

Great Lakes
Association of Presbyterian
Church Educators

Presents an Online Event

**Equipping the Church
to Welcome All**

Gender Identity/Fluidity/Pronouns

**Featuring
Rev. Shanea D. Leonard
and
Rev. Jess Cook**

Session One - Wednesday, October 14th at 7:00 p.m.

Session Two - Thursday, October 15th at 10:00 a.m.

Times are Eastern Standard Time.

Zoom events will be recorded and available for viewing after the live session has ended.

This is a meaningful opportunity for all church ministries.

***Christian Educators
Pastors
Christian Education Ministries
Member Care Ministries***



Rev. Shanea D. Leonard, B.A., M.Div.

Rev. Shanea D. Leonard, B.A., M.Div. is a pastor, teacher, consultant, community activist, and justice warrior. Shanea has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) for over twelve years. A native of Philadelphia, they received their B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. They currently carry out their justice mandate as the Associate for Gender & Racial Justice for the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries for the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Shanea has been serving communities and congregations in various capacities for over fifteen years. Rev. Leonard has done extensive work within urban areas to eradicate systemic oppression in the areas of race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic despair. They have spent time doing international outreach in Africa, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Shanea believes that God has given them a burden for people whom others have disregarded, oppressed, forgotten, or simply don’t even see.

A modern-day abolitionist, Shanea is the founder & former pastor of JUDAH Fellowship, which at its height was the Western Pennsylvania region’s only predominantly Black affirming faith community. While in Pittsburgh, Rev. Leonard was a leading revolutionary voice of system change in the work of jail reform, LGBTQIA inclusion, racial justice, & civic well-being. Shanea has served several other organizations including being the chair of Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto’s LGBTQIA Advisory Council, but now lends support as a member of the board of Johnson C. Smith Seminary. Pastor Leonard is an often-quoted media contributor and an active, outspoken faith voice for justice.

Shanea is also the founding director of Diversity Consulting, an organization that focuses on the education and coaching of individuals and groups around intersectional advocacy and issue-based leadership in the areas of faith, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Rev. Leonard has received numerous awards including the recent 2019 Voice of Justice Award from New Voices for Reproductive Justice, a multi-state RJ organization. Shanea resides in Louisville, Kentucky but travels extensively for the cause of liberation of marginalized people. They live their life by the mantra of Assata Shakur which states, “...*it is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win...we have nothing to lose but our chains!*” And the scriptural passage of Micah 6:8.



Rev. Jess Cook

Gender pronouns: they/them/theirs

Jess Cook is a native of East Texas and lifelong Presbyterian, Jess holds a Master of Divinity from Union Presbyterian Seminary, a Master of Fine Arts in Photography from the University of North Texas, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art from Baylor. Jess was the first openly non-binary person to be ordained as a Minister of The Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Prior to joining MLP, Jess was the Youth Programs Director at Side by Side, an organization in Richmond, VA serving LGBTQIA+ youth. While at Side by Side, Jess worked with hundreds of young people through support groups, a leadership program, and various programs in the community. They created a parent support group and a meals program, and trained a wide variety of faith community leaders and service providers on best practices for working with LGBTQIA+ youth.

Jess's call is to help facilitate spaces where reconciliation is possible, with the acknowledgement that reconciliation is only possible if we are able to be honest with ourselves and one another about the ways in which we are broken. True reconciliation requires relationships, and relationships require trust and vulnerability. Jess sees their role as helping make spaces where that vulnerability is celebrated and trust can be built. To learn more, check out [Jess's TEDxTalk](#) on what faith communities can learn from LGBTQIA+ youth.

Jess loves poetry, liturgy, sharing meals, and pretty much any conversation about the ways we see the Spirit