

WHY PRIDE MATTERS

June is Pride Month, celebrating LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Plus) people and community.

On June 28, 1969, the Stonewall Riots in New York City marked a turning point for the gay rights movement in the United States.

Although the gay rights movement predates Stonewall, Stonewall was the impetus for its gaining momentum through the 1970s, through the devastating AIDS crisis in the 1980s, into the 1990s, to today.

In recognizing Pride month here in the United States, while the work for justice is ongoing, it's also important to acknowledge the remarkable strides that have been made in weaving LGBTQI+ people into the fabric of American life.

For instance, marriage equality (same-sex marriage) is now a reality. Individuals and same-sex couples now enjoy freedoms and legal rights that were unthinkable back in 1969. Trans and non-binary people are more able to live openly as the people they are.

If someone happens not to be LGBTQI+, they may wonder, "Why does Pride matter to me?" Some religious people, or people of faith, may ask, "Why should Pride matter to me?"

It matters because God created us in God's image and likeness. Regardless of our diversity (which God created in glorious fashion, too) we are all equal as human beings. We all deserve to be loved without shame. We all are worthy of living our lives as God gave us freedom to do.

If you don't happen to be LGBTQI+, know there are people who are not able to live as freely as you. Pride matters for people who are not able to celebrate because they live in parts of the world where they face oppression, stigmatization and violence on a daily basis because they are LGBTQI+.

So, when we celebrate Pride, we are noting that freedom and equality are not exclusive gifts for some. They are universal gifts for all given to us by our Creator and deserve to be legally protected as we work towards shaping a world that is more inclusive, just and supportive of everyone. That is why Pride matters.

So, however you identify, whether as LGBTQIA+ or straight, or something else, whether you are a religious believer, doubter, or seeker, I wish you "Happy Pride!" Let's celebrate, advocate and champion freedom, equality and justice for all!

Blessings,
Will