

## Baptist church calls transgender pastor

by [Bob Allen](#) in the [September 25, 2019](#) issue

Members of an Ohio congregation invited the community to a September 8 worship service officially welcoming as its new pastor one of the few openly transgender Baptist ministers in the US.

Erica Saunders, a 2019 graduate of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity ordained to the gospel ministry this spring by Wake Forest Baptist Church, began July 1 as pastor of Peace Community Church in Oberlin, Ohio, affiliated with the American Baptist Churches USA.

Saunders began the process of changing her gender presentation during her first year of seminary.

“Erica stood out as a candidate with unique strengths,” the search team said.

“Bright, compassionate, faith-filled and spirit-led with a loving presence, she showed as much interest in each of us as we did in her.”

Saunders said in a statement that she is “grateful for the gospel witness provided by Peace Community Church.”

“With God’s help, together we can follow the example of Christ and create a beloved community marked by abiding peace, expansive love and radical justice in Oberlin and beyond,” said Saunders.

The church, which adopted the name Peace Community Church in 2000, decided by consensus to welcome and affirm LGBTQ persons in 2005.

The church self-describes as “an inclusive congregation that boldly and earnestly embraces the call of Jesus to seek God’s Realm.”

“We work together to bring peace and justice to our world,” the identity statement continues. “We gather to worship and praise God and build an authentic community of harmony, joy, and celebration, and to pray and care for one another.” —Baptist News Global