

Metropolitan Community Churches

Inclusive
Language
Guidelines

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MCC[®]

METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCHES

Since its founding in 1968, Metropolitan Community Churches has sought to recognize our limited understandings of God and faith and to expand Christian community. Language has always been a critical part of making this circle wider, because language shapes value and meaning. The words chosen to describe our experiences of the divine and our understandings of gospel messages not only reflect our reality but, in fact, help to create it. Furthermore, as an organization of faith, the importance of language is reinforced for us by its power in foundational scriptural stories of Creation, inspiration, and call.

The use of inclusive language, then, furthers the aim of Metropolitan Community Churches to reflect that the full range of people is created in God's image and in community life, as well as to speak to and about all people in ways that show respect and honor human dignity and worth. It allows for broader frameworks to understand God beyond those based on limited human qualities and theological beliefs. Inclusive language importantly, and often uncomfortably, also helps to share power, to interrupt the effects of unearned privilege, and to repair the spiritual harm done to those who have excessive and unexamined privilege. In these ways, inclusive language benefits all people as we seek together to become Beloved Community.

Inclusive language does not require that we necessarily do away altogether with traditional, often treasured language. In some cases, we may choose to stop using some beloved names or words in order to be more welcoming to marginalized people. At other times, we may choose to continue to use traditional and cherished terms alongside other words and terms so that a clearing can be created that allows more of the congregation to find themselves and their God named in community. It is even possible during some liturgical rites to allow each congregant to use their own terms: For example, the pastor might invite the congregation, "Please join me in the Prayer That Jesus Taught, or The Lord's Prayer, using the language that has meaning for you. Our..."

The goal of inclusive language generally is to challenge us to consider and to care that certain traditional, treasured language about God and faith can do harm to some people and groups and can place barriers between them and full participation in church life. The greater hope and intention is that inclusive language encourages us to make room for a number of understandings and even to re- and co-create our experiences in ways that empower us all.

Inclusive language, importantly, is more than a set of directives and cannot be applied using any single, uniform understanding of divinity, community, or humanity, because words that make one oppressed group feel more welcome may at the same time inadvertently cause another oppressed group to feel more isolated. It is vital that we not assume that there is a monolithic progressive worldview, nor allow any particular version, however well-intended, to be universal, normative, or a blanket solution. In this material, we acknowledge that there is a diversity of approaches to inclusive language, always informed by one's own social location, and that our lexemic suggestions may often not work outside of certain (English, or possibly Germanic) languages. In that spirit, therefore, the compilers of this material locate ourselves both as white, able-bodied, English-speaking, and trans-masculine people living in the United States.

By taking care with our language and messaging concerning gender, race, class, age, physical abilities, nationality, theological beliefs, culture, lifestyle, and the other ways that we describe and categorize humans, we affirm and empower all people and we hold as truth that we are all magnificently created and beloved by God.

In our efforts to include, it is critical to be aware of intersectionality. Any person is more than one single category, such as gender, race, or class. Every person is multidimensional and complex, and all people's lives and experiences are informed by many factors and social dynamics. An intersectional framework understands both that oppressions are linked and that one person can experience both oppression and privilege at the same time. And intersectionality is explicitly geared toward transformation, coalition building between communities, and working to achieve social justice.

LANGUAGE

This applies to church materials, including mission statements, policies, liturgy and worship materials, promotional items, and social media postings, and aims to guide us in what we say, sing, and write.

RACE

When addressing race, it is important to acknowledge that race includes people of all colors as well as our assumptions about the universality of "Whiteness," that race has a particular history in each part of the world, and that, in the United States, race is multi-layered and shows up in ever-evolving ways.

If we are indeed going to be an inclusive church, we must acknowledge that we all are the product of our pasts. Incorporated within our Christian religious heritage is a long history of racism (conscious and unconscious). Racism, whether deliberate or unintentional, is destructive and must be overcome in order for us to be whole in our Christian faith. So, in keeping with our guidelines for inclusivity, we recommend the elimination of racist language, imagery and symbols in references to people, God and Jesus Christ in scripture, hymns, song, liturgy, sermons, and contemporary language.

Churches, pastors, and congregants may disagree over whether and how to substitute some of these terms, particularly in historical settings such as pre-Civil War era spirituals. This can become an opportunity for congregations to engage in difficult and rich conversations about the significance of language in and the importance of these traditional contexts.

COLOR SYMBOLISM

White is commonly equated with goodness, purity, and being clean, whereas black is often connected to sin, evil, deceit, and death. These are not harmless or benign associations. Each time that we use white and black in this way, we reinforce the assumption that black is bad and that white is good, and these assumptions have been and are translated in our culture and applied to bodies and skin color.

Preferred clean, bright, harsh/bad as sin	Not Preferred white, dark/black as sin
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The bible moreover describes sinfulness in a number of ways, including “bitter” (Proverbs 5) and “like dirty rags” (Isaiah 64).

DARKNESS

We similarly confuse issues of light and dark skin pigmentation and light and dark illumination. In a technical and a theological sense, they are indeed separate issues, whereas, in their practical application, because of its racism, society has strongly intertwined the two. We need to be especially careful of how we use terms of lightness and darkness.

Preferred shadow, struggle, evil, wrongness, hard, dank, gloom, bright	Not Preferred darkness, dark, white
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Further, it is worthwhile to question and interrupt the idea that darkness is negative or deficit. “The paradox of Christianity is that what is wisdom to reason is foolishness to God, and what seems foolish or irrational to reason is the true wisdom that leads to redemption. The darkness from which reason flees is the true path to truth and being. This is the constant teaching of the scriptures. The greatest redemptive acts in the history of salvation were done at night or in darkness of Faith” (The Dark Center: A Process Theology of Blackness, Bulalia Baltazar, Paulist Press, New York 1973, p162 -3). The poet Wendell Berry says it this way: “To go in the dark with a light is to know the light./ To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,/ and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,/ and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.”

GENDER

As we discuss the human and divine in gender-expansive ways, we recognize the inherent, often subconscious, ways that masculinity has been privilege, honor the potential and the equality of women and other non-masculine genders, and notice and celebrate the diversity of gender, including nonbinary gender (that is, genders other than “male” or “female”).

INTERRUPTING MALE PRIVILEGE

Words like “man” and “mankind” have traditionally been used to denote all people or human beings in general, and the pronouns “he” and “him” to designate all individuals, which excludes women and other genders from the human race and presents maleness as normative and superior. Using inclusive terms and pronouns helps to include all of us in our descriptions of people and in God’s invitations and promises.

<p>Preferred people, humanity, humankind they, their, one, they, those</p>	<p>Not Preferred man or mankind, he, his</p>
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For example, “Those who come to me shall not hunger,” instead of “He who comes to me shall not hunger.”

It isn’t necessary to add diminutive feminine endings to words for women, like “prophetess,” “priestess,” or “deaconess” (nor to God, for that matter), nor is it necessary to clarify that someone is a “woman doctor” or a “female police officer.” This implies that the original terms are masculine, or that masculinity is the norm and that feminine expressions of these positions and roles are less valid. The same Hebrew word (nabiy’) is used for prophet and the same Greek term (diakonos) for deacon, regardless of gender.

REFERENCES TO GOD

God is often referred to exclusively as male, and yet God is all genders and all people are created in God’s image. We can reflect this by consistently also using terms and pronouns that are feminine and gender-neutral.

<p>Preferred include she, mother, queen, you, who, whom, one, their, God, God’s, God’s self, creator, parent</p>	<p>Not Preferred exclusively male terms</p>
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Sometimes, in our efforts to be inclusive, we will use both a male and female term for God, for example, by saying “Mother-Father God.” To fully represent all genders in the spectrum, we might also include nonbinary terms. Another way to practice this is to choose a single neutral term that can encompass all genders.

<p>Preferred she-he-they Mother-Father-Parent God King-Queen-Ruler God include Parent, Creator, Nurturing God, Source of Life, Ruler, Crown</p>	<p>Not Preferred man or mankind, he, his</p>
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Not everyone will wish to use hierarchical terms, such as King or Master, and may choose among the many biblical terms for God that do not denote power-over, such as Rock, Everlasting, or Holy.

Sometimes we use biblical Hebrew and Greek terms to describe and refer to God. These terms are often also gendered, although in ways that are less apparent to us. Adonai, for example, is a masculine term that carries meanings of “Lord” and “Master.”

REFERENCES TO JESUS

To many Christians, Jesus is both the historical man and the divine savior, the Christ. The historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, was male – but it is Jesus’ qualities that we affirm and want to emphasize, not his maleness. When referring to the historical Jesus, therefore, male pronouns make good sense, and yet it may be useful to use non-masculine words to describe his qualities or roles. When referring to the risen Christ, it can be helpful to use a range of gendered and gender-neutral terms and pronouns to convey the limitless qualities of this messianic figure.

<p>Preferred</p> <p>Teacher, child, heir, Sovereign The Human One</p>	<p>Not Preferred</p> <p>Master, Son, Lord, Son of God</p>
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Not everyone will wish to use hierarchical terms, such as Master or Sovereign, and may choose among the many biblical terms for Jesus that do not denote power-over, such as Shepherd, Healer, Peace Giver.

Understanding intersectionality is important as we do this work. In the United States, Black men were and are being obliterated from African American communities through slavery, Jim Crow, and their modern versions in mass incarceration and state-sanctioned street murder. As a result, attempts to welcome women and nonbinary trans folks by deemphasizing Jesus’ maleness may be experienced by Black people as further erasure of Black men (though these identities are not exclusive, as women and nonbinary trans folks are of all races and ethnicities). We can acknowledge intersecting and overlapping identities and concerns by using a variety of terms and words and by explicitly talking about these issues often in our churches.

REFERENCES TO HOLY SPIRIT

Like God and the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Spirit, Holy Breath, or the Holy Ghost is all genders and has no gender, and we can reflect this by using many or neutral pronouns and terms when describing this divine figure.

REFERENCES TO PEOPLE

Our congregations and ministries are filled with men, women, trans folks, and people who are nonbinary (genderqueer, agender, neutrois, and otherwise not men or women). It isn't required to know all of these terms or identities, yet it is critical that we have a general understanding of the breadth and range of gender. We can help more people feel included and welcomed in church life by using words to describe our congregations that reflect many varieties of gender.

Sometimes, in our efforts to be inclusive, we will use both male and female terms for the people in our congregations, for example, by saying "brothers and sisters..." To fully represent all genders in the spectrum, we might also include nonbinary terms. Another way to practice this is to choose a single neutral term that can encompass all genders.

Preferred

brothers and sisters and siblings; husbands and wives and partners; men and women and transgender and nonbinary people; siblings, kin, family, spouse, people, folks

Not Preferred

exclusively male or binary terms

We can imagine terms for occupations, roles, and choir sections that don't refer to gender and we can use terms that designate the work done, rather than the gender of the person who does it.

Preferred

Chair, sopranos, altos, upper voices, tenors, basses, lower voices, fishers, police officer, mail carrier, fire fighter, flight attendant

Not Preferred

Chairman, Chairwoman women's voices, men's voices, fishermen, policeman, mailman, fireman, stewardess

Unless you know a person's preference, use the neutral pronoun "they," even for individuals, or use first names (people love it when you remember their name!) and train others to remember names, too. Try always to use a person's preferred name and pronoun. (Ask them directly about their preferred names and pronouns if you are unsure.) Use affirming words in response, and try to address one another in broad and open ways that don't rely on gender.

Preferred

Absolutely! Excuse me. Hello.
Good morning, folks, people.

Not Preferred

Yes, sir! Ma'am, Sir, ladies, gentlemen

It is important to be aware of the ways that descriptive language can be gendered, to consider more precise descriptive words, and to use these words for people across the gender spectrum.

Preferred precise, descriptive words, like strong, nurturing, decisive, gentle	Not Preferred general, gendered, descriptive words like masculine or motherly
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ABILITY

As we discuss people and spirituality in non-ableist ways, recognize how able bodies have been privileged and treated as morally and spiritually superior. Honor the goodness and completeness of people with disabilities, noticing and celebrating the diversity of bodies across the spectrum of size and ability.

Not all people who are concerned about ableism are in agreement about language. Here, we are using the term “disability” because it is the word used predominantly by people and activists from within the communities. However, notably, many people from Deaf communities do not experience themselves as disabled. Many Deaf people understand themselves as members of a minority language culture who speak ASL (American Sign Language) and who navigate the world visually. As we do this work within our churches, we can be most current and most welcoming by continuing to read and research the ways that people with disabilities and the Deaf communities are talking and writing about their experiences.

DISABILITY AND DEAF AS A METAPHOR

Throughout scripture, disabilities and deafness are used as metaphors for such things as ignorance, stubbornness, sin, and refusal to repent. Further, being healed from a disability is assumed to be desired and to be superior, which is expressed frequently in scripture and hymn. A classic example can be found in the lyrics of “Amazing Grace”: I once was lost, but now am found/ Was blind, but now I see. It is inappropriate, though, to project these spiritual shortcomings onto people with disabilities or Deaf people, and it is not true that able bodies are better or preferable to bodies with disabilities.

During bible studies or when preaching on these texts, we can highlight the impact of these interpretations on groups of people and explicitly talk about these issues. In hymns, we are free to replace troubling language with words that don’t stigmatize a group of people.

Preferred

I once was lost, but now am found/ Was bound, but now I'm free ("Amazing Grace")

I the God of wind and flame/ I will tend the poor and pained ("Here I Am")

How he made the sick ones well again/ And saved all those in need ("Victory in Jesus")

Let us go with each other in perfect harmony ("Let There Be Peace on Earth")

Not Preferred

I once was lost, but now am found/ Was blind, but now I see ("Amazing Grace")

I the God of wind and flame/ I will tend the poor and lame ("Here I Am")

How he made the lame to walk again/ And caused the blind to see ("Victory in Jesus")

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony ("Let There Be Peace on Earth")

Be aware that often we use language that treats abilities as metaphors for other actions. For example, it is very common to say, "Don't you see that this is true?" Our organizational documents are called, "Mission, Vision, and Values." And we will often ask allies to "stand up" for certain issues. As we become more aware of the ways that physical abilities are used as a stand-in for other words, the more we can replace these words with more precise language for what we mean.

Preferred

Do you understand what I mean?
Mission, Aspiration, Values.
Ask allies to "support" issues and to "stick up" or "show up" for one another

Not Preferred

*Do you see what I mean?
Mission, Vision, Values
Ask allies to "stand up" for one another*

DISABILITY AND DEAF AS A STAND-IN FOR "THE UNFORTUNATE"

Similarly, scripture often refers to a list of people who are marginalized and oppressed, including people with disabilities and Deaf people. The groups listed are those who were (and are) often neglected and dismissed, and whom God admonishes God's people to value and attend to along with other groups, such as widows, orphans, foreigners, the poor, the hungry and thirsty, and those in prison. In our church communities we can discuss the importance of understanding these groups not as the unfortunate, "there but for the grace of God go I," but as people along with all others to value and welcome and care for as kin and community.

REFERENCES TO PEOPLE

Generally, describing people only by their disability can have the effect of over-emphasizing that attribute or equating the person with it. It is usually best to refer to people by their name or by distinguishing features that are shared generally.

Preferred

Audrey was new to the church today.
Will you give this to Audrey? She has
blond hair and is in a wheelchair
near the front of the church.

Not Preferred

*Audrey, the woman in the wheelchair,
was new to the church today.
Will you give this to Audrey? She is
in the wheelchair.*

Generally it is preferable to use “person-first” language and to avoid euphemisms and terms that reduce people to their disability, that assume the disability is negative, and that overextend the severity of a disability.

Preferred

Person with a disability.
People with schizophrenia.
A child with an intellectual disability.
Barbara uses a wheelchair.
Marcy is living with epilepsy.

Not Preferred

*The disabled. The physically challenged.
The specially-abled. Special.
Schizophrenics. A mentally disabled
or retarded child. Barbara is confined
to a wheelchair. Barbara is wheelchair-bound.
Marcy is afflicted with epilepsy.
Marcy suffers from epilepsy.*

While it is generally preferable to use “person-first” language, individual people should be allowed to claim their own identities. It is important to allow an individual with a disability to identify in whatever ways they do, including as a disabled woman or a queer crip and so on. Inclusive language is meant not to confine the identities of individuals but rather to engage in aware and respectful language, which always prioritizes the person’s experience first. It is in keeping with the philosophy of person-first to respect each person’s identification.

CLASS

As we discuss people and spirituality in non-classist ways, recognize how wealth and education are often privileged and treated as socially, morally, and spiritually superior. Honor the contributions and value of poor and working class people. Be mindful of using language that assumes that everyone present is employed, has a stable living situation, can afford to meet their basic needs, or works a first shift job. As we do this work within our churches, we can be most informed and most welcoming by reading and becoming knowledgeable about the ways that working class and poor people are talking and writing about their own experiences.

“POOR” AS A STAND-IN FOR “THE UNFORTUNATE”

Scripture often refers to a list of people who are marginalized and oppressed, including poor people and those, like widows, orphans, and foreigners, who are impoverished because of their social status. The groups listed are those who were (and are) often neglected and dismissed, and whom God admonishes God’s people to value and attend to along with other groups, such as people with disabilities and Deaf people, the hungry and thirsty, and those in prison. In our church communities, we can discuss the importance of understanding these groups not as the unfortunate, “there but for the grace of God go I,” but as people along with all others to value and welcome and care for as kin and community.

Further, it is useful to be aware of the privileged standing that the poor and working poor actually have in scripture. They are consistently presented as models and exemplars of faith, as powerful agents of change, and as holding a special connection to God. The widow at Zarephath prepares the last of her food for Elijah, though she and her son are starving. Jesus congratulates the poor as those who will inherit God’s realm. Shepherds and peasants are the first to carry and embody the Good News of Jesus’ birth. This understanding of the poor is stated explicitly in James 2:5 and implied in 1 Corinthians 1:27. In addition to not marginalizing the poor and working classes, it is important to talk about these people as essential to their own and our communal salvation.

PRACTICE

Invitation and inclusion goes well beyond what words we use. Everything that is imaged and practiced also carries the potential to include and exclude, to affirm and to wound. Ensure through education and practice that all ministry leaders understand the importance of this ongoing commitment to inclusion.

RACE

IMAGES

Include pictures and images that convey racial diversity on walls, in materials, in worship resources/bulletins, and on websites and other social media outlets. Avoid using stock photos, though, to display diversity, and take care not to tokenize people of color in the congregation in attempts to appear more diverse. Based on the time and place of his birth, Jesus is likely to have been black- or brown-skinned. Consider displaying images and pictures that include this perspective and embrace this possibility.

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING

Ensure there is a diverse leadership and participation in church programming. Offer programs that invite a wide range of participation across race, culture, and ethnicity and include training on a regular basis that promotes racial etiquette, welcome, and hospitality, led by experienced and qualified facilitators. Host a conversation around race and racism, both individual and systemic. Invite and warmly welcome various perspectives when planning church programs to enrich the experience. Ensure there is representation from and participation by people of color and that the discussion promotes respect and dignity. Create a culture that celebrates differences.

ADMINISTRATION

It's important not to expect people of color to bear the brunt of racial education and transformation work. And it is critical to intentionally encourage racial diversity in leadership roles, on the Board, and serving in worship. Remember that whether congregants can find people like themselves among those serving and leading the church and its worship carries a message of inclusion or exclusion.

Ensure that forms, services, and facilities promote inclusion.

Forms: Not asking about race, particularly within the United States, can erase people of color and perpetuate whiteness as a universal standard. Take care, though, that any information collected about race and ethnicity has a purpose, and be clear with congregants about how it will be helpful and how it will be used.

Services: Be sure, whenever possible and appropriate, to include a racial and ethnic spectrum of participation. Congregants will quickly assess: "Is someone like me involved?" The greater the diversity of the participants, the richer the church experience will be for all.

GENDER

IMAGES

Include pictures and images that convey gender diversity on walls, in materials, in worship resources/bulletins, and on websites and other social media outlets, including transgender and gender nonbinary, as well as male and female. Avoid using stock photos, though, to display diversity, and take care not to tokenize transgender and genderqueer people in the congregation in attempts to appear more diverse.

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING

Ensure there is a diverse leadership and participation in church programming. Offer programs that include a spectrum of gender identities and include training on a regular basis that promotes gender etiquette, welcome, and hospitality, led by experienced and qualified facilitators. Host a conversation around gender and gender diversity where people can safely share their experiences. Invite and warmly welcome various perspectives when planning church programs to enrich the experience. Ensure there is representation from and participation by people of various genders and that the discussion promotes respect and dignity. If you offer a "men's group" or "women's group," allow congregants to self-select for each group. Moreover, consider opening the groups to all in order to make room for gender nonbinary folks. Create a culture that celebrates differences.

ADMINISTRATION

It's important not to expect women, trans folks, and genderqueer people to bear the brunt of gender education and transformation work. And it is critical to intentionally encourage gender diversity in leadership roles, on the Board, and serving in worship. Remember that whether congregants can find people like themselves among those serving and leading the church and its worship carries a message of inclusion or exclusion.

Be aware of diverse leadership styles – such as linear v. circular, rapidly-paced v. measured, democratic v. consensus – and how they have become associated with gender (are considered more “masculine” or “feminine”) and accordingly are valued or dismissed. Strive to appreciate various styles of communication and leadership and to create the time and space to reflect them.

Be proactive by inviting congregants and guests whenever possible to provide preferred names and pronouns (for example, during introductions or with name tags). Remember that everyone has a gender identity and a preferred name and pronoun(s). Be aware that not everyone will be comfortable outing themselves with pronouns; keep this exercise easygoing and voluntary.

Ensure that your forms, services, and facilities promote inclusion.

Forms and Mailings

If gender data is necessary, include options beyond male and female. Avoid unnecessary gendered titles, such as Ms., Mrs., and Mr.

Services

Widen gender-inclusive service offerings. For example, imagine, create, and promote special services and liturgies that include gender-expansive “naming,” “baptism,” and “wedding.”

FACILITIES

- Provide infant changing tables in all restrooms.
 - Restrooms have long been sites of danger for transgender, gender nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people. Labeling the space so that everyone can use the restroom without fear of harassment or erasure is an important part of gender inclusiveness. If your restrooms are single occupancy, make them all-gender. If your restrooms have multiple stalls, consider labeling them as neutral or, if you want to communicate which has the urinals, consider using “Men and All Genders” and “Women and All Genders” or “Restroom with Urinals.” Prepare the congregation before and after making such changes by providing education and training to help promote a genuinely safe environment.
 - Restrooms may also provide a place for transgender people to change their clothing before/after service. There are times it is not safe for trans folks to dress as they prefer, and providing this for our congregants can make the trans worship experience more authentic, empowered, and even transformative. Other spaces in the church, besides or in addition to restrooms, might be designated as changing rooms as appropriate.
- (for example, during introductions or with name tags). Remember that everyone has a gender identity and a preferred name and pronoun(s). Be aware that not everyone will be comfortable outing themselves with pronouns; keep this exercise easygoing and voluntary.

ABILITY

IMAGES

Include pictures and images that convey body diversity on walls, in materials, in worship resources/bulletins, and on websites and other social media outlets. Avoid using stock photos, though, to display diversity, and take care not to tokenize people with disabilities in the congregation in attempts to appear more diverse. Take particular care if your church is not physically an accessible space.

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING

Ensure there is a diverse leadership and participation in church programming. Offer programs that include a spectrum of abilities and include training on a regular basis that promotes Deaf and disability etiquette, welcome, and hospitality, led by experienced and qualified facilitators. Host a conversation about Deaf and disability issues where people can safely share their experiences. Invite and warmly welcome various perspectives when planning church programs to enrich the experience. Ensure there is representation from and participation by people of various abilities and that the discussion promotes respect and dignity.

Engage directly with people with disabilities, rather than with their caretaker or translator.

Be aware of needs for flexibility, differences in pacing, and different kinds of process and outcome, and provide opportunities for participation across a variety of learning styles and abilities. Congregants may need to get up and move during worship or group activities, or use the restroom often. Congregants may need sermons and bible studies to be paced differently, incorporate more breaks, or otherwise accommodate different learning styles. Create a culture that celebrates these differences.

Educate yourself about and avoid using disability as a metaphor in worship, for example with a liturgical dance that depicts someone in a wheelchair getting up to dance as a metaphor for God's realm. Educate yourself about "inspiration porn" and avoid treating people with disabilities who are engaging in routine activities as inspirational or exceptional.

ADMINISTRATION

It's important not to expect Deaf people and people with disabilities to bear the brunt of disability education and transformation work. And it is critical to intentionally encourage people with a range of abilities to participate in leadership roles, on the Board, and serving in worship. Remember that whether congregants can find people like themselves among those serving and leading the church and its worship carries a message of inclusion or exclusion.

Be proactive by arranging administrative spaces to allow accessibility, by expecting speakers to use microphones as a rule, and by reading out or describing slides and videos as a rule.

Ensure that your forms, services, and facilities promote inclusion.

Forms

Whenever possible, provide worship bulletins in large print or Braille.

Facilities

Make it a priority to ensure that restrooms are accessible with handrails alongside the toilet.

SERVICES

- Make it a priority to provide a chair lift when stairs are the primary access.
- Make it a priority to provide ASL (American Sign Language) to Deaf and hearing-impaired people. Clearly promote and communicate how these services are made available.
- Arrange the altar and other worship space to allow accessibility.

CLASS

IMAGES

Include pictures and images that convey class diversity on walls, in materials, in worship resources/ bulletins, and on websites and other social media outlets. Positively portray people in working class and rural vocations. Avoid using stock photos to display diversity, and take care not to tokenize poor and working class people or to portray them as objects of charity.

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMING

Ensure there is a diverse leadership and participation in church programming. Offer programs that invite a wide range of participation across class and education and include training on a regular basis that promotes class etiquette, welcome, and hospitality, led by experienced and qualified facilitators. Host a conversation around class and classism, both individual and systemic. Invite and warmly welcome various perspectives when planning church programs to enrich the experience. Ensure there is representation from and participation by working class people and that the discussion promotes respect and dignity. Create a culture that celebrates differences.

Discuss Stewardship and conduct Stewardship drives in ways that value all contributions to the ministries of the church and that do not out congregants who cannot participate at the levels of wealthier households or at all.

If your congregation provides families with Thanksgiving baskets or Christmas gifts, talk about these ministries in ways that maintain the recipients' value and dignity.

Be aware of needs for flexibility and differences in education, and provide opportunities for participation across a variety of learning styles and abilities. Be proactive by using a range of vocabulary and reading level language in your sermons and programming.

ADMINISTRATION

It's important not to expect poor and working class people to bear the brunt of class education and transformation work. And it is critical to intentionally encourage people with a range of education levels, communication styles, and skill sets to participate in leadership roles, on the Board, and serving in worship. Remember that whether congregants can find people like themselves among those serving and leading the church and its worship carries a message of inclusion or exclusion.

Create a culture without dress expectations or even cleanliness expectations that makes all congregants feel welcomed as equals, and not as people to be helped.

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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