

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

The 1985 Synod of our Diocese approved a resolution that the Board on Canons and Rules of Order re-phrase all the Constitution and Canons in inclusive language and complete the text by the Synod of 1988. In a previous Synod it was agreed that inclusive language be used in all Diocesan Services and Parishes were encouraged to do the same.

We realize that in many Parishes this still presents difficulties but we feel that attention should be drawn to the intention of the Diocese. We are still in the process of re-thinking the language issue in our Churches (in both Scriptures and Hymnal) as inclusive of both men and women. We can only provide here brief guidelines but we would draw your attention to the more extensive publications listed below.

Language not only shapes our image of God but our image of ourselves and our possibilities. In our church, at some levels, there has been a recognition of the language issue for over 10 years but there has been little change in the use of exclusive language. Part of the resistance to change can be attributed to the fact that many people hold dear the traditional language and images of the Christian community and, therefore, find it uncomfortable and painful to use different, inclusive language. Their sense of loss is not to be uncaringly dismissed but at the same time we need to help people understand that language reflects power in relationships and in institutional structures. Unfortunately many people still think the use of inclusive language is only a matter of concern to a few women. Significant change will occur only when people realize how important language is in shaping the lives of our children and the future of our society.

The 1975 United Presbyterian document, "Language About God", says: We believe that language is the key to understanding and shaping people's perceptions of themselves. Language is formative. Sexist language symbolizes and shapes our views of who men and women are and how they ought to relate to each other. And our language about God is crucial: it clarifies and colours our views of who God is and how God relates to us.

Some of the above material has been taken from:
GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, Published by the United Church of Canada and adapted for Anglican use.

Other Publications:

AN INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE LECTIONARY – Westminster Press

COUNT US IN – INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN LITURGY, Faull and Sinclair, Grove Books Ltd.

GUIDELINES – SOME EXAMPLES

EXCLUSIVE

Man, Men, Mankind

Sons of God

Brothers, Brotherhood

He, him, his

Clergyman

Laymen

Chairman

The family of man

INCLUSIVE

People, all people, persons, men and women, humanity, everyone, all

People of God, daughters and sons of God, children of God

Sisters and brothers, the family of faith, family, community

he/she, we, our, their, individual, someone

Clergy person, clergy men and women, clergy

Laity, lay people

Chairperson, chair

The human family

Language about GOD presents special difficulties for many people, but it is suggested that instead of generic words like FATHER, KING, HE, HIM, we use GOD, CREATOR, FRIEND, SUSTAINER, REDEEMER, etc.

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