

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE POLICY

BROADWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (BUMC)

ADOPTED BY CHURCH COUNCIL OF BUMC ON DECEMBER 12, 2000

Statement of Purpose

At Broadway United Methodist Church, we define inclusive language as terms and imagery that recognize and affirm the full range of diversity among persons engaged in the communication process. Throughout history, the language of Christianity has often excluded or denigrated persons on the basis of many factors, such as age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, nationality, physical ability, race, sexual orientation and size.

So that all persons may feel welcomed and cherished as recipients of God's grace, Broadway United Methodist Church embraces the concept of inclusiveness not only in language, but in all areas of church life and structure. In our language of worship, we claim a Wesleyan theology based on the interplay of scripture, reason, experience and tradition.

In terms of gender, it is clear that Christianity was born into a male-dominated society whose language reinforced such discrimination. In fact, the Christian understanding of God and God's acts has been dominated by male-oriented imagery and language while ignoring complementary feminine images. The very survival of this feminine imagery is testament to its importance in the life of the church.

We therefore strive to reclaim it within our understanding of God, along with images that transcend gender, in order to truly proclaim the Christ who lived and died for all persons. Furthermore, just as the presumption of male gender limits our understanding both of God and of our shared human life, so do presumptions of age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, nationality, physical ability, race, sexual orientation or size. Therefore, we encourage the use of a variety of images surrounding all of these characteristics that affirm the worth of God's entire creation.

We acknowledge that inclusive language has the potential for alienating or offending some persons who worship with us, and we seek wisdom and gentleness in affirming our inclusive theology. Such language can feel strained or awkward to the ear of those familiar and comfortable with traditional language and liturgy. We strive to improve our ability to use inclusive language gracefully. We realize that purposefully using inclusive language is a process. During this ongoing process, we become more aware of the variety of meanings that our words convey as we move toward full inclusion.

Inclusive Language Guidelines

The following guidelines for use of inclusive language apply to all liturgical materials, sermons, church school and other educational materials, statements and other documents produced by and used within the congregation. They are offered for use by those preparing or revising such pieces.

1. In general, anything newly written should use inclusive language, but material with traditional or classical value (e.g., Handel's *Messiah*) need not but may be altered. If it is necessary to revise an existing work, be aware of context and use discretion when the author's intent is unclear.
2. Choir anthems, solos, congregational hymns, and other presentations of historical or classical music require special attention. The guidelines are as follows:
 - Make every effort to use music that is already inclusive.
 - Revise music that can be made inclusive with minimal editing. Exclusive verses may be omitted, or a note may be placed in the bulletin offering inclusive alternatives to specific words.
 - Present works with a particular historical or classical value as written, and try to balance them with inclusive music.
3. References to humanity should be gender-inclusive and recognize diversity in sexual orientation. References to known gender may be used. However, if a term applies or should apply to both men and women, generic terms or a combination of terms should be used. References to personal relationships should acknowledge GLBT relationships (i.e., husbands, wives, partners). Some possibilities are given below.

MAN/MANKIND: humanity, people, persons, humankind, women and men, folk, one, anyone, everyone

BROTHERS/BROTHERHOOD: sisters and brothers, kindred, family, community, sisterhood/brotherhood, communion

SONS: children, daughters and sons, offspring, heirs, inheritors
4. References to humanity should acknowledge and celebrate a diversity of abledness and age.
5. References to God, the Reign of God, and the Holy Spirit should be inclusive. This might require balancing complementary male and female terms, but single-gender images should not stand alone. Likewise, symbols embodying evil or good should not be attributed to one color or one gender. Ideas for neutral substitutions follow:

KING: ruler, sovereign, leader

FATHER: God, Creator, Mother, Parent, Sovereign, Father/Mother

KINGDOM: Kindom, Reign of God, Commonwealth of God, Sovereignty, Rule, New Earth

LORD (all caps): Yahweh, God, Elohim

Lord (not all caps; do not translate as Yahweh, God, Elohim): sovereign, ruler

ALTERNATIVE IMAGES: The First and the Last, Fountain of Life, Friend of the Poor, Giver of Love, High and Holy One, Mighty Redeemer, Ruler of the Universe

BLACKNESS/DARKNESS: gloom, shadow

WHITENESS: brightness, light

6. References to Jesus of Nazareth should remain gender-specific, given that Jesus was a male human being. However, in speaking of the incarnation of God or Jesus the Christ without specific reference to the earthly life of Jesus, one should use inclusive language to avoid suggesting that God's act of salvation was dependent on the gender of the historical Jesus. In these cases, male pronouns should be avoided, and the name Jesus or an inclusive title like Christ, Savior, or Lamb of God should be used. Discretion and common sense are advised in this ambiguous area. In addition, one of the following alternatives or other inclusive changes should be made in the following exclusive titles:

SON OF MAN: Child of Humanity, Human One

SON OF GOD: Child of God

LORD: rabbi, teacher, sovereign

7. Making scriptural and other readings inclusive may present special problems. The guidelines are as follows:
 - Make every effort to select readings that are already inclusive. Verses may be omitted if desired.
 - If it is necessary to choose a text that is not inclusive, include a note in the bulletin offering an inclusive substitution.
 - Many existing texts defy revision because of their inherent exclusiveness. If it is impossible to make a revision that remains faithful to the author's intent, such work should be avoided. However, readings that are not inclusive but that have a particular historical or classical value should be used without revisions.
 - The terms "Hebrew Bible" or "First Covenant" should be used rather than "Old Testament" to refer to the first section of our scriptures. The intention is to convey respect and connectedness and to avoid communicating an attitude of superiority or replacement.
8. Language or symbols denigrating other faiths and religious traditions must be avoided.