



WELCOMING ALL GOD'S PEOPLE A SIMPLE GUIDE

As disciples of Christ we should celebrate the diversity found in the human family. We acknowledge the universal bond that human beings are all made in the image of God, equal in dignity, sharing a common humanity in which God shows no partiality or favouritism. This is the foundation for our pursuit of human flourishing for all, and our relationship with our neighbours.

(Affirming our Common Humanity 2011)

A PRAYER

*Heavenly Father,
you have welcomed us into your kingdom
and your heart's desire is to draw every human
being to yourself.*

*Help us to know people as you know them,
sensitive feet to stand in their shoes, and warm
smiles to welcome them in your name.*

*Give us such generous hearts, that our church
becomes a foretaste of heaven where every
soul you send us finds their loving home in the
community of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

*(adapted Course Prayer from Everybody
Welcome Course)*



The **Methodist** Church 



DIOCESE OF TRURO

DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

GOD'S PEOPLE

We are all God's people. Each one of us is made in the image of God. As Christians we believe God is the creator of all humanity.

Jesus showed us how as his disciples we should be welcoming of all, whatever their origin, situation and condition. We should discriminate against none. Jesus spent time with all kinds of people and welcomed them as children of God.

Jesus Demonstrated By His Words

Jesus said:

'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself'
(John 12:32)

Jesus Demonstrated By His Actions

The miracles of Jesus were performed so that the person could be restored to take a full part in their community.

We think of the man healed at the pool of Bethesda, the cleansing of the leper, the demoniac man.

'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you'
(Luke 8:39)

He proclaimed his message to all who would hear it. We remember his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. She says, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?'



ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS

The early church proclaimed it

'But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God' (John 1: 12)

'There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female: you are all one person in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28)

Christians now affirm it

“ Every child, every person needs to know that they are a source of joy; every child, every person, needs to be celebrated. Only when all of our weaknesses are accepted as part of our humanity can our negative, broken self-images be transformed. ”
(Jean Vanier, Becoming Human)

“ When we love and respect people, revealing to them their value, they can begin to come out from behind the walls that protect them. ”
(Jean Vanier, Finding Peace)

*Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.
(Marty Heugen)*



A LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

We seek to ensure that all are included and welcomed not only because we are disciples of Christ, but also because as citizens, we seek to abide by the legislative requirements of our country. All people must be treated fairly and equally.

Equality and Diversity legislation culminated in the Equality Act of 2010. This Act sought to remove discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion, directly or indirectly, by identifying nine 'protected characteristics'

Race: includes colour, nationality and ethnic origin.

Religion: religious or philosophical belief or a lack of such belief.

Disability: physical or mental impairment, long-term illness and mental health problems.

Age: refers to a particular age group. The young as well as the old can experience discrimination depending on the context.

Sex (Gender): both males and females protected.

Sexual orientation: a person's attraction towards their own gender, the opposite gender or both genders.

Gender reassignment: process or completion of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: marriage of same or opposite sex couples, civil partnerships of same sex couples.

Pregnancy and Maternity: extends to women who are pregnant, are in the period of maternity leave after giving birth or are breast-feeding.

Sadly we acknowledge that prejudices do exist in our communities. As we follow Christ's command to 'Love one another as I have loved you', we have the great opportunity to take a lead in being fully inclusive and welcoming, working to eliminate discrimination and to change attitudes.

WELCOMING GOD'S PEOPLE: ACTION IDEAS

Suggestions for us as disciples and members of our worshipping communities

1. **Pray:** for a new awareness of others, of the situations and conditions that may disadvantage them and make it difficult for them to engage fully in church life. Be ready to listen not assume.
2. **Think:** about our buildings and equipment. Has your church or chapel undertaken an accessibility audit? Would changes in layout and facilities enable better accessibility e.g. provision of large-print order of services for those with sight impairments, space for wheelchairs and pushchairs to be parked, area where small children can play and mothers can feed their children?
3. **Consider:** Are we willing to support new forms of service which may not particularly attract us but may be helpful to others? Are we prepared to change and experiment?
4. **Explore:** In a spirit of Christian love and commitment, are we willing to talk with and seek to understand those whose gender and sexuality we find difficult to comprehend? We must be ready to emphasize acceptance of the person as an individual, and have a determination to ensure inclusion.
5. **Reflect:** What might be the barriers to church attendance for some? It may be a physical impairment, but it might it be a fear of being judged, condemned, ignored.
6. **Remember:** all of us can find ourselves in situations where we are vulnerable and need support, where we find ourselves in one or more of the 'protected characteristics' groups. Let's build up trusting relationships where we can both give and experience support.
7. **Set up a discussion session:** assess your church community's attitudes towards the 'protected characteristics' and produce an action plan to ensure greater equality and opportunity.



RESOURCES TO HELP

National Organisations:

Equality & Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Inclusive Church: www.inclusive-church.org.uk

Churches for All: www.churchesforall.org.uk

There are a number of national and local organisations who offer support and advice on each of the nine 'protected characteristics'. Unfortunately it is not possible to list them all here.

Also there for advice:

The Church Buildings Survey Toolkit

Designed to help church leaders discuss their church buildings creatively and openly in the light of the challenges of making the building an effective place for worship and mission in the 21st Century, whilst having regard of the need to maintain and repair the often historic fabric of the building. Available on Diocese of Truro website.

The Equality & Diversity Committee

An ecumenical group of Anglicans and Methodists from across Cornwall with a passion to promote inclusion within our churches and chapels. Contact via Church House: 01872 274351

**To view this leaflet as large print go to:
www.trurodiocese.org.uk,
Equality and Diversity section.**

*'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it'
(1 Cor 12:27)*

*'Brother, sister let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too'*