

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST WESTBOURNE AND WOODMANCOTE MISSION CHURCH

EQUALITIES POLICY STATEMENT

1 Introduction and Statement of Intent

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St John the Baptist, Westbourne, believes that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God. In his ministry, Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people, including those who were marginalised in his day.

This parish affirms its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. It intends in spirit and in deed to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.

We will nurture inclusive communities where all are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

We will value the distinctive contribution of diverse cultures in our society generally, and in our worshipping community in particular.

We are committed to social justice and will resolutely oppose discrimination within our church and in wider society.

2 Discrimination

We recognise that discrimination can occur on many grounds including (but not limited to) those recognised in law i.e. age, gender, gender reassignment, economic circumstances, skin colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, child or domestic care arrangements, pregnancy and maternity arrangements, marital or civil partnership status.

We recognise that discrimination can be either:

- Direct discrimination - where a person is treated less favourably for a reason unconnected with their ability
- Indirect discrimination - when a condition, rule, policy or practice applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular group of people. Indirect discrimination is unlawful whether or not it is intentional.
- Perceptive - where discrimination occurs against someone because the discriminator thinks the person is of a particular racial group or sexual orientation etc, even if they are not.
- Associative - This type of discrimination can occur against someone because they have an association with someone who is of a particular sexual orientation or racial group etc.

We recognise that promoting equality of opportunity is not simply a matter of treating everyone the same. In some cases more favourable treatment for an under-represented group might be necessary in order to redress an inequality of opportunity.

3 Equal opportunities in Parish life

We will promote respect for other people and we will seek to treat everyone fairly.

We will encourage the use of inclusive language and images in our conversations, worship, literature and publicity. This encouragement will, however, be kept in balance with the aesthetic and traditional elements of worship, during which more ancient forms of language are used (including, especially, the use of the Book of Common Prayer). Wherever practical, the historical use of such language forms will be placed in context (for example, explaining that the terms 'Men' or 'Mankind' were traditionally and historically used to refer to all 'humankind').

We will challenge any discriminatory attitudes and actions of members of our congregation or user groups and take steps to bring them to an end.

We will seek to address the inequalities of opportunity faced by people in under-represented groups. We will seek to identify and remove barriers to participation in all aspects of parish life, including employment (both paid and voluntary roles), training, promotion, leadership and representation on parish committees.

We will seek to challenge all forms of harassment, bullying or victimisation within the parish and take steps to bring it to an end. Harassment consists of words or actions which are unwelcome, unwanted and offensive to the person receiving them and which create an atmosphere of intimidation, hostility or humiliation for that person. Such behaviour can include embarrassing or offensive jokes, unwelcome physical contact or sexual advances, the expression of racist or homophobic views, lewd comments etc.

We will seek to ensure that this policy is known by the congregation and that staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities for implementing this policy. To this end, we will regularly offer education and training in the principles and practice of this equalities policy.

3.1 Equal opportunities in provision of services

In this context, 'services' does not refer simply to acts of worship, but to the whole range of services a church might offer, including: children's activities; toddler groups; cafes, lunch clubs, or coffee mornings; other events; etc.

We are committed to providing services on a fair and equitable basis, regardless of: age, gender, gender reassignment, economic status, skin colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, child or domestic care arrangements, pregnancy and maternity arrangements, marital or civil partnership status. We intend that no person requiring services from this church will be treated less favourably than any other person on any grounds – except that United Kingdom law currently prevents us from offering either marriage or blessings to same-sex couples.

We will seek to take reasonable steps to alter or remove features of our premises that make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with a disability to make use of the facilities that the Church provides.

3.2 Equal opportunities in recruitment of paid staff and volunteers

In employment (includes volunteers) this PCC actively seeks to recruit the right mix of talent, skills and potential, promoting equality for all, and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications, experience and commitment to our values and purposes.

As an organisation seeking to deliver services within a Christian context, some posts can be filled only by Christians. The nature of these posts or the context in which they are carried out, and their link to the ethos of the organisation, give rise to a 'protected characteristic' (or 'genuine occupational requirement') for the post-holders to be Christians. Relevant responsibilities include: senior leadership or management of a Christian organisation; teaching or promoting the Christian faith; evangelism; leading or participating in worship, prayer or bible-study. All staff in these posts may be required to demonstrate a clear personal

commitment to the Christian faith. (This policy is in accordance with Employment and Race Directives issued by the government and ACAS guidance.)

3.3 Equal opportunities in assessing information about criminal records

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, this Parish undertakes to comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice and to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of disclosure based on conviction or other information revealed.

A Disclosure is only requested after a risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a Disclosure is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a Disclosure will be requested in the event of the individual being offered a position.

Where a Disclosure is to form part of a recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of any criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover to the recruiter within the organisation and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of a recruitment process.

Unless the nature of the position allows representatives of the PCC to ask questions about your entire criminal record, we only ask about "unspent" convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and in accordance with The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2013.

At interview, or in separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment or voluntary work, or later dismissal from the post.

We make every subject of a DBS Disclosure aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.

We undertake, either by someone within the local church or with the Synod Safeguarding Officer, to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the person seeking a position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an applicant from working with us. It will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences with due consideration given to our responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable people.

3.4 Monitoring of equal opportunities within the church

The Standing Committee will monitor the implementation of this policy. The PCC will review & evaluate the policy on an annual basis.

VERSION	DATE	DETAILS	BY
Draft	14.03.23	New document.	Stewart Taylor
1	14.03.23	Approved	PCC 22.03.23