

B. POLICIES & GUIDELINES

1. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Because we are called to be one with God and each other in a Christian community, it is appropriate to use language which clearly demonstrates that we intend to be an inclusive community of faith. Words are powerful and both reflect and influence reality and our perception of reality. We encourage presbytery leaders to be cognizant of the power of language and sensitive as to all people as they plan and lead presbytery functions and worship services. Our intended use of inclusive language will focus attention on the following areas of concern:

Language About God

God is ultimately indescribable. All words about God are symbols pointing to part of the totality of God's nature. Traditionally, God has been described with predominantly male images. However, since God is spirit and, therefore, neither male nor female, we will, wherever possible, avoid describing God with images that are exclusively either male or female. We will use a variety of metaphors and similes for God. We will use terms that expand rather than limit the experience of God's action in our lives.

Language About Persons - The People of God

While terms such as "man" and "mankind" were once understood and accepted generically as well as with reference to human males, increasingly this is not the case. Underlying the accustomed use of male language in a generic sense was the assumption (conscious or unconscious) that males were more representative of humankind than females; indeed, that females were subordinate or inferior. It is imperative that we do not perpetuate such concepts by continuing to use sexually exclusive language even among those who still "hear" it generically. For generic terms such as man, brotherhood, mankind, etc., we will substitute such terms as humanity, humankind, human beings, persons, people, folk, everyone, family, and/or children. Additionally, we will avoid the use of masculine pronouns when referring to men and women together.

The Use of Scripture

Scripture, in the original Hebrew and Greek, is more inclusive than most English translations. Therefore, when we read the words and the intention is not exclusive, we will read it inclusively. When preparing for scripture to be read in unison, it is appropriate to rephrase and reprint the passage to eliminate exclusive language.

Use of Hymns and Worship Resources

For the worship services of this presbytery and its committees, we will choose hymns and other aids that do not contain gender exclusive images. We encourage the writing and use of new hymns that reflect the sensitivity of our times.

Printed Communication and Common Language

In all our verbal communication, we will be sensitive to and aware of the need to use inclusive language in all of our meetings, including the stated meetings of the presbytery. All printed material that is by the presbytery for its work shall use inclusive language. The use of inclusive language in other materials is strongly encouraged.

Adopted May 9, 2000, updated May, 2003