

River of Life MCC Resources

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Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ: What is Inclusivity?

Inclusivity for me is adding to the understanding of God. At MCC we try to use language that does not oppress or limit anyone or anything. This means that occasionally we may use the word father for God, but then we would balance it with the word mother. Or we may use the term male and balance it with female relating to humanity – or we may use non-gender terms. Our language unwittingly can exclude people from worship or even oppress, so our aim is to open up worship in order that everyone can relate to God and each other in new, exciting and wonderful ways.

Catherine

St Paul said in Romans “Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God”. We are part of that creation and, by our words and actions, must try to reflect this love of God for all, by acceptance of others and by the exclusion of no-one. In this we must be pro-active and our worship, for example, must never be off-putting to others for want of care on our part.

Brian

Inclusivity – in terms of ministry – can be defined as a practice of inclusion, or inclusive behaviour – in language, thought, practice and ethics. Seeking to ensure that we do not exclude anyone by our thought, words, actions, beliefs, practices, ethics or teachings. For example – the use of non gender specific language, the practice of *not* using sexist language – both in relation to each other and to God. To refer to God as ‘father’ or indeed ‘mother’ can – by association - be exclusive to people who have a less than productive/healthy or indeed abusive relationship with their parent(s). Using terms such as ‘white as snow’ can be exclusive to black or non white cultures. Having steps at the front of a church building is exclusive to wheelchair users and people who are less able to negotiate them than we might be. Male terms such as ‘master’ instead of ‘original’ and ‘mankind’ instead of ‘humankind’ can be exclusive to women and indeed indicate a male dominance. Although as a culture we are used to hearing such terms of male language in reference to everyday things the time has come for ‘usual’ practice to reflect balance in gender, in culture and in all areas of life. In order to bring balance we should think ‘inclusively’ as a general practice and be certain that our personal behaviour and actions do not exclude people or make them feel ‘less’ valued than they should.

Karen