

Kirkcaldy Congregational Church

Policy & Guidance

1. Equalities
2. Disabilities

1. Equalities

The constitution of Kirkcaldy Congregational Church states:

The Church is a community of faith which seeks to live in the image of God, revealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit. We affirm that every person bears the image of God and has worth. The Church is an inclusive community, welcoming all people into all aspects of the Church's life, regardless of ability, age, gender, race or sexual orientation. We affirm that the Church is called to be an agency of reconciliation, standing against all forms of discrimination, promoting inclusiveness and actively pursuing justice and peace.

This church affirms its commitment to show openness to all people in today's world, believing that this reflects the ministry of Christ, who showed Divine love to all people in his day, including those marginalised at that time.

The Church, in spirit and in deed, will seek 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 will be 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.

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, 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.

Equal opportunities in church life

- We will promote respect for other people and we will treat everyone fairly.
- We will encourage the use of inclusive language and images in our conversations, worship, literature and publicity.
- We will challenge any discriminatory attitudes and actions of members of our congregation 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 identify and remove barriers to participation in all aspects of church life, including employment (both paid and voluntary roles), training, promotion, leadership and representation on church committees.
- We will challenge all forms of harassment, bullying or victimisation within the church 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.
- We will ensure that this policy is known by the congregation and that staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities for implementing this policy. Where possible, we will offer education and training in the principles and practice of this equalities policy.

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, coffee mornings and other such activities.

- We are committed to providing services on a fair and equitable basis, regardless of age, gender, gender reassignment, 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. No person requiring services from this church will be treated less favourably than any other person on any grounds.

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

Equal opportunities in recruitment of paid staff and volunteers

In employment, this church actively seeks to recruit those with talent, skills and potential, promoting equality for all, and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates. We select 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 only be filled 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. Staff in these posts may be required to demonstrate a personal commitment to the Christian faith.

Equal opportunities in assessing information about criminal records

As an organisation using the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG) to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, this church undertakes to comply fully with the PVG Codes of Practice and to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

A Disclosure is only requested when 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 the position.

Where a Disclosure is required for the post being recruited, 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 the recruitment process.

At interview, or in separate discussion, we will 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.

Any conviction or other information revealed on the Disclosure will be risk assessed by the Safeguarding Coordinator, in conjunction with the Minister and Church Secretary.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a disclosure with the person seeking a position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment. Please note that having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. It will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offence/s, with due consideration given to our responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable people.

Monitoring of equal opportunities within the church

The leadership team of the church will monitor the implementation of this policy. It will be displayed in the church building and on the church website, together with a notice advising people of the contact names and addresses of the people to whom they should make any complaints, or give compliments.

2. Working with those with disabilities: communication and etiquette

Language

Appropriate use of language is less to do with ‘political correctness’ but more to do with challenging negative stereotypes and incorrect assumptions about people with disabilities. Often people with disabilities have identified a vocabulary that they feel comfortable with and efforts should be made to accommodate this. People should take care not to address a companion or carer as a conversational go-between or talk in childish language.

Listed below are words and phrases that are not helpful with acceptable alternatives:

Unhelpful words / phrases	Helpful words / phrases
Physically challenged, differently abled, cripple, invalid, handicapped. Handicapped has its origins in ‘cap in hand’, with implications of charity and begging. Invalid can be interpreted as ‘not-valid’.	A person with disability
Mentally retarded, mentally handicapped, intellectually challenged.	A person with a learning disability
Deaf aid	Hearing aid
Deaf and dumb	Profoundly deaf, without speech
Disabled toilet	Accessible toilet, wheelchair-accessible toilet
Victim of disability or ‘the disabled’- this is impersonal and implies a group separate from the rest of society.	A person with disability
Suffering from, afflicted by.	A person with...
An arthritic, spastic or epileptic.	A person with arthritis, a person who has cerebral palsy or epilepsy
Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair	Wheelchair user

The church will challenge the use of insensitive language, and seek to learn as language changes and adapts to reflect the ways in which people with different disabilities wish to engage or be addressed. Within the church and its activities we will encourage better understanding. The following information seeks to support this.

Visual impairment

Below are some guidelines that will help someone with a visual impairment to feel welcome and included:

- Identify yourself by name when you meet someone with a visual impairment.
- Reserve seats as near to or at the front of any gathering, so the partially sighted person has the option to sit closer to what's going on. Offer to assist someone who is blind to find his or her way around. Don't push – always allow them to take your arm and, if necessary, provide space for a guide dog to lie down.
- As far as possible, make sure that all corridors, approaches and circulating areas are free from obstructions.
- Ensure large print paper versions are available for songs and other written material.
- All print for partially sighted people should be in typefaces such as Arial, Univers and New Century Schoolbook. These are all good examples of clear and legible typefaces. No single size is suitable for everyone, but most people prefer their large print in the range of 16 to 22 point, but this may need to be checked with the person using the material. Printing should be on contrasting colour paper (black on white, or black on pale yellow is best) and on matt (nonglossy) paper. This also helps people with dyslexia. Don't use pale coloured type on dark colours or print over photographs.
- For safety reasons, good lighting is essential for partially sighted people (Deaf people benefit too, as lip-reading is only possible in good lighting).
- Use colour contrast as much as possible to designate entrances/exits.

Hearing impairments

Below are guidelines that will help those with a hearing impairment feel welcome and included:

- Always address the deaf or hard of hearing person direct, not the person who may have accompanied them.
- Make sure that your face and mouth can be seen clearly. Look directly at the person and speak at a normal speed and volume with clear lip patterns. Avoid exaggerated lip patterns that are harder to read. Keep your hands away from

your face and remember eating whilst talking hinders effective lip reading. Don't speak directly into the person's ear.

- A hearing induction loop should be provided for talks, entertainment, etc, whether you are aware of people using hearing aids or not. It is not always obvious someone has a hearing aid and most people do not like to draw attention to the fact.
- Be aware that background noise can make life very difficult for people who use a hearing aid because it often distorts the sounds they are trying to hear.
- Be prepared to write things down if necessary, particularly if communication is difficult. The important thing is not to give up.
- The international symbol should be shown on literature, advertisements and notice boards to indicate facilities are provided for the hard-of-hearing.

Speech impairment

- Never finish a sentence or word for a person with speech impairment. It is also important not to get agitated or become impatient when you are waiting for words to be said. In this situation retain your interest in the person, perhaps by nodding affirmingly and/or retaining eye contact.

Impaired mobility

- Reserve seating that is the most accessible and minimises walking, but remember that it is up to the person to decide where they want to sit. Always enquire if they would like assistance before you help.
- Wheelchair Users: All internal and external access needs to be level or ramped.
- Don't designate one area for wheelchair users - this unnecessarily draws attention to their disability.
- Make sure that at least one seat is alongside each wheelchair position for a friend to be able to sit with a wheelchair user.
- When talking to a wheelchair user, it is polite to sit down so that you are on the same level, making eye contact easier.
- Remember that a wheelchair is part of the user's personal space, so don't lean on it, hold it or attempt to move it/push it unless asked.

Learning disabilities

Adults and children with learning disabilities often experience difficulties dealing with life issues and/or adjusting to new situations. The term 'learning disability' is often used in a general way that, because of people's preconceptions, isn't always helpful. For example, it can include people with conditions like Dyslexia or Asperger's syndrome, where intellectual capacity is unhindered or maybe exceeds the general average, but may affect social skills and the ability to communicate effectively.

Equally none of these ‘givens’ may apply, which underlines the importance of not making assumptions about people that are known to have a learning disability and not treating them in a childish or patronising way. Below are some guidelines that will help those in this situation feel understood, valued and supported:

- adults with learning disabilities may have limited or no reading ability so where possible, signpost facilities and directions (e.g. fire exit) using images as well as words
- read out written material and, if applicable, include songs with repetitive or uncomplicated words
- offer assistance if people are experiencing difficulties understanding or need help with certain instructions. Keep all communication of information in ‘bite-size chunks’, taking extra time if necessary to explain. Make explanations clear, concise and uncomplicated
- be patient if individuals are noisy or move about when it seems inappropriate and/or don’t immediately pick up on the ‘norms’ of how things are done within the church

Adoption

Church Secretary:	David Fairgrieve
Signed:	
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