c/o Knutsford Methodist Church
Princess Street, Knutsford
Cheshire, WA16 6BY

Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion Policy

Introduction

The Methodist Church's Strategy for Justice, Dignity, and Solidarity report to the Conference 2021 commits the whole Connexion to becoming a fully inclusive Church. Alderley Edge & Knutsford Methodist Circuit embraces this commitment, and seeks to embed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of its life, witness, and governance.

We affirm:

- The rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church as a gift from God, and a source of thanksgiving and praise.
- The responsibility to eradicate discrimination, coercive control, and all behaviours that undermine dignity.
- The call to ensure that every person is treated justly, respectfully, and with compassion.

This Policy sets out how the Circuit will promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster an environment where all can flourish.

The Circuit adheres to the Equality Act 2010, recognising the protected characteristics of sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

We commit to a culture of openness, fairness, and transparency, ensuring that no decision is influenced by irrelevant or discriminatory factors.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Lay Employees
- Ordained Ministers
- Volunteers
- Secondees, Consultants, Suppliers, Contractors, and Agency Workers
- anyone working for, with, or on behalf of the Circuit

All individuals have a duty to uphold this Policy, and contribute to an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. It applies to all employment, training, service delivery, and public-facing activities.

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Aim

The Policy aims to:

- Ensure EDI principles are fully reflected in all employment practices and procedures.
- Maintain compliance with statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- Monitor and review employment policies to ensure alignment with this policy.
- Attract, recruit, and retain a diverse workforce through fair and inclusive recruitment methods.

Genuine Occupational Requirements (GOR)

Where a GOR applies under the Equality Act 2010, the Circuit may lawfully seek candidates with specific protected characteristics. Any GOR must be:

- A proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- Clearly justified and documented.
- Consistent with the Methodist Church's purpose and ethos (e.g., roles requiring Christian faith).

Definitions

The Circuit adopts the Equality Act 2010 definitions of:

- Direct discrimination;
- Discrimination by association;
- Discrimination by perception;
- Indirect discrimination;
- Harassment;
- Victimisation.

These definitions are reproduced in full in the Appendix, and remain binding.

Roles and Responsibilities

Circuit Superintendent / Circuit Stewards / Circuit Manager

- Communicate the Circuit's EDI commitment to all Employees, Ministers, Volunteers, and Service Providers.
- Lead by example, modelling inclusive behaviour and decision-making.
- Create a culture where difference is valued and respected.
- Ensure EDI principles are embedded in governance and operational decisions.

Line Managers / Supervisors

- Foster good relations among Employees, Ministers, and Service Users.

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- Ensure staff attend EDI training periodically.
- Manage recruitment, selection, and promotion processes fairly.
- Identify and address discriminatory practices or behaviours.

all Employees and Ministers

- Integrate EDI principles into daily work and interactions.
- Report inappropriate behaviour or potential breaches of this policy.
- Familiarise themselves with the Policy, and ensure their conduct aligns with it.
- Undertake mandatory EDI training.

Recruitment and Selection

The Circuit is committed to fair, transparent, and inclusive recruitment.
The principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion are embedded within the Church's recruitment and selection procedures, and, therefore, shortlisting, interviewing, and selection will always be carried out without regard to sex, transgender status, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or maternity leave.

Key principles:

- Recruitment panels should include members trained in Recruitment & Selection and Unconscious Bias.
- Panel Members must declare if they know a candidate; close personal or familial relationships require withdrawal.
- All Panel Members must attend every stage of the process to ensure consistency.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure disabled applicants are not disadvantaged.
- Allegations of breaches will be investigated confidentially under the Grievance Procedure.
- False allegations made in bad faith will be addressed under the Disciplinary Procedure.

Consequences of Breaches

- Employees found to have committed discrimination may face disciplinary action, including dismissal for Gross Misconduct.
- Ordained Ministers serving within the Circuit are subject to the **Complaints and Discipline** process (Standing Orders Part 11).

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Review of Policy

This Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with legislation and alignment with evolving organisational needs and Methodist Connexional guidance.

Appendix - Equality Act 2010 definitions

1. Discrimination:

1.1 Direct Discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another, not on the merits of the case but on grounds of a protected characteristic.

1.2 Discrimination by Association occurs where a person is directly discriminated against by association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

1.3 Discrimination by Perception is when a person is directly discriminated against based on a perception that the person has a particular protected characteristic, even if the person does not actually possess that protected characteristic.

1.4 Indirect Discrimination occurs when a provision, practice, or a criterion that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Although equally applicable to all possible applicants, this may nevertheless be discriminatory because:

1.4.1 The number of people of the same personal status who can comply with the requirement is considerably smaller than the number who cannot; and

1.4.2 The requirement cannot be shown to be justifiable.

1.5 Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 that has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Alternatively, the conduct may amount to harassment if it is reasonably considered by the target of the conduct to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for them. This applies even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

1.6 Victimisation occurs when an individual has suffered a detriment because they have done one of the "protected acts" set out below, or it is believed that they have or may have done one of these acts.

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The protected acts, which must not be done in bad faith, are:

- bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010;
- giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Act;
- doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Act; or
- making allegations that another person has contravened the Act.

Approved: *Circuit Meeting, 15th September 2026*

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