

GRACE

GRACE MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH

June 19, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

We are delighted to share **Grace Memorial Episcopal Church's Equity and Inclusion Policy** with you. A team comprised of Vestry members Daniel Jones, Cameron Denney, and Andrew Eshleman drafted this Policy. Your Vestry then unanimously and enthusiastically accepted it on behalf of our parish. Vestry now unanimously and enthusiastically shares this Policy with you.

What is an Equity and Inclusion Policy?

An Equity and Inclusion Policy does no fewer than three things.

First, it *names where a given community is* around questions of racial, economic, gender equality, and so on. And as significantly, it names how we got to where we are. Sometimes you will hear folks say, "I don't want to talk about the past." But if you have, say, gotten lost in the woods, knowing how you got lost is absolutely invaluable data if you hope to get found again. It is neither meaningful nor honest to speak of racial justice in Portland without speaking of redlining and sundown laws. It is neither meaningful nor honest to speak of racial justice within the Episcopal church without speaking of our Diocese's ongoing struggle to attract and retain black clergy.

Second, a Policy such as this one *names where God is calling us to be*. Just about always, there is a discrepancy between the first point – where we are – and the second – where God is calling us to be. In Stephanie Spellers' book, *Radical Welcome*, Spellers interviews a gay couple who attend an Episcopal church. The couple tells her that they feel welcome at their parish. But then they add that they aren't sure how welcome they would be if they *acted gay*. Sometimes – oftentimes – a majority within a community is comfortably unaware of the ways in which they expect minority community members to conform to the majority's cultural expectations.

Third, an Equity and Inclusion Policy, at least in a small way, *begins to effect the transition from where we are to where God is calling us to be*. Now, we want to be careful here: a Policy such as this is in no way a substitute for action. Rather, what we are suggesting is that, as a sacramental people, the symbols we employ shape us and change us. We believe that we, the Grace community, have been changed – and changed for the better – by choosing a statement of welcome which insists that *we welcome persons of every race, language, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, national origin, immigration status, and economic level*. We believe that this Equity and Inclusion Policy will change us for the better further still.

A parish for all people in the heart of the city.

For many years, we at Grace have proudly claimed these words as a key part of being the Body of Christ in North East Portland. At the beginning of this year, your Vestry discerned that embodying this mandate still more deeply was one of our most urgent priorities.

As a consequence, this spring the team named above developed our new Policy. We believe that the statement embodies Grace's values, vision, and calling as followers of Jesus.

When your Vestry adopted this Policy on behalf of our parish, we dreamed of having a ceremony and a celebration; we dreamed of meeting face-to-face, reading this statement together, and affirming our holy commitment to equity and inclusion. We did not guess just how timely and necessary this Equity and Inclusion Policy would come to be for us.

And now, we are proud to share Grace's Equity and Inclusion Policy with you.

We ask you to read and re-read this Policy. We invite you to wrestle with it. We invite you to pray with it. If there are parts of this statement that leave you with big feelings – joy, confusion, trepidation, and so on – we invite you to pay attention to those feelings.

There is more equity and inclusion work to come for us a parish, more anti-racism work to come for us. Please let your Vestry know how you would like to become involved or more involved in this work. Our plan is to (i) host anti-racism trainings facilitated by professionals; (ii) hold ongoing holy and vulnerable conversations about this work; and (iii) form a team to carry out action in furtherance of our Policy.

We are continuing a journey toward becoming not just a “not racist” (or “not homophobic” or “not-misogynistic,” the list goes on) church, but rather an actively and deliberately anti-racist church.

In the words of poet Andrea Gibson, we seek “to build a day where grief need not be the midwife who pulls truth into the light.” A day where there are no more brutal, extrajudicial killings of African Americans, a day where news of widespread peaceful protest is bigger news than isolated riots, a day on which our transgender neighbors need not live with their very humanity under question. As the prophet Amos – and later Dr. King – famously said, that will be a day on which we will see justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

We invite you to come with us on this journey.

Yours in the Love of Christ,



Martin Elfert



Jeanne Kaliszewski

on behalf of your Vestry:

Co-Senior Warden (Vestry Chair): Robin Gault; Co-Senior Warden (Rector's Advisor): Louise Tippens;
Junior Warden: David Waldow; Clerk: Alicia Lehrle; Treasurer: Curt Germundson;
Roosevelt Carter; Cameron Denney; Andrew Eshleman; Daniel Jones;
Charles A. McGee II; Holly Puckett; Katy Unbehaun; and Kevin Walsh

Grace Memorial Episcopal Church

Equity and Inclusion Policy

Grace Memorial Episcopal Church is *a parish for all people in the heart of the city.*

We name that we live in a city, state, and country that has preferred to make the American Dream available to white people, particularly white men, while impeding the progress of others towards the same goal.

We name that we serve a church that has, for most of its history, denied, mocked, and vilified the ministries of women, queer folk, the physically and mentally atypical, and other American ethnic groups.

We name that, to this day, we are part of a Diocese that struggles to attract black clergy and in which black clergy disproportionately exit their calls amidst hurt and accusation.

Our concern for equity entails a commitment to addressing these and other obstacles faced by those who have been marginalized in our society and who thereby have been denied fair and equal opportunities.

Our concern for inclusion entails that those we welcome into the Grace community are encouraged and feel empowered to fully participate in our shared life (e.g., in its ministries and leadership).

As followers of Jesus Christ, the One who sees the image of God in all people, and who insists on the dignity and belovedness of all, we name that we are called to be better and do better.

As a parish for all people in the heart of the city, we affirm and insist:

- The ministries of this Parish, as performed by clergy, staff, volunteers, and contractors, embrace all people irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities, or cultural identity and class;
- That we are decidedly anti-racist, which is essential to being effective at equity and inclusion in the cultivation of the whole person of faith. We acknowledge that long-term consequences of structural racism exist;
- That what we call the Gospel is known by many names and is lived into by many people, including those for whom the practice of Christianity is unfamiliar, incoherent, or corrosive. We partner, therefore, with organizations and communities that invite love and dignity deeper into a hurting world, and not necessarily those who pronounce a religious doctrine;
- That we will be a good and just employer, asking not “what is the least we can pay?” but rather “what is the best that we can afford?” Our employees and contractors will receive a living wage, and we will pay musicians;
- That the contractors with whom we partner will have policies that encourage women and minority-owned businesses to apply during the bidding process and hiring opportunities. They will provide transparency around those efforts.

As *a parish for all people in the heart of the city*, Grace Memorial Episcopal Church is diligent in its efforts to address the importance of having an equitable and inclusive community.