

Knox College – Policies & Procedures

Policy: **Inclusive Language Use**

Applies to: BD students, AD students

Approval & Responsible Individual: Faculty

Reference information:

Policy

It is the policy of Knox College that inclusive language is to be used in public worship, class presentations, written assignments, and official communications. This means that:

1. When referring to human beings in general, gender exclusive terms should be avoided or, in the case of pronouns, the sentence re-written so that gender-exclusive pronouns become unnecessary.
2. Images of and metaphors for God should reflect the variety found in Scripture (See examples below from the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada).
3. A diminished use of masculine pronouns with reference to God, where grammatically feasible, in order to refrain from encouraging a false male image of God.”
4. Where the integrity of an historical text requires that exclusive language be retained, commentary on those texts should use inclusive terminology.
5. Any language which demeans or stereotypes others because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, mental and physical characteristics, or age is unacceptable.

The Knox College Inclusive language policy is based in statements accepted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Two important statements can be referenced. First, at the 114th General Assembly a report of the Church Doctrine Committee with recommendations were accepted in 1988. Please see the Acts and Proceedings of the 114th General Assembly pages 256-261. Secondly, in 1989 the General Assembly passed a Vision Statement for the Presbyterian Church in Canada which includes the paragraph cited below. You can find the full Vision Statement on the Presbyterian Church in Canada website.

The Vision Statement of the Presbyterian Church in Canada Adopted in 1989, affirms:

“5. We will be a loving, inclusive community – truly God’s family. We will not simply be a club for "nice" people. The use of the word inclusive opens up the Church to take seriously the presence and needs of people of all ages, and of many different cultural backgrounds other than the Scots-

Irish out of which this Church sprang in past centuries. We will take seriously the special needs of disadvantaged people, and we will be intentional about seeing that those needs are met. We will use inclusive language as we learn to be inclusive. Our congregations will be a family for those who have no other family and an extended family for those who do. We will be a people who practice love, as we have met and experienced it in Jesus Christ.”

In the 1988 Assembly the following motion was passed:

“That those using maternal or other female imagery with reference to God in worship exercise caution to preserve the concept of monotheism and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and to avoid confusion with so-called “nature religions”. But we urge the Church to continue its exploration of new forms of worship which better reflect the richness of the biblical approach. Specifically:

1. The use of a wider spectrum of images, both personal and non-personal in prayer, consistent with biblical usage. E.g. God could be addressed as “O God, who gave birth to your people Israel,” or “O God who cares for us as a comforting mother cares for her children,” or “O God, steadfast as a rock.”
2. An increased use of non-gender-specific biblical images in the language of worship, e.g. referring to God as Guide, Judge, Healer, Advocate, Friend, Saviour as well as Father, King, Lord.
3. A diminished use of masculine pronouns with reference to God, where grammatically feasible, in order to refrain from encouraging a false male image of God.”

Please find the link below to a resource developed by the Presbyterian Church USA, that provides some helpful examples of inclusive language usage:

<http://www.pcusa.org/womensministries/history-theology/well-chosen.htm>