

Parishes of the Meon Bridge Benefice Equality Policy Statement

<http://www.bridgechurches.org.uk>

The Parishes of The Meon Bridge Benefice (Corhampton and St Andrew, Meonstoke, St Mary and All Saints, Droxford, and St Peter and St Paul, Exton) ['The Benefice'] are committed to promoting the understanding of the principles and practices of equality – treating each person as an individual, according to their needs, with an awareness of our diverse society and appreciating the value of difference. The Benefice recognises Access* as an important part of its work and a key element in the Equality Policy (hereafter 'Policy'). The Benefice is committed to providing Access in accordance with the Policy using all reasonable means at its disposal.

The Benefice and its constituent parishes and groups fully recognise and accept their collective and individual responsibilities to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of a person's physical appearance, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity (see Part 2).

All individuals will be treated fairly and equally, and all relevant legislation will be complied with in the undertakings of The Parishes of The Meon Bridge Benefice, and in arrangements for access to facilities and information.

In pursuance of this policy, the Benefice will monitor the effectiveness of the policy as part of its regular evaluation of its policies. Where needs are identified, appropriate action will be taken.

The process for ensuring the Benefice maintains effective deployment of their Policy lies with individual Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), the processes of each will be reviewed annually or more frequently as appropriate.

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or suffered harassment because of your gender, marital status, race, religion, colour, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, you should report this without fail, via the Rector to the Designated Equality representative for the Benefice.

Any such complaints will be fully investigated as speedily as possible, and you will be kept advised of action taken.

The Parishes of The Meon Bridge Benefice will ensure that:

- All members of each PCC are made aware of the necessity of the effective deployment of an Equality Policy;
- Recruitment and selection methods for staff and volunteers are free from bias and applied fairly;
- Any complaints of discrimination are dealt with speedily and fairly; and,
- Confidentiality of information is maintained at all times.

The Parishes of The Meon Bridge Benefice will also:

- Seek to meet the needs of all individuals as far as practically possible.
- Provide suitable interpretation services where appropriate.
- Ensure that buildings are accessible to all wherever and as far as possible.

*Access in this context is defined as, but not limited to, physical, spiritual and intellectual access

Day-to-day responsibility for seeing that this policy is put into practice is delegated to _____ for the whole Benefice.

Overall and final responsibility for Equal Opportunities is that of the Rector and the Parochial Church Councils of the Parishes of The Meon Bridge Benefice.

Part 2 – Policy Document

Introduction

Every person has been made in the image of God and is loved unconditionally by God. Everyone is equal and we treat each other with dignity and respect. Our churches are places where everyone should be able to flourish in a loving and hospitable community. Each person, uniquely different, should be able to thrive, irrespective of physical appearance, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Bridge Benefice is committed to promoting the understanding of the principles and practices of equality – treating each person as an individual, according to their needs, with an awareness of our diverse society and appreciating the value of difference. We actively seek to challenge discrimination and we promote an anti-bullying stance which makes clear the unacceptability of racist, disablist and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and language.

1. Legal framework

We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in relation to age (as appropriate), disability, gender identity, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

2. Guiding principles

Our approach to equality is based on Gospel values and the teaching that everyone is uniquely known and loved by God, who created everyone in his image.

St Paul also informs us that we are uniquely and differently gifted and yet each one of us has an integral and equally valuable part to play.

The idea that human beings should have a set of basic rights and freedoms has deep roots in Britain. Various national and international milestones have shaped the concept of human rights in Britain for over the 800 years.

The Equality Act (2010) provides the legislation covering this policy. It brought together more than 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single act - a new, streamlined legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

(<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/equality-act-2010>).

Our approach also follows the Diocesan guidance on disability and accessibility (<https://www.portsmouth.anglican.org/social-justice>)

3. Links to other policies and documentation

We shall ensure that the principles listed above apply to all of our policies and practices including those that are concerned with:

- Nurturing and Discipleship
- The spiritual and personal development, and wellbeing of congregations and visitors, and, as far as we can, our communities
- Preaching and teaching styles and strategies
- Volunteer and staff recruitment, retention and development
- Pastoral care, guidance and support
- Working in partnership with schools and other partners
- Working with the wider community

We also ensure that information about our responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) are included in our mission plans, our web site and all other forms of communication.

4. Our actions

To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

We meet our legal duty and live out our guiding principles listed above by opposing prejudice and bullying, taking account of equality with regards to the way the churches provide facilities and services, actively promoting Equality and creating an environment of dignity and respect.

To advance equality of opportunity between different groups

We meet our legal duty and live out our guiding principles listed above by being alert to the potential impact of any negative, prejudicial language or behaviour on particular individuals and groups.

To foster good relations

We meet our legal duty and live out our guiding principles listed above by teaching and modelling how to live well together, and to respect diversity and equality, challenge discrimination and prejudice and listen to and treat others with dignity and respect.

Other ways we address equality issues

We will maintain records of training relating to equalities and inclusion and each time we review our policies, we shall do so in relation to equalities.

5. Disseminating the policy

We ensure that this policy is known to all those connected with church in whatever. This policy is available in full on the website and to any person who requests it. The Policy Statement above will be displayed at each church of the Benefice.

6. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of each member of the church community, including ministers, wardens and members of the PCCs and of visitors to uphold the principles and actions of this policy are under development in consultation with our many stakeholders.

7. Breaches of the policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with Church of England procedures and regulations or as a pastoral or teaching issue, as determined by the Incumbent in consultation with the PCC and, if the matter is potentially more serious, with the Archdeacon.

SIGNED AND AGREED:

Incumbent:	_____	The Rev'd A W Forrest
Churchwarden/s:	_____	Corhampton and Meonstoke
	Mrs A Peagram	

	Mrs S Matthissen	Dr G Edmunds
	_____	Droxford
	Mr R Pepys	_____
	_____	Exton
Equality Representative(s):	_____	_____
Approved:	3 December 2019 (C&M)	Review Date: By 2 December 2020
	3 December 2019 (Droxford)	Review Date: By 2 December 2020
	3 December 2019 (Exton)	Review Date: By 2 December 2020