

# 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