

ADELAIDE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY INC

Guidelines for Inclusive Language and for the Use of Language for God

Preamble

The ACD is aware that language shapes and informs our understanding of reality and our understanding of ourselves. Therefore general use of language and the use of language for God are matters of importance for ACD faculty, staff and students.

Legislation/Standards

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Educational Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000

EEO Act 1984

Higher Education Support Act 2003 – Higher Education Provider Guidelines

Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Racial Vilification Act 1996

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations

National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students

State Code of Practice – Overseas Students

Delegations

The ACD Board has delegated to the ACD Executive Officer responsibility for implementation of these Guidelines within the ACD and ATCC. The ACD Board has delegated to principals of ACD constituent member colleges responsibility for implementation of these Guidelines within their colleges.

Approvals

These guidelines were approved by the ACD Board/ACD President on 10 December 2004.

Related Documents

ACD Grievance Procedures

ACD Equal Opportunity Policies

Guidelines

1. General Guidelines

1.1 In using language we must take care and remember that:

- Australia embraces many cultures, backgrounds and nationalities and people's experiences are diverse across the country;
- Some traditional use of language is now widely regarded as offensive by today's society;
- It is easy to inadvertently convey or reinforce stereotypical attitudes and inaccurate information about specific cultures by using inappropriate language;
- Inappropriate language can be deemed as racist and therefore discriminatory.

- 1.2. The ACD follows the Flinders University general guidelines for inclusive language which can be accessed at the following website: www.flinders.edu.au/eo_unit/Publications/index.html. These guidelines may also be found in the flyer *Communication* which is available from college offices or the ACD Office.

2. Guidelines for the Use of Language for God

- 2.1. The ACD recognizes that most Western European languages are androcentric and products of the widespread patriarchal culture out of which they emerged.
- 2.2. Our language for God, used in theology and worship, is the human means whereby the believing community expresses its understanding of God. Theological language can never adequately express the mystery and wonder of the living God.
- 2.3. God-language is always shaped and formed by a particular cultural context. For both Jewish and Christian faiths these contexts have been patriarchal. Hence the language used for God has been cast in predominantly male terms.
- 2.4. The result of this particular dimension of our Judeo-Christian cultural heritage has been to limit our imaging and understandings of God and our understandings of ourselves as human beings. Within our Churches language with regard to God that is gender-exclusive continues both to limit who God can be for us and to limit who we can become as human partners in God's mission.
- 2.5. If we are to be faithful to the mystery and the transcendence of God, to the sheer abundance of God, then we need to draw more fully on the wealth of biblical images, including female and male images, as well as drawing on fresh images and names from our own age.
- 2.6. As teachers and students who are ministers of the good news and aware that different images of God will speak to people at different stages of their lives, we are in a position to model a rich use of language for God.
- 2.7. Teachers and students
- are encouraged to draw from the richness of biblical images in their use of God language;
 - acknowledge and address the androcentric emphasis within the Judeo-Christian heritage that limits our understandings of God and humanity.
3. Students are encouraged to use a variety of names and images for God that include female, male and non-gender specific images in their papers and tutorials and teachers are encouraged to model in their classes how this might be done.
4. The scriptures themselves witness to attempts to transcend the limitations of gender-exclusive concepts and imagery for God. For example, Genesis 1:26-28 makes it clear that female as well as male is made in God's image. Other examples of female images for God include: Is. 42:14-16, Is. 46:3, Is. 66:13, Luke 13:34, Luke 15:8-10. Other biblical examples are - Father/Mother, Creator, Maker, Sustainer, Nurturer, Loving Parent, Source of Life, Sovereign, Ruler, Saviour, Redeemer, Liberator, Companion, Friend, Advocate, Everloving God, Gracious God.
5. The practice of constantly using only male pronouns can be overcome in various ways:
- a) Repeat the word God, eg God created the world and on the seventh day God rested.
 - b) Address God in the second person, as "you", rather than "he" or "she".
 - c) Use "he" and "she" interchangeably.
 - d) Leave out the pronoun, eg "God created the world and then rested", not "then he rested".

6. Resources

Some resources that may be of assistance are:

Books

What Language Shall I Borrow? Brian Wren - London: SCM Press 1989

The United Methodist Hymnal - United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville Tennessee 1989

Songs for a Gospel People - Wood Lake Books 1988

Prayers of Our Hearts in Word and Action - Vienna Cobb Anderson - Publisher Crossroad NY 1993

Celebrating Women - Hannah Ward, Jennifer Wild, Janet Morley - SPCK London 1995

Bread of Tomorrow: Praying with the World's Poor - Janet Morley - SPCK London 1992

All desires known - Janet Morley - SPCK London 1992

Women Included: a book of Services and Prayers - St Hilda Community SPCK 1991

Tapes

God Beyond All Names - Bernadette Farrell

Bread for the Journey - Ruth Duck