

Inclusive Language with Reference to the People of God

| Avoid Words that Exclude | Choose Words that Include |
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| brothers, brotherhood (in the faith) | brothers and sisters, friends, kindred, family of faith, neighbors, humankind |
| men, mankind | people, men and women, women and men, humanity, humankind |
| chairman | chair, chairperson, moderator, group leader, presiding official |
| fellowship | community, friendship, "koinonia" |
| forefathers | ancestors, forebears |
| kingdom | kingdom, realm, reign |
| laymen | laity, member, congregant |
| clergyman | clergy, minister, teaching elder |
| birth defect, disabled, crippled, deformed, mentally ill | congenital disability, persons who are differently abled, physically challenged, mentally challenged |
| blind | visually impaired |
| stand as you are able | rise in body or spirit |
| minority | racial ethnic people, people of color |
| third world | developing countries |
| manmade | constructed, not natural, human-made, synthetic |
| workmen | workers |
| foreigner, alien | visitor from another country, immigrant |
| man and wife | husband and wife, woman and man |
| sons (of God) | daughters and sons, children of God, people of God |

Words Have Value

Language is not value neutral. All words have value and meaning. The words we choose to use communicate our personal thoughts, beliefs and feelings. Our language is a carrier of culture and mirrors culture. It can create systems of insiders and outsiders.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to a new way of life and a new way of speech. Accordingly, we are called to consciousness that "death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). Each time we speak, we have the opportunity to give life by choosing to use language that empowers, that is sensitive to the plight of oppressed people, that honors all human beings as God's good creation, and that has evolved through time and history. Well chosen words have the ability to build up, instead of tear down.

Our use of inclusive and expansive language speaks to our ability to be reformed in our thinking about God and the people of God.

Expansive Images of God from our Theological Traditions

"But you too, good Jesus, are you not also a mother? Are you not a mother who like a hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings?"—*Anselm of Canterbury, Prayers and Meditations*"

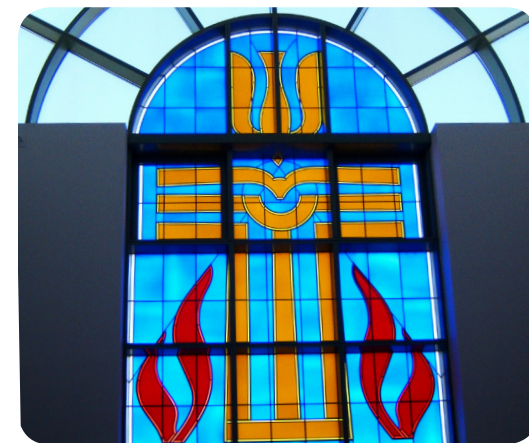
In *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian of Norwich spoke of Jesus as the mother who gives us birth in the agonies of the cross and who nurses us at the breast in Holy Communion.

Order this brochure at pcusa.org/store or download at pcusa.org/allwomen ("Resources" tab)

Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries
Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC)

PDS 27-532-12-001

Well Chosen Words!



Inclusive

Language with Reference to the People of God

Expansive

Language with Reference to God

pcusa.org/women



Inclusive and Expansive Language

- » Seeks to include others.
- » Is sensitive to the plight of people who have been marginalized in history.
- » Broadens our expressions of God.



“A concern for inclusive language bespeaks the church’s emerging conviction both that the diversity of the people of God is to be acknowledged and embraced in such a way that all may feel included, as well as the realization that every reference to God is limited in its capacity to express the reality and mystery of the One who has so variously encountered us” (*Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language*, 197th General Assembly (1985), PCUSA, Advisory Council on Discipleship and Worship, Council on Theology and Culture).

Expansive Language with Reference to God

“Our language about God should be as intentionally diverse and varied as is that of the Bible and our theological tradition. This diversity should be reflected in the language and life of the church. Rather than using only a very small number of terms referring to God (e.g., Father, Creator, Lord, Almighty), we should seek to employ the rich reservoir of imagery found in the New and Old Testaments” (*Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language*).

Expansive Images of God in the Creeds

The Nicene Creed—God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God

The Apostles’ Creed—Maker of heaven and earth

The Westminster Confession—Infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute . . . most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, Christ the Mediator.

The Larger Catechism—God is a Spirit, in and of himself* infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; allsufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

(**historic language*)

The Confession of 1967—Reconciling the world, Redeemer, Creator

A Brief Statement of Faith—Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child; giver and renewer of life. God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God’s image, male and female, or every race and people, to live as one community

The Theological Declaration of Barmen—Jesus Christ—the One Word of God

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Expansive Images of God in Scripture

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|--------|--|
| Mother | Numbers 11:12-13, Deuteronomy 32:18, Isaiah 42:14, Isaiah 46:3-4, Isaiah 49:15 |
| I Am | Exodus 3:14 |
| Hen | Matthew 13:33, Psalm 57:1, Psalm 61:4 |
| Rock | Isaiah 17:10 |
| Water | Jeremiah 17:13 |
| Eagle | Deuteronomy 32:11-12, Exodus 19:4 |
| Woman | Luke 15:8-10, Psalm 123:2 |

Inclusive Translations of Scripture

- » *The Inclusive Bible: First Egalitarian Version*. The Priests for Equality, Sheed and Ward, 2007.
- » New Revised Standard Version (*NRSV*). New York: National Council of Churches, 1989.
- » *Inclusive Language Lectionary*, Years A (1983), B (1984), C (1985). New York: National Council of Churches.
- » *Inclusive Language Psalms*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1987.
- » *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* (New York: Oxford), 1995.

General Assembly Actions

The General Assembly (GA) took action in 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2010 encouraging the use of inclusive language in worship, education, publications, and theological and biblical reflection. See GA minutes of these assemblies for more information.

Available at pcusa.org/language-gender

- » *A Report to the Church on Issues of Language and Gender*

Document Available from Presbyterian Distribution Services, (800) 524-2612

- » *Definitions and Guidelines on Inclusive Language*, PDS 70-420-01-003