



Chipping Sodbury Baptist Church

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy Statement

Chipping Sodbury Baptist Church (CSBC) recognises and is committed to its obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and other related legislation. CSBC will therefore be mindful of its legal obligations, both as an employer and as a service provider. As a registered charity, we follow the Charity Commission's Guidelines F5 "Religious or belief organisations".

In addition to its legal obligations, CSBC acts from a belief that all people are created by God (Ephesians 3:15), in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and are of equal value in the sight of God (Galatians 3:28). In his ministry Jesus showed God's unconditional love by his openness to all people, including particularly those who were marginalised and experienced discrimination in his day.

This Church affirms its commitment to show openness to all people attending the Church or using the Church's activities. It intends in spirit and in deed to promote equality of opportunity in its activities and is committed to taking positive action to tackle discrimination that exists within society. We will aim to nurture an inclusive community where all will be valued equally and treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

Equal opportunities in recruitment of paid staff and volunteers

As an organisation seeking to deliver services within a Christian context, some posts can only be filled by Christians. The nature of these posts or the context in which they are carried out, and their link to the ethos of the organisation, give rise to a 'genuine occupational requirement' for the post-holders to be Christians. Relevant responsibilities will be determined by the leadership as a vacancy arises but will include the Ministry Team Leader, the Pastoral Worker and the Youth and Community Worker. Voluntary roles with a Christian leadership/teaching responsibility and worship participation will also be covered.

All staff in these posts will be required to demonstrate a personal commitment to the Christian faith. A list of such posts will be kept by the Church secretary and kept under review. (This policy is in accordance with Employment and Race Directives issued by the government and ACAS guidance and as such any discrimination on these grounds is not unlawful.)

We recognise that equal opportunities is not simply a matter of treating everyone the same. For example, in some circumstances it will be necessary to take positive action to ensure people with a particular illness or impairment can access the buildings or participate in activities.

However, as Christian community there will be some circumstances justifying different treatment, which is not unlawful (for example to comply with a 'genuine occupational requirement' for a position or for matters of Church Membership and Leadership). These circumstances are addressed under the relevant sections below.

Equal opportunities in provision of services

In this context, 'services' does not refer simply to acts of worship, but to the whole range of activities the Church might offer, including children's activities, toddler groups, social activities, lunch clubs, coffee mornings or other events.

We are committed to providing services on a fair and equitable basis, regardless of: age, gender, gender reassignment, skin colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, child or domestic care arrangements, pregnancy and maternity arrangements, marital or civil partnership status. However, this Church has exercised its right not to conduct civil partnership or same sex marriage ceremonies or blessings.

We will take reasonable steps to alter or remove features of our premises which make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with a disability to make use of the facilities that the Church provides. In particular, we will actively consider any reasonable adjustments necessary to achieve this when any changes are made to the Church premises.

Equal opportunities in Church life

We will promote respect for other people and we will treat everyone fairly. We will challenge discriminatory attitudes and actions, ensuring access to training where this is necessary to improve knowledge and understanding of the presenting issue.

We will seek to address the inequalities of opportunity faced by people in under-represented groups and will identify and remove barriers to participation in Church life, including positive action to address physical disability or sensory impairment.

We will ensure that this policy is known by the congregation and that staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities for implementing this policy. Training will be made available where necessary.

Use of the Church buildings by external organisations

The Church actively encourages the local community to make use of the Church buildings and enquiries for this can be made to the Church office. All bookings from individuals or organisations which have not used the premises before will be referred to the Church leadership for approval. This is to ensure that any use of the buildings does not contravene the ethos of the Christian community or any of its Christian convictions. We will not seek to use this clause unlawfully and where a booking is declined, a clear explanation will be provided.

Church Membership

As described above, we will seek to ensure that the range of services provided by the Church is open to all. However, individuals who have a Christian faith and who want to make an ongoing commitment to the Church can also apply for Church Membership. All requests for membership will be referred to the Church Leadership and to the Church Members' meeting for approval. This is to ensure that the personal faith of those making applications is in keeping with this Christian community. We will not seek to use this clause unlawfully and where a membership application is declined, the applicant will be provided with feedback on the reason for the decision.

Monitoring of equal opportunities within the Church

The leadership team of CSBC will monitor the implementation of this policy. The Policy Statement at the beginning of the document will be displayed in the Church building and on the Church website, together with a notice advising people of how they can request a copy of the full document. The contact names of the people to whom they should make any complaints or give comments or compliments will also be displayed.