

# **PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND**

## **EQUALITY POLICY FOR LICENSING THE USE, BY BODIES OTHER THAN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND, OF CHURCH HALLS AND OTHER PROPERTIES USED FOR DIRECT MISSION OR MINISTRY PURPOSES**

### **1. Statement of Policy**

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of Railway Street Presbyterian Church (“the Congregation”) to the promotion of equality of opportunity in licensing the use of church halls and other properties of Presbyterian congregations (“Church Premises”) by persons or bodies (“Potential Licensees”) other than the Congregation and other bodies of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The Congregation supports the principle of equality of opportunity and is committed to the elimination of discrimination in the provision of and access to goods, facilities and services. The Congregation is also committed to accommodating diversity for Potential Licensees so long as this is consonant with the following proviso (“the Proviso”) namely that the Christian ethos and the doctrine and testimony of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland are not in any way compromised.

Accordingly all statements contained in this Policy are subject to the Proviso.

The Congregation recognises, therefore, that it is both good practice and in the Congregation’s best interests to have an equality policy that covers Potential Licensees who might seek a licence to use Church Premises.

It is the Congregation’s policy not to discriminate or harass a person unlawfully and to license the use of Church Premises equally to all, irrespective of:

- Disability
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief and/or political opinion
- Sex, pregnancy or maternity (including breast feeding)
- Gender reassignment
- Age

The Congregation is opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination. All Potential Licensees will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the aforementioned grounds. Decisions relating to Potential Licensees will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination. However, each Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland reserves the right to exercise its discretion to refuse to license the use of Church Premises in circumstances such licensing could be in conflict with the Christian ethos and the doctrine and testimony of Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The Congregation fully acknowledges its duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to have access to Church Premises. The Congregation will take steps to assess the needs of disabled people seeking access to Church Premises, and will anticipate the requirements of such people generally and the reasonable adjustments that the relevant legislation may require it to make for them.

## **2. To whom does the policy apply (scope)**

This policy applies to:

- Potential Licensees
- Visitors
- Members of the public who enter Church Premises

## **3. Statement of commitment**

The Congregation is committed to ensuring that the licensing of the use of Church Premises to Potential Licensees will:

- be in an environment which promotes equality of access for all persons and implementing any positive action where necessary;
- be free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- accommodate diversity and fulfil all the Congregation's legal obligations across all of the grounds as covered by equality legislation and associated Codes of Practice including its statutory duties;
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

The Congregation will not tolerate discrimination against Potential Licensees by employees or non-employees, over whom the Congregation has control. Any discrimination may lead to disciplinary action for employees and to other sanctions for non-employees such as suspension of contracts or exclusion from Church Premises. Any breaches of this policy could constitute misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

## **4. Implementation**

The Kirk Session of the Congregation has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy to ensure that Potential Licensees do not experience discrimination and diversity is accommodated. The Congregation expects that all Potential Licensees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective. The Kirk Session shall delegate the taking of the steps necessary to implement this policy to the Congregational Committee

## **5. Monitoring and review**

Any enquiries in respect of this policy or matters arising within its remit should be referred in the first instance to the Clerk of the Kirk Session, who shall refer it either to the Kirk Session or to Congregational Committee, as appropriate.

The Congregation will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to ensure the effective implementation of this policy for the licensing of the use of Church Premises.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed regularly and action taken as necessary.

Signature: Rev Michael Davidson (Minister)

Date: 31 December 2016