

Church Meeting March 26th – Introduction to new Policies and Statements :

Equal Opportunities Policy

Equal Opportunities Code of Practice

Ethos Statement

Values Statement

Why do we need these Policies and Statements?

We currently have adopted the Safe to Grow policy which relates to child protection, and we have an excellent Health and Safety policy which Dave Thompson has written and implemented for us.

By law we also need to adopt and put into practice an **Equal Opportunities policy** and this is fleshed out by an Equal Opportunities Code of Practice – both of these are mainly related to employment. Then we have also developed **Ethos and Values Statements** to help with defining **for those outside of the church** the motivation for the work we do as well as the way we intend to do things and this will be particularly helpful in relation to lettings if we decide to keep the uses of our premises limited to those purposes which fit with our ethos and values.

Ethos statement and values statements: how do they help our church?

Thinking these issues through helps us be clear about what we are doing as a church but we also need to keep on the right side of the law. Legislation of 2nd December 2003 on equality and diversity in the workplace – which covers issues of religious discrimination – obliges every church to be able to define ‘who we are’ – our ethos. Why? Because if we want specifically to employ a Christian in any of the work we do, we will have to demonstrate that our decision to do so is based on a genuine requirement of the job (ie that the requirement reflects and relates to our ‘organisational ethos’).

In addition to this we intend that all groups and individuals using our premises comply with our ethos and values so that every area of church life is governed by the same ethos and values.

In both these areas, employment and the activity that takes place on our premises, we are trying to make sure that all that we do as an organisation is rooted in who we are as Christians. As we develop our work in the local community we will have to make sure that we are not only keeping to the law of the land but also remaining true to our ethos and values in everything that we do.

What is the difference between our ethos and our values?

The ethos of our church can be described as the spirit or shared motivation we have. It’s why people do what they do, what makes us tick. It’s what makes us unique and gives us our identity. It’s the environment within which our mission and activity are formed and delivered.

The values of our church are statements we agree on to make sure that the ethos actually happens in practice on a day to day basis. It is one thing to say these things about ourselves as a church, it is another thing to live by them. We are looking at adopting the values the Baptist Union have offered as a summary of what Christian community is all about. In addition following the detailed advice in the Baptist Union’s ‘Christian Ethos Audit’ we have added values about our attitudes to people and the way we work which we intend to see put into practice in all areas of church life. **Our values are the ways we live out our ethos.**

Why do we need Ethos and Values statements as well as an Equal Opportunities Policy?

The Equal Opportunities Policy we have adopted was devised by the BU who took legal advice in order to make sure that it included all the necessary details to comply with Equal Opportunities Law, with particular reference to employment of people by the church. The Ethos and Values Statements are much broader, describing how what we believe influences the way we work and the way we treat people in all that we do.

Why is there no references to more specific Christian beliefs (such as Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection) in our ethos statement?

The church has a brief statement of belief (which our constitution refers to) which is the same as the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle (see the Baptist Union Website :

http://www.baptist.org.uk/baptist_life/what_is_a_baptist/dec_of_principle.html)

However our ethos statement is what flows out of this – it is a description of how this affects the way we behave, the things we do. We have not referred to the crucifixion directly as a model for what we do as a church although Christians themselves understand that 'dying to self' or 'taking up your cross' ie self sacrifice in loving service to others is to be at the heart of all we do. The ethos statement is written **primarily for those outside the church** and so the language we use is important. It is describing how it is important for us as Christians to follow Christ in the way we do things. It is explaining how our beliefs (as described in the Declaration of Principle) work out in the way we treat people and the way we work. So it is not necessary in this case to refer to all our beliefs themselves in the ethos but only to the effect they have on our way of working and behaving towards people.