



**International Church of Bangkok**  
*Advancing the Work of Jesus*

## **POLICY ON DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVENESS & UNITY**

As an international congregation, we stress our unity in Christ by both commitment and experience while recognizing that we are a diverse congregation located in Bangkok, Thailand. Since its founding, the community has been welcoming of all although it was a highly expat community initially. Starting from 2002, work began to incorporate this inclusive ethos into our Mission Statement during the time of the Revd. Bill Anderson and through the work of Mr. Tom Baker and his committee in drafting the statement.

Our Mission Statement states - "ICB is an English language congregation (composed of native and non-native speakers) committed to welcoming people with diverse backgrounds to Christian worship in a diverse, inclusive and unifying faith experience. We seek to advance the work of Jesus Christ by promoting and supporting spiritual growth, community, and service to others."

The statement appears on our website and weekly bulletins.

1. **The purpose of this policy** is to speak directly and more comprehensively to inclusiveness within our congregational family. The concept of inclusiveness as used in this policy statement is defined as the sharing of power, responsibility, accountability, respect, and love among all persons. The specific focus of this document concerns ethnicity, culture, gender and theological understandings so that all of us will be enabled and encouraged to appreciate and be enriched by other perspectives. Stated simply, we believe we are all one in our Lord Jesus Christ. Together we acknowledge that whatever separates us from God and from one another is sin.

2. **Racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice** that devalue the person are all forms of sin separating us from one another and from God. "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

3. **It is our conviction** that the commandment of Jesus to love God and neighbor is accompanied by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for overcoming the forces of division operating within our congregational family and our society at large. We reaffirm our commitment to inclusiveness. We believe it is time to move toward maturity in unity as a congregation in order to be effective in our witness and mission.

4. **Inclusiveness** is a genuine model of Christian community, and reflects our very understanding of God. The church's commitment to inclusiveness is portrayed vividly in the concept of "the household of God" where we are no longer strangers, but citizens (Ephesians 2:14-20).

5. **The ministry of Jesus** was characterized by its inclusiveness as Jesus preached the Reign of God and called persons to repentance, commitment and discipleship. Although each of the four Gospels shows the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry, none does it more clearly than the Gospel of Luke. Here Jesus is presented, through his teachings and actions, as the one who reaches out to "marginalized" persons, offers God's forgiveness and calls those who respond to discipleship. These individuals include sinners, tax collectors, the poor, the maimed, the disabled, women, children, Samaritans, and Gentiles (e.g., Luke 4:16-19; 5:29-32; 7:22; 8:1-3; 10:29-42; 14:13, 21; 15:1-2; 18:9-17; 19:1-10).

6. **The inclusive nature of Jesus' ministry** was continued in the earliest church in the Samaritan mission, the Ethiopian mission, and the outreach to the Gentiles (Acts 8-11). One of the focal points of Paul's theology was his concept of the "new creation" in Christ (Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The new creation means for Paul a new inclusiveness, especially for Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 5:6; 6:15; Romans 1:16; Colossians 3:11; Ephesians 2:11-22). This inclusiveness was understood even more broadly by Paul, as expressed in the well-known affirmation ". . . for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. . . . 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 3:26-28). For Paul, inclusiveness and the unity in Christ were crucial for the life of the church: ". . . bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. . ." (Ephesians 4:1-6). The powerful presentation of the consummation of God's people in Revelation is striking for its inclusiveness. Those redeemed by the Lamb, Jesus Christ, are ". . . saints from every tribe and language and people and nation. . ." who have been ". . . made . . . to be a kingdom and priests serving our God" (Revelation 5:9-10; Isaiah 40:5).

7. **Diversity in unity** also is promoted and presented in the Bible as important for God's people. Paul especially emphasizes diversity, particularly in terms of the variety of spiritual gifts, and makes it clear that to be diverse is not to be divisive or factious. To be diverse is to contribute to the growth, maturity and unity of the whole Body of Christ (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:7-16). The main point of Paul's famous body image in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 is not to stress unity - for that is assumed - but to highlight diversity within the Body of Christ. The different members need one another; the acceptance and respect of diversity overcomes dissension and division. This point is also emphasized in Ephesians 4:7-16. Diversity means that ". . . as each part is working properly, [it] promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:16). Paul welcomed diversity in other ways

as well. In discussing differing theological perspectives related to faith and life (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:1-15:6), he urged acceptance of diversity with mutual respect and sensitivity. In addition, Paul was strongly committed to diversity and respect for differences in his strategy for mission and evangelism (1 Corinthians 9:19- 23). It was from this context he declared: "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). One of the earliest conflicts in the early church arose out of the failure to accept ethnic and cultural diversity (Acts 6:1-6). Greek-speaking widows were being neglected in Jerusalem, where most people spoke Aramaic. Church leaders responded by appointing additional leaders who spoke Greek and were more sensitive ethnically and culturally to the needs within the whole church. The Bible makes it clear that the church is meant to be a people who celebrate diversity and practice inclusiveness within the love and unity that is to characterize the Body of Christ.

**"Be it resolved:** That we reaffirm our faith in the New Testament as a divinely inspired record that is therefore a trustworthy, authoritative and all sufficient guide for our faith and practice. We rededicate ourselves to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and call our entire congregation to the common task of sharing the whole Gospel with the whole world."

As a congregation, we are committed to –

1. Welcoming all to our community of faith and participating in our journey towards Christ Jesus. We acknowledge that individuals will be at various stages and points in their walk. It is our resolve to assist all in finishing the race (Philippians 3:10-11). There are no insiders and outsiders – we all **BELONG** to God's family (Mark 9:38-41).
2. Being a community of faith in Jesus. We share this faith freely with all with the hope that by God's grace, all may **BELIEVE** in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and thus become children of God (John 1:12; 3:16).
3. Letting our faith be seen in our works of charity and generosity (2 Timothy 2:14-26). This reflects our continuing changing in **BEHAVIOUR** through the power of the enabling Spirit of God.

Practically,

1. Membership at ICB is open to all who will commit themselves in supporting the church family through worship of God, fellowship with each other, supporting the family and its outreach.
2. From time to time, the Minister and the Council may invite members to come on board the Council so that individual gifts and capacities may be utilized for the building of the local body of Christ. Invitations are extended to diverse members so that the wellbeing of the

whole family is promoted and assured. These invitations will follow the protocols found in ICB's Constitution.

3. Members are highly encouraged to have conversations on matters of faith and theology for the edification of all. Such conversations are to be healthy and respectful of differing opinions and thoughts.

4. Outreach into the community at large is inclusive of all, valuing all faith journeys (religions). Cooperation with others in offering care and compassion is encouraged.

This Policy Paper on Diversity, Inclusiveness and Unity will be updated biennially and when circumstances warrant it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margaret K. McMillion". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Margaret K. McMillion  
ICB Chairperson

Dated: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022