

Recommendation

The Presbytery of Northeast New Jersey respectfully overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall F-1.0302 (c) be amended by inserting the following words [Text to be added is shown in bold.]: “Because the church is catholic, it strives everywhere to testify to Christ’s embrace of men, women, and children of all times, places, races, nations, ages, **abilities**, conditions, and stations in life.”

and F-1.0404 be amended by inserting the following words [Text to be added is shown in bold]: “a new openness in its own membership, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, ethnicities, **abilities**, and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of the new humanity.”

Further, the Presbytery of Northeast NJ recommends that disability be included in future lists of marginalized people in policy, procedure, and liturgy.

Rationale

The current foundational statement (F-1.0403) already uses language inclusive of people with disabilities. This amendment seeks to use consistent language around disability throughout the Foundational statements of the book of order.

“Well Chosen Words” (2010) states using inclusive and expansive language is one way to acknowledge and celebrate all people and bring recognition and a sense of belonging to people who have been historically marginalized in society and even in the church.” This amendment would reflect this overture by making all parts of the Book of Order consistent in their inclusion of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities include 26% of the US population (CDC, 2020) making it the largest minority group in America. People with disabilities represent an important part of our church and they should be named in lists of people to be included.

Research shows a significant gap in presence and full participation for people with disabilities into the life of the church (Ault, Collins and Carter, 2013). The inclusion of people with disabilities in our polity shows our intention to be inclusive of this group.

We identify as being “people of the word,” marking both our commitment to Biblical scholarship and exegesis and the importance of the words that we use when preaching, teaching, and guiding our church’s polity. These small corrections reflect the value and importance that we put on the use of consistent inclusive language throughout our policies.

References:

CDC: Disability Impacts All: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographicdisability-impacts-all.html>

Well Chosen Words: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/well-chosen-words/>

Ault, Collins and Carter (2013): https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235381799_Congregational_Participation_and_Supports_for_Children_and_Adults_with_Disabilities_Parent_Perceptions DOI:10.1352/1934-9556-51.01.048