

Inclusive Language (2016)

To further the use of inclusive language in our liturgies, the Bishop offers the following guidelines to clergy and the people.

1. **As a scholarly and inclusive version of the scriptures the use of the New Revised Standard Version (1989) of the Bible will be used at all diocesan liturgical gatherings, and we strongly recommend its use at parish liturgies.**

For parishes wishing to use an inclusive language Psalter, we would suggest adoption of the *Sz. Helena Psalter*, (available at <http://www.osh.org/breviary.html>) which is an effective and thoughtful translation.

The spirit of inclusivity in public worship is only one of the ways by which we can respond to the call for a spirit of greater inclusivity in the church. We encourage our parishes to take such appropriate steps as we propose by the above guidelines. The introduction of new forms and words should be done with careful preparation and sensitivity. Written resources for encouraging dialogue and reflection are available from the Diocesan Doctrine and Worship Committee and members of the Doctrine and Worship Committee are willing to help in the planning of workshops at parish, deanery, clericus, or area levels.

References to God

In the Bible, male pronouns are used consistently with reference to God. Although we know that such language is metaphorical, the cumulative effect is an assumption of God's maleness that is misleading in itself and is also experienced as diminishing by many women. Eliminating or reducing the use of male pronouns can help counteract this assumption.

Language about the Persons of the Trinity raises particular issues. In Trinitarian theology, 'God' and 'Father' are not interchangeable; the Son and Spirit are also properly spoken of as God. Although the Second Person lived as a male human being, it is humanity, not the maleness that is crucial. It is therefore, appropriate, with regard to Christ, to reduce the number of male pronouns when they create an overwhelming impression of maleness. As there is no compelling theological reason why male gender should be assigned to the Holy Spirit, reduction or elimination of male pronouns seems particularly apt in this case. Indeed, one may speak of the Holy Spirit in feminine terms.

Use of "Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier" is also problematic, as according to Trinitarian theology, only those aspects of individual persons of the Trinity can be used in the formula; for example, Creator for Father infers that the Son and the Spirit were not involved in creation, Redeemer for the Son infers that the Father and the Spirit had no part in Redemption and Sustainer or Sanctifier for the Holy Spirit infers that the Father and the Son have no part in the Sanctification or Sustaining of the believer.

The Holy Spirit is always properly referred to as "the Holy Spirit" as opposed to the linguistic habit (born of Charismatic movements in the 1970's) of referring to the third person of the Trinity as "Holy Spirit" in a familiar way like a proper name. This is contrary to our Credal formulas.



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Trinitarian Formulas

The only acceptable formula for baptism in the Christian church, by universal acceptance is that of "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Other forms, which may seem desirable for the purposes of inclusivity locally, serve to cast doubt on the efficacy of the baptism being administered, and will serve to exclude the person seeking baptism from the Body of Christ. Ecumenically, as well as internationally, only the formula mentioned above, is universally accepted by all Christians (see *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, WCC 1982). There is no acceptable deviation from this practice in the Diocese of Huron.

