

CONTACT

*To worship God, grow as Jesus' disciples,
care for one another, and take God's love to the world.*

Why Welcome?



The Social Justice Group, meeting over several months, has worked on a revised “Statement of Welcome and Inclusion.” This statement was adopted by Session at its meeting in May, and is presented in this issue of Contact. At such times, I need to ask the question of myself: “Why?” Why welcome? I answer for myself, and I submit to you that we welcome, deliberately and conscientiously, because others have not always felt our welcome as followers of Jesus. We welcome because Jesus himself offered welcome to all those who were excluded from covenant relationship by the powers that be. This is not a top-down magnanimous welcome, like some Roman patrician who would patronize the artist and scholar.

Rather, this is a recognition that we need one-another. We are together in this journey of faith and life. We do not welcome because it is the progressive thing to do, we welcome because it is justice. The kind of justice we hope for ourselves when we need it. It is welcome in a polarized world. There is an edge to it. Even as there is an edge to exclusion. I speak particularly of our welcome of LGBTQI2+ persons. In offering welcome to one another, we believe we are acknowledging the Divine creative drive—rich, diverse, incomprehensible. The opposite of harming creation, we participate in the work of healing. This is why we are making this statement, and binding and committing ourselves to it. There is a burden to this welcome.

So how do we carry it, or carry it out?

First, welcome yourself! Allow your body, mind and heart to be completely present to your own memories, sensations of pain, sorrow, grief, but also relief, joy, and the feeling of being at home. At home in yourself, because another welcomed you as a child, and later as an adult, when you needed this most, with no strings attached, no hoops to jump through, just because you are you. This is how Jesus welcomed all who came to him. He had much to teach them, much to show them, but first and last he welcomed these bodies and souls with a love which broke their defences, their dividing walls, and so called together a church people, to be in the world in a new way.

The Riddle Scale of Homophobia (first developed by Dorothy Riddle in 1973 and published in 1985 & 1994). It is one way of recognising that our welcome may be dynamic; changing toward LGBTQI2+ people as we strive to move from *tolerance* to *nurturance*, which recognises that we are a blessing to one another.

The Riddle Scale



Statement of Welcome and Inclusion Central Presbyterian Church God's Love Includes Everyone



We strive to be a welcoming, nurturing, loving, and supportive community unified in Jesus Christ. As an inclusive congregation, we joyfully affirm and honour the diversity of God's creation. Our community is richer when we include people of all ages, gender identities, racial and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, abilities, economic circumstances and family configurations. We proclaim this statement of inclusion to all who have experienced the pain of exclusion or discrimination by the church and society. All are invited to join a body of believers, to participate fully in the life, leadership, witness and ministry of Central Presbyterian Church. We acknowledge we are imperfect and in different stages of our faith journey. **No matter who you are, how you identify, whom you love, or where you are on life's journey: know you are welcome here, and you are loved by God.**

The congregation is invited to connect with the following staff, elders, and members who are available to answer questions on the updated Statement of Welcome and Inclusion: Rev. Dr. Nick Athanasiadis, Interim Minister; Beth Carey, Elder; Gwynneth Simpson, Elder; Kirk Starkey, Member; Mark Stuppel, Clerk of Session; Sara Traficante, Coordinator of Discipleship and Member