



The Church Commissioners

Our approach to diversity, equity and inclusion

“At the Church Commissioners we are passionate about doing our work well and clear that diversity, equity and inclusion are not additional; they are integral and essential to what we do, how we do it, and how effectively we do it.



We do not know all the answers but we have worked continually over the past few years with people from under-represented groups (be they existing trustees or staff, or a range of people outside our organisation), reflecting on our practices and helping us improve them. I have learnt much and am committed to continuing to learn and working with my colleagues to foster an environment in the Church Commissioners where all can feel that they belong and are valued for who they are and what they bring.

We need to continue to ensure that the attitudes and actions we describe in this document are not just words but are our daily habits. In publishing it we are holding ourselves to account for this and I hope and expect that readers will do, too. We want people to tell us if they see us falling short of the high standards we set ourselves. Better still, we want people to see us attaining these standards and thus recognise that the Church Commissioners is a place where diversity, equity and inclusion really matter. I hope that this in turn helps many more people from diverse backgrounds decide that they would like to explore working with us. Perhaps you?”

Gareth Mostyn
Chief Executive,
Church Commissioners for England



INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity and inclusion are different things. To be diverse (i.e. to fully reflect the community we exist to serve) we need more people from under-represented groups around our Board/ Committee table and in our executive leadership and staff teams, and, in order to be equitable and inclusive, we need to ensure that, when they get there, they feel equal and are able to thrive; that their voices are not just represented but *heard*. And not just being heard, but being influential. We have to do everything we can to ensure we reflect the communities we serve and to ensure our people can flourish. So diversity, equity and inclusion go hand-in-hand and we take them all very seriously. This is a matter of justice for any organisation, and especially the Church, but it is also proven from a business point of view that varied experience produces better results than ‘groupthink’.

What follows is not just a summary of our attitude towards diversity, equity and inclusion; it is also a commitment to certain specific actions, a reflection on reasons why we have struggled to make an impact and what we have learned to do better, and an indication of the standards to which we expect to be held by our stakeholders when we recruit, welcome, and work with new trustees and staff.

TRUSTEES

1. Improving our diversity profile

We believe that equality of opportunity is an essential Christian aim (the Fourth Mark of Mission calls us to “seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation”). It follows from this that we see diversity at trustee level as an important element in achieving our charitable objectives. We believe our commitment to belonging and inclusion fuels our progress and drives us forward.

The Church Commissioners must be a safe, inclusive workplace for people from all backgrounds and walks of life. We have made greater progress improving some aspects of our diversity than others and, quite simply, **we want more applications from, and then more appointments of, women, GMH/UKME people, people with disabilities, members of the LGBT+ community, younger people, neurodivergent people, people from a broader range of social backgrounds and lived experiences.**

A recent survey (see [Why we campaign | Getting on Board](#)) said 75% of charities struggle to recruit trustees. We do not. We are blessed to receive a high volume of applications for our roles. This should make it easier for us to bring in greater diversity. So why have we not traditionally been very good at this? Because we have until more recently been too passive, stating in role profiles that we want candidates from under-represented groups and then sitting back and waiting for them to apply. That was really just putting the onus on to the excluded to include themselves! But nobody else controls our recruitment processes - the onus is on us. We realised that we needed to be far more active, deliberate and practical as summarised below.

- *We are clear about our own motivations for a more diverse team.*

Everyone involved in the recruitment process is clear that we are not ‘ticking the diversity box’ or doing what is expected of us. We are all genuinely passionate about equality and about bringing in the best collection of skills and perspectives for the betterment of our work. We are also open/ humble about the fact that it is ok to make mistakes as long as we learn from them.

- *We seek to raise awareness about trusteeship.*

When people from under-represented groups do not apply for our roles, we don’t assume that they are not interested. Instead we ask ourselves whether we are adequately explaining what the roles entail (particularly for younger potential trustees) or perhaps inadvertently discouraging applications. We acknowledge that the Church’s own past actions may put people off working with us and we realise that we must work very hard to overcome this. We endeavour to explain roles clearly; to de-mystify. We seek to make clear that the role of a trustee is not to know all the answers but to bring ideas and insights which contribute to the delivery of the things which the trustees are collectively responsible for. We must overcome the fact that, as long as we are insufficiently diverse, the people who will help us to be more diverse may not ‘see themselves’ among us and/or do not think they would be listened to if appointed.

- *Our applications process is intentional and clear about the skills and experiences we need.*

In drawing up lists of required skills we start from the organisation's strategy rather than lists of professions we have relied on previously. We value lived experience, not just professional experience, and we are clear that the relevance of applicants' experience counts, not just its length. We want to attract younger trustees including first-time trustees as part of a team with varying types and lengths of experience. We will identify the challenges and opportunities ahead of us and actively assess whether we lack any of the skills and experiences that we are going to need to meet these challenges and opportunities.

- *Our applications process is transparent and accessible.*

We advertise openly. We try to avoid advertising in the 'same old' places, aiming to reach beyond our existing networks (including through websites and publications specifically dedicated to the recruitment of under-represented groups, social media and various networks) and, where we use search consultants, they will need to have an excellent track record in producing diverse shortlists in order to win the contract. We try to be clear about what we are asking for, and we ensure that interviews are welcoming and support two-way conversation. We aim to remove unnecessary barriers. E.g. we test afresh with each recruitment the level of previous trustee experience, if any, that is required; we try to avoid off-putting language; we ensure meeting locations and meeting materials are as inclusive as possible and aim to make reasonable adjustments that candidates may require. We also try to help potential future trustees consider whether they want to be trustees, to understand what it involves, how to apply and to be more aware that it is open to them. We promote inclusion by de-mystifying what a trustee is, stating plainly that trustees are responsible for ensuring the charity is doing the things it was set up to do.

- *Our shortlisting and interviewing processes are consistent and fair.*

Shortlisting and interview panels will themselves be diverse, and we will bring in external members when necessary to ensure this. We regularly remind ourselves of unconscious bias and actively mitigate it. We make shortlisting and interview decisions according to a clear framework of agreed competencies. At every shortlisting meeting and interview session we ask ourselves whether the candidate in question will bring us something we don't already have. We treat all candidates equitably, meaning we will design the format around candidates' identified needs. Interview questions are consistent, purposeful and conducive to a two-way conversation and we make any reasonable adjustments/ adaptations to ensure candidates can participate fully.

- *Our work in this area is supported by quality data (monitoring and reporting)*
- Some of the differences between us are visible while others are not, and our characteristics (e.g. our age, gender, ethnic background, disability status) can change over our lifetime. So gathering accurate data is an important enabler. We seek to collect and maintain high quality data about the demographic profile of our trustee body, to help us work with certain groups that are underrepresented and to understand where resources should be directed to address any barriers to these groups accessing opportunities. All such data will be responsibly collected and used in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act.

2. Ensuring equity and inclusion

We seek to welcome new trustees and ensure they feel fully included and able to have an impact, and we take steps subsequently to ensure that the environment continues to be inclusive. For all new members we commit to:

- *Thoughtful induction and training.*

We acknowledge that it takes time to get up to speed and we embrace this - new trustees and the organisation can learn together. We try to ensure new members have sufficient access to relevant Committee Chairs, other trustees and staff. We don't overload them with information as they join us, starting instead with a broad overview of the Charity and later branching out into relevant specialist areas. We commit resources to trustee training and in particular we will offer training in how to be an effective trustee. While the induction programme will include handing out information, it will also actively encourage the new trustees to have input/ give feedback. We won't just give trustees the information we believe they need; we will ask them about their knowledge gaps and development needs, too.

- *An inclusive culture.*

We will continue to seek a culture in which all our trustees feel able to challenge and be challenged. And we will make this systematic, e.g. by incorporating into our standard practices opportunities to take an alternative view, share ideas or identify concerns. When someone does, we will celebrate it together. But, in the regrettable event that any trustee feels that they, or someone else, have not been included, taken seriously or properly listened to, we encourage them to raise it with the Board's (Deputy) Chair or Chief Executive to enable us to address it together. We can also offer additional support from a range of sources (e.g. secretariat, Diversity & Inclusion advisers) if this is required.

We will remind ourselves that we do not recruit members of under-represented groups in order to 'up the representation', or because we think they will bring a particular view/skill, but because we want the whole range of their insights (as such we will not, for example, seek younger trustees because we assume they will help us with our technology!)

We will structure our meetings and other aspects of our working life together in ways which seek to reinforce the fact that, regardless of our roles or longevity, we are all partners in a shared endeavour and are all equally valued (e.g. through 'awaydays'/off-site meetings, briefings and smaller group work when appropriate).

While we are passionate about bringing in diverse trustees with new perspectives and the positive impact that this will have on our effectiveness, at the same time we don't put the onus for changemaking onto them. We contribute individually but we succeed and change together. Nor do we put the onus on the Chair to ensure inclusion. The Chair must ensure inclusive conditions are maintained, but we will all routinely ask ourselves whether we:

- listen as well/ as often as we speak;
- are welcoming to new members;
- exclude newer colleagues by over-reliance on shared history;
- speak and act humbly;
- are self-aware and aware of wider group dynamics;
- champion difference;
- are willing to change our minds.

We will periodically issue short, confidential and user-friendly Belonging & Inclusion surveys to help trustees share their observations in a stress-free way, and we will act upon the results.

We will be considerate of all trustees' circumstances and seek to be as inclusive as possible in all our decisions relating to the scheduling and style of our meetings, the circulation of meeting materials and other practical arrangements. Staff will at all times seek to support trustees and to remove burdens and barriers to enable them to give of their best in carrying out their trustee duty. And we will seek to provide appropriate emotional support for new trustees. We will make any reasonable adjustments in respect of interviews and meetings.

The Church Commissioners along with the other National Church Institutions have adopted Values and Generous Behaviours (see below) which make clear that it not just what we do that matters, but how we do it. We want our trustees' own experience working with us to be enhanced by the existence and observance of these Values by all their colleagues, and we also expect trustees to model the Values.

Finally, there will not be a time when this work is 'done'. This note is more than a to-do list. It is a statement of how we think about diversity, equity and inclusion and a snapshot of our ongoing efforts to improve continuously. It will be continually reviewed.

STAFF

Unlike our trustee roles, very few of our staff roles carry a religious faith requirement. We have talented, committed staff who come from a range of faiths and many with no faith and, regardless of this we all work to supporting the Church of England's mission and ministries. Whether staff are attracted by the opportunity to serve the Church specifically, or to work for a values-based organisation and apply our professional skills in a meaningful way, we all support an institution that makes a difference to society and we can all contribute to that making a difference in our own work.

Everything we say above about our commitment to (and the reasons for our commitment to) equality of opportunity and ensuring belonging and inclusion at trustee level applies equally to our recruitment of staff. Likewise all the principles and practices mentioned in the previous section – about intentionality and clarity in the skills we seek in recruitment, transparent and accessible application processes, consistent and fair shortlisting and interviewing, and thoughtful induction and training – apply here too. There follows some additional observations about our belonging and inclusion work as it relates to our staff:

- We have therefore developed a **Belonging & Inclusion strategy** which sets out the areas we believe will have the biggest impact on improving the diversity of our workforce and shaping the culture to ensure this is a place of belonging and inclusion for everyone.
- The Church Commissioners and other National Church Institutions have adopted shared **Values** (we strive for Excellence, we show Compassion, we Collaborate, we Respect others, we act with Integrity) and **Generous Behaviours** which fully reflect the Values: We are generous towards each other: we listen to and learn from each other in a spirit of humility; we are open and transparent in our communications; we celebrate each other's successes and work towards positive solutions together; and we are forgiving of each other's mistakes. These values and behaviours are explained further in an annex to this document.
- **Our aim** is for a workforce which represents the diversity of the nation that the Church serves, and that everyone in the workforce feels they belong, are valued for who they are and what they contribute, and are supported to develop and flourish. Helped by regular monitoring of workforce data we are taking actions to increase the number of people from under-represented groups in senior roles and to create career pathways – 'not only bringing people in but bringing people on'. We are taking action to ensure there are no significant disparities in pay, progression and retention rates and that everyone is able to grow, flourish and progress.
- And we are **committed to getting it right**. If behaviours fall below our Values we will not shy away from it but address it. We encourage any staff witnessing hurtful or discriminatory behaviour to speak up and we encourage all our colleagues to share the responsibility for tackling it.

- **We expect our senior leaders to demonstrate their commitment** to enabling and supporting belonging and inclusion and to be accountable for promoting and maintaining our commitment to treating each other with respect. What leaders say and do plays a significant part in forming our culture and signals to people what really matters to us as an organisation.
- We also believe in **celebration and stories** to ensure belonging in the workplace and support the staff diversity networks and communities of interest, events, blogs/ stories, all of which help our staff feel welcomed when they join us and enable us all to experience a vibrant and varied working life, celebrating what we have in common and honouring our differences.
- We also run a successful reciprocal **mentoring programme**, tailored to focus on individuals and their needs for development over a sustained period. It offers participants a safe space and time to be supported and challenged to explore their issues (for example challenging work/life balance, wellbeing issues or career planning).

Our Values and Generous Behaviours

Strive for excellence

- Be passionate about providing a high quality of service delivery to those we serve
- Take ownership for finding solutions to problems
- Be creative in trying new things that will improve our service
- Invite feedback and examples of excellence to learn from.

Show compassion

- Encourage and support colleagues, especially when times are hard
- Take time to actively listen, enabling others to be heard
- Recognise good work and show gratitude
- Appreciate each other as people with lives outside of work.

Respect others

- Value and embrace our different backgrounds and perspectives
- When we disagree, do so with respect
- Respect other people's time
- Address people as they want to be addressed.

Collaborate

- Seek ideas and input from people with different perspectives
- Pull together to get the best result for those we serve
- Stay connected and celebrate together often
- Proactively share information with other teams to avoid unnecessary work.

Act with integrity

- Keep the promises that we make
- Be clear about what we can and cannot do and allow others to do the same
- Learn from mistakes together
- Tell the truth courageously, even when it is difficult.

Our **Purpose**: We support the mission and ministries of the Church of England.

The **Church of England's vision** is to be a church for the whole nation, centred on Jesus Christ– a church that is simpler, humbler, bolder. www.churchofengland.org/vision