Inclusive or Exclusive: God or Man at the Centre of the Universe?

Annette Hannah,
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Dear reader,

In introducing this paper asking us to consider the language we use when we talk about God in our public worship and life, I would ask you to consider it in the framework of the mission of God in the world we are called to be involved in. There is much talk today about being a missional church and, at its core, that is about rethinking our theology in the light of the missionary context we now find ourselves in as western societies after a millennia and a half of Christendom. Our God talk needs to connect with and be able to be understood by those who have not been raised in the womb of the church as generations previous to us have been.

The early church recognised this and from Paul on through the early fathers drew on the language and metaphors of their Graeco-Roman cultural contexts to communicate what they believed had been revealed about God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and subsequent coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. That world was a patriarchial society, and while we can see significant challenges to and changes in how that was understood in the New Testament writings in the light of what was revealed through the life and teaching of Jesus, nevertheless the theological language used to talk about God in trinitarian terms was still developed using largely male and patriarchial terms and concepts. Interestingly it is clear this became more marked the longer the tradition was removed from the earliest period. Western society remained predominantly male dominated and patriarchial until well into the twentieth century and thus its language, both inside the church and in the wider society, was gendered. This framework has now been widely challenged, and in most areas is significantly changing, even if rather slowly for the liking of some. This can be seen in the inclusive language policies that most learning institutions have.

These issues mean that language which speaks about God in almost entirely male language and metaphors presents a gendered image of both God and Christianity to those outside of the Christian community. While we may believe that terms such as Father when applied to God have been completely redefined by Jesus and do not mean that God is male, this clearly is not understood by those outside of the church – and I might add, sadly, by many inside the church. The constant use of the pronoun "him" in referring to God reinforces this concept. For many women this is a barrier to their coming to an understanding of God as primarily love and experiencing the accepting grace that comes through Jesus Christ by the Spirit. But not only for women for many men also who have experienced fathers as abusive and controlling, it is hard to imagine a God who is Father (and therefore by definition male) as loving and gracious. I read a story of a minister in the Bronx, New York, where they were trying to rethink the language of the Lord's Prayer for their very violent community, and in the end came up with a beginning "God who is like a loving grandmother." It does not matter how much within the church we might believe that all these concepts and terms have been turned upside down and redefined by Jesus, if the continuing use of them means people cannot see beyond the language the God who Jesus reveals, then what have we gained apart from our own comfort from hearing terms that have meant much to us. Learning that is part of the journey of Christian discipleship, but people first have to "hear" the good news before they begin that.

So it is for the sake of the mission of God in our world through the church which I ask you to give serious thought to the issues raised in this paper, rather than dismiss them out of hand, because of some previously determined position, or worse still simply traditional usage.

Kevin Ward.
26th January 2009

Acknowledgement:

General Assembly 2010 Inclusive Language Recommendations passed Leadership Sub Committee

The language for God and people in public worship is an issue that previous Assemblies have debated and made policy on. Yet many continue to use exclusively male language and images for God with little realisation that this does not reflect the full revelation of Scripture and diminishes the self-worth of those who hear it with a sense of exclusion and alienation. With this in mind the Leadership Sub-Committee makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations:

A)   That the decision of the 1993 Assembly to encourage the use of Inclusive Language be reaffirmed.

B)   That the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership be asked to prepare study resources on Inclusive Language in consultation with the Leadership Subcommittee and the Doctrine Reference Group.

C)   That the Assembly decisions regarding Inclusive Language be commended to the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership and that the staff be encouraged to continue to teach sensitivity and care in the use of language, particularly in courses on preaching and worship.

D)   That the Assembly decisions regarding Inclusive Language be commended to the Church and encouragement given to be sensitive and careful in the use of language in our life and worship.

Inclusive or Exclusive: God or Man at the Centre of the Universe?

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Introduction
This paper arises out of a concern for the mission of God's church in what appears to be the increasing, rather than decreasing, use of male language for God in public worship; a concern for what this language says to those who are not part of the church, a concern that it acts as a barrier, hindering people from hearing the Gospel. Certainly this is a complex matter, involving theological, psychological and biblical issues. The Presbyterian church of New Zealand (PCANZ) recognized this in its six year debate, that finally led to the 1993 General Assembly decision not only to adopt a policy of inclusive language but to commit the church to monitor progress on this move. Our concern is that this does not seem to have been followed through.

Although there has been tacit assent in the PCANZ, and increasingly in society in Aotearoa New Zealand, to the use of inclusive language, this has largely been limited to language referring to people, and even here such changes have often been viewed as 'political correctness' rather than genuine attempts to be inclusive. Language for God has remained overwhelmingly male and any divergence has, for the most part, been met with resistance, although some theologians and some churches, both ministers and congregations, have engaged with the issue and come to a more just and transformative expression and understanding of the relationship between God, Christ, and humanity.

The Issue
The challenge to all writers, theologians and liturgists is to find language to talk about the mystery who is God, the divine, so far beyond all our human categories that any attempt to express this in words only results in limiting our understanding of God. Liturgists, who contribute to the very life-blood of worship, rely on images, including images of feminine as well as masculine imagery for God. . There are, of course, fine poets and liturgists whose language reflects the wonderful diversity that provides inspiration and guidance of how this can be achieved. However, many churches are still exclusively using male terms, male pronouns and male images for God, with little realization that this so often diminishes the self-worth of those who hear the language with a sense of exclusion and alienation.

There are, broadly speaking, two ways of understanding and implementing "inclusive" language.

- Does one use completely neutral terms for God, that is, neither male nor female terms? Certainly, neutral terms can be used effectively in relation to the person of God. It does, however, limit the wealth of metaphors that are valuable for our understanding of God and therefore our ability to describe more fully the nature of the God in whom we trust and believe.

- Or does one also draw upon female terms and feminine images to complement the masculine, in an effort to achieve a more balanced and nuanced, image of God? This option, of course, continues to speak of God in gendered terms, while recognizing that God is beyond gender. Yet, as Karen Bloomquist writes, "if we are to speak of the God revealed through the Bible, we cannot avoid using human vehicles, but a more balanced variety of symbols rather than nearly exclusively male ones can help circumvent the tendency to divinize the male at the expense of the female." [1]

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[1] Karen Bloomquist, " 'Let God be God': The Theological Necessity of Depatriarchalizing God," in Carl E. Braaten (ed.) *Our Naming of God: Problems and Prospects of God-Talk Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 45-60 (48).

48
Why Does This Matter?
This already alerts us to the problem: theology and the language used of God, not only in Christian worship but also in the creeds and doctrines, affects the way in which God and humanity are understood. Male language used exclusively for God results in a gendered theological understanding not only of God, but of humanity, reinforcing a gendered understanding that man and woman each stand in a different relationship to God and therefore, to each other. This, almost subliminal, message lies at the heart of our daily language, preaching, and worship.

Many people say, "I don't think of God as male, even though I use male terms for God" This is psychologically not possible. Our brain, memories, and language do not function in this way. In a test designed to see whether terms such as *man* and *his* could be understood or encoded as either feminine or masculine, i.e. perceived as generic for humanity, Sik Hung Ng found this was not so; not surprisingly, they were understood and encoded only as male.[2] A similar generic claim is frequently made for the words *Father* and *Him* referring to God. What happens, however, when we use the word *Father* for God, is that we draw upon and use our existing information about human fathers, what psychologists call *cognitive schemas,* in order to describe God.[3] As Karen Bloomquist writes, "if God is symbolized as 'Father', God is concretized in terms of the human relationship of father and child. *At the same time*, this human relationship is consecrated into a pattern of divine-human relationship, thereby giving fatherhood theonomous, sacramental depth."[4] The message this conveys is that

> God is male, or at least more like a man than a woman, or at least more fittingly addressed as male than as a female. The symbol of God functions. Upon examination it becomes clear that this exclusive speech about God serves in manifold ways to support an imaginative and structural world that excludes or subordinates women. Wittingly or not, it undermines women's human dignity as equally created in the image of God.[5]

As noted above, the exclusive use of the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" for God has the same effect. Historically, in patriarchal cultures such masculine terms were used in a generic sense, with the assumption that "he" or "man" included "she" or "woman". This was embedded into the English legal system by Parliament in 1850 "because men should 'naturally' take precedence".[6]

Consider the effect of the following sentence,

> … every New Zealander while showering and getting ready for his days work shaves his face and his legs, pulls on his coat and his pantyhose, and breastfeeds his baby as well as expresses off some milk for the daycare center before he sets off to face the challenges that man is required to face on a daily basis.

While this may seem a little humorous it does convey some sense of how male language, applied out of context, erases women.[7] Today exclusive language for human beings is no longer accepted linguistic

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[2] S. H. Ng, "Androcentric coding of man and his in memory by language users," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 26(2) (1990): 455-464.

[3] Schemas are used to anticipate situations, make attributions about ourselves and others, and generally determine and guide our behaviour. They are a shorthand way of understanding the world.

[4] Bloomquist, "Let God be God," 48.

[5] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is*: *The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 5.

[6] Letty M. Russell, *Household of Freedom, Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 45.

[7] As Dale Spender, *Man made language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) noted the use of words such as 'cockpit' for flight deck, "seminal" for important, "master" implying powerful, and "mistress" as sexual, provide some insight into the masculinisation of the world and suggested that language for women occupied negative semantic space.

88 practice. Most organisations have policies that require the use of gender inclusive language. Likewise,
89 bible translations have increasingly recognized the need for inclusive language. Few, however, have
90 extended this to language for God. As Paul Smith asks in regard to the NRSV, "why did they stop short
91 of doing the same thing with extensively masculine pronouns for God? Does the word "he" as
92 originally used for God in a strongly patriarchal society communicate the same meaning in our
93 egalitarian one?"[8] On the contrary, the constant use of masculine pronouns today implies that God is
94 only masculine and not feminine.
95
96 **Psychological Impact of Theology and Language on Men and Women**
97 It is not enough to presume that male language has no significant negative effect on women (or men).
98 The intrinsic and often unnamed psychological impact on women of a God expressed in male terms is
99 profound, and disturbing both from a Christian and an ethical viewpoint. As Elizabeth Johnson notes,
100
101   whether consciously or not, sexist God language undermines the human equality of women
102   made in the divine image and likeness. The result is broken community, human beings
103   shaped by patterns of dominance and subordination with attendant violence and suffering.[9]
104
105 The following quote is still currently relevant.
106
107   It is not only in the past, or only in Kabul, that there has been a refusal to accept women as
108   of equal human value, as having equal rights and equal potential compared with men. If in the
109   West equality of the genders is officially
110   pronounced and even largely put into practice, there remains in force
111   all sorts of glass ceilings which get in the way of women's full
112   equality.[10]
113
114 In a study of how images of God are understood in Aotearoa, Mary Betz writes,
115
116   sociologists note that changes in social structures and God images occur together. While
117   feminist theologians intuit that the world would be a better place with a change from
118   traditional God images, psychologists and this study have documented the increased well
119   being of women with positive and gender balanced or feminine God images.[11]
120
121 Much research has been done on the effect and use of gendered language on women and men. Such
122 studies indicate a positive correlation between loving God images and increased spiritual well-being,[12]
123 finding that both men and women who image God as masculine demonstrated greater mental health
124 issues than those who did not.[13] Another study by Eshleman *et al.* found that girls perceived more

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[8] Paul R. Smith, *Is it OK to call God Mother? Considering the Feminine Face of God* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1993), 34.

[9] Johnson, *She Who Is*, 18.

[10] Anke Schröder and Helmut Reich, "Eve's RE, not Adam's: A Lesson about Zelophehad's Daughters," *British Journal of Religious Education* 21.1 (1999): 90-100 (90).

[11] Mary Betz, *Who is God for us? Images of God in a group of Roman Catholic Lay women in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Ph.D. diss. University of Otago, NZ, 2003), 323.

[12] P. J. Bauman (1995) Correlations among marital intimacy, Object relations, Mental representations of God and Spiritual Wellbeing (Ph.D. diss. Boston University, 1995). Abstract cited online 13/11/09 in UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertations. http//wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/fullcit/9507136.

[13] S. S. Muhlenkort, *Object Relations and Images of the Divine* (Ph.D. diss, The Wright Institute, 1992). Abstract cited online 13/11/09 in UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertations. http//wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/fullcit/9228362.

125 distance from God when God is male.[14] A study by McMinn *et al.* found that male language for God
126 limits people's concept of God, that it carries masculine stereotypes of power while female language
127 for God emphasizes God's mercy. Interestingly, participants in this study preferred having a male God
128 presented with a female voice in the recorded vignette, rather than a female God presented with a male
129 voice.[15]
130
131 There is yet another aspect to this use of male language: "by drawing imagery and concepts for God
132 almost exclusively from the world of ruling men, inherited speech functions effectively to grant a
133 theomorphic character to men who rule but that relegate women, children, and other men to the
134 deficient margins."[16] This patterning is difficult to resist, for as Spilka *et al.* note, "[s]ocial disapproval
135 and ostracism are strong weapons for shaping thought and action." [17]
136
137 These studies indicate that women are conditioned to behave, to think, and to accept certain limitations
138 even if this is achieved in a more covert, passive aggressive manner in today's world. Male language
139 and the power imbalance that it indicates and legitimates is still a powerful tool against women. On the
140 other hand, one can readily cite women who manage to function skillfully in the church, despite these
141 covert messages. Its full effect, however, can be as limiting as the example cited by Carol Gilligan of a
142 woman saying after her divorce, "[a]s a woman, I feel I never understood that I was a person, that I can
143 make decisions and I have a right to make decisions. I always felt that that belonged to my father or my
144 husband in some way, or church, which was always represented by a male clergyman."[18] (See appendix
145 C: Religion and Health for further information)
146
147 **Where Are the Roots of this Exclusive Language for God to be Found?**
148 Historically, the use of the term 'father' for God follows the words of Jesus, addressing God as 'abba'.
149 For Jesus, this is understandable, for as Paul Smith, a US Southern Baptist minister, points out,
150
151   *Calling God mother in a culture which considered women the property of their husbands would*
152   *be like calling God "slave" instead of "master*." But, of course, Jesus was about to change even
153   the slavery image because he took on the form of a slave and forever changed our
154   understanding of God.[19]
155
156 We will never know whether Jesus did ever call God mother, as the terms that Jesus himself used are
157 difficult to verify from the New Testament accounts, [20] although the tradition, particularly in the Gospel
158 of Matthew, has Jesus speaking himself as Divine Wisdom, the figure who appears as female in
159 Proverbs 1-9, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon.[21] It is understandable that the early church wished to

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[14] A. K. Eshleman, J. R. Dickie, D. M. Merasco, A. Shepard, M. Johnson, "Mother God, Father God: Children's perceptions of God's distance," *The International Journal of Psychology of Religion*, 9 (1999), 139-146.

[15] M. R. McMinn, Sonja DB, Marcia AT, Wesley EH, Paul GH, "The effects of God language on perceived attributes of God," *Journal of Psychology and Theology,* 21.4 (1993): 309-314.

[16] Johnson, *She Who Is*, 18.

[17] B. Spilka, R. W. Hood Jr, B. Hunsberger and R. Gorsuch R. (2003). The Psychology of Religion. New York: Guilford Press.

[18] Carol Gilligan," In a different voice: Women's conceptions of self and of Morality," *Harvard Educational Review* 47.4 (1977). 487.

[19] Smith, *Is it okay to call God Mother?* 144.

[20] Biblical scholars' conclusions over the 'authentic' words of Jesus continue to be debated. See R. Gorsuch, *Integrating Psychology and Spirituality* (London: Praeger, 2002), 96, "[f]irst, the explanations are ex post facto. Second, there are too many alternative explanations that could explain the data. Unfortunately these scholars have not realized some limits of human judgment that psychologists have been forced to acknowledge. Without that realization, it is easy for us humans to assume we know more than we really know."

[21] See Celia Deutsch, "Jesus as Wisdom: A Feminist Reading of Matthew's Wisdom Christology," in Amy-Jill Levine (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Matthew* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2001), 88-113.

grant authority to the language they had inherited from the Jesus tradition, which, of course, had been written down and filtered by those who held the power of the pen. It was this culturally refined memory that became the institutionalized expression.

Joachim Jeremias in a 'seminal' work noted that Jesus' use of father, when speaking of God, appears only three times in Mark, the gospel considered closest in time to Jesus' ministry, four times in material common to Matthew and Luke, four times in material peculiar to Luke, but a hundred times in John.[22] It would seem that 'father' for God was used more frequently the further removed the writings were from Jesus' own lifetime. So there would appear to be a clear distinction between Jesus' use of father and the tradition of early Christianity. This tendency has continued to gain momentum to the present time.

The tradition of male language for God was further determined by the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Nicene Creed, formulated by the church Fathers in their concern to create a standard against which heresy could be identified. These formulations have continued to embody the essence of Christian tradition, identifying God according to the gendered world of early male clerics. Once again, the further removed from Jesus' time, the more masculine has become the image of God.[23] Nor is it all a matter of early history: Ruth Duck suggests that theological trends in the 19th and 20th centuries led to an increasing use of "Father" as a metaphor for God. She quotes Paul Schilling,

> Seen as a whole, the hymns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contain even more sexist language than their predecessors. Ironically, lyrics influenced by the rise of the social gospel are probably the greatest offenders.[24]

Biblical Writers and Gendered Language
The biblical writers were themselves aware of the power of gendered language. The "marriage" imagery introduced by Hosea in chs. 1-3, gains much of its force by addressing Israel as the wayward bride of God, which meant that the Israelite male audience heard themselves shockingly addressed as female. God was male but they were not![25] These ancient prophets knew that language is powerful and radically affects one's sense of self-identity.

The priestly liturgist of Genesis 1 was also aware of gender: humans are created in the image of God, and they are created as male and female. Whether or not the priestly writer would have thought in this way, one may surely draw from this, as Pamela Allen writes, "if women and men are equals, lovingly created in the image of God, then God may be imaged in feminine as well as masculine terms."[26] Indeed Jurgen Moltmann goes as far as to say that it is only as two fully "equal" before God, yet also

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[22] Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Studies in Biblical theology 2(6); London: SCM Press, 1967).

[23] Ruth C. Duck, *Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1991), 79.

[24] Duck, *Gender and the Name of God,* 78. S. Paul Schilling, *The Faith We Sing* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 216. Duck, 79, also refers to J. Frank Henderson a member of the International Commission on English in Liturgy (ICEL) who found that whereas "Father" was used four times in Roman missal collects before the 20th century, the 1970 Roman missal (Latin edition) addressed God as "*pater*" in 22 of fifteen hundred collects and when translated into English was used in 555 collects! The social gospel use of the phrase "the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man" was significant in this development.

[25] When the human male and the divine male are fused together as in Hosea 2, the abusive violence of the imagery directed at the female has dangerous implications for women.

[26] Pamela Payne Allen, "Taking the Next Step in Inclusive Language," *Christian Century* (April 23, 1986), 410. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 74-75, makes the same point.

196 differentiated, is humanity reflective of God's glory.[27]
197
198 While male images predominate, there are also those that draw upon the female. The poems that hymn
199 the divine Wisdom in Proverbs, for example, use the metaphorical and personified female figure as the
200 symbol of God's wisdom, without apology or qualification. Nor is there any problem here with
201 pronouns: the Hebrew has all the prefixes and suffixes clearly feminine. While these do not draw upon
202 mother imagery, "[i]n texts widely scattered throughout the Hebrew Scriptures different aspects of
203 being a mother – conceiving, being pregnant, going into labor, delivering, midwifing, nursing, carrying,
204 rearing – become metaphors pointing to God's ways of relating to the world." [28] These readily provide
205 biblical warrant for the use of such images today. Murray Rae, for example, in an article on the
206 atonement, draws on maternal imagery in referring to God's divine passion in the death of Christ,
207 holding together God's work in creation and redemption, as that of a woman in travail.[29]

Recent Background History of the Move to Inclusive Language
209 The Committee on Women in Church and Society and the Church Worship Committee raised the
210 matter of inclusive language in worship in their reports to the 1984 General Assembly (GA). In 1985
211 the report noted that "[t]he unthinking leader of worship may very well conduct a service that is
212 completely male oriented… (and) so often imply that only male worshippers are present and are of any
213 value." A booklet from the Methodist Church in NZ, *Guidelines for Inclusive Language* was made
214 available and widely distributed. At the 1987 GA a motion was passed to "urge Presbyteries and
215 Parishes to use inclusive language in all services of worship wherever it is sensitive and appropriate to
216 do so." In 1988 the following motion was passed: "Whilst affirming the value of the Church using
217 inclusive language in reference to people, the Assembly request that the Doctrine Committee examine
218 the theological implications of the use of inclusive language in reference to God as revealed in Jesus
219 Christ," a motion that expresses the crux of the matter. The 1990 GA resolved, "[t]hat this 1990
220 Assembly reaffirm the position taken at the 1988 Assembly, which encouraged the use of inclusive
221 language in all publications and services of worship." Although the original motion advocated a
222 monitoring process to ensure it happened, this was removed from the final form. Finally, at the 1993
223 GA, inclusive language in worship was again affirmed and the Church Worship Committee was invited
224 "to monitor our use of language" and "help us to maintain this commitment". Yet despite the
225 distribution of inclusive language guidelines (see Appendix D), in 1994 the Doctrine Committee noted
226 that language about God and patriarchy was an area that still needed addressing.
227
228 The issues around gender and language seem to have moved out of General Assembly discussion from
229 this point on. Does the 1988 request to the Doctrine Committee to examine the theological implications
230 of the use of inclusive language in reference to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and the 1994 note by
231 the Church Worship Committee of the need to examine language about God and patriarchy, indicate
232 that the inclusive language guidelines did not necessarily address this area, or were they simply
233 disregarded?
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235 These debates were not only held in New Zealand; one particular study was commissioned by the
236 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and published in 1982, because a woman dared address

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[27] See J. Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 285.
[28] Johnson, *She Who Is*, 100. She quotes Dt 32:18, Isa 42:14; 49: 15; 63:13, Ps.22: 1, 9-10. Hos 11:34 is another such. See also Virginia Ramey Molenkott, *The Divine Feminine: Biblical Imagery of God as Female* (New York: Crossroad, 1984).
[29] Murray Rae, "The Travail of God," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5.1 (2003): 47-61.

237 God in prayer as "God our Mother."[30] As the report on the Scottish commission was written by one of
238 the three men on the committee, even though it included seven women, it is questionable whether the
239 women's voices are to be heard. What is written is:
240
241   Instead of repudiating belief in and language about God our Father, as a means to making
242   the church a community in which women enjoy full equality with men, we should on the
243   contrary emphasis the Fatherhood of God all the more, since all that Christ reveals of that
244   father stands in contradiction of masculine domination. Our group thus wholeheartedly re-
245   affirms the traditional way of describing and addressing God as Father. [31]
246
247 The report conceded that one could call God a "Motherly Father," as "to call God Mother would be
248 illegitimate and cause hurt" (65). Because God is not male, that makes it all right to use male terms for
249 God, because these male terms are radically redefined by God! This, of course, begs the question as to
250 whether these terms are, or can be, radically redefined by men and women. Although the aim was to
251 create a community in which women would enjoy equality, they decided the way to do this was to re-
252 emphasis the fatherhood of God! As the studies referred to above have indicated, as people use what is
253 known to define what is not known, masculine terms for God are naturally understood in line with the
254 normal male masculine understandings of their culture. (See appendix B: Promise Keepers)
255
256 Inclusive language was seen worldwide as a significant issue in the 1980s and much was written, in
257 books, papers, articles and church study material. There was an awareness of how the maleness of the
258 trinitarian terms, largely used as a baptismal formula from early church times, sounded very clearly
259 when the baptized were female.[32] Inclusively worded liturgies appeared. Pamela Allen quotes just three
260 of the many using complementary gender terms, in these instances balancing the father/mother terms.[33]
261
262   "We believe in God, who is like a good mother or father, near to us, and strong to help us"
263   (*Hymnal for Worship,* James W. Gunn, editor: Program Committee for Professional Church
264   Leadership, National Council of Churches, 1982)
265   Gracious God of the loving heart, by whom all fatherhood and motherhood is named,
266   Source of our own creation, you whose Trinity of persons all human bonding and richness
267   of human community reflects, may your name be praised! ... Because of the boundlessness
268   of your love, you opened your womb, pouring forth your own inner life, giving birth to the
269   world, and bestowing on it life like your own ... *[Flames of the Spirit,* edited by Ruth C.
270   Duck (Pilgrim, 1985), 971].

271   Holy and Living God, Father of life and light, weaving space and time, only source of
272   everything that is, set us free from all false gods to worship you alone ... God our Mother,
273   you give birth to all life, and love us to the uttermost. Your love surrounds us and feeds us.
274   Within your love we find our home, our joy, our freedom. [Copyright © Brian Wren,
275   1982].

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[30] While this might seem humorous, women studying theology and training for the ministry at that time in New Zealand were still not allowed to eat their meals with the men in the Knox College dining room (this didn't change till 1986). They were, however, allowed to take a tray to the men's bedrooms!

[31] A. E. Lewis, *The Motherhood of God* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 28. The title here is misleading as the report is more about the fatherhood of God than a genuine exploration of God's motherhood.

[32] See Duck, *Gender and the Name of God,* for an excellent discussion and suggested possible Trinitarian reformulations for baptism.

[33] Pamela Payne Allen, "Taking the Next Step in Inclusive Language," *Christian Century* (April 23, 1986).

Understanding How Language Works

A key to understanding the effects of exclusive language is understanding how language itself works. There are, of course, different theoretical approaches.

(a)   *Language as a system of difference.* Theorists who draw on the structural linguistic work of Ferdinand de Saussure, understand language as a system of relationships, where words gain meaning through reference to other words: "a given word is defined by what *differentiates* it from related words."[34] When the term 'father' is used, rather than 'parent', a significant understanding is that what is meant is specifically the male parent and not the female. The use of the male pronoun, which is much more prevalent in liturgies and hymns can likewise be heard as differentiating, and so virtually erasing the female. For many, these small words assail with an unwanted and unwarranted punch. What is heard and understood affects the listener's thinking about themselves and their relationships and place in the world.

Language meaningful through association. Words become meaningful through associations, as readers draw upon their own experiences. Male participants are able to associate "father" with their own human roles, or those of their fathers, whereas, without the accompanying "mother", many women hear their particular roles significantly diminished. To use masculine images of God and then, in the same breath, say that God is not defined as male poses a difficulty indeed. Even though we might intellectually tell ourselves that God is not male, we are led by this language to see God as like a man.

Language for God by way of analogy. Another discussion understands language for God as meaningful only through analogy, implying that any words "can be applied literally, but only to a specified degree or with certain limitations or qualifications."[35] This draws on a solution proposed by Aquinas: as Grace Jantzen explains, " 'we can name God only from creatures' – we have no source of language other than human experience – the application of a word to God will be different, but yet not utterly different, from, its application to finite beings."[36] How were these words to be chosen? Jantzen (177) draws attention to the influence of the medieval concept of a " 'great chain of being' according to which all things participate in the divine being in a graded sequence … The things nearest the top of this hierarchy were therefore most godlike, and terms drawn from them … would arguably be most fitting for God." Not surprisingly, in the context of the time, men headed this hierarchical chain. Jantzen's point is that although we no longer think in these terms, or accept such a notion as a chain of being, we maintain the gendered language that rests on such an understanding and leads to stereotypical thinking and behaviour.

(b)   *Language for God as Metaphor.* Many would agree with G. B. Caird, "all, or almost all, of the language used by the Bible to refer to God is metaphor." [37] In Colin Gunton's words, "metaphor is used as the *vehicle* of discovery." [38] This denies any literal application, metaphor being a "figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another … in such a way as to create new meaning."[39] The distinctive boundaries that existed before now collapse into a new

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[34] David Jobling, "Structuralist Criticism: The Text's World of Meaning," in Gale A. Yee (ed.), *Judges & Method: New Approaches to Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 91-118 (93). See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. Roy Harris; London: Duckworth, [1972] 1983), 6.

[35] Grace M. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 184,

[36] Jantzen, *Becoming Divine,* 176, referring to Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia.13.5: For in analogies the idea is not, as it is in univocal's, one and the same. Yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals, but the name which is thus used in a multiple sense signifies various proportions to some one thing."

[37] G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 18-19.

[38] Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 31.

[39] Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor And Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 15.

316 vision, with fresh associations. This newness, however, does not entirely erase "the ordinary reference
317 of words; its shock or surprise and its meaning depend on the preservation, as well as the deformation,
318 of established meanings."[40]
319
320 As with analogy, here too, many of these biblical metaphorical terms are derived from human life and
321 experience. This, again, is not surprising, "[t]he human body, senses and personality are the objects
322 with which we have the most direct, first-hand acquaintance, and the cognitive principle of proceeding
323 from the known to the unknown makes it natural for human beings to see the rest of the world in the
324 light of that experience."[41] As the scribes responsible for these biblical writings were male, they quite
325 naturally tended to choose male terms, conveying a male God. For, as the realist philosopher Hilary
326 Putnam points out, it "is not that language mirrors the world but that *speakers* mirror the world; i.e.
327 their environment - in the sense o*f constructing a symbolic representation of that environment.*"[42]
328
329 What happens with metaphors that become part of everyday speech, is that unfortunately they begin to
330 lose their metaphorical sense. So for example, Carl Braaten explains, "in the cultic context of primitive
331 Christianity, the 'Father' symbol loses its metaphorical load of meaning associated with patriarchy and
332 masculine characteristics and begins to be used as a proper name together with Son and Holy Spirit."[43]
333
334 Allied to this feature of "dead metaphor" is the refusal of some to recognize the metaphorical or
335 analogical use of God language at all, so that 'Father' is said to be the only 'proper name' for God.[44]
336 Gunton suggests that this kind of rationalism "wants to find privileged types of words and ways of
337 discovery which give direct access to reality and are, at least in principle, immune from error."[45] Some
338 have expressed the concern that if God is not called 'Father' how are they to know whether they are
339 referring to the God of Jesus Christ rather than any of a pantheon of gods. Yet the New Testament
340 writers, in a world with a considerable pantheon, seemed to have little difficulty in using a rich variety
341 of terms, alongside a limited use of "Father".
342
343 **Theological Issues.**
344 A different approach bypasses the matter of language *per se*, on the understanding that God through
345 Jesus revealed the name of "Father," so providing a prescriptive rather than descriptive formula.
346
347   The Christian naming of God "Father Son and Spirit" is … an event that arises in response
348   to God's self-communication in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. [46]
349
350 Yet while in the gospel *tradition,* and particularly in John's Gospel, 'Father' is the term Jesus uses for
351 God, there is little evidence in the New Testament as a whole of the term being regarded as exclusively
352 prescriptive. For instance, there are eleven prayers recorded outside of the gospels, and in none of them

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[40] Lynn M. Poland, *Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 113.
[41] Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*,173-174.
[42] Hilary Putnam, "Realism and Reason," *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 123-38 (123). So, too, Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor And Religious Language*, 150, 149, "it is not words but speakers using words who refer, and … speakers use words according to established patterns of investigation and interest."
[43] Carl E. Braaten, "The Problem of God Language Today," in idem (ed.), *Our Naming of God: Problems and Prospects of God-Talk Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 11-33 (32).
[44] See Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement,* 30, "*unless it ceases to be a metaphor it cannot tell the truth"* (author's italics).
[45] Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement,* 38. "The result is too much is attributed to mental operations and concepts, too little to the interaction of the world, bodily sense and reason that is required by the more indirect relationship revealed by attention to the central place that metaphor plays in our conversation with our world."
[46] Braaten, "The Problem of God Language Today," 33.

353 is 'Father' used as an address for God.[47] As noted above, there have been recent moves by liturgists to
354 express the triune nature of God inclusively, using terms such as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.
355 Janet Martin Soskice suggests "there is no reason why such three fold invocations should not have their
356 place in worship where the theological balance is kept."[48] The concern here is a possible collapse into
357 tri-theism, and the necessity of avoiding any suggestion that, "it is only the first person who creates,
358 only the second who redeems, and the third who sustains."[49] The problem is that the terms that refer to
359 particular actions could be attributed to separate 'persons' of the Trinity, rather than expressing the
360 triune ontology or Being of God.

362 However, it would seem that the psychological priming of male roles and thought schemas associated
363 particularly with 'Father' and 'Son" leads equally to a tri-theistic collapse.[50] But, as Soskice points out,
364 that depends on associating the persons of the Trinity with human male equivalents, whereas, "it is the
365 doctrine of the Trinity which saves the Christian doctrine of God from stifling androcentrism" (i.e.
366 malecenteredness). For,

368   First and foremost the doctrine preserves the otherness of God – that is, it frees us from the
369   gross anthropocentrism which is ever a threat to religion. The triune God is not male …
370   Even though God became incarnate in the man, Jesus Christ, God is not a creature at all, far
371   less a male creature.[51]

373 Yet it would seem to take some considerable mental gymnastics to separate the theological intention
374 underlying the Trinitarian formulation, so central to a Christian understanding of God, from the
375 language in which this intention is expressed. Indeed, the terms Father and Son would more naturally
376 imply an androcentric hierarchical relationship. The consequences of this can clearly be seen in those
377 who argue, on this basis, for a hierarchical nature of human relationships, in particular female to male.
378 The question remains: is the doctrine dependent on the language? Is God only to be known through
379 such Father, Son, terms?

381 **Conclusion**
382 A paper, "The Trinity: God's Love Overflowing," which has recently been produced by a group of
383 theologians and ministers in the Presbyterian Church in the USA, who spent many years wrestling with
384 this issue, provides a possible way forward. They advocate, rather than never speaking of the Trinity as
385 Father, Son and Holy Spirit or of only using that terminology, taking a middle ground, whereby, while
386 recognizing the traditional masculine Trinitarian expression as an indispensible anchor for our efforts
387 to speak faithfully of God, we are also "[f]reed to speak faithfully and amply of the mystery of the
388 Trinity. We may cultivate a responsible trinitarian imagination and vocabulary that bears witness in
389 different ways to the one triune God …"[52] Furthermore,

390

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[47] These are Acts 1.24, 4.24, 7.59-69, 10.13-14; 1 Cor 16.22; Rev 4.11, 11.16-17, 15.3, 16.5, 16.7, Rev 22.20. Paul in Rom 8.15 and Gal 4.6 does write of the Spirit enabling us to cry "*Abba,* Father" which may indicate it being used in prayer. But still the remarkable fact is that "There are no accounts in the New Testament of anyone but Jesus addressing God as Father!" (Smith, *Is It OK To Call God Mother?*, 83).

[48] Janet Martin Soskice, "Trinity and Feminism," in Susan Frank Parsons (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 135-150 (142).

[49] Soskice, "Trinity and Feminism," 142.

[50] 'Spirit' is to some extent freer from direct relationships but when referred to by male pronouns is hierarchically associated with the Father or the Son.

[51] Soskice, "Trinity and Feminism," 139. As she notes, the baptismal formula uses the term " 'in the Name' (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and not 'in the names' (plural) of two men and a mysterious third."

[52] "The Trinity: God's Love Overflowing", (2006), 7.
http://www.pcusa.org/theologyandworship/issues/trinityfinal.pdf. Accessed 14/12/2009.

391   Rather than simply repeating the word "God" in prayer and liturgy, we are free to broaden our
392   vocabulary for speaking of the triune God, emboldened by the rich reservoir of biblical and
393   traditional terms, images, and metaphors.[53]
394

395 The broadening that this paper advocates is significant, for as we have argued, there is a riskiness in
396 using the male terms of the Trinity alone, with the natural inference and implication that God is male.
397 One cannot abstract words out of the human cultural context, which continues to give these words
398 meaning, and say they mean something else entirely different: 'father' is inherently male. To repeat the
399 point made earlier, while the early church fathers stated that the term Father was not analogous to any
400 human father, it is psychologically difficult, if not impossible, for people in today's world to use the
401 term and not infer the similarity of human fathers to God and God to human fathers. To put it bluntly: it
402 would seem that God as "Man" remains at the centre of the theological and semantic universe. If we
403 wish to maintain a Christocentric theology where Jesus radically challenges all our categories and
404 perspectives and is seen to be on the side of the oppressed then this distorted image of "God-Man"
405 needs to be displaced, for such language, that harms both women and men, does not cohere with
406 Christ's mission.

407

408 It is this life-giving mission that the language of our doctrines, creeds, statements of faith, hymns and
409 prayers need to reflect. There is a wealth of resources, in the writings from a range of disciplines, on
410 which we can draw to inform our thinking, and a rich wealth of imagery, both biblical and other, on
411 which we can draw to enhance our worship experience. Therefore alongside 'some' use of Father, we
412 are calling for a much more diverse and rich variety of feminine, masculine, and neutral terms and
413 metaphors for God, as appropriate in the worship of the God of Jesus Christ in whom we trust, and who
414 holds us in a loving and abounding Grace.

415

416 This paper, which does not pretend to cover the issues in depth, is a call to decision and action for
417 nonsexist, inclusive and emancipatory language use in public worship. The proactive decision has
418 already been made by the PCANZ General Assembly, now we need to turn intention into action for the
419 sake of the church's role in God's ongoing mission in the world and future mission of the church.

420

421 Let us put God who is the Holy one of Israel, the Christ of history and the Spirit of all that has Being at
422 the centre of our thinking, our talking and our worship.

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[53] "The Trinity: God's Love Overflowing", (2006), 7. This document also has excellent worship resources.

Appendix A: The Role of Women in the Church

Following developments in other areas of society in the years following World War II, and partly as a result of the wider contribution women had made in many different areas during the war years, the place and role of women in the church began to be raised. In 1948 the PCANZ General Assembly (GA) set up a special committee "to investigate and report on ways by which women may be given a voice in the courts of the church and what constitutional changes are required to secure this end. At the 1953 GA amendments were brought for the Book of Order to allow for women elders, and this was approved in 1955.

In 1958 GA debated the question of the admission of women to Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This was approved in principle by the 1961 GA, and in 1964 amendments to the Book of Order were approved, and women admitted to the ordained ministry. Although the way had been opened for women to participate in all leadership roles in the church, this was not the end of the debate. The report from "Women in Church and Society" to the GA in 1985 expressed concern that at three consecutive Assemblies (1982, 1983, 1984) there had been major debates about the ordination of women to eldership and Ministry of Word and Sacrament, and that there was a group within the PCNZ who were consistently working to impose their view that women should not be ordained or hold any leadership role.

In 1981(2009) there were 50(68) ordained women ministers, 26 (61) in parish ministry, and 425 (225) ordained men ministers in parish ministry and (28) men in non parish ministries. In 1981 women constituted 11% and in 2009, 21% of those in ordained ministry.

Appendix B: Promise Keepers

When men are given theological agency over women the outcome is not good for women (Ephesians 5: 24-33). At this point it is important to mention the Promise Keepers men's movement. While many men are seeking community and learning responsible behaviours rather than abdicating their responsibilities as husbands and fathers, the ideological framework on which these admirable virtues are expounded is worrying and a return to unthinkable consequences for women, when taken literally.

Literal interpretation ie. one can see that men are dominant in most societies therefore this is their God ordained rightful place is based on 'natural' theological interpretations Linda Kintz[54] discusses in detail many of the Promise Keepers writings, and quotes Stu Weber[55] as saying "Women need to nurture and savor relationships and memories; men need to conquer and provide. That is a lesson that comes directly from the Bible, whose truths do not come to us hermeneutically through interpretation but literally through revelation: "Every major tenant [sic] of our faith is a matter of *revelation* not explanation. We know what we know by taking Him at His Word. We apprehend His intensions and affirm our allegiance by believing what He says"(88). And what he says is that "woman was made for man, not man for woman"(108). This literality is also applied to the naming of Father Son and Spirit.

A current case in point of the use or misuse of Father God theology and imagery is clearly seen in the current Destiny Church where 700 men signed a covenant oath of loyalty and obedience, to defer to, respect, praise, the self appointed Bishop Brian Tamaki as the "tangible expression of God" who proclaims himself as the church's "spiritual father" and designated the male members as "spiritual sons."[56] Women don't figure in this picture. While similar to the Promise Keepers theology Tamaki is

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[54] Linda Kintz, "Tender Warriors," in Elizabeth Castelli (ed.) *Women*, *Gender, Religion: a Reader* (Palgrave MacMillan 1997), 492-517.
[55] Stu Weber, *Tender Warrior: God's intention for a man* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1993), 13.

[56] http://www.nzherald.co.nz/news Cited online 29/10/2009.

468 the new mob leader who so far is leading his male members in a by and large positive direction, but at
469 the same time removing any agency for 'their' women that is not approved of by men.
470
471 **Appendix C: Religion and Health**
472 Religion, far from being the Freudian 'obsessional neurosis' of earlier decades has been found to have
473 a positive impact on believers general mental health resulting in 80% greater life satisfaction (79/100
474 studies);83% predicted greater well being (10/12 studies);3 studies show greater hope and optimism;
475 greater purpose and meaning in life (15/16 studies); 35of 69 studies found a lower level of anxiety or
476 fear, while 10 studies found greater anxiety in the more religious. Less depression and suicide, fewer
477 people likely to abuse alcohol or take drugs particularly adolescents and young people (89 studies).[57]
478
479 However worldwide, "Unipolar Depression is the number one cause of years lost due to disability with
480 the burden of depression 50% higher for females than males. Females also have a higher burden from
481 anxiety disorders, migraine, and Alzheimer and other dementias. In contrast, the male burden for
482 alcohol and drug use is nearly seven times that of females and accounts for almost one third of male
483 neuropsychiatric burden" (WHO 2004)[58]. For females depression begins in adolescence and increases
484 during the child bearing and rearing years and then decreases in older age.
485
486 The WHO statistics are mirrored in the NZ setting with rates of depression (major episodic and
487 dysthymia) and specific and generalised anxiety disorders higher for women and alcohol and substance
488 abuse/dependence disorders are higher for men.[59] The core dysfunction in depression is a negative view
489 of self, and the world, resulting in a sense of hopelessness for their future. The core dysfunction in
490 anxiety disorders is fear due to an irrational sense of threat to life resulting in constant worry and
491 avoidance of feared situations which worsens the anxiety. "They commonly think that the seed of their
492 disorder lies within their own nature, personality, or temperament…and inability to cope with it."[60]
493 Anxiety is often present long before depression develops.
494
495 In Aotearoa New Zealand one women is killed every twelve and a half days, mostly by men with
496 whom they are, or have been, in relationship. There is also a significant rise in the amount of violence
497 perpetrated by women in community samples (not in criminal samples), where they are fighting or
498 fighting back, contributing possibly to more brutal attacks and death. As one male offender stated, "if
499 she would have just done as she was told none of this would have happened ..."[61] The 'this' being
500 grievous bodily harm. Echoes of Ephesians 5? Taking religious sayings, injunctions and applying them
501 in a literal or legalistic sense goes against what most of us would see as the central teaching of Jesus.
502 Abuse of women and children has been found to be highest among alcoholics and the "next highest
503 incidence of incest and physical abuse takes place in intact, highly religious homes."[62] It seems then
504 that Ruth Duck sums up the situation correctly, when she writes that "[u]ntil patriarchal patterns are

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[57] H. G. Koenig, D. B. Larson, "Religion and Mental Health: Evidence for an Association," *International Review of Psychiatry* (2001): 13, 67-78.

[58] World Health Organisation website: http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/2004_report Cited on line 13/11/09.

[59] M. A. Oakely-Browne, P. R. Joyce, J. E. Wells, J. A. Bushnell, A. R. Hornblow, "Christchurch Psychiatric Epidemiology Study, Part II: Six Month and Other Period Prevalences of Specific Psychiatric Disorders," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 23 (1989): 327-340.

[60] G. Andrews, R. Crina, C. Hunt, L. Lampe, and A. Page, *The treatment of Anxiety Disorders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 12.

[61] In personal conversation with the writer.

[62] Mary Stewart van Leewen, *Gender and Grace: Women and Men in a Changing World* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1990), 119,170.

505   only a part of past history and not present reality, predominant use of parental imagery endangers
506   children and endangers the faith response."[63]

---

[63] Duck, *Gender and the Name of God*, 182.

Appendix D: Worship Resources

Liturgy/Prayer

All Desires Known, Janet Morley, SPCK, 1992

Out of the Silence Prayers Daily Round   Jim Cotter and Paul Payton, Cairns Publications 2006*(a rewriting/'unfolding' of the Psalms)*

Deep Waters Trisha Watts CD and Song Book available from Willow Resources (see Iona section)

Seeing Christ in others: An anthology for worship, meditation and mission Geoffrey Duncan ed., Canterbury Press, 1998

Tranquil Moments: the poetry of prayer Brian Hardie, Steele Roberts (NZ) , 2002

Praying like a woman Nicola Slee, SPCK 2004

Seven Songs of Creation: Liturgies for Celebrating and Healing Earth Norman Habel, Pilgrim Press, 2004

Australian Prayers Bruce D. Prewer, Open Book 1983

Sanctuary: Where heaven touches earth (Prayer Rituals) Trisha Watts and Gabrielle Lord, Willow Publishing, 2005

 Come and See: Reflections on the life of Jesus among us Joy Cowley, Pleroma Christian Supplies, 2008

Books by Dorothy McRae-McMahon, retired Minister from the Uniting Church in Australia. She is an internationally recognized creator and writer of religious rituals and the first woman to be a Moderator of the World Council of Churches Worship Committee

Echoes of our Journey: Liturgies of the people JBCE, 1993

The Glory of blood sweat and tears: liturgies for living and dying JBCE 1996.

Liturgies for the journey of life SPCK 2000

Prayers for Life's particular moments Desbooks, 2001

Rituals for life, love and loss Jane Curry Publishing, 2003

Liturgies for Daily Life, SPCK, 2004

New Zealand Hymns

New Zealand Hymn Book Trust PO Box 4142 Manawatu Mail Centre, New Zealand;
www.hymns.org.nz; info@hymns.org.nz phone 06-356 9681; fax 06-356 9687

559 *Alleluia Aotearoa* (hymn book; CD of choir and congregation performances of a selection of hymns)
560
561 *Faith Forever Singing* (hymn book; CD of choir and congregation performances of a selection of
562 hymns)
563
564 *Carol our Christmas* (hymn book; CD of choir and congregation performances of a selection of hymns)
565
566 *Hope is our Song* (hymn book - CDs expected to be released soon)
567
568 CDs *Singing Faith* and *Singing Love* accompaniments for Shirley Murrays and Colin Gibsons hymns
569
570
571 **Hymns by Brian Wren**
572
573
574 **Iona Community Resources - a selection.** Available from Willow Connection Pty. Ltd, Unit 4A, 3-9
575 Kenneth Road, Manly Vale NSW 2093, Australia.; Pleroma Christian Supplies, Higginson St, Otane,
576 4170 Hawkes Bay NZ.   See also www.ionabooks.com
577
578 *Prayers/Liturgies/Meditations*
579
580 *The Pattern of our Days* ed. Kathy Galloway 1996.
581
582 *Each Day and Each Night: a weekly cycle of prayers from Iona in the Celtic Tradition* by J. Philip
583 Newell 1994.
584
585 *Iona Abbey Worship Book, 2001*
586
587 *Blessed be our table: Graces for mealtimes and reflections on food,* Neil Paynter 2003
588
589 *A wee worship book* 1999.
590
591 *Holy Ground: Liturgies and worship resources for an engaged spirituality* Neil Paynter & Helen
592 Boothroyd, 2005
593
594 *He was in the world* by John L. Bell 1995
595
596 *Stages on the way: Worship resources for Lent, Holy Week and Easter* 1998.
597
598 *Present on Earth: Worship resources on the life of Jesus* 2002
599
600 *Dandelions and Thistles: Biblical meditations from the Iona Community* Jan Sutch Pickard 1999
601
602 *Cloth for the Cradle: Worship resources and readings for Advent, Christmas & Epiphany* 1997/2000
603
604 *Jesus and Peter: Off the record conversations* John L. Bell & Graham Maule, 1999.
605
606 *Eggs and ashes: Practical and liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week*, Ruth Burgess and Chris
607 Polhill, 2004
608
609 *Praying for the Dawn: a resource book for the ministry of healing*, Ruth Burgess and Kathy Galloway
610 eds., 2000.
611
612

613   ***Readings***
614

615   *The Jesse Tree: Daily Readings for Advent* Thom M Shuman, 2005.
616

617   *Lent and Easter Readings from Iona* Neil Paynter ed.2002.
618

619   *Advent Readings from Iona* Brian Woodcock and Jan Sutch Pickard, 2000
620

621   *This is the Day: Readings and meditations from the Iona Community* Neil Paynter ed. 2002.
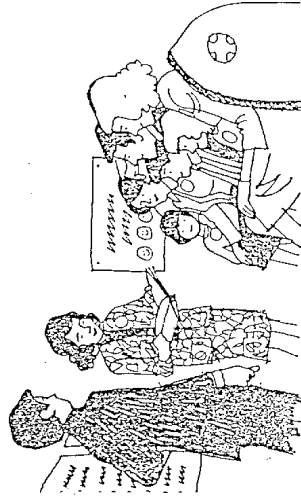622

623   ***Songs***
624

625   *Come all you people: Shorter songs for worship* by John Bell 1994. (book & CD/cassette)
626

627   *There is one among us: Shorter songs for worship* John Bell, 1998 (book & CD/cassette)

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN WORSHIP

A discussion paper for use in Sessions or Parish Councils, Worship Committees or Home Discussion Groups

1. Language and Attitudes:

We use language to describe the world around us and within us. And language, in turn, inevitably shapes us, restricting us - often unawares-to the thoughts and attitudes built into the words we inherit.

But we can also acquire new ideas and attitudes through language. Most of us have learnt to see something in a new and better light by hearing a fresh or arresting form of words; while advertisements and political propaganda often seek to bias us by the overtones of the language they choose.

Many people today sense the bias of our language in matters of sex, race, social class, age, physical ability, religion and so on; it would indeed be surprising if dominant groups in the past had not, albeit unconsciously, reinforced their power by building it into their language. Much of the language in which we discuss and express our faith derives from cultures where women were generally subordinated to men.

Recently many minority groups like black or homosexual communities have set out, with some success, to change people's attitudes by changing the language; their modifications have rapidly infiltrated general usage.

To redress dominant attitudes implicit in the traditional language of Christianity demands constant vigilance and may take many years. It nevertheless offers new understandings of both God and humanity, and significant opportunities for bringing Christ to the community.

2. Gender Bias - Some Guidelines:

I. GOD IS NOT A MAN. In fact it is very hard to say what God is, except by means of parables, metaphor, analogy and so on. Masculine pronouns like he, him, his etc probably obscure more than they reveal about God. Avoiding them, we and our hearers will learn more about God.

II. JESUS WAS A MAN, BUT HIS MASCULINITY WAS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT HIM. He had, after all, to belong to one sex or the other. Of far greater significance is Christ's HUMANITY: language that endorses and emphasises this will teach us and our hearers more about Christ and about what it means to be human.

III. HALF THE HUMAN RACE IS FEMALE. Female reactions to the male bias of the English language vary from a magnanimous toleration to a deeply wounded resentment. The love of Christ accepts and affirms the equal value of all individuals; language embodying this rather than exploiting the toleration or increasing the pain will teach us more not only about other people but about ourselves as well.

IV. WE MAY DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LANGUAGE ABOUT PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE ABOUT GOD. The New Revised Standard Version has found ways of handling the former inclusively. Acceptable changes in the latter still present us with a stimulating challenge.
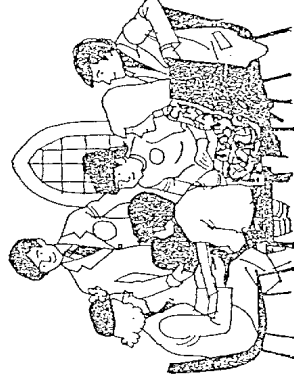
3. Questions and Discussion Topics:

1. To start with, pray: Holy God, Creator, Saviour, Healer; may the words we say and the ideas we explore be acceptable to you, Yahweh, our rock and redeemer.

2. Think up and share some examples of the way words restrict thought. (Words for tastes and smells, or for describing strangers, may suggest ideas; but plenty of others exist. In a rainbow do we see only the colours we have words for?)

3. Share some experiences of words that have changed the world (I love you; an Iron Curtain has been drawn across Europe; New Zealand; Aotearoa New Zealand; glasnost; you can't sink a rainbow etc etc). Invent some "devil's declensions" (on the pattern of -I am firm; you are obstinate;- he is pig-headed; I move with the times;-you are well-preserved; she is mutton dressed as lamb).

Try I am politically aware; you ....   Or   I am intelligent; you ....
Or I am caring............and so on and so on.

4. Search some advertising copy or political propaganda for hidden persuaders.

5. Ponder the effect of classifying the human race into whites and non-whites and the norm that this distinction assumes.

6. Ponder similarly the hidden implications of words like disabled and unemployed and contrast the latter with the leisure classes.

Give examples of effective language manipulation by minority groups.

7. Collect some examples of sex-role stereotyping in language (the Know Your Place section in MORE Magazine may help).

8. Try to reword the following phrases to remove the gender-bias, if you can't, at least ponder the silent implications of each:

a) The brotherhood of mankind
b) Every Christian must love his neighbour
c) Strive manfully onward
d) Old wives tale
e) Dear Lord and Father of mankind
f) Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord
g) God himself will be with you
h) Father, Son and Holy Spirit
i) the Son of Man
j) the Kingdom of God
k) all men that on earth do dwell
l) The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

9. Find authority in the Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version), and particularly in the teaching and actions of Jesus, for:

a) accepting and affirming the equal value of all individuals (cf. Matthew 15: 21-28; Galatians 3: 21-29)
b) being fastidious about the language we use (cf. Psalm 141, Ecclesiastes 5: 2, Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7: 6 - 23.)
c) respecting the views and feelings of people we disagree with (cf. Luke 10: 25-37, 1 Corinthians 8.)

10. List some of the non-male metaphors for God in the Bible (cf. Isaiah 49: 14-16, Isaiah 66: 7-14; Hosea 11: 1-4, Luke 15: 8-10; Hebrews 12: 28-29).

Inclusive Language in Worship

- a discussion paper prepared by the Church Worship Committee for use in sessions, parish councils, worship committees or discussion groups.

Bibliography:

"Praise the God of Grace - Hymns for Inclusive Worship"
- Elizabeth J. Smith - St. Stephen's Anglican Church Published in Australia, available from the Anglican Bookshop in Wellington - $9.50

"The Psalms : the Grail Psalms and Inclusive Language Version"
- Collins - $14.95

"Out of the Darkness - Path to Inclusive Worship" - Language and Liturgy Task Group Commission on the Status of Women Australian Council of Churches - $19.95

"What Language Will I Borrow?" Subtitled God Talk in Worship - a Male Response to Feminist Theology - Brian Wren - $49.75 - SCM Press

"Touch Holiness - Resource for Women" - edited by Ruth Duck/Tirabassi - Pilgrim Press - $44.75

"Bread for the Journey" and "Flames of the Spirit" - edited Ruth Duck

"Count Us In - Inclusive Language in the Liturgy" - Growth Booklets - Faull and Sinclair - $9.75

"Exclusive Language - A Hindrance to Evangelism Amongst Women" - Bob Temple - Growth Booklets - $6.25

"The Liberating Word - Guide to Non-Sexist Interpretation of the Bible"
- editor Letty M. Russell - Westminister Press - $22.25

"Weaving the Sermon - Preaching in a Feminist Perspective"
- Christine M. Smith - Westminister/John Knox Press - $37.75

"The Divine Feminine - The Biblical Imagery of God as Female"
- Virginia Ramey Mollenkott - Publisher Cross Road - $28.50

"Women and Worship" - a Guide to non-sexist hymns, prayers and liturgies - Sharon and Thomas Neuferemswiler - Publisher Harper and Row - $19.95

"In Her Own Right - Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition"
- Margery Procter Smith - Abbington Press - $35.50

"Weaving the Visions - New Patterns in Feminists Spirituality"
- Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ - Published Harper San Francisco - $34.20

"Inclusive Language in the Church" - Nancy Hardesty - Westminster/John Knox Publisher

These books are available either from the Anglican Bookshop in Wellington or from the Epworth Bookshop, P.O. Box 6133, Te Aro, Wellington. Other leaflets and booklets are available from the Methodist Education Division in Wellington - "When I Say "Men" I mean "People"" and "How to's for Inclusive Worship" and "Guidelines for Inclusive Language".

Other material on this subject is available from:
The Church Worship Committee,
66 Nelson Street,
WANGANUI

If you wish to respond to any matter in this paper, you are welcome to write to the Co-Convener of the Church Worship Committee.