

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

EQUALITY POLICY FOR LICENSING THE USE OF CHURCH HALLS AND OTHER PROPERTIES USED FOR DIRECT MISSION OR MINISTRY PURPOSES BY MUCKAMORE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DECEMBER 2023

1. Statement of Policy

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of Muckamore Presbyterian Church (“the Congregation”) to the promotion of equality of opportunity in licensing the use of the Church, halls and grounds (“Church Premises”) by persons or bodies (“Potential Licensees”).

The Congregation supports the principle of equality of opportunity and is committed to the elimination of discrimination in the provision of and access to goods, facilities and services. The Congregation is also committed to accommodating diversity for Potential Licensees so long as this is consonant with the following proviso (“the Proviso”) namely that the Christian ethos and the doctrine and testimony of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland are not in any way compromised.

Accordingly, all statements contained in this Policy are subject to the Proviso:

The Congregation recognises, therefore, that it is both good practice and in the Congregation’s best interests, to have an equality policy that covers Potential Licensees who might seek a licence to use Church Premises.

It is the Congregation’s policy not to discriminate or harass a person unlawfully and to license the use of Church Premises equally to all, irrespective of:

- Disability
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief and/or political opinion
- Sex, pregnancy or maternity (including breast feeding)
- Gender reassignment
- Age

The Congregation is opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination. All Potential Licensees will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the aforementioned grounds. Decisions relating to Potential Licensees will be made objectively and without unlawful discrimination. However, each Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland reserves the right to exercise its discretion to refuse to license the use of Church Premises in circumstances where such licensing could be in conflict with the Christian ethos and the doctrine and testimony of Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In submitting an application for the use of Church Premises Potential Licensees must fully explain the purpose for which the premises are to be used.

The Congregation fully acknowledges its duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to have access to Church Premises. The Congregation will take steps to assess the needs of disabled people seeking access to Church Premises, and will anticipate the requirements of such people generally and the reasonable adjustments that the relevant legislation may require it to make for them.

2. To whom does the policy apply (Scope)

This policy applies to:

- Potential Licensees
- Visitors
- Members of the public who enter Church Premises

3. Statement of commitment

The Congregation is committed to ensuring that the licensing of the use of Church Premises to Potential Licensees will:

- be in an environment which promotes equality of access for all persons and implementing any positive action where necessary;
- be free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- accommodate diversity and fulfil all the Congregation's legal obligations across all of the grounds as covered by equality legislation and associated Codes of Practice including its statutory duties;
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

The Congregation will not tolerate discrimination against Potential Licensees by employees or non-employees, over whom the Congregation has control. Any discrimination may lead to disciplinary action for employees and to other sanctions for non-employees such as suspension of contracts or exclusion from Church Premises. Any breaches of this policy could constitute misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

4. Implementation

The Kirk Session of the Congregation has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy to ensure that Potential Licensees do not experience discrimination and diversity is accommodated. The Congregation expects all Potential Licensees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment which is its objective. The Kirk Session shall delegate the taking of the steps necessary to implement this policy to the Congregational Committee.

Arrangements to use the Church Premises shall be made with Mr. Samuel Gray, who will then seek the permission of the Kirk Session. Sufficient notification must be given to ensure that insurance, child protection and risk assessments are in place before any Potential licensee can be granted permission to use Church Premises. It is the responsibility of Potential licensees to satisfy the Kirk Session that all appropriate arrangements/assessments are in place.

Muckamore Church is not responsible for accidents or injuries due to unauthorized use of Church Premises.

5. Conditions & Regulations for Usage

- Children under the age of 13 must be under the direct supervision of adults at all times;
- Church equipment (e.g. copiers, TV/DVD, computers, projectors, screens), sound desk and other sound equipment (e.g. microphones, amps, cables, speakers), musical instruments (e.g. organ, piano, drums), supplies (e.g. paper etc.) and kitchen supplies may not be used without prior approval;
- Proper care and protection of all furnishings, walls, carpets, restrooms, floors, etc. is the responsibility of the Potential Licensee. Any damage to or accident/injuries on Church Premises must be reported to Mr Samuel Gray as soon as possible and within 24 hours who will then inform the Congregational Committee;

- Rooms rearranged for events must be restored to their original arrangement immediately following the meeting;
- Since the thermostats are pre-set and the outside lights are on timers, any change must only be made by the church staff or a member of the Congregation authorised by the Congregational Committee;
- Lights must be turned off, doors locked, and bollards closed following the conclusion of the meeting/use of Church Premises;
- Smoking and vaping are not permitted on Church Premises ;
- Alcohol is not permitted on Church Premises at any time;
- Non-prescription drug use is not permitted on Church Premises at any time;
- Permission to use the First Aid Boxes and a Defibrillator located on the premises is granted, but no liability is accepted for anything arising from their use.

6. Responsibility of Users

- No smoking or vaping is permitted on Church Premises. The person(s) making the reservation will enforce this restriction. Muckamore Presbyterian reserves the right to cancel the event if this rule is violated;
- Alcoholic beverages and non-alcoholic substitutes are not allowed on Church Premises. The person making the reservation will enforce this restriction. Muckamore Presbyterian reserves the right to cancel the event if this rule is violated;
- All rubbish/waste must be placed in the bins provided in the kitchen, halls, toilets and outside wheelie bins;
- All users are responsible for the safety and actions of anyone they bring onto Church Premises;
- All users are responsible for providing adequate security to ensure that unauthorized people do not gain access to Church property because of the permitted use;
- Any items brought onto Church Premises must be removed immediately after use, unless advance arrangement is made;
- Posters, visual displays, etc. may not be affixed to walls without prior permission and an agreed time when same should be removed. No tape, pins, screws, hooks or nails should be used;
- If there is a spill, please try to clean it up as well as possible. Mops, brooms, and dust pans are available in the Church Officer's Store;
- In case the fire alarm is set off, evacuate the building. Call the emergency services if needed. Muckamore's alarm system is NOT connected to the fire services. This must be reported to Mr Samuel Gray as soon as possible and within 24 hours who will then inform the Congregational Committee;
- Do not use Muckamore Church's name in advertising as a sponsoring organization. Only include the name for location purposes.

7. Monitoring and review

Any enquiries in respect of this policy or matters arising within its remit should be referred in the first instance to the Clerk of the Kirk Session, who shall refer it either to the Kirk Session or to Congregational Committee, as appropriate.

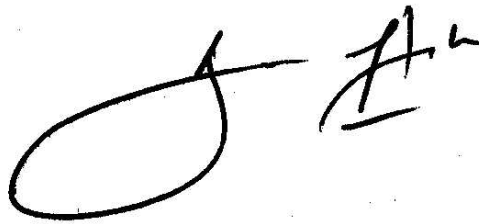
The Congregation will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to ensure the effective implementation of this policy for the licensing of the use of Church Premises.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed regularly and action taken as necessary.

This policy was adopted by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 19th December 2023



Signature: _____ (Moderator)



Signature: _____ (Clerk of Session)