

All In

Co-Design and Connect

Attitude



Setting a positive and accepting attitude towards the inclusion of people living with disability in the church community.



Positive attitudes start with our church leaders

Followers of Jesus Christ are called to work together as one body that facilitates everyone's gifts and strengths so the church can fulfil God's plan to share God's love to the world.

Children and young people living with disability are an indispensable part of that body. How they are included matters to God and to how God's church will thrive because God says they are indispensable.

As Christians, we need to facilitate life-enhancing interactions for people living with disability. This means we must address attitude, communication, access and social participation barriers so that opportunities to live, be, and become are equally available to everyone.

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many... God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you." Nor can the head say to the feet, "I do not need you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable..." (1 Corinthians 12: 14-22, ESV)

Recognise I'm indispensable

"The Bible says the church is one body with many parts. I am one of those parts! I have a right to belong because God chose me! It really helps if leaders demonstrate attitudes that consider my abilities and see me as able, rather than disabled. Such attitudes set a positive and

accepting tone in our church community and reflect to church members that God says I am an indispensable part of His church."

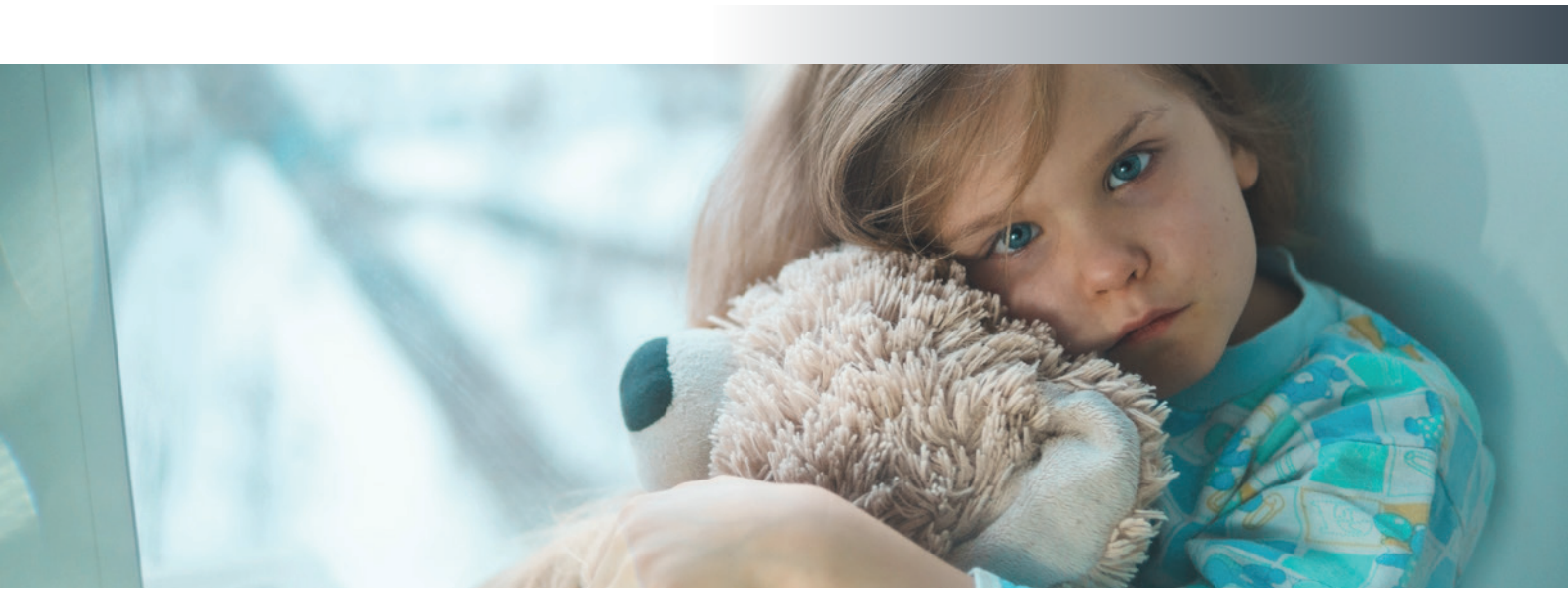
A biblical perspective on disability involves seeing the person as a whole being— body, mind and spirit. As humans we process the world and the people in it through our body and mind, but it is the spirit that is the essence of who we are as a person. It is the animating life-force breathed into all humans by God, at creation. The spirit animates every living person and enables them to experience meaning, purpose, love, hope, faith and an awareness of the spiritual dimension.

How we understand the biblical viewpoint of the person will influence our attitudes toward people living with disability. Therefore, it is important to take the time to examine how we put God's word into action as individuals and as faith communities.

Please speak to me

"See me and hear me! I am more than my disability."

Inclusion is possible and can be achieved with ease. Please ensure to speak with a person living with disability and their family about their needs. A listening ear and getting to know a person's strengths can aid in a person living with disability becoming involved.



Be willing to provide opportunities

“Please don’t see me as ‘hard work’, ‘less than’, ‘incapable’, ‘a project’, or ‘a problem’. I just want the same opportunities to participate and belong as everyone else.”

Open up opportunities so everyone can get involved. We all benefit from the opportunity to participate. It is not a problem, or a project or hard work, it’s a new opportunity.

Use positive messaging

“It helps if leaders promote dynamic and positive messaging and imaging of young people living with disability instead of seeing me as an object for charitable action because I am a ‘vulnerable’ person.”

Present an image delivering dynamic and positive messaging of the person living with disability.

Have a ‘can do’ attitude

A ‘can do’ attitude when helping people with disability reach their full potential shows support and care. With extra advice and resources, what may seem impossible might not be.

A ‘can do’ attitude with intention to deliver successful participation for people living with disability shows your support and care. What may seem impossible may not be with extra preparation and advice.

Develop disability champion roles

Denominational leaders in disability inclusion can facilitate the role of disability champions, who enable inclusion into church activities for people with disability.

Facilitate valued roles for the young person living with disability

“It’s a great feeling being valued and included in the church’s welcome team.”

People get their value and identity from the social roles that they enact within their family, school, community, church, workplace, etc. It helps when inclusion leaders prepare champions with training in social role valorisation. This work focuses on the unconscious ways people may devalue the young person living with disability and raises community awareness of ways we can all help people living with disability to achieve their God-given potential.

Inclusion leaders and champions would consider the many ways the church experience is shaping the person living with disability and their family in their faith-life and affecting their psycho-social and spiritual wellbeing. Together, they may find new ways forward that shift mindsets, innovate services, and enable the young people living with disability to take up valued social roles within the faith community, the family, the wider community and the workplace.



Provide equal acknowledgment

Acknowledgement can keep a person motivated within their role and they feel valued within the community. It's encouraging having your strengths recognised. Acknowledgement can best be given in private as it can be embarrassing for some people living with disability.

It is important to acknowledge all effort. Acknowledging areas of equal competence demonstrates each person has strengths to contribute. It focuses on the role the person has successfully undertaken, rather than the person. It shows the person living with disability has completed a valued role and acknowledges them alongside their peers as equals. It sends a positive message that the person living with disability is contributing as an equal.

Introduce me and my family

Some churches have created short video clips that introduce the family of the young person living with disability via a 'get to know us spot' within their church services. Family members are invited to say what inclusion looks like for their family. They speak about what they enjoy about being included and the best aspects of life within a caring faith community. They highlight the ways they support their faith and finish with any relevant support issues that may help their family.

This content was developed with young people living with disability, care givers/parents with lived experience, and professionals working with young people living with disability. **Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.**

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