

Jorja's Story

Jorja was born with Spina Bifida which limits her mobility.

“Everyone has different needs. Just because I use a wheelchair doesn't mean that I have “special needs” in inverted commas, my needs are the same as yours, I just need a little bit of assistance to get some of my needs met. “

Jorja is a part of Baptist Care SA's Connections project contributing to workshop content and co-presenting.

“It's been really great to be part of a project focused on disability, where people are interested to know what it's like to have a disability, and to know what they can do to improve the quality of life and improve the way people with disability participate in the life of the community and in the church.

I've enjoyed meeting different people at the workshops, sharing my story with them and learning about other different disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome, mental health issues, and what other people's experience of disability has been. It's been a great learning curve.

I'm liking having a voice and being listened to. It's been an amazing confidence boost. I can't describe the world that it's opened up for me.”

In the workshops Jorja shares her knowledge to build community awareness about how churches and communities can be inclusive. Here are two easy tips:

“Having a special spot in the congregation where a person can park their wheelchair so they're not just shoved at the back - that's really welcoming.

For families of kids with disabilities the biggest thing that they can do is ask the family, ‘What can we do to help you?’”

Sue's Story

Sue is a valued member of Rostrevor Baptist. Sue lives with Cerebral Palsy. With an assistive communication device Sue shares with us her experience of church.

"I've been coming to church for 30 years.

I enjoy coming because I love God and want to worship him, praise him, pray, and hear what he's saying to me through the speakers.

I enjoy the songs, my favourite is 'It is well with my Soul'.

I like to share food and a drink with everyone and I like Communion.

I also like to see my friends.

They help me when we have a meal, and with Communion.

They listen to me, especially when I am sad and in pain.

They also help drive my wheel chair. I help others by being a friend.

I invited my very good friend, Lynne here years ago

They laugh with me which makes me happy, especially when the Crows win! Pastor Dan teases me about the Crows because he goes for Carlton.

I would like to help others learn how to meditate. This is something God spoke to me about.

I help people understand how it is to be disabled, that I still live a very full and normal life.

I feel excluded when people don't realise how much I understand. When they do not talk to me, or talk to me as though I am a child. I'm pleased they talk to me, but it would be even better if they could talk to me as an adult."

I feel included when others talk to me, especially when they learn how to listen to me through my communication system. I love it when others introduce me to people and include me in their conversations.

I'm included when I hold a Biggest Morning Tea each year to remember my friend, Elizabeth, who died of cancer. "

Baptist Care SA's 'Hope Pack'

The importance of hope and a friend

“The pits”, “a really bad spot”, “deep depression” – these are the phrases people use to describe their lives before becoming involved in Share and using the Hope Pack with their buddy.

The Hope Pack gives the person something special to look forward to each day.

Kate* says, “The pack was a lifeline to me, not only did it have healthy habits and things to do daily to get me looking forward, which was essential at the time, but it also had positive messages, Christian messages that spoke to me on a spiritual level, to lead me forward.”

Nico* states, “I found the best part of it for me was definitely the scriptures. I know who I am in Christ now, I really know!”

George* says, “I found the Hope Pack very helpful. It gave me structure and something to do on a daily basis, but probably the most important aspect of the whole package was the buddy. The buddy gave me someone with whom I could commune. There was a sense that someone was walking the path with me. Someone was there for me who would hold my hand and not let me slip back into the deep depression I was in.”

Don* agrees, “My buddy has been very important to me because I felt alone and lost for so many years. It is great to have someone who genuinely cares about my spiritual walk. I'm not alone!”

Nico concludes saying, “One of the best things about it, I went from getting help to giving help!”

*Not their real names.