

Celebrating Ability



**Disability Sunday
2nd June 2013**

**A day for UK churches and fellowships to focus on celebrating the
abilities of disabled people**

Organised by

Churches for All 
Disabled people inspiring faith without limits

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Disability Sunday Resource Pack

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Introduction

The 2012 Paralympic Games profiled disabled people in a way that no other event has done previously. According to research by ComRes, 75% of the general public now have a more positive attitude towards disabled people since the Paralympics. It appears that perceptions of disability are improving. However, three-quarters could not name a disability organisation in the charity sector and 89% of sports clubs saw no increase in disabled people joining them. Attitudes may have changed on a superficial level but there is still a big gap between positive perceptions and positive action.

In contrast to wider society, the church has a mandate to lead the way in recognising the needs and abilities of disabled people, to bring about positive change, and enable the full inclusion of disabled individuals within church and community life.

Disability Sunday on 2nd June 2013 offers the opportunity to do something in church that highlights the presence of disabled people in the congregation and in the community.

In Britain, one person in six lives with one or more of the recognised disabilities so it's a topic to engage every church and we hope that this resource can assist you and your church in the mission to enable churches for all.

Purpose of this resource pack

- To highlight the topic of including disabled people through materials churches can use within their congregations and communities at Sunday services and activities
- To encourage manageable action by church congregations



Disability facts and figures

- More than one billion people worldwide experience some form of disability (*World Health Organisation, 2011*)
- 10.9 million disabled people live in Great Britain (*Office for Disability Issues, 2011*)
- 72 per cent of families with disabled children experience poor mental health, anxiety, depression or breakdown; 49 per cent have felt so unwell that they have asked their GP for medication or to see a counsellor (*Contact a Family, 2011*)
- Disabled children aged 11-15 are 17 times more likely to be restricted in developing personal relationships (*Life Opportunities Survey 2010*)
- The poverty rate for disabled adults is twice that for non-disabled adults (*Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2006*)
- The employment rate of disabled people (44 per cent) is slightly over half that for people without disabilities (75 per cent) (*Office National Statistics*)
- 8.8 per cent of people with a disability or long-term illness said they had sustained an injury in some way as a result of violence or aggression at work compared to 4.7 per cent of people without a disability or long-term illness (*British Crime Survey 2009/10*)
- Around a third of disabled people experience difficulties related to their impairment in accessing public, commercial and leisure goods and services (*Citizenship Survey 2009/10*)
- 66 per cent of disabled people say that they have experienced aggression, hostility or name-calling (ComRes, 2012)
- Almost half (46 per cent) of the disabled people questioned said they experience discrimination on either a daily or weekly basis (ComRes, 2012)
- 98 per cent of disabled children in developing countries do not have access to basic services (*World Health Organisation*)
- 92 per cent of mothers diagnosed with a Down's syndrome pregnancy decide to terminate (*University of London, 2009*)



Planning Disability Sunday

Please note this is a general overview only, and is not intended to go into all the detailed considerations of different disabilities. [Additional resources](#) with recommendations for specific disabilities are listed at the end of this resource pack.

Step by step

Step 1 Form a team

Find other people in your church who would be interested in helping your church participate in Disability Sunday. Ask disabled people in the church and others with experience of disability or a heart for disabled people. This may include parents of disabled children or medical or social service professionals.

Key points:

- Get the team members to share their vision and think about the aims of the day. These could include providing a context in which people with disabilities of any kind: feel welcomed and valued; hear clearly about God's love for them; are able to respond to Him; and go home having had a positive and enjoyable experience of church.
- Pray together for God's equipping for a Disability Sunday as well as future ministry related to disabled people in the community.
- Develop a proposal as to how your church would hold Disability Sunday on 2nd June (or another suitable date).

Step 2 Involve your church's leadership

If you are not part of the leadership of your church, you and your team should meet with your church's vicar, priest or pastor. (If your church does not have an individual leader, approach your church's leadership team). Present your team's vision for participating in Disability Sunday.

Key points:

- Present why this reflects God's heart.
- Express your team's willingness to take the lead in organising this.
- Explain that the leaders' support and involvement are vital.



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Step 3 Publicity

Disability Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to invite people who are disabled and their families from the community. [A sample invitation letter](#) is included in this document.

Publicity can be arranged through [press releases](#) (sample included later) to local newspapers and radio stations, letters to local residential, educational and day care facilities for disabled people, disability organisations and local schools.

You should also publicise the event in your church, starting as early as possible. (Sample [news](#) item included later.) Encourage the congregation to include family, friends or neighbours who are disabled.

Step 4 Develop your plan

Your team should choose which parts of the Disability Sunday programme you want to use. The worship service portion is a priority in order for it to be successful. The other parts are strongly recommended because they reinforce the worship service and get people talking about the subject of disability.

The worship service - There is no one order of service that suits all churches, so it will be up to you and your church leaders to put together the service. Be sensitive to whatever liturgy may be customary in your particular denomination. It is, however, important that particular care is taken to ensure that the welcome at the beginning draws attention to the facilities available for disabled people, e.g. that there is a loop system, where to sit to benefit from the loop, the provision of large print or Braille song sheets etc.

Remember that people with learning disabilities will not be able to grasp complex language and concepts, so write down what you want to say in your introduction to the meeting, during worship or in the talk, and decide beforehand what songs and prayers to use. Then you will be able to check that the language is appropriate.

The following items may form part of your order of service:

- Someone with a disability to lead the service
- A personal story (4-5 minutes) by a disabled person or family member
- Music by a disabled person or group
- Scripture reading and prayer by someone with a disability or a family member
- A sermon focusing on God's view of people with disabilities ([sermon suggestions](#) are included in this document)
- A [drama](#) on the subject of disability
- A multi-sensory experience of communion

Involve disabled people at every level – taking up the offering, welcoming, giving out song sheets etc.



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Be as creative as possible. Remember that when it comes to worship songs and hymns, many of them contain complex ideas that may be difficult for people with learning disabilities to grasp. However, a programme that is either not Christ-centred or that is completely different from a normal service will detract from future ministry.

Celebration event – You might also decide to have a celebration event or feast, with a talk, drama, witnessing, entertainment etc. around the meal or refreshments.

Small groups – You can also hold discussions or Bible studies on the subject of disability in the weeks leading up to Disability Sunday, or afterwards. Involve any existing groups or start new ones, including home groups, youth groups, mums' groups etc. There are [discussion resources](#) later in this pack.

Children's/Youth programme - Talk with the people responsible for your church children's or youth activities and review the programme with them. Make sure they take on responsibility to carry out the programme. You will have other things to do and they will do a better job of it! Follow up with them on a regular basis to ensure that the leaders have what they need and are on schedule. You will need to enlist extra helpers to assist any disabled children or young people who join the special activities. There are suggested resources for [children's](#) and [youth](#) activities later in this pack.

Step 5 Welcomers and stewards

Preparations for the day should include some training for the stewards or welcome team. A [guidance sheet](#) for stewards/welcomers is included in this document and can be copied and given out to the team. It is a good idea to have more welcomers and stewards than usual so that some can show visitors, both disabled and non-disabled people, to their seats and introduce guests to the person who will be sitting next to them. Don't forget to invite disabled members of your existing congregation to be on the welcoming and stewarding team.

Step 6 Your church building

Your church doesn't have to have perfect access for people with limited mobility, but it should not be an impossible challenge either. A [basic checklist](#) is enclosed. Desirable for the Disability Sunday are:

- Parking for people with disabilities (blue badge holders), which is monitored to make sure that they can park in a suitable place to access the service
- A way to get into the front of the building without steps
- Seating area for wheelchair users that is not only at the back; in other words, you should be able to give people who use a wheelchair a choice to sit in the back, middle or front
- Child care (crèche, Sunday School) which can meet the needs of a disabled child



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- Large print programmes/orders of service, notice sheets and songs used on the overhead projector (if your church uses such items during a service; it is simpler to produce all printed material for that day in large print: 16 point type size will meet most needs)
- An induction loop for hearing aid users
- A British Sign Language interpreter for Deaf people
- Wheelchair-accessible toilet facilities
- If you are following the children's programme, you should aim for those rooms to be wheelchair-accessible as well

Step 7 Church feedback questionnaire

To plan for future disability ministry, collect feedback from the congregation on the service and ideas for meeting needs more effectively. A [sample questionnaire](#) is provided for your use. It can be copied and inserted in an order of service or notice sheet and collected afterwards.

It is also useful for long-term planning if you do a survey of the needs perceived by members of the congregation. This survey will let your team know what needs exist within your church and community. Again, a sample survey is provided for distribution widely within the church. **(Do we need a link here?)**

Step 8 Transport

You may need to consider how disabled people who do not have their own transport may be able to travel to your Disability Sunday service. Advice should be available from local disability charities or social services as to forms of transport which may be made available.

Finally

How about donating your offering taken during the Disability Sunday service to a national disability charity or a local ministry that you already work with? Partners in the Churches for All consortium are listed at the end of this booklet, and they rely on donations for their work of making the Christian message accessible to all.



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Sample letter of invitation

(to be printed on church notepaper)

[date]

Dear

It's a real pleasure to invite you and your friends, relations and colleagues, to attend a Disability Sunday event on 2nd June 2013 at *[11.00 am]* at our church, which is in *[Lupin Gardens, Ambridge]*.

Last year's Paralympics raised awareness of disability and celebrated the abilities of disabled people which is something we want to reflect in our community. The main talk will focus on what the Bible really says about disability and on God's positive attitude towards disabled people. We have also asked a few members of our congregation to speak about their own experiences of disability. We plan a drama and musical contributions by disabled people.

We would like to welcome anyone in our community who is affected by disability – you or a member of your family may have a disability, or you may work with disabled people. We want the service to be a major step towards fully including disabled people in the life of our church. Our church building is accessible to wheelchair users and has an accessible toilet. A British Sign Language interpreter for Deaf people will be provided at the service. Braille service sheets will be provided.

If you have no transport and you need a lift, or if you have any questions, please call us on *[phone number]* as soon as possible and we will try to help.

With warmest good wishes



Draft news release

News Release

St Mark's Church in Ambridge is holding a Disability Sunday service on 2nd June 2013 at 11.00 am. There will be an engaging meeting of teaching and worship, in which disabled people are playing a leading part, and focusing on the world of disability.

Last year's Paralympics raised awareness of disability and celebrated the abilities of disabled people which is something we want to reflect in our community.

Members of the congregation will be sharing their own experiences of disability; there will be a drama and musical contributions by disabled people and there will be a brief talk on disability from a biblical perspective.

The church is accessible to wheelchair users. A British Sign Language interpreter for Deaf people will be provided at the service. Braille and large print service sheets will be provided.

Child care is also available.

In addition to the worship service, disability awareness will be the special focus of the children's programme with groups for all ages.

For more information contact: Name:

 Telephone:

Adapt to your plans and print the news release with a church letterhead, and post it, email it or fax it to local radio stations and newspapers in mid-May.

Give details of any other special contributions to be made by disabled people. Avoid using Christian jargon words or phrases.

If your church is not manned continuously during office hours, make sure you give a mobile phone number as an alternative to the church office. Nothing irritates media more than to be unable to get an immediate response to a question. Why not cultivate a relationship with your local reporter and invite them to come along?



Church newsletter item

Recruiting team members:

Last year's Paralympics raised awareness of disability and celebrated the abilities of disabled people which is something we want to reflect in our church community. Many of you know the importance we attach to being fully inclusive of disabled people. We are planning to hold a Disability Sunday service/event on 2nd June with the following objectives:

- To show disabled people that God cares about them and their needs
- To raise awareness of disability and the needs of disabled people
- To give a voice to people affected by disability
- To show that God responds to and uses disability in many different ways
- To show that including disabled people isn't a burden, but a blessing.

If you would like to serve on the planning team, please contact *[name]*.

Please invite friends, family and neighbours with personal experience of disability to attend the service on Sunday 2nd June.



Inclusive principles

Churches can ensure that disabled people are included in every aspect of church life by:

- Welcoming and being open to disabled people so they feel they 'belong'
- Offering reserved parking/a drop-off point
- Having 'step-free' access giving level/ramped entry to a building
- Providing accessible toilets
- Having a loop system in operation and, when required, providing sign language interpreters and/or speech-to-text (captioning)
- Using straightforward, jargon-free language
- Supplying written information (including that on a screen) in large print (font size 16 point) and other alternative formats (e.g. audio, electronic, Braille)
- Ensuring that there are clear/pictorial signs for people with learning disabilities
- Having a quiet space available during the main meeting for those who may need time-out, especially for people on the autistic spectrum
- Having good, even, glare- and flicker-free lighting to benefit people with sight loss or autism
- Offering seating (some with arms) near the entrance/exit
- Providing a named contact to 'champion' issues and initiate training on disability
- Speaking directly to disabled people, assuming nothing and asking them how they are best supported and included
- Ensuring there is commentary/audio description for purely visual content to those unable to see the screen/stage
- Ensuring the church website is accessible and has information that helps disabled people access the building and activities
- Adopting a 'can-do' culture with an inclusive ethos, valuing all and addressing each person's needs on an individual basis
- Intentionally encouraging and enabling disabled people to contribute to church life using their God-given gifts

Note: For more information, see [Further Specialist Resources](#) later in this pack, or seek advice from [Churches for All](#).



Guidelines for stewards and welcomers

DO	DON'T
<p><u>General</u> Treat disabled people as you would anyone else. Always speak directly to the person who has a disability. Always ask the person who has a disability if you can help him or her in any way. Whenever possible, seat disabled people with their friends or family. Try to be aware of people's hidden disabilities such as epilepsy or Alzheimer's disease, which may require assistance. Assume nothing - always ask!</p>	<p>Don't use negative terms such as "crippled" or "victim". Do not consider a companion or carer to be a conversational go-between.</p>
<p><u>Sight loss</u> Identify yourself by name and as a steward. Show a blind person to his or her seat. Ensure they know large print song sheets are available. Explain to a visually impaired person where things are located. Provide space for a guide dog to lie down by removing a chair.</p>	<p>Don't push a visually impaired person - always allow them to take your arm.</p>
<p><u>Deafness and hearing loss</u> Ensure your face and mouth can be seen clearly. Look directly at the person and speak at normal speed with clear (not exaggerated) lip patterns.</p>	<p>Don't exaggerate or shout. Don't speak directly into the person's ear. Don't obscure your face.</p>
<p><u>Speech impairment</u> Give your whole, unhurried attention with good eye contact. Remember the person with a speech impairment may use another method of communication, such as writing.</p>	<p>Don't finish a sentence or word for the person. Don't get agitated or impatient. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat a sentence if you don't understand; or feed back what you think they said, and ask them to confirm.</p>
<p><u>Mobility impairment</u> Always ask a wheelchair user if she or he would like assistance before you help. Try to sit or crouch down to talk to wheelchair users so that eye contact is easier. Provide seats near the entrance for people with mobility difficulties to minimise walking.</p>	<p>Don't push a wheelchair user unless they ask you to. Don't hold on to or lean on a person's wheelchair.</p>
<p><u>Learning disabilities</u> Be patient, give someone with learning disabilities plenty of time.</p>	<p>Don't assume the person cannot understand you.</p>
<p><u>Austism spectrum</u> Have someone with knowledge of autism ready to act as a befriender.</p>	



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Guidelines for suitable language

Many people are reluctant to approach disabled people because they are afraid of saying the “wrong thing”. The following table shows some of the current acceptable and unacceptable expressions. But remember, disabled people would like you to speak to them (even if you get things “wrong”), rather than hold back out of fear or embarrassment.

DO SAY	DON'T SAY
<p><u>General</u> Disability Disabled people</p> <p>Person who has/experiences... Person with... Cerebral palsy</p> <p>Non-disabled</p>	<p>Handicapped Crippled Invalid</p> <p>Victim of... Suffers from... Spastic</p> <p>Able-bodied, normal</p>
<p><u>Sight loss</u> People with sight loss</p> <p>Blind and partially sighted people</p>	<p>The blind</p>
<p><u>Deafness and hearing loss</u> Deaf Deaf people Hard of hearing people Deaf sign language user</p>	<p>Deaf and dumb Deaf mute</p>
<p><u>Speech impairment</u> Deaf sign language user</p>	<p>Dumb</p>
<p><u>Mobility impairment</u> Wheelchair user</p>	<p>Wheel-chair bound Confined to a wheelchair (the wheelchair is not the source of the disability)</p>
<p><u>Learning disabilities</u> Person with learning disabilities Has learning difficulties Learning-disabled Has mental health problems</p>	<p>Mentally handicapped Retarded Mentally ill, insane, mad, crazy, nutter Psycho, psychopathic Schizo, split personality</p>



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Follow-up survey

We value your feedback to help us to better meet your needs. Please complete the following questions and return to one of the stewards/welcomers.

How did you find your overall experience of today's service/event?	
What did you find particularly helpful?	
What aspects could be improved?	
What overall message will you take from today?	
Are there any other comments you would like to make?	

Please leave your name and contact details if you would like to receive further invitations to our activities.

Thank you. We look forward to welcoming you again.



Disability Sunday Activities

Sermon/message

Background

It is helpful to understand how society and Church typically view disabled people.

The traditional approach to disability follows the 'medical model'. This model sees disabled people as 'having a problem', which needs 'fixing or curing'. The emphasis is on what is 'wrong' with them, and they are treated as in need of healing or in need of pity and having to be cared for. This has often led to disabled people losing control over their lives – e.g. they have to go to bed when the carer can put them to bed, not when they choose to.

The better model, and most importantly, the model chosen by disabled people is the '**social model**' of disability. This looks at the environment to see what can be changed to allow a disabled person to take part on equal terms with non-disabled people. Thus, a wheelchair user is not disabled in an environment where doors are wide, door furniture is within their reach, floors are flat and smooth and changes in level are accomplished by the use of ramps and lifts.

Using the social model of disability has led to the growth of more independent living, where disabled people employ their own personal assistants to help with personal care, housework, going out, shopping etc. Thus the disabled person retains control of their life and is able to make their own contribution to church and community life.

Christians see beyond the dependency that too often has been the outcome of the medical model and the laudable independency to which the social model aspires. God has made us all in his image – the image of God who, understood in the Trinity, is community. He has made us for community and invites us all through Jesus into the community that is his body, the church – to live in interdependency – each one enabled to give and receive to the benefit and blessing of all.

Preparation

When delivering your message, consider how to convey your talk in a way that is accessible to all. Consider your terminology and minimise the use of Christian jargon. If using PowerPoint or visual aids, describe them and don't assume everyone can see. Consider whether you need to use a sign language interpreter, or have speech-to-text (captioning). If someone with involuntary control of their muscles or someone with mental health issues makes a noise, or calls out during the talk, consider how you would react. If someone with autism feels 'overwhelmed' they may need to walk out and find a quiet space. People with learning disabilities may appreciate a simpler or pictorial version of the message – provided beforehand for them to follow. It is impossible to cover every eventuality, but giving some thought in advance to the various needs of the people who may be present will be beneficial for everyone.



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Key points

Here are some key points that can be used in a talk, presentation or discussion in churches, home groups, youth groups, Christian Unions or a school assembly.

Consider how you can use these key points to raise awareness of the needs of disabled people and to challenge, educate and motivate people to develop an ongoing disability ministry in your church and local community.

Let me paint a picture. If it were possible to gather together all the disabled people in the world into one nation, that mythical nation would number one billion men, women and children (*World Health Organisation, 2011*). That nation would be the world's third largest country, after China and India, and would have a number of unique characteristics. That nation would...

- have the least access to education - because disabled people receive little or no education in developing countries
- have the lowest proportion in employment
- be the poorest nation on earth – disabled people are the poorest of the poor
- have the least access to any sort of transport - poverty again
- be the least evangelised nation with the lowest proportion involved in a church

[Disability facts and figures \(see separate page\)](#)

Sermon suggestions

A place for all, a party for all

The text of a sermon given by Dr Mike Townsend in a BBC Radio 4 morning service during August 2012 to welcome the Paralympics

In Luke 14 we read Jesus' parable about a party, thrown by a very rich ruler. This was going to be a big society party. The right sort of people were invited – just look at the guest list! There was a wealthy landed gentleman increasing his acreage, a successful business man expanding his farm with more oxen, and a well-connected man, just married.

Wow! Some party!

But they didn't turn up!

The ruler was determined to have a good party, so more invitations went out. But look at the kind of people in this new guest list: physically disabled people, blind people, and then the vagabonds and low life from the byways. Not the sort of people you would want at a glittering society function.

Which list do you think you would have been on?



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Our society values the kind of people in the first list: the wealthy, the beautiful, the clever and the well-connected. The 'A' list! Possibly some disabled people are on the 'A' list, but a lot of us are on the 'Z' list!

How does God – the ruler in this story told by Jesus – see people? How does he see you and me?

In Genesis we learn that we are all 'created in the image of God'. Isn't that amazing? Each one of us bears God's personal stamp! Think about that: how does it make you feel?

I am totally blind and people often make sure I know who they are by saying, 'It's only me.' I hate that phrase! Nobody is 'only me.' We are all special, made in the image of God – even those of us on the 'Z' list.

Perhaps you don't feel valuable right now. You may have messed up, been overlooked and neglected; you may feel lonely, or struggling with illness or disability.

Why do you think the ruler persisted with the party? 'That my house will be full,' it says in the Gospel. He wants YOU there! God says we are all special. We all have a purpose.

What about disabled people? Do we bear the stamp of God's image? Do we have purpose?

As I write this, we are days away from the 2012 Paralympic Games. In the 60s I was an athlete. I ran the mile in 4 minutes 7 seconds – about 10 seconds off the world record. As a totally blind runner, I needed sighted guides. Since none were fast enough for the full distance, it was like a relay. At each quarter mile, I dropped one guide and picked up the next. Only with their support could I achieve my amazing time.

Paralympic athletes run with a purpose. What purpose do disabled people have?

Some ethicists and theologians believe that profoundly disabled people have no purpose and are barely deserving of human life. This message is reinforced through pregnancy screening which results in the abortion of many disabled children. But God sees value in all people.

'Created in the image of God' cannot be about physical or mental characteristics, because Jesus tells us in John's Gospel that 'God is spirit'. I believe the image imprinted upon our personality is spiritual. We, uniquely among God's creatures, have the ability to respond spiritually.

Some years ago, my wife Edith and I waited eagerly for our new link foster care lad. Mark was profoundly disabled. He couldn't see, speak, or move independently. Being blind, how was I going to connect with Mark, I wondered? We connected through touch and sound. Mark loved to have his bumpy, deformed back massaged. Sighted people told me his face filled with a beaming smile. Did Mark like music? I tried 'Guns and Roses' but Mark stiffened. He relaxed and gurgled to James Galway's flute.

Mark could not say anything, but shared his love and pleasure as we relaxed together as a family.

Though God designed us as individual personalities, he did not mean us to be loners. God is trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This relational interdependence pervades



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the whole of God's creation. Adam had an Eve. I succeeded at the mile because of the support of my guides. We each find purpose together within God's interconnected framework.

The cross of Christ is the heart of that framework, binding it together in love: '... for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'

We can each take our place together in God's framework of love... even Mark.

Many disabled people recognise disability as part of their personal identity. We might wonder, does disability persist into eternity?

In the Book of Revelation we read, '... Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne.' Jesus' resurrection body is physical, but different. Jesus could go through walls. He still bears the wounds of the cross in eternity.

Paul talks of our resurrection bodies as being like plants. You can't tell from the seeds what they will be like. We will all be as gloriously different as the stars in the sky. 1 Corinthians 15 goes on, '...The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power... '

Many believe that we should all match up to a standard of health and success. The pressure on us to be healed into health is immense. I believe that the hope and purpose for us all, including disabled people, is not physical success within an earthly context, but to be ourselves within the framework of God's eternal love. Each one of us is made in the image of God. Let us all connect with that interdependent framework of God's love, through Jesus' loving sacrifice on the cross.

Luke 5:17-26 Friends lower a paralysed man through the roof

The paralysed man's friends worked together to make sure he made contact with Jesus. The attitude of the friends and Jesus towards the disabled man was that of acceptance. Jesus calls him 'friend' (verse 20). This would have been in contrast to the religious teachers gathered. The story makes it clear that the important issue Jesus dealt with was that of forgiveness of sins. It was the friends' faith that contributed to the man's salvation (verse 20). The healing of the man served to illustrate that Jesus is God and has the power to forgive sins. As a result of this encounter with Jesus, God was glorified (verse 26). It is not known whether the man remained fully healthy for the rest of his life, but the important thing is that he would be with Jesus in eternity.

Do we care about those excluded from our church services? Does our compassion motivate us to act and meet needs in practical ways? Do we accept and love our disabled neighbours as ourselves?

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 One body, many parts

This passage contrasts the church body to our human body. Imagine how the human body works together – every part vital, whether visible and prominent like eyes, mouth, arms and legs, or hidden from view, tucked away and seen as more fragile, such as the liver, pancreas, bones or nerves. In the Church we are all unique and different but we are all united, belonging to the one body. We all need one another. We are not



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independent, but interdependent – having equal concern for each other and suffering or rejoicing with one another (verses 25–26). We are also to value those considered as value-less – ‘Those that seem to be weaker are indispensable’ (verse 22). “Most churches have difficulty in ministering to disabled people simply because of some basic fears and lack of awareness. Moving past these attitudinal barriers and misunderstandings we’ll discover the joy of caring for someone simply based on the preciousness of their souls, not on their physical attractiveness and intellectual capabilities or social position.” (*Joni Eareckson-Tada*)

Do we have the motivation to enable someone to find their place in the body of Christ, to uncover their gifting and contribution and become a fully valued and indispensable member?

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 God's power revealed in weakness

God’s ways are not our ways. He calls us out to be separate from this world, to be counter-cultural. He chooses the weak to shame the strong. Why would Paul boast in his weaknesses? Because he needs to rely more on God. It requires a greater amount of faith and God is more obviously present. If we do things we know we are capable of doing, how much faith is required?

Do we see Jesus in those who are different from us? Do we see the person first, or the disability? How can we model a way of life that is attractive to a world of hurting people?



Disability Sunday Resource Pack

Prayer

This prayer is one of many activities taken from the book, ENABLING CHURCH, by Gordon Temple with Lin Ball, published by SPCK, 2012. It's available from Through the Roof in standard paperback; Torch Trust publish braille, giant print and audio format versions.

Leader: Father, thank you for the diversity of the people you have created, each with something to show us about your character.

All: We thank you, Lord, for all your people.

Leader: Forgive us, Lord, for our lack of acceptance of each other's differences, for our cold-heartedness, for our judgemental spirit.

All: Forgive us, cleanse us and transform us, Lord.

Leader: We pray for more understanding of the peoples you have created, each with their own history and customs, their own culture, music and literature.

All: We thank you, Lord, for all your people.

Leader: Forgive us, Lord, for our intolerance of other nations, for our blindness to their distinctiveness, for our lack of interest in their ways.

All: Forgive us, cleanse us and transform us, Lord.

Leader: Thank you for the different people in our community, many coping with difficulties and pain, with hardship and weaknesses, with physical or mental challenges. All are unique and all individually known and loved by you.

All: We thank you, Lord, for all your people.

Leader: Forgive us, Lord, for barriers we have erected or maintained that have the effect of disabling some people, particularly physical and attitudinal barriers that stand in the way of full inclusion of all within our churches.

All: Forgive us, cleanse us and transform us, Lord.

Leader: Forgive us, Lord, for the times we have not reached out a hand of friendship or attempted to break down the barriers between us.

All: Forgive us, cleanse us and transform us, Lord. Amen.



Children's activities age 5-11

Remember to prepare children who have an Autistic Spectrum disorder for these activities, as they may find them distressing if no warning is given.

Items Needed: 2 pairs of big heavy boots, balloons and 2 buckets.
Ear muffs. Large, thick gardening gloves.

1st Activity: “Big Boot Relay” (You will need: 2 pairs of big heavy boots tied together with shoelaces, balloons and 2 buckets.)

1. Divide the children into two teams.
2. The first child in each team put the boots on.
3. Children then ‘walk’ to pick up a balloon,
4. Next they need to ‘walk’ to put balloon in the bucket,
5. When the balloon is safely in the bucket they need to walk back to team and change boots with the next child in line

*Health and safety note: Adapt to the age and stage of your children. Discourage attempts to run!

Tell the Story of Mephibosheth (pronounced Muh-FIB-oh-sheth)

Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul and a son of Jonathan.

Both his father, Jonathan, and his grandfather, Saul the king, were killed in a battle.

When Mephibosheth’s nurse heard the news she panicked because she thought people might want to kill him too. She picked him up and ran away from the palace as fast as she could. Just think how frightened Mephibosheth must have felt.

Mephibosheth must have been wriggling because he was frightened and didn’t understand what was happening, and in the rush to keep him safe the nurse dropped him. His feet were very badly injured in the fall Mephibosheth grew up, but his feet wouldn’t work any more.

(Questions: What do you use your feet for? What things might have been hard for Mephibosheth to do? How did you feel playing the game?)

In those days, people who couldn’t walk were treated unkindly. They often had to beg and lived on food that no one else wanted. One day a strange thing happened to Mephibosheth. A man came to where Mephibosheth lived with a message from King David. “Mephibosheth,” he said. “King David wants you to come to the palace. You must come with me.” How would you have felt if you were Mephibosheth?

Mephibosheth went to the palace - he was shaking with fear as he bowed down in front of the king. He was really scared and thought King David might kill him!

But David was really pleased to see him! David could see that Mephibosheth was really scared and said, “Don’t be afraid. I will be kind to you because your dad, Jonathan, was my best friend. I’m going to give you all the land that belonged to your grandfather, Saul. AND I want you to eat with me every day.”

Mephibosheth couldn’t believe what he had heard. The king had invited him to eat with him every day! Wow! Because he couldn’t walk, no one had been this kind to him in such a long time!

Mephibosheth asked, “Why are you being so nice to me - I’m not important at all.”



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“Your father and I promised each other that we would be kind to each other’s families,” King David explained. But that wasn’t all! David knew that, because Mephibosheth couldn’t walk, he could not farm the land David had given back to him. David called to his servant and told him and his family to farm the land he had given Mephibosheth. David treated Mephibosheth with great kindness, as if he were his own son and Mephibosheth spent the rest of his life at the palace.

Creative Prayer Suggestion:

Cut out some stars or flowers from heavy sugar paper, so the petals/points can be folded over into the middle. If you use stars make sure the points are long enough to fold. Have a shallow tray of water (Cat litter trays are best!)

Get the children to write the name of, or draw a person they want to pray for.

Get them to fold the petals/points neatly into the middle. (There should be no hindrances to the petals/points opening out!)

When folded, gently float the flower in the tray of water, and get the children to quietly pray (in their heads!) whilst watching the flower open.



Other Possible Activities:

Big glove challenge: Give children thick heavy gardening gloves and ask them to do simple activities such as turning the pages of a comic, picking up and eating a sweet or putting their shoes on.

Muffled Chinese whispers: A normal game of Chinese whispers, but with the children wearing ear muffs or a thick wooly hat

The following content is taken from ‘Parachute Bible Stories’ – published by Through the Roof

Use a play parachute to tell a story from the Bible in an inclusive and interactive way (see below). Read out loud the bits in normal print below, and then give directions, printed in bold, to everyone to act out or demonstrate the story in a visual and interactive way.

Bible story: Through the Roof

Bible passage: Mark 2:1–12 and Luke 5:17–26

Point: Remarkable things happen when disabled and non-disabled people encounter Jesus together.

Time: 10 minutes **Numbers:** Minimum 8 **Equipment:** Parachute

Set-up: Parachute out on the floor; people standing on the parachute



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Activity: Jesus was preaching inside a house. So many people were gathered that there was no room left inside. **(Everyone stands on the parachute and spreads out across it.)**

Some friends were carrying a paralysed man and wanted to see Jesus. **(Everyone picks up the parachute and walks once round the room and back, then puts the parachute down. Choose one person to be the paralysed man. Get her/him to lie on the parachute).**

The friends could not get in to see Jesus. **(Split the group into two, one group holding the parachute with the man on it, the other forming a crowd to block the way.)**

The friends took the paralysed man up on to the roof. **(Make sure the paralysed man gets off, then everyone lifts up the parachute and holds it above their heads.)**

The friends lowered the man down to the feet of Jesus. **(Everyone slowly lowers the parachute and puts it on the floor. The paralysed man lies on the parachute.)**

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." **(Everyone makes a 'mushroom' with the parachute – and cheers.)**

The teachers of the law were angry and thought, "No-one can forgive sins except God. This man is blaspheming".

Jesus knew what they were thinking and said, "Why are you thinking like that? Is it easier to forgive sins or to heal? To prove to you that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins, I will heal this man too."

Jesus said to the paralysed man, "Get up, pick up your mat and walk."

Immediately the paralysed man stood up, picked up his mat **(the man gathers up the parachute)** and went home praising God.

Everyone was amazed and praised God **(everyone makes a 'mushroom')** saying, "We have seen remarkable things today".

Discussion

After completing the activities and/or parachute Bible story, divide the children into age groups for a short discussion.

- Ask how we feel when we first meet someone with a disability.
- Ask the children to consider especially how those with disabilities might feel. Encourage them to think about positive feelings as well as negative ones.
- Ask how we could be like King David in the story of Mephibosheth or the friends of the paralysed man; how can we be like Jesus to other children with disabilities?



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NB. Remember to emphasise that not all disabilities are obvious on the outside. Also, remember that younger children may find it easier to draw simple pictures to describe feelings.

Conclude with a prayer time in groups, encouraging the children to pray about what they have learned; and for people they know who are disabled.



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Youth programme age 11+

Activity: Someone else's shoes (and socks)

Duration: 8 minutes

Aim: To consider the implications of being assisted and assisting one another

Bible verse: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." *John 13:14*

Introduction: Every day many people who are physically disabled require assistance or support to dress, wash, eat, go to the toilet etc. Their care-giver/personal assistant may be known to them - for example, a family member - or may be a total stranger doing a low-paid job. A 2003 survey of disabled people in the USA found that '42 per cent reported having failed to move in or out of a bed or chair because no-one was available to help.'

Action: Ask the congregation to get into pairs. (This activity will be easier if you know the other person fairly well!) Ask one of the pair to take the other person's shoes and socks off, then put them back on again. When complete, swap roles.

Reflection:

- Describe how you felt as the care-giver, and as the one being assisted?
- How would you feel if your washing, dressing, eating, sleeping etc depended on another person and when they started/finished their 'shift'?
- What positives could you draw from the experience of this activity?
- How could we be/do church differently to enrich our relationships or respond to the issues discovered in this activity?

The following content is taken from 'Lasting Values' - a practical four-session resource to explore the values of the Games with young people. Written by Through the Roof and ALOVE, it is available to download free from:

www.throughtheroof.org/2012-games or www.salvationarmy.org.uk/alove

One of the values of the Paralympic Games is that of 'Inspiration.' In your own words, how would you describe 'inspiration'?

Leader's notes: You will need a flip chart with paper and pens. Working in small groups, ask the young people to write down their thoughts on the paper provided. Feed back to the whole group.

Definition of 'inspiration': the act of breathing in; an object or person that inspires; stimulation by a divinity, a genius, an idea or a passion.

Watch: 'Inspirational Rick and Dick Hoyt, Team Hoyt (A Fathers' Love)' at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=36fjVFHNU48

Discussion questions

1. Describe how you felt when watching the video. What thoughts and feelings did you have? Any surprises?
2. Did anyone in the video remind you of someone you know? Can you tell us about that?



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Activity: Play a Paralympic sport: Sitting volleyball.

Qualities required: Strength, agility, and flexibility

The game:

Sitting volleyball is a six-a-side sport for players with physical disabilities who have reduced or no movement in their upper and lower limbs. Players aim to land the ball in their opponent's half of the court. Each team is allowed three touches of the ball before it must cross the net and part of a player's body (between their bottom and shoulders) must be in contact with the court when the ball is played. The first team to reach 25 points wins the set and a game is best of five sets

Watch a clip of sitting volleyball at:

<http://paralympics.channel4.com/the-sports/video/vid oid=1229080/index.html>

Try a mini-game:

1. Blow up several balloons.
2. Sit players on the floor in the form of a circle.
3. Players work together to try and keep a balloon in the air for as many hits as possible.
4. Increase the number of balloons or introduce a lightweight ball to make it harder.
5. Divide the circle in two to introduce the concept of two teams playing against each other.

Activity: Feeling inspired?

Equipment needed: Scrabble board and tiles

Explanation: Set up a Scrabble board and place the word 'inspire' in the middle and ask the young people to use the rest of the Scrabble tiles to make words that they associate with it. When the young people have used all the Scrabble tiles, ask them each to choose two words that they think best describes the feeling of being inspired. This could be linked to the qualities of a person who inspires them.



A drama for Disability Sunday

“Hope Found” by Gayleen Gardner

Though simple in form, the message is powerful and one with which everyone can identify. The drama takes approximately 10 minutes and requires no props. Costumes for the Bible characters are highly recommended.

(Scene: Woman enters, obviously agitated, talking to God. Upstage are four Bible characters with their backs to the audience. Modern-day characters are seated in the audience. Each character either turns or rises to deliver their line. At the end of each line each character chooses a pose around the woman. 'All' refers to characters who have already spoken - excluding the woman.)

Woman: O God, no. Please. No. I can't do this. I can't face this. This is beyond me. I thought you loved me. OK. OK. I KNOW you love me but, O God, this hurts too much. I feel so alone. I feel so far from you. What are you doing? What in this world are you doing?

Hannah: My name is Hannah. I know what it's like to feel alone. But I know how to worship and cling to the Giver of Life. He is my hope and salvation.

Job: My name is Job. I know what it's like to feel devastated.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Job: ...who gives and takes away. He is my hope and salvation.

David: My name is David. And I know what it's like to feel guilty.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

David: ...who takes away my sin. He is my hope and salvation.

Joshua: My name is Joshua. And I know what it's like to feel inadequate.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Joshua: ...who is my strength and my shield. He is my hope and salvation.

Barbara: My name is Barbara. And I know what it's like to be terminally ill.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Barbara: ...who heals in this life and the next. He is my hope and salvation.

Kim: My name is Kim. And I know what it's like to lose a child.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord



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- Kim:** ...who holds each child in His hand. He is my hope and salvation.
- Carol:** My name is Carol. And I know what it's like to be divorced.
- All:** But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord
- Carol:** ...husband to the widow and defender of the defenceless. He is my hope and salvation.
- Ken:** My name is Ken. And I know what it's like to be addicted.
- All:** But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord
- Ken:** ...who died to set me free. He is my hope and salvation.
- Disabled woman:** My name is *[name]* and I know what it's like to be paralysed.
- All:** But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord
- Disabled woman:** ...who walks with me. He is my hope and salvation.
- All:** We know how to worship and cling to the Lord.
- Woman:** You - O God - are my hope and salvation.

Director's notes...

You hold in your hand a script that is simple and quite honestly unassuming on paper. But the simplicity and staging are very powerful and it is the intention that God will use this sketch to bring hope to each person in your congregation - no matter how obvious or hidden their heartbreak may be. The following are a few suggestions for casting and staging:

Use your most dramatic actor or actress for the person in crisis. Their effectiveness is the key - their gender is not.

When possible, you can use individuals from your congregation who really have struggled with illness or addiction or divorce. It is very effective for them to step out to the congregation.

However, be prepared! Someone may think this is an open invitation to share!

Having your Bible characters in costume is recommended.

Experiment with placement and posing. Hannah may kneel next to the woman, while David and Joshua stand, and Job is in a more humble, reclining position. Every character needs to speak to the woman, but they do not have to all be gathered too close around her. Your divorced character and addict are probably good ones to leave on the edges because that is often how they feel!

We find the unison reading very powerful. If you don't have time to practise getting it to sound good then just have the individual characters say the entire line. Give it a try though - it works!



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© Gayleen Gardner, 1997. Used with permission by Joni and Friends. This script may only be used by churches and organisations sponsoring disability ministries or awareness programmes and may not be reproduced for other purposes without the written permission of the author and Joni and Friends.



Multi-sensory communion

Encourage people to use all their senses, particularly those that are often under-utilised, and also focus on the images produced by sensory-related passages of Scripture, to enhance the full experience of communion.

Sight – visibly show the bread and the cup to everyone.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” (Hebrews 2:9)

Hearing – use fresh crusty bread so that people can hear the bread as it is being broken; pour the communion wine/juice into the cup from as high as you dare to hear it being poured out.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

Smell – as the bread and cup are taken, encourage those partaking to breathe in the smell of bread and wine/juice. Use fresh bread and warm it in an oven before the service

“For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.” (2 Corinthians 2:15–16a)

Touch – encourage people to focus intentionally on the texture and feel of the bread and cup.

“Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” (Luke 24:39)

Taste – encourage people to focus on the taste of the bread and wine/juice.

“Taste and see, the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8) and “... by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” (Hebrews 2:9)



Here are four things you can do

We're sure that you will find that your Disability Sunday brings a real blessing to everyone in the congregation, not just disabled people. We hope it opens new doors for your church and inspires people to reflect God's heart for disabled people all the more, so you won't want to limit yourself to just one Disability Sunday.

1. PRAY

Ask God for opportunities to use the gifts and talents He has given you to make a real difference in the lives of disabled people.

2. BECOME A DISABILITY CHAMPION

- You could encourage your church to sign up to, and take on board [the Churches Inc Charter](#) initiated by Livability and Through the Roof.
- Find out about opportunities to volunteer and support the work of disability charities in your area.
- Take practical steps to make disabled people feel welcome and included in every area of church life by developing your own disability ministry.
- There are further resources and training you can obtain from various Christian disability organisations, to help you develop your ministry. Details are given at the end of this document.

3. GIVE

There are many simple, practical things we can do to raise money for various disability charities such as organising a collection, sponsored activities, selling Christmas cards, carol singing or holding a special service.

4. KEEP DOING IT

Make Disability Sunday an annual event and broaden the theme to include a variety of ways in which God works through pain, suffering and brokenness.



Further specialist resources

(Please obtain from the individual organisations at the contact addresses given at the end of this pack.)

Through the Roof

[Hearts in Motion](#) – a six-lesson Bible study exploring disability from a biblical perspective

[Roofbreaker Guide](#) – simple and practical advice on how to make your church welcoming to disabled people

[Come In](#) – making your church buildings accessible to disabled people

[Guidelines for stewards/welcomers](#) - double-sided, playing card-sized, laminated cards that give the key principles of inclusion in bullet-point format

[Integr8](#) disability youth programme - this provides resources such as an e-newsletter, e-mail support group, youth website, training and resources for youth leaders and more

[When God Weeps](#) by Joni Eareckson Tada - a book on pain and suffering

[Depressed or Possessed](#) by Joe Hayes – a book recognising and responding to mental illness

[Enabling Church](#) by Dr Gordon Temple with Lin Ball, 112-page paperback (by SPCK). The flexible material in the book is presented in seven sessions ideal for small groups, with Bible study discussion questions, activities, prayer and worship suggestions, and real-life interviews with disabled people.

Prospects

[Worship CDs and other resources](#), - featuring original songs with simple lyrics.

[Makaton materials](#) and Makaton signing

[Remembering God's Love](#) - understanding the service of Holy Communion

Easy to understand [Bible Reading Notes](#), - available both in written and audio (CD) format, to help people with learning disabilities grow individually in faith

A member of our mission development team will be happy to visit and talk to you about training, resource materials and the affiliation partnership programme.



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Livability

[Life to the full – 10 things your church can do to involve disabled people](#) - free resource

[The Community Mission Team](#) - can run training courses and retreats to motivate congregations to become active in outreach and social involvement

Torch Trust

FourSight – a booklet about including blind and partially sighted people in the life of the church, available in print, giant print and Braille

[Enabling Church](#) by Dr Gordon Temple with Lin Ball, 112-page paperback (by SPCK), available in braille, large print and audio editions from Torch Trust. The flexible material in the book is presented in seven sessions ideal for small groups, with Bible study discussion questions, activities, prayer and worship suggestions, and real-life interviews with disabled people.

Go Sign!

Sign Me In! - a policy for including deaf people in the life of the church

Christian Signs - booklet and DVD on British Sign Language resources, which includes people giving their testimony in sign language, as well as a video clips of Christian vocabulary translated into BSL (also available online at www.christiansigns.co.uk)

ASNA

Making the Gospel accessible - a practical training guide and resource manual for Special Needs Co-ordinators within the British Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (Applicable to all churches). Compiled by the Association of Christian Counsellors for Premier Lifeline, this is an invaluable resource for finding trusted and reliable Christian counselling and care across the UK

Mind and Soul

[UK Directory of Christian Counselling and Care](#) - compiled by the Association of Christian Counsellors for Premier Lifeline, this is an invaluable resource for finding trusted and reliable Christian counselling and care across the UK

Open Ears

Advice about inclusion of hard of hearing and deafened people in church life - contact Open Ears on 01425 615215 or admin@openears.org.uk



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Other

Guidelines for producing print material suitable for people with all levels of sight are available in the "[See it Right](#)" book and CD-Rom produced by the [RNIB](#). Contact the RNIB on 0845 702 3153 or see their website: www.rnib.org

Information about website accessibility is available on the [RNIB](#) website. The [Web Access Centre](#) is located under "Good Design".

[Equal Sign](#) is a translation service from English text to British Sign Language (BSL) on video. www.equalsign.co.uk

[Signs of God](#) offer advice about booking and using BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters - see their website: www.signsofgod.org.uk



Disability Sunday Resource Pack

What is Churches for All?

[Churches for All](#) is a partnership of UK Christian disability organisations. Partners have a breadth of experience and depth of knowledge on disability issues - challenging and enabling churches to fully include disabled people.

Our aim is to help churches create and sustain an environment where disabled people can participate fully in church life for the benefit of all. Disabled people are involved in the leadership of Churches for All and many of its partner organisations.

Together, we strive to equip churches to reach towards their full potential by truly including and involving disabled people.

The Churches for All Partners

in association with Strategic Partner 'Premier Life' - the community unit of Premier Christian Radio.



A full life in Christ for people with learning disabilities. 0118 951 6978



Christian literature and fellowship for blind and partially sighted people. 01858 438 260



Supporting and enabling deaf Christians through networking, equipping, teaching and outreach. 01702 613 114



The new name of Grooms-Shaftesbury. Provider of care, housing, education and holidays for disabled people. 020 7452 2000



Transforming lives through disabled people. 01372 749955



Fellowship for non-signing hard of hearing Christians 01425 615 215.



Exploring Christianity and mental health.



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Churches for All Associates



Supporting and encouraging excellence in children's work.



To support the spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs of people living with special needs and disabilities. 01491 821103.

Guild of Church Brailleists

Advance the Christian religion in particular, by transcribing Christian literature from print into Braille.



Fostering Communities of Belonging.

Kingdom Trust

Christian perspectives on today's issues.



Reaching Older People with the Good News of Christ.



A movement of churches working together to change the nation.