

DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY CREATIVE SUGGESTIONS



Date: Annually, the last Sunday in August- or another date that suits your church programme.

Theme: Choose a theme that is appropriate in your local context or use a universal theme such as 'Belonging to the Body of Christ'.

The church and disability? Do they belong together?

It is estimated that 95% of all persons with disability are not connected with a church. There may be many reasons for this. One of these is the negative experiences some persons with disabilities have had in the church:

*"I wish I could really **belong** in the church like others that play a helpful role there. But it feels to me the church focuses on my limitations and I don't get a chance to exercise my talents.*

Because I'm in a wheelchair, they think I can't help myself, let alone helping anyone else!"

Disability Awareness Sunday is a regular opportunity to look at the question: "Do we enable persons with disability to really *belong to* our community of faith?"

Suggestions for activities around Disability Awareness Sunday

1. Start a discussion group around the following questions:

- What are the experiences of persons with disabilities in our church?
- What are the reasons why few or no persons with disability attend our church?
- In which ways can we enter into conversation with persons with disability, to listen to their experiences?
- What would real inclusion and belonging mean for a person with disability?
- In which practical ways can we enhance inclusion and belonging to the church as part of the Body of Christ?

2. Consider the following principles of inclusion and belonging:

- Emphasize that persons with disabilities are also made in the image of God and that all people are part of the body of Christ, meaning everyone has value, dignity, and spiritual gifts.
- For people to really feel they belong in the Body of Christ their role should be so significant that they will be missed when they are absent. This should apply for persons with disabilities as for anyone else.

3. Arrange an interesting worship service that emphasises inclusion and belonging:

- Ask persons with disabilities in your congregation to take a leading part in the service, for example: preaching, singing, sharing a testimony, reading from the Biblical, offering a prayer, or whatever they would be willing to contribute.
- Invite persons with disabilities in your community to attend the service. Arrange transport for them, when necessary.
- Ensure that people with special needs really feel welcome. See [Tips for ushers](#) on the RampUp website.
- Invite a staff member of an organisation, dealing with disabled or special needs people in your community, to do a short presentation on a specific type of disability such as hearing loss; including for example persons who communicate through lip reading, and others demonstrating or teaching Sign Language.
- Show a video clip: You Tube on the internet provides many options. Search for 'Special Needs Ministry' and 'Church and Disability'.
- Arrange a special item for children to learn about disability e.g. a wheelchair ride, reading from the Braille Bible or playing a game together with disabled children. However, do this with sensitivity.

4. Plan on-going activities for inclusion and belonging:

Make use of the RampUp website where you can access many helpful documents to ensure ongoing efforts for inclusion of disabled people - see www.rampup.co.za.

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