

HOW DISABILITY-FRIENDLY IS OUR CHURCH?

The following points can help a church to start discussing the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

1. Physical accessibility

Are all the buildings and facilities accessible for people with disabilities, including toilets for wheelchair users?

Tip: On the RampUp website at the 'Buildings for everyone' button, you will find guidelines to accessible buildings.

2. Worship services

In the worship services, can persons with disabilities easily take part in all aspects? For example:

- a. Sacraments like the Holy Communion: is it possible for all persons with disability to participate in the sacraments?
- b. Seating: is there a proper space for wheelchairs as to not to sit in the isle?
- c. Choir worship team: are people with disabilities enabled to take part?
- d. Are ushers informed on how to assist people with disabilities in an appropriate way?

Tip: Ask persons with disability what is their experience of the worship services in your church.

3. Group activities in church

Can people with disabilities take part in all activities at church?

- a. Congregational committees?
- b. Religious education for adults and children: e.g. Bible study or Sunday school?
- c. Service in church life: ministry groups etc?
- d. Fellowship events: youth, camps, recreation and social activities?

Tip: Assess all the ministry activities: Are persons with disability enabled to also exercise their spiritual gifts in the church?

4. Approaches of awareness

It can be helpful for the church to develop the following approaches:

- a. Have plans in place for the inclusion of people with disabilities; reflect annually on accessibility and inclusion
- b. Raise awareness of the inclusion of people with disabilities through the annual Disability Awareness Sunday on the last Sunday of August
- c. Build friend-relationships with people with disabilities
- d. Task a dedicated church member to take responsibility for improving the inclusion of people with disabilities

Tip: Allow time and opportunity in the church program to address these issues.

5. Families touched by disability

Is there awareness of the needs of families that have someone with a disability?

Are these families visited regularly and assistance offered to them?

Tip: Find out who are the families in our church that are touched by disability.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ANY OF THE ABOVE POINTS, SEE THE WEBSITE

WWW.RAMPUP.CO.ZA and contact us at erna@tlm.co.za