

DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY

SUGGESTIONS FOR

26 AUGUST 2018



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

Theme: The theme for 2018 is: 'The human dignity of persons with disability'. Feel free to choose a theme that is appropriate in your local context.

The church and persons with disability: do they experience human dignity?

It is estimated that 95% of all persons with disability are not connected with a church. There may be many reasons for this. The story of Neale can be an important lesson:

"I have a severe speech impairment. I do accept that it is hard for people to understand me. At church there are two people who take the time and make the effort to communicate with me. Most others ignore me, they stay at a distance. The worst are those who think I have an intellectual disability and therefore they regard me as a child. I often feel that I'm not respected as a human being. People see my disability and not my personhood."

Disability Awareness Sunday is an opportunity to address this question in the church: *"Do we really respect the human dignity of people with disability in our community of believers?"*

Suggestions for activities around Disability Awareness Sunday

1. Be brave and start talking about the following questions:

- Do we make an effort to listen to the experiences of persons with disabilities in our church?
- How can we create opportunities to affirm the human dignity of all persons in our church?
- What does it mean to respect the image of God in ALL PEOPLE?
- In which practical ways can we as a church make life easier for people who live with impairments?

2. Beyond *talking* about people with disability as a separate group, become willing to be *transformed* in our approach:

- From seeing disability as a problem, to respecting persons with disabilities as also made in the image of God, believing everyone has value, dignity, and spiritual gifts.
- From being focused on the limitations, to appreciate the gifts, talents and contributions of people with disability.
- From a mindset of 'I cannot relate to people who are so different', to a willingness to learn lessons from the lives of disabled people.

3. Arrange an interesting worship service that emphasises participation and interaction:

- Invite persons with disabilities in your community to attend the service. Arrange transport for them, where necessary.
- Ask persons with disabilities in your congregation to take a leading part in the service, for example: do the preaching, render a music item in Sign Language, sharing a testimony, do the Bible reading from a Braille Bible, offer a prayer, or whatever they would be willing to contribute.
- Do a sermon on human dignity, using a passage in the Bible about a person with disability.
- Create opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people to interact on a personal level.
- Arrange a special item for children to learn about disability e.g. a wheelchair ride, learn a few sentences in Sign Language or play a game together with disabled children. However, do this with sensitivity.

4. Become a church that practice respect for human dignity in all circumstances:

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.

Contact person: Erna Möller erna@tlm.co.za.