LEARNING DISABILITY ACTION PACK





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HELLO!

WELCOME TO THE LEARNING DISABILITY ACTION PACK.

This pack is for people and church members who are interested in making church more inviting and exciting for those with learning disabilities but haven't actually started doing anything about it yet.

This pack is for all those people out there who are thinking, asking questions, and perhaps willing to start out on a journey of creating real communities of belonging.

This pack is written by the Church of Scotland Learning Disability Working Group. You can find out more about us on page 17.

By working through the pack we hope that you will be able to decide what is best for your church and your community. We want you to reflect on what suits you and what is achievable. We are not here to suggest a one size fits all course of action. Here are some things that other churches have tried.

"We decided that a Thursday afternoon group for those with learning disabilities and their companions would work well. We had a small team of people who could commit to that initiative and we worked with Prospects to run fun sessions with songs and craft." (more information on projects on page 24)

"There were only two other people interested in doing anything in my church so we started looking around for somewhere we could help. When we talked to the Visiting Elders we found out that there was a day centre nearby. We asked them if we could come in and talk to the clients. They were delighted. We go in every Tuesday and it has turned into a prayer group. The lounge is always packed out with everyone waiting for us to arrive. It has become the best part of my week – I can't stop smiling afterwards."

"After the last Church of Scotland Learning Disability Conference I went back to my church and talked to our Minister. We decided that we actually wanted to change the Sunday morning service to be more helpful for our members with learning disabilities – like me. Once we started talking we realised there were lots of little things we could do. We now send the order of service out by email before so that everyone is prepared. We have changed the font colour of our words in the service which has made it much clearer for everyone. It has made a real difference for all of us. I'm even on the welcome team rota now like my dad."

"Once a month we hold a coffee morning with lots of cake, board games and a sing-along in the church hall. It is really good fun and it has grown and grown. We have all made friends with people living round about that we had just never seen before."



SO, SEVERAL QUESTIONS MIGHT BE FLOATING AROUND YOUR HEAD AT THIS MOMENT.

- 1. Is this an important issue for our church?
- 2. WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER TO REACH OUT TO THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THEIR COMPANIONS?
- 3. WILL THIS MEAN MAJOR CHANGE TO THE WAY WE DO CHURCH?
- 4. WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

LET'S LOOK AT THOSE QUESTIONS ONE BY ONE

1. IS THIS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR OUR CHURCH?

According to the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability in every community across Scotland – from Wick to Wigtown and everywhere in between - around 0.6 to 1% of the community has Learning Disabilities.

So up to 1% of our nation have learning disabilities. We were very surprised when we started looking at this that it was the same WHEREVER you lived in Scotland. We thought (wrongly) that certain areas would have higher percentages, but no, wherever you live there are people with learning disabilities living there too.

Some Ministers have said to us "this piece of work is no concern of ours because we don't have anyone in our congregation with learning disabilities" but that is exactly the point. They are <u>in</u> your community but they might not be in your congregation – and that makes us ask WHY NOT?

2. WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER TO REACH OUT TO THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THEIR COMPANIONS?

We believe that God loves everybody and everybody is welcome in the family of God.



"IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST IS NOT BROKEN BY EXCLUSION"

Rt. Rev Dr. Russell Barr, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church Of Scotland

We all approach God differently, we all experience God differently. One person might prefer joyful praise with percussion and dance, another may meet God in silent meditation; one may meet God on a green hillside, another see him in an artist's creation.

We all have spiritual styles. One may think very deeply and be satisfied by the wrestle of theological argument, while another may meet God through emotions: feeling loved, feeling accepted, feeling forgiven.

Church tries to be a place for all to be together to worship and encounter God. It is a difficult balance but a balance Christ asks us to try to achieve. By calling us brothers and sisters he makes us family (Matthew 8:23-27). It is perhaps a good time to ask if our church is reaching out to all members of the family, even ones who encounter God in a different manner. Is church a place where people with learning disabilities feel comfortable and catered for?

John Swinton (Chair in Divinity and Religious Studies at the School of Divinity, History, and Philosophy, University of Aberdeen) has written a very interesting article for us called 'Creating Communities of Belonging'. We have included a copy in this pack – our Discussion Starter pamphlet. He makes the point that inclusion is a good start but belonging is the end goal. Being in the room is not the same as being part of the family.

3. WILL THIS MEAN MAJOR CHANGES TO THE WAY WE DO CHURCH?

Do you want it to?

As you can see from the examples of what other churches have done, it really is up to you! Do you want to change the way you do Sunday service? Perhaps no, perhaps yes, but only baby steps. You might feel it would be better to have a parallel expression of worship on a different day of the week – one that is tailored to the specific needs of the people who come? Some churches have decided to focus on sharing Christ's love and joy in the community – linked to the church, but not in the weekly service. It really is up to you.

4. WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

One thing that we repeatedly get told by those churches starting down this road is the increase in joy they experience. The volunteers and the helpers report that working with those with learning disabilities – to their personal surprise – has developed their understanding of God. It has given them a place to help where happiness and joy are the main focus. Those who deliver small teaching slots have told us that having to focus on the key messages of Jesus, and explain them simply and clearly, has spiritually nourished their own understanding too.

Whole congregations have told us that bringing those with learning disabilities into the centre of their services has brought with it a rejuvenating sense of liberty, a time to cut through church jargon and reclaim the heart of Jesus' message.

It seems to us that we all learn a lot about what it means to be filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit when we spend time with our brothers and sisters with learning disabilities.

LOVE PEACE SELF-CONTROL KINDNESS

GENTLENESS FORBEARANCE GOODNESS

WE WROTE THIS PACK TO HELP <u>YOU</u> TAKE THE FIRST STEPS IN GROWING OR CHANGING THE WAY WE DO CHURCH. SOMETIMES IT IS HARD TO DECIDE WHERE TO BEGIN.



BY WORKING THROUGH THIS PACK IT WILL

- HELP YOU REFLECT ON WHY WE ARE TRYING
 TO CREATE COMMUNITIES OF BELONGING
- HELP YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR CHURCH, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR RESOURCES AND COME UP WITH THE BEST WAY FORWARD FOR YOU
- TAKE YOU STEP BY STEP THROUGH THE FIRST CONVERSATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS OF YOUR ACTION PLAN
- HELP YOU DISCOVER YOUR NETWORK OF HELP AND YOUR NETWORK OF INFLUENCE
- . HELP YOU GET STARTED!

MY EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH

Church is a very important place. For many of us it is where we connect with our faith corporately and where we worship and encounter God. Church is a family, with all its complicated and changing relationships. Church can also be the beating heart of a community. This is just as true for those with learning disabilities and their families as those without. So, in their own words, here are two people telling us about coming to church and what it means to them.

My son Matthew is severely disabled with dystonic cerebral palsy and is cortically blind. My wife and I have always worshipped in church but unfortunately, we had a very damaging experience on one particular occasion. At the time our son had been diagnosed with developmental delay, we knew he had a problem with his vision, and had just received the diagnosis that he was blind. We were beside ourselves and totally devastated. In the same week he had shown us he was recognising our voices and he had learned to babble saying "dada!" This was a massive leap forward in his development and we were very excited by it, despite the difficult news. He was enjoying learning to use his voice and would do so loudly and joyfully. That very weekend, I was singing in the Cathedral choir and Mattie recognised my voice and started happily shouting, to his delight the sound of his "dad da daaing" echoed round the large stone building and this encouraged him even more. My wife could tell that some around her in the congregation were uncomfortable with Mattie 'joining in'. To her dismay the warden of the Cathedral approached her and insisted that 'perhaps they would be more comfortable in the crossing of the Cathedral, further away from the service'. My wife was totally devastated by being forced to leave. Once she had moved to the empty crossing the echo was even more intriguing to Mattie and he continued his joyful noise while his mother tried to sssh him. She felt so upset and embarrassed, she left the cathedral and sat with her baby son in the car outside weeping and alone, waiting for the service to be over. It was a hugely challenging week in our lives where we needed the love and support of the family of Christ and we didn't receive it. It took a very long time for us to recover from this incident and restore our trust with the cathedral and church generally. As Mathew has grown up we have discovered that he is extremely spiritual and all those who meet him are drawn into his joyful presence. He communicates by eye pointing, vocalisation and facial expression. At our own church, despite being nonverbal, he uses his switch to regularly assist his mother with the prayers. In this way, he leads the congregation in the responses. Matthew is now a full member of the Church of Scotland and truly part of the congregation. Truly part of the body of Christ and even shows off his sense of control and humour by operating his switch occasionally more times in the prayers than scripted but that's ok because the congregation know him and treasure him, his use of his switch has become a regular part of the way he worships. Recently we worked with a retired Minister to have a special service in his own home where Mattie could affirm his faith. It was a deeply moving, and healing time for all of us. A couple of weeks later he was admitted into the Church by his elder, Minister and congregation.



Church is very important for me. I love church. Every Sunday I get up and I take two buses to get to church; one to get me into Edinburgh and one to get me across to the other side to where the church is. I like lots of things about church. I like to sing and I like to listen to the Minister. He is a good teacher.

I like church because I see my friends. I have a good social life with people at church; I meet them for coffee. I am good friends with the Minister and we all went out for dinner for his wife's birthday. I got her book tokens.

One time I said I was going to leave but the Minister came to visit me and said that I couldn't leave because everyone would miss me and who would buy him jam doughnuts. He visits me quite a lot.

I like to help at church and I am on the coffee rota. I like helping. It gives you something to do — you get to stay behind and chat more. It feels nice to help.

I also got baptised. I thought to myself 'in for a penny, in for a pound'

This information is taken from the Mencap website: www.mencap.org.uk



WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Someone with a learning disability has a reduced intellectual ability and encounters difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people.

The level of support someone needs depends on the individual. For example, someone with a mild learning disability may only need support with things like getting a job. However, someone with a severe or profound learning disability may need full time care and support with every aspect of their life. They may also have physical disabilities.

People with certain specific conditions can have a learning disability too. For example, people with Down's Syndrome and some people with Autism have a learning disability.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEARNING DISABILITIES, LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ETC?

Learning disability is often confused with dyslexia, mental health problems and lots of other things. Mencap describes dyslexia as a "learning difficulty" because, unlike learning disability, it does not affect intellect.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

- · DYSLEXIA
- · Dysgraphia
- · DYSCALCULIA
- · AUDITORY PROCESSING DISORDER
- · LANGUAGE PROCESSING DISORDER

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS can affect anyone at any time and may be overcome with treatment, which is not true of learning disability.

DYSPRAXIA is a disorder that is characterized by difficulty in muscle control, which causes problems with movement and coordination, language and speech, and can affect learning.

AVTISM is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. People with autism can often have learning disabilities but everyone with the condition shares a difficulty in making sense of the world

ASPERGER'S SYNDROME is a type of autism that some people of average intelligence and language ability have. They find it particularly difficult to understand what other people think and this makes it hard for them to communicate and act appropriately.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) is thought to be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that affects the parts controlling attention, concentration and impulsivity.

DEMENTIA is an umbrella term used to describe a range of brain diseases characterised by a progressive decline in intellectual and other mental functions. While Alzheimer's disease and vascular disease are the most common causes, there are a number of less common forms of dementia. As Dementia is not a lifelong condition it is not categorised as a Learning Disability



DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNING DISABILITY

There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate or severe. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong.

It can be difficult to diagnose a mild learning disability as the individual will often mix well with others and will be able to cope with most everyday tasks. However, they may need support in other areas of their life such as filling out forms.

People with a severe learning disability or profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD), will need more care and support with areas such as mobility, personal care and communication. People with a moderate learning disability may also need support in these areas, but not definitely.

LEARNING DISABILITY AND CONDITIONS

There are some conditions that mean you are likely to have a learning disability, but will also have other physical or emotional effects. For example:

DOWN'S SYNDROME is caused by an extra chromosome in your cells. In the majority of cases it can not be inherited, and occurs by chance at the time of conception. People with Down's syndrome will typically have some level of learning disability but the level of ability will be different for each individual.

WILLIAMS SYNDROME is a rare genetic condition. It occurs randomly and affects 1 in 18,000 people in the UK. Williams syndrome is not passed on from parent to child. Williams syndrome affects everyone in different ways, but many people will have a learning disability. A child's development will be delayed if they have Williams syndrome, which means they may take longer to learn how to walk, talk, and develop other social skills.

FRASILE X is a genetic condition that affects both boys and girls, although boys are often more severely affected. It can cause a range of issues with language, emotions, attention, behaviour and social interaction. Fragile X is the most common inherited cause of learning disability. Of the people who have Fragile X, nearly all boys will have a learning disability but only a third of girls. The learning disability could be mild, moderate or severe, which will affect the amount of support the person needs day-to-day.

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT DELAY (or just the term 'developmental delay') is used when a child takes longer to reach certain development milestones than other children their age. This might include learning to walk or talk, movement skills, learning new things and interacting with others socially and emotionally. Someone with another condition, like Down's syndrome or Cerebral palsy, may also have Global developmental delay. For some people, the delay in their development will be short term and can be overcome with additional support or therapy. In other cases the delay may be more significant and the child will need ongoing support. This indicates they may also have a learning disability.

CEREBRAL PALSY is a physical condition that affects movement, posture and co-ordination. It is usually diagnosed at birth or in early childhood. Cerebral palsy is not a learning disability, but some people with cerebral palsy might have a learning disability.

THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH AND DISABILITY

People with 'disabilities' have often found themselves somewhat sidelined by the church. They have failed to conform to our stereotype of the 'normal', and so, in our embarrassment, we have kept them firmly on the periphery of the church's life. Whenever this has happened, we have done our disabled friends an injustice, and we have deprived the church of immeasurable blessing.

It is greatly heartening that in recent decades this situation has been changing. In theology, scholars of the stature of Stanley Hauerwas, Nancy Eiseland, Amos Yong and, in Scotland, our own John Swinton and Brian Brock, to name but a few, have been helping the church come to a more healthy place on this issue, guided by the wealth of our biblical and theological inheritance.

There is, firstly, the consideration that every single human being, regardless of ability or disability, has been created in God's image (see Genesis 1 and 2). God's image in us is not so much a matter of our ability to reason (as other animals cannot) but as our being made in the likeness of a God who, as Trinity, exists as persons in relationship. Our 'being with' others in love and friendship, not least with those in whose reasoning ability there is impairment, respecting their stories and differences, is to reflect the divine image. Our true humanity is found not in isolated independence but in the forging of friendships in which we are equal and vulnerable together.

Some writers have spoken helpfully of Jesus as the 'dis-abled' God, showing in a variety of ways God's attitude to people with disabilities. He explodes the myth of a direct link between disability and sin (see John 9: 3); he allowed himself to become disempowered by the dis-abling powers of his day, and he cut across the social norms of his time by becoming part of the community of people with disabilities. He befriended them, ate with them and included them in the circle of his followers. The cross demonstrates that the image of God includes the human experience of disability and people with disabilities bear that image as truly as others.

The implications of this for our attitude to people with disabilities is made clear in Paul's image of the church as the body of Christ (see Romans 12: 3-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27; Ephesians 4: 1-16). As in our physical body, all members have a vital part to play – and in fact we give greater honour to apparently weaker members (1 Corinthians 12: 23) – so there is a unique and essential place for each and all in the Christian community. Prejudice and discrimination have no place in the church of Christ who has for us won the victory over sin and evil. Since, in the church, non-disabled and disabled are together gifted by the Holy Spirit, and impart grace to one another, we must all work at removing whatever disabling barriers hinder this from taking place.

We follow the Jesus who called his disciples 'friends' (John 15: 14-15). Friendship, in Christ, embodies the *shalom* of God, and makes present among us his loving, saving embrace. It is a relationship in which the 'weak' and the 'strong' minister in love, in such a way 'that all suffer and rejoice with the victories and challenges of each other' (Amos Yong).

Jean Vanier reminds us why we in the church should have the deepest interest in, and practical concern for the full integration in our common life of those with disabilities:

People with disabilities are like everybody else.

Each person is unique and important
whatever their culture, religion, abilities or disabilities.

Each one has been created by God and for God.

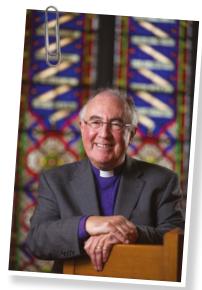
Each one of us has a vulnerable heart
and yearns to love and be loved and valued.

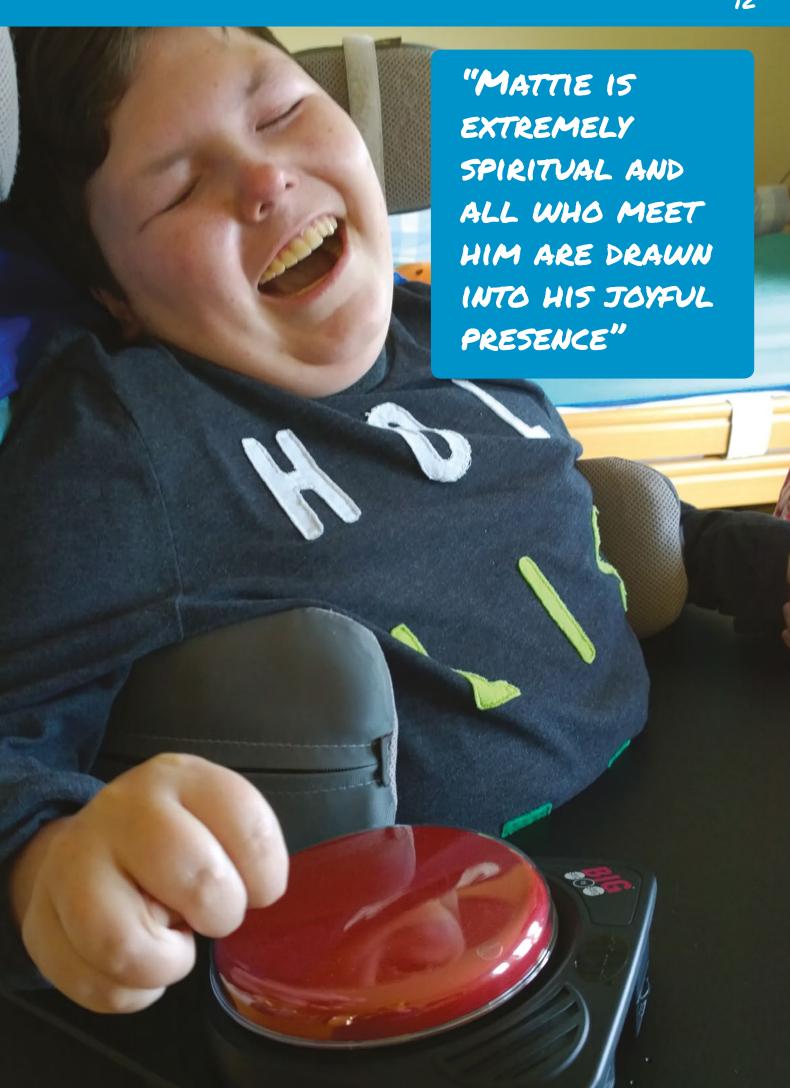
Each one has a mission.

Each of us is born so that God's work may be accomplished in us.]

Together we have much to do to facilitate this aim.

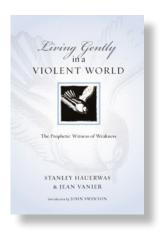
Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison President, Scottish Churches Disability Group





Over the next few pages we have put together a selection of books that have helped us on our journey towards understanding.

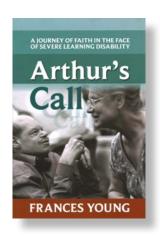
Some of these books are not strictly about learning disabilities; some of the books cover other topics like dementia or mental health. Some of these books cover a wider understanding of disabilities but include sections on learning disabilities.



LIVING GENTLY IN A VIOLENT WORLD

By Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier

In this fascinating book, theologian Stanley Hauerwas collaborates with Jean Vanier, founder of the worldwide L'Arche communities. For many years, Hauerwas has reflected on the lives of people with disability, the political significance of community, and how the experience of disability addresses the weaknesses and failures of liberal society. L'Arche provides a unique model of inclusive community that is underpinned by a deep spirituality and theology. Together, Vanier and Hauerwas carefully explore the contours of a countercultural community that embodies a different way of being and witnesses to a new order--one marked by radical forms of gentleness, peacemaking and faithfulness.

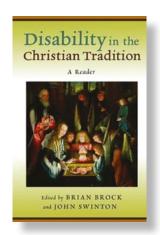


ARTHUR'S CALL

By Frances Young

Written by one of the world's most distinguished theologians and spiritual writers, here is a book full of hope and help for all who struggle with faith in the face of unremitting suffering.

Frances Young reflects on forty-five years of caring for her severely disabled son, and how this has led her through darkness and doubt to a deeper awareness of God's presence. With profound insights into the vocation and ministry of persons with severe disabilities



DISABILITY IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

By Brian Brock and John Swinton

For two millennia Christians have thought about what human impairment is and how faith communities and society should respond to people with perceived impairments. However, never before has one volume collected the most significant Christian thinkers writings on disability.

Brian Brock and John Swinton have answered this need in "Disability in the Christian Tradition". This book brings together for the first time the views of renowned Christian leaders throughout Christian history including Augustine, Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, Luther, Calvin, Hegel, Kierkegaard, van den Bergh, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Vanier, and Hauerwas. Fourteen experts in theology and disability studies guide readers through each era or group of thinkers, offering clear commentary and highlighting important themes.



MENTAL HEALTH: THE INCLUSIVE CHURCH RESOURCE

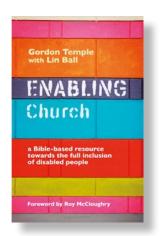
By Jean Vanier and John Swinton

DISABILITY: THE INCLUSIVE CHURCH RESOURCE

By John Hall

There is a huge need for churches to be more inclusive - some might be more inclusive in some areas than others (both in attitude and resources), but on the whole this is a massive failing of churches. Most church leaders recognise this failing but lack the resources and understanding to effect meaningful change.

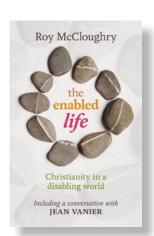
The Inclusive Church Resources aim to educate, to reflect theologically and to provide practical advice and guidance. Each book contains first-hand personal experiences of people from the marginalised group, a theological reflection and a resource section containing addresses, websites and practical advice on improving your church's inclusivity.



ENABLING CHURCH: A BIBLE-BASED RESOURCE TOWARDS THE FULL INCLUSION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

By Gordon Temple

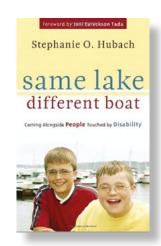
If we are all made in the image of God, 'fearfully and wonderfully made' as the psalmist puts it, what does that mean if we can't see, or can't walk; if we can't hear, or can't speak? If we can't remember our own name because of the ravages of dementia? Or if the only response of which we are capable is a smile? How can we truly be a valued and valuable part of the Body of Christ here on earth the Church? This rich resource book for church leaders, congregations and small groups challenges us to get to grips with what the Bible says about disability and what the Church could do in response. Themes of understanding, inclusion and interdependency are explored through discussion, prayer, worship, hands-on activities and listening to the authentic voices of disabled people.



THE ENABLED LIFE-CHRISTIANITY IN A DISABLING WORLD

By Roy McCloughry

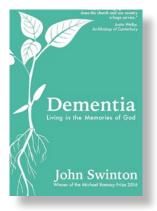
Attitudes in the Church can be strangely unsettling. People are often embarrassed or fearful in encountering disabled people, who are, if the Bible is to be believed, at the heart of the kingdom of God. After all, God does not want us to conform to society's stereotype of what is normal, but to celebrate diversity by delighting in who we are. We do not need to be 'cured' to know God's healing and empowering love in our lives. Indeed the 'abled' may well discover their true humanity through learning from those whose humanity has sometimes been called into question.



SAME LAKE DIFFERENT BOAT

By Stephanie O. Hubach

When the church attempts to function without all of its parts, the body of Christ becomes disabled. Same Lake, Different Boat is a transformational work-designed to renew our minds to think biblically about disability in order that our lives, our relationships, and our congregations might wholly reflect Christ.



DEMENTIA. LIVING IN THE MEMORIES OF GOD

By John Swinton

In this clearly written and accessible volume, Swinton incorporates the best insights of contemporary psychological approaches to human memory and dementia care into a biblically grounded theology. The result is an account that does not shy away from the pain and challenge that faces people affected by dementia, yet at the same time asserts a transformative vision of their situation based on the grace of God who creates and redeems them





THE WORK OF THE LEARNING DISABILITY WORKING GROUP

In 2009 the Church of Scotland brought together the working group to focus on the needs of those in our communities with learning disabilities. The ecumenical group consists of Council Members and staff from the Mission and Discipleship Council, as a well as co-opted members who bring personal experience and professional expertise. Working together we look at the issues raised in our focus groups of those with learning disabilities and their companions.

You can contact us on learn@churchofscotland.org.uk or by ringing 0131 225 5722 and asking for Congregational Learning in the Mission and Discipleship Council.

Part of our vision is to build a network of Learning Disability Contacts (LDC). These are people who are interested in making the church a place of togetherness and inclusion for all. They can be everyday members of the church or someone in a voluntary role, or an employed person. We will keep a note of their contact details and send them updates and information. More information on page 27.

Does your church have a Learning Disability Contact? Could it be you? Please get in touch at learn@churchofscotland.org.uk

All relationships are fuelled by listening. We recently listened to our friends with learning disabilities as they told us about what we can all do to take a community of faith from a place of inclusion to a place of belonging. They put together a list of Top Tips which is included in your pack (page 41) – you can find a downloadable version half way down our web page http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/learning_disabilities

LEARNING DISABILITY WORKING GROUP GOES ON THE ROAD

In 2016 the Learning Disability Working Group started to move its meetings around the country, rather than always meeting in Edinburgh. We invite all the local Learning Disability Contacts as it is nice to put a face to a name, hear ideas and concerns and help where we can. We also arrange a local focus group of people with learning disabilities and their companions and professionals who work in this sector. By moving the Learning Disability Working Group (LDWG) around the country we have the opportunity to meet a much larger spectrum of people, making friendships, gathering views and hearing experiences from our members.

RESOURCES

WEBSITE

You can find more information on our website. Quite a lot of what we do can be found on Learn Online. This is an area of the Church of Scotland website under the resources tab. It can be found here www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/learn

Some of what we do is not a learning resource. You might find what you are looking for under the more general Learning Disability Working Group pages of the Church of Scotland website under the connect tab.

WEBSITE: WWW.CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK/CONNECT/LEARNING_DISABILITIES



PUBLICATIONS

In 2016 we created a new publication - Learning Disabilities - A Discussion Starter

This new learning and development resource is for anyone in our congregations who is seeking to enable those with learning disabilities to meaningfully belong to their church community. This free resource is designed to be a starting point. It contains an article written by John Swinton entitled 'Creating Communities of Belonging'. The article is followed by discussion questions, suggested points of action and further reading. It is designed to generate discussion and can be used in a flexible way within group settings or for study by individuals. We've included one in your pack. You could use it at Kirk Session, see page 28.

FILMS

The Learning Disability Working Group has produced a short animation film. This film gently opens the discussion about how we can reach out to the community and open our churches more to those with Learning Disabilities. You can watch the film on the Church of Scotland You Tube channel.

WEB: WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=FPOVINYGSA

OR YOU CAN CONTACT US AND REQUEST AN EMAIL LINK TO DOWNLOAD OR A DVD BY POST. EMAIL: LEARN@CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK.



The Learning Disability Working Group aims to connect, resource and inspire the body of the Church of Scotland to look further at the way we do church and to open the family to as many different people as possible. We have had two Learning Disability Conferences so far.

Our 2015 conference entitled "Creating Communities of Belonging" was delivered in partnership with a group of people with learning disabilities and was attended by more than 80 people drawn from a variety of denominations.

In 2016 our conference looked at 'God's call in the lives of those with Learning Disabilities'. With input from CrossReach, Faith and Light, L'Arche, Scottish Churches Disability Group, Comrie Special Friends, Prospects, SquareWholes and RoofBreakers it was a really special event.







WHO'S IN THE PEW?

Often we know the people around us in church to say hello to and have a chat over a cuppa but we might not know that much about them – we might not know about their extended family or about their job; we might not know where they volunteer in the spare time or what their hobbies are.

When starting a new venture – like developing our church to better support those with learning disabilities – sometimes the connections and resources you need are already all around you – sitting in the pews and we just didn't know it.

That's why it can be a good idea to do an audit. You will find on the back of this page a questionnaire to photocopy and give out but we would suggest that a questionnaire can be a little detached. If you are going to give one out please take some time to explain why you are asking these questions; all we are trying to do is find out the links that collectively we as a congregation already have to those with learning disabilities and their companions.

At the end of the day you might find it easier to have a wee look at the questions and then weave them into your everyday conversations rather than giving out a questionnaire – that is just as effective.

By asking questions we naturally open up honest conversations about topics that perhaps have not been

touched on before. A large part of what the Learning Disability Working Group is trying to achieve is to raise awareness of those with learning disabilities and get us all thinking about how we can include them more in the weekly life of our churches. Having conversations is the first and most important step of this process.

ACTION

Please look at the questionnaire (on the reverse of this page) and see if you would like to photocopy it and give it out

WHO'S IN OUR CHURCH NETWORK?

Once we start to find out more about each other we start to uncover what we call a network. It is just a fancy term for mapping out all the people you know. How many people does your church connect with? For example, if you have a hall - who is using that?

Well we host Brownies, and Guides – so we connect with all their parents and guardians, we have Bowls Club, Rotary, Lunch Club, Prayer Circle, Boys Brigade, Guild, Mothers and Toddlers etc etc and on and on.

Now the question is why are we trying to make a note of everyone in our network. It comes down to this statistic – in every community across Scotland – from Wick to Wigtown and everywhere in between up to 1% of the community has learning disabilities.

So, if our church network touches 200 families, which it easily could, then between us we probably connect with up to 600 people – some of which are people with learning disabilities.

We might also find that we already know people who are passionate about this subject but we just didn't know they were. Or people with specialist knowledge like teachers and nurses. We might find

people who have been volunteering their time for years – looking after and being with friends and relatives.

ACTION

You will find enclosed an A3 piece of paper. On one side we have filled in an imaginary church's network as an example. The other side is blank for you to have a go at mapping your network.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Hello, as a church we are thinking about what it means to be a community of belonging, especially for those with learning disabilities.

In every community in Scotland, up to 1% of people have learning disabilities, and so we are reaching out to you to find out if we as a church have any connections with those with learning disabilities, their families or organisations that support them.

We don't necessarily know at this time what we may or may not like to do to help create a community of belonging but the first step is always to find out what connections we already have.

Q1	How are you connected to our church? (please tick as many as appropriate) I attend this church for services I live near this church					
	 □ I use the church building for meetings and groups □ I know someone connected with the church □ Other - please tell us 					
Q2	What is your age bracket? ☐ 2-20 ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61-70 ☐ 71-100					
Q3	B How would you describe your gender? ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other					
Q4	Do you or a member of your family have learning disabilities? – If YES please tell us as much as you are comfortable with – for example <i>my Aunt</i>					
Q5	Have you had experience of spending large amounts of time with someone with learning disabilities? If YES please tell us as much as you are comfortable with					
Q6	Do you have connections with those with learning disabilities or their companions through your work If YES please tell us as much as you are comfortable with					
Q7	Do you have connections with those with learning disabilities or their companions in the local community? If YES please tell us as much as you are comfortable with					
Q8	Do you have connections with people working in the area of learning disabilities? - If YES please tell us as much as you are comfortable with					
Q9	Would you like to hear more about how this church might work towards creating a community of belonging in the future? If YES please give us your contact details Name:					
	Telephone number: Email address:					

CHURCH NETWORK EXAMPLE



GROUP

CONTACT

Playgroups
Music Group
Brownies
Guides
Rainbows
Cafe
Judo
Ladies Circle
Dance Class
Mens Breakfast
Boys Brigade
Scouts
Cubs
Beavers
Guild
Bowls
Prayer Group
Walking Group
Lunch Group
Counselling

PLEASE PHOTOCOPY TO REUSE TEMPLATE



GROUP CONTACT



WHO'S IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

COMMUNITY AUDIT

As well as finding out about who is in the pew, and understanding all the people that make up your church network, it is also important to understand who is involved with learning disabilities in your local community.

There are lots of people who care for or work with those with learning disabilities who live and work in your local area. There might even be a facility nearby, maybe a home run by Social Services, a special school or a day centre. Maybe there is a club at the local community hall or a specific swimming class at your local pool.

We believe that church is part of the wider community. All our lives intersect as we live and work alongside each other so it is important to find out what is going on outside the Kirk walls.

It can be difficult to find out about a new area of interest without having any form of connection. One of the first places to start finding out if there is something already happening in your town would be by contacting some of the following organisations.



CROSSREACH

CrossReach continues the Church of Scotland's long tradition of providing care and support. In fact, this work started back in 1869, so we have a long history in the field of social care. We aim to support our service users to live a purposeful and meaningful life through a holistic person-centred approach.

"In Christ's name we seek to retain and regain the highest quality of life which each individual is capable of experiencing at any given time".

CrossReach provides a range of services including:

- Supported Accommodation
- Holidays, short breaks and activities through Sparkle Leisure
- · Residential Care for adults with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities
- Housing Support and Care at Home within mainstream housing
- Support and encouragement for people to live independently and have the best life possible

WEBSITE: WWW.CROSSREACH.ORG.UK





PROSPECTS IN SCOTLAND

Prospects in Scotland is a small Christian charity that offers advice, support, training and resources to churches to help then to welcome people with learning disabilities and share the Gospel message in a way that is relevant and understandable. We believe that people with learning disabilities have much to contribute to church life. As we all get to know each other better we can build friendships with each other and with Jesus.

Prospects has been chosen as one of the Guilds six projects. Over three years the Guild will fundraise money for prospects and raise awareness of the charities work with its members.

WEBSITE: WWW.PROSPECTS.ORG.UK

EMAIL: IVYB@PROSPECTS.ORG.UK





FAITH + LIGHT

Faith & Light was founded in 1971 and now has 1600 communities from various Christian traditions in 80 countries worldwide. Communities are made up of people with intellectual disabilities, their families and friends who work together.

WEBSITE: WWW.FAITHANDLIGHT.ORG.UK





THROUGH THE ROOF

Through the Roof is a Christian disability charity seeking to advance the Christian faith by providing disabled people with life-changing opportunities; and serving churches to ensure disabled people and their families belong and contribute to the kingdom of God.

Edinburgh and Lothians was one of Through the Roof's pilot Roofbreaker Networks seeking to build relationships, connect people with disabilities to inclusive Christian activities and serve the church to become inclusive. We experiment with inclusive worship, tell stories, exchange ideas and resources, pray for one another and eat together.

WEBSITE WWW.THROUGHTHEROOF.ORG



L'ARCHE

L'Arche welcomes people with and without learning disabilities to share their lives together – in 2 Scottish communities in Inverness and Edinburgh, and 147 internationally.

We celebrate the unique value of every person, and recognise our need of one another. Living that vision as an ecumenical Christian community is an invitation to all who come to L'Arche, and to those we meet in our local churches and neighbourhood communities.

WEBSITE: WWW.LARCHE.ORG.UK





THE SCOTTISH CHURCHES DISABILITY GROUP

The Scottish Churches Disability Group supports churches of all denominations to promote inclusive worship and Christian fellowship for everyone, regardless of disabilities. We share good practice and raise the profile of talented people with disabilities in Scottish churches. For information and addition to the mailing list contact the Secretary:

EMAIL: BARBARA.GRAHAM74@BTINTERNET.COM

TEL: 01563 522 108.















CARE FOR THE FAMILY

Care for the Family is a national charity which aims to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties. Our work is motivated by Christian compassion and our resources and support are available to everyone, of any faith or none. We are passionate about enriching family life through our events, courses and resources and helping families to look at new ways of 'doing life'.

WEBSITE: WWW.CAREFORTHEFAMILY.ORG.UK





THE KAIROS FORUM

The Kairos Forum is for people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities. We seek to highlight and respond to the spiritual and religious needs of people with disabilities. To facilitate the crafting and empowerment of 'Communities of Belonging', both within religious and secular settings. Our expertise provides specialist services, training and resources.

WEBSITE: WWW.THEKAIROSFORUM.COM EMAIL: C.GANGEMI.KAIROS@GMAIL.COM





LDC NETWORK

YOUR MINISTER

KIRK SESSION

PRESBYTERY

LEARNING DISABILITY CONTACT NETWORK

The Learning Disability Working Group believes in people with passion. Although holding a formal position within the church is great sometimes it is the everyday folk in the pews who have personal motivation to make a specific thing happen.

That is why we are building a network of people called Learning Disability Contacts (LDC's). These are people up and down the nation who have let us know that they are interested in hearing more about the work of the Learning Disability Working Group.

We keep in touch with them and tell them about any new resources or ideas we are working on. We take the Learning Disability Working Group out and about on the road from presbytery to presbytery to give us an opportunity to meet the LDC's face to face, hear and learn from them.

Are you an LDC? We are hoping to have an LDC for every congregation. So that means that perhaps there is another LDC just down the road from you, if not now, then hopefully soon. Why not get in touch with us by email and we will see if we can get you linked up with your neighbouring LDCs. You could write or chat to each other or meet up face to face to share ideas. It is always nice to support each other and know someone else who is walking the same road.

EMAIL US AT LEARN@CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK OR RING CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ON 0131 2255722. THAT NUMBER GETS YOU THROUGH TO RECEPTION AND THEN YOU NEED TO ASK FOR CONGREGATIONAL LEARNING IN THE MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL.





TALKING TO YOUR MINISTER

As the LDWG deals directly with contacts in the congregation sometimes your Minister might not be aware of the work you are doing. Please let your Minister know what you are thinking about. It is our expectation that every Minister has a heart for the marginalised and wants to invite as many people into the church community as possible, so we hope they will encourage your enthusiasm. They can often be very busy people and so having a motivated person like you in their congregation will probably be very welcome indeed. When talking to your Minister please be clear about the level of involvement you feel you need from them so that they can plan it into their workload. The work of the LDWG sits in the Church of Scotland's Mission and Discipleship Council with the Congregational Learning Team. The Congregational Learning Team is there to CONNECT RESOURCE and INSPIRE everyday members of the Kirk to be involved in the life of the church – so please reassure your Minister that this does not necessarily mean a new wave of work for them alone.

Like all new ventures this process may result in growth and change.



TALKING TO THE KIRK SESSION

As you know the Kirk Session is the local court of the Church of Scotland. Kirk Sessions oversee the local congregation and its parish, and consist of elders presided over by a minister. Some of you might be very involved in Kirk Session but others of you might not; equally some Kirk Sessions might be very open to the idea of reaching out to those with learning disabilities, while for others the idea has never come up.

The Learning Disability Working Group has created a free resource to help get the ball rolling. The pamphlet is called "Learning Disabilities – A Discussion Starter" and it contains an article written by John Swinton entitled 'Creating Communities of Belonging'. The article is followed by discussion questions, suggested points of action and further reading.

We designed it to generate discussion. The idea is for everyone to read it and then work through the discussion questions together, but it could also be used for individual study.



WE'VE INCLUDED ONE IN YOUR PACK - IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ORDER MORE FREE COPIES PLEASE GO TO WWW.CHURCHOFSCOTLAND/LEARN AND CLICK ON THE RESOURCES TAB.



Under 'Learning Disabilities – A Discussion Starter' you will also find a pdf version to print off and photocopy or a full colour electronic copy to view.

TALKING TO PRESBYTERY

At district level, the court is a Presbytery. Presbyteries consist of all the ministers in the district and an equal number of elders, along with members of the diaconate (a form of ordained ministry, usually working in a complementary role in a ministry team in both parish and industry sector contexts).

Sometimes Presbytery meetings can go on for a long time and it may be difficult to get a slot to talk to Presbytery. To help you talk to your Presbytery the Learning Disability Working Group has made a short animation film. This film gently opens the discussion about how we can reach out to the community and open our churches more to those with learning disabilities.

YOU CAN WATCH THE FILM ON THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND YOU TUBE CHANNEL (WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=FPOVINYG5A). OR YOU CAN CONTACT US AND REQUEST AN EMAIL LINK TO DOWNLOAD OR A DVD BY POST - EMAIL US ON: LEARN@CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK





The first thing you are going to need to do is see who else is interested in walking this journey with you.

There are lots of ways to do this

- · Put a mention in the church notice sheet
- Put up a poster on the information board (blank poster supplied)
- Go and speak at other church groups Guild, Men's Breakfast, Homegroup
- · Ask the minister to mention it in the service or work with them perhaps a little interview from the front
- · Speak to your friends and family
- Mention it in the local newspaper or community magazine
- Speak to the local volunteering centre
- Put a notice on your church website or Facebook page

Remember our church audit - Who's in the Pew? on page 19. Maybe you found out about a few people there.

Once you have a few people interested, chat with them to see what level of commitment they can promise. That might help you decide what to do – perhaps people can't commit to a weekly event – perhaps monthly?

Sometimes people get very worried about over committing their time. If a lot of people can give a small amount of time why not think about a rota? That means that people only help out every now and again. Another way to ease people's worries is to give them a specific job. For example:

- √ John might be happy to always do teas and coffees and supply the home-baking but wouldn't want to lead a group
- √ Susan can't attend but would be happy to plan the sessions and email out all the resources
- \checkmark Jan hates planning but is warm, bubbly and confident and is happy to lead
- √ THE LOCAL BROWNIE GROUP IS HAPPY TO SHARE ALL THEIR CRAFT IDEAS, RESOURCES AND SUPPLIES
- √ Frank is happy to champion the group at Kirk Session and Presbytery
- √ THE MINISTER CAN'T BE INVOLVED EVERY TIME BUT IS FULLY BEHIND THE PROJECT
- ✓ SYLVIA IS HAPPY TO DO SOME DIGGING AROUND FOR COMMUNITY FUNDING
- ✓ BILL IS HAPPY TO DRIVE PEOPLE TO AND FROM THE SESSIONS
- √ Paul and Maisie are keen to come along and help out with whatever is going on

Another way to make your volunteers feel more comfortable is to offer a time limit to the project. In church life we can sometimes find that we end up on the same rota year after year – perhaps you could say that we all just give it a try for a year and then we can take a moment to re-evaluate our involvement. We often find that people are happy to continue if they feel valued and supported.

MEETING TOGETHER AS A TEAM

Why not invite everyone together for a cup of tea and a chat? This would be an opportunity for you to explain why you are looking in this area and share your inspiration with others. It is an opportunity for you to reassure people about any anxieties they may have and answer their questions. You might find that once the group has met together you start feeling like a team and new friendships may develop. Someone from the Church of Scotland Learning Disability Working Group might be able to attend and support you or a Learning Disability Contact from another congregation who have already started their plan of action. There are also lots of good organisations that can guide and support you e.g. Prospects, Faith and Life, Through the Roof. You will find contact details for these organisations and others in this pack on pages 24 and 25.

YOU CAN CONTACT THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND LEARNING DISABILITY
WORKING GROUP BY EMAILING: LEARN@CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK OR BY RINGING 0131 225 5722
AND ASKING FOR CONGREGATIONAL LEARNING IN THE MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL

On page 33 you will find a blank poster for you to fill in to advertise your first volunteer gathering. Feel free to photocopy it first so you can use it again.

Here is a sample text to use if you want to send emails.

SENDING AN EMAIL



Dear xxxxx

Recently I have been wondering about reaching out to people with learning disabilities who may live in our community or have family connections to our congregation. I have been looking at some resources from The Church of Scotland that talk about creating communities of belonging – where people with learning disabilities not only feel welcome but comfortable and treasured. I'm not quite sure what this will look like. There are lots of different options. Some churches have a special meeting specifically for those with learning disabilities. Please have a look here for some ideas www.prospects.org.uk

Or it could be a monthly coffee morning, or a morning in a local residential or day centre. It might even just be inviting new people to our Sunday mornings and listening to them about small changes we can make to church to make it better for them.

Would you be interested in coming along to chat all this through? I would really appreciate your thoughts and insights at this early stage? We are meeting on xxxx at xxxx - are you available?

If you know someone else (from within our church or in the community) who might be interested please let me know - I wouldn't want to miss anyone.

There's no pressure but I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Xxxxxxx

Tel: xxxxxxxxxx

EXAMPLE NOTICE FOR NEWSLETTER, ORDER OF SERVICE, WEBSITE OR FACEBOOK PAGE

DID YOU KNOW THAT UP TO 1% OF EVERY COMMUNITY IN SCOTLAND HAVE LEARNING DISABILITIES.

As a church we are starting to think about how we can open our community of faith up to those with learning disabilities, their families and companions. We don't know how yet but we would love to hear your thoughts on the subject. Please come along for coffee and a chat on xxxxx at xxxxx.

For more information please chat to XXXXXX
Email:
Tel:





FOR MORE GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEERING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS PLEASE CONTACT VOLUNTEER SCOTLAND.

TEL: 01786 479593

EMAIL: HELLO@VOLUNTEERSCOTLAND.ORG.UK

VOLUNTEER SCOTLAND, JUBILEE HOUSE, FORTHSIDE WAY, STRILING, FK8 1QZ

IF YOU WOULD LIKE IMAGES TO INCLUDE PLEASE CONTACT US AT LEARN@CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK OR BY RINGING 0131 225 5722 AND ASK FOR CONGREGATIONAL LEARNING IN THE MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding is about preventing harm and abuse, and making a timely and appropriate response if it occurs. Your team will come under the remit of your own church's Safeguarding Officer.

Harm or abuse of children and adults at risk can happen anywhere – even in church communities. We have a duty to ensure a safe church for all. This means protecting children and adults at risk.

The Church of Scotland aims to minimise the risk of harm occurring. If harm or abuse does occur, with appropriate support and training, it will be recognised and reported. If it occurs we will work with the Police and Social Work services if appropriate.

The Safeguarding Service supports the whole Church of Scotland in the UK and abroad. This includes the Church's 70 social care services, provided by CrossReach for adults and Children.

The Church of Scotland's website has a dedicated section on Safeguarding that contains comprehensive guidance, publications and resources. The Church of Scotland provides excellent training free of charge. All of these things should be well known to your church Safeguarding Officer.

All volunteers working with vulnerable adults should receive safeguarding training and be PVG checked.

If you would like to contact the Church of Scotland Safeguarding team please do so. The service is available 9.00am-4.45pm, Monday to Friday. You can leave a message on the answering machine outwith these times.

The Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service The Church of Scotland 121 George Street Edinburgh, EH2 4YN

TEL: 0131 240 2256

EMAIL: SAFEGUARDING@CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK

WWW.CHURCHOFSCOTLAND.ORG.UK







OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES



Do you want to help make Church better for those with learning disabilities, in the church or the community?

Come for cake and a chat.

When
Where
••••••

Name

Tel: Email:

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR OUR CHURCH?

Every church is different and no two communities are the same. The Learning Disability Working Group is not here to tell you what to do. We want to facilitate a process where you look at your current circumstances and deicide what fits for you.

We have listened to other churches that are on this journey with us and the responses can be loosely grouped into four categories

1. PARALLEL EXPRESSION

This is a group that meets at a time other than the main (Sunday) morning service. Sometimes these groups can function like a house group. There is often a time of singing, a small time of reflection or teaching, a fun activity and refreshments. A good example of these would be Prospects groups, see page 24.

WWW.PROSPECTS.ORG.UK



These groups don't have to be just for those with learning disabilities – the fun can be experienced by all. Parallel expressions can be built to meet the needs and likes of those that attend, they can also be great places for people who don't usually attend church or people from across denominations – all faiths and none!

You can build your group around what your volunteer team can manage. It doesn't have to be a weekly meeting, it could be fortnightly, monthly or even quarterly. If you have a church or a church hall that is accessible and appropriate you could use that but you could also rent a different space.

2 WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

Sometimes there might be a good link with organisations or facilities in the local area. Often day centres and specialist care providers are happy to have local members of the community volunteer with them. You could run craft sessions or a prayer group, Bible study, park walk group – whatever fits the skills you can offer and suits the organisation you are working with. CrossReach is the social care arm of the Church of Scotland and provides all levels of care for those with learning disabilities – there might be a facility near you.

WWW.CROSSREACH.ORG.UK



Ask at places like your local community centre or library – there may be a group already up and running that you could help at.

There are also good community based organisations working in Scotland perhaps there is one near you e.g. Faith and Light.

WWW.FAITHANDLIGHT.ORG.UK



Do speak to your pastoral care team at church. They may already have good friendships with individuals and their families who are in the parish but do not attend church.



3. ONE OFF EVENTS

You may be at a much earlier stage in the process and feel that at this time you can't commit to any long term plans. You may feel more comfortable with a one-off event for other members of your church either to:

- · Raise awareness and get people thinking
- Recruit a volunteer team
- Fundraise for a learning disability charity

Y. ADAPTING THE MAIN SERVICE

Although working alongside the church allows you to tailor your approach to best suit people's needs there are also great benefits to looking at your main expression of worship and seeing if it could be adapted. We have heard people say that changes they made in their Sunday services to help those with learning disabilities have actually ended up benefitting everyone. Here are some examples of what other churches have done

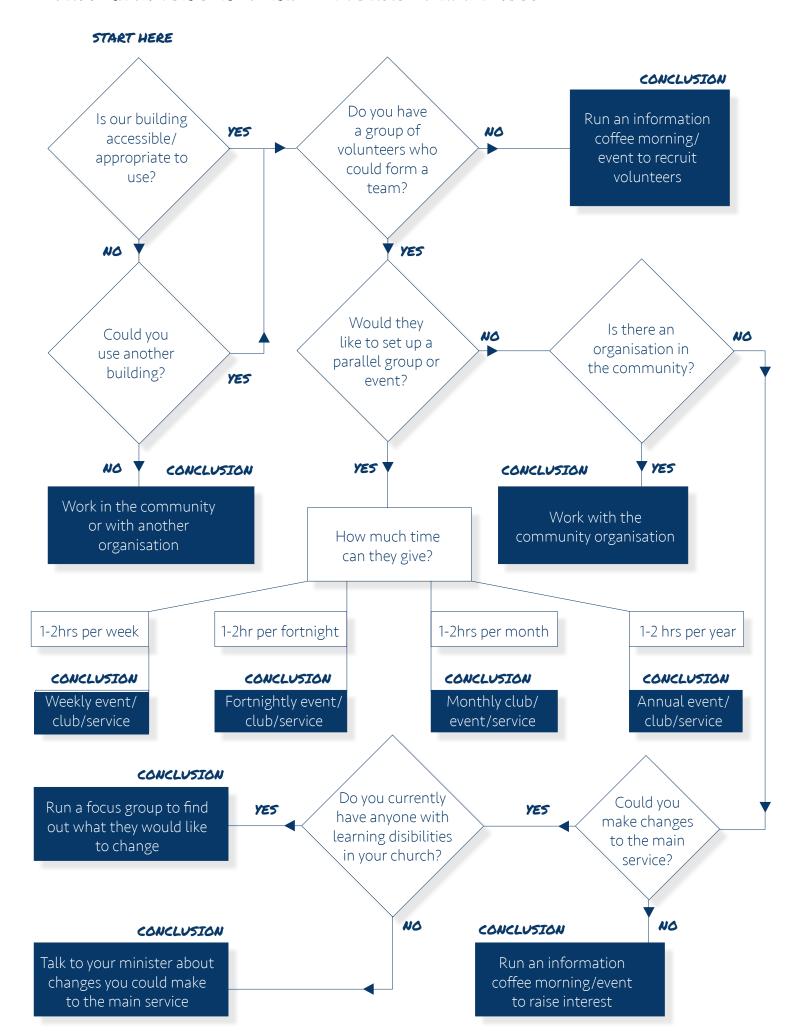
- · Helped those with learning disabilities join the café and welcome teams
- Used larger print
- · Shortened the sermon
- · Used simpler songs
- Incorporated actions
- · Used symbols alongside headings in the order of service
- · Sent notices out by email a day before
- · Had a Sunday club for adults with learning disabilities who did not want to remain in the sanctuary
- · Changed the font colour on the overhead screen
- · Reserved the first two rows for those with disabilities
- Provided a box of percussion instruments
- · Asked those with learning disabilities to help with the service, for example with the prayers
- · Set jobs for those with learning disabilities to help them feel valued e.g. carrying in the Bible
- · Asked those with learning disabilities to help with cleaning and maintenance along with everyone else
- Cut out jargon by using everyday words that everyone could understand immediately

DECISION-MAKING FLOW CHART

ON THE NEXT PAGE YOU WILL FIND A DECISION - MAKING FLOW CHART; HOPEFULLY IT WILL HELP YOU FIND WHICH RESPONSE FITS YOUR CHURCH AND YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE DIAMONDS HOLD QUESTIONS - BY ANSWERING YES OR NO YOU ARE LED ON TO THE NEXT STAGE OF THE FLOW CHART. WHEN YOU REACH A SHADED BOX YOU HAVE COME TO A CONCLUSION.

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR OUR CHURCH - A DECISION MAKING TOOL



AFTER THE FLOW CHART

Hopefully, if you have worked through the flow chart you have come to some conclusion (in a black box). This might not be exactly right but perhaps it might give you a steer.

The conclusions on the flow chart separated into the following groups:

- · An event with members of your church or community to raise awareness
- · Working in the community, perhaps with another organisation
- A parallel expression of church i.e. not the main Sunday service. This expression could be weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually
- · Finding ways to improve the main church service

Sometimes it can be hard to imagine what these things mean so we have collected three casestudies from our friends with learning disabilities. They would like to share their experiences of church with you.



WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY



My Godson David loves Church. Church is really important to him. He feels at home in church – surrounded by familiar faces and family friends. It is a constant in his life from childhood to adult hood. Every Sunday service in the Parish Church, David carries the bible into the sanctuary. It means a lot to him to do that – to have a position of honour. He knows why it is a key job and what it means.

David also attends a monthly community service locally in the Scottish Episcopal Church, tailored to the needs of people with learning disabilities. The group is ecumenical and all are welcome. We start with a welcome song that David's friend, Louis, knew from primary school. Louis later leads us in the Lord's Prayer. We speak at his speed, not at our own. At the time for distribution of communion, David distributes the bread. Comrie Special Friends is David's ministry. He is our minister.

Although David has Downs Syndrome and hearing impairments, he ministers to us. A new service for people with learning disabilities starts soon in the Cathedral in Inverness, inspired by the Vice-Provost's experience of being ministered-to by David.

When you first meet David he can be quite quiet, but he speaks in other ways. He is a prize-winning photographer. Last year David and I went to an academic conference entitled Exploring the Glory of God, where David presented a slideshow of his photos. David's presentation, together with the communion afterwards, where David distributed bread, opened delegates' eyes through the silent language of photographs and the sacrament, to the glory of God that is revealed when the people of God seek to include all.

David has been loved and supported by his church and by the openness and enthusiasm of Ministers, in both The Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopal Church. I think it is right to acknowledge David's ministry both here at home and nationally.

PARALLEL EXPRESSIONS

My family didn't really go to church but I went to Sunday School with my sister and brother after a school trip to Lourdes. I remember pulling Santa's beard at a Sunday school party.

Later, I lived at an ARK house. Somebody came in to lead Bible readings and prayers in a housegroup. I also got a lift from a friend to the local Prospects group. Now I have moved I go to a different Prospects group and I go to Connect Plus, a newer Prospects group that meets at the other side of town.

Prospects helps me love Jesus more. I like the singing and praying; sometimes we do a wee drama from the Bible. Sometimes I help lead the meeting. I also like going to the Prospects weekend away.

I have also gone on a L'Arche Friendship Retreat. We learned about 'the Lord is my Shepherd' and made felt flowers in the art room. I enjoyed swimming and seeing the animals, especially the baby goat.

At my church I go to all the Square Wholes sessions, they have a monthly ones and they also have 4 ceilidhs a year. They are good fun.

CASE STUDIES 40

IMPROVING THE MAIN CHURCH SERVICE



I have been going to church with my parents since I was a little girl and I like it very much. I enjoyed Sunday School and stayed a bit longer in that than others my age but I wanted to join the church along with other teenagers when I was 17. When I first joined I used a scrap book to help me understand what was going on and that helped me join in with the others my age.

Although I liked church I did think to myself that there are ways it could be better, not just for me but for the other people with Learning Disabilities who attend. One of my suggestions was to help make it clearer when we need to respond in the service. I asked for the words on the screen to be in different colours – what the Minister is going to say in black and what everyone else says in red or BOLD. Lots of people have told me that they find this much better.

Another suggestion I had was to start 'hymn of the month' to help us all learn new songs.

I also wanted to be involved more so I asked to join the welcome team like my dad. The church was happy for me to join the team and I did that for many years. I quite often lead the prayers in the service and even at

special services such as the Easter morning service at Loch side.

There are other adults with Learning Disabilities at our church but unlike me they don't like the main service – it's too long. We were struggling to find something for them to enjoy. I wanted to give them something. I had an idea that they might prefer to join the service half way though with those from Junior Church as they could only cope with half a service. Simon, Lucy and Ben love the Junior Church part of service, they much prefer it and feel part of it.

I also think that it is important to pass information on and share what you think with others so I always pass stuff on to our Session Clerk. I invited him to the Prospects group in Dunfermline to see what was involved and now we have our own Church Prospects group that I help run.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND LEARNING DISABILITY FOCUS GROUP WORKED TOGETHER TO COME UP WITH A TOP TIPS SHEET. SMALL WAYS WE CAN ALL MAKE CHURCH BETTER FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES. WE THOUGHT YOU COULD USE IT AS A POSTER TOO.

LEARNING DISABILITIES TOP TIPS FOR CONGREGATIONS

- 1. In the first instance, please just be friendly to me smile at me and speak to me.
- 2. Please could you invite me to go with you to a Church event?
- 3. I would love to help in the church. Is there a job you think I could do?
- 4. It would be great if you could arrange to meet me sometimes outside Church.
- 5. Please ask me what my needs are and also ask my carer, but ask me first.
- 6. Please talk to my carer about their needs.
- 7. It would be helpful if I had a 'buddy' in the Church.
- 8. It can help me when pictures and other visual aids are used.
- 9. The use of standard icons on a screen can help me to know what is happening next.
- 10. There are many different technological aids available. Please ask what I use out of Church and explore the possibilities of use in Church.
- 11. It is good if someone in the Church can take on a role to help and advise others but everyone can be my friend.
- 12. Perhaps you could arrange training, so that people could better understand the challenges I might face and how best to help me, whilst still remembering that everyone is different. Please ask if I can help in preparing and delivering the training.
- 13. Please invite me to share my gifts, stories and hospitality and not leave me to always be the recipient.
- 14. Please pray for me and not just about my disability. I will likely be seeking prayer for the same sort of issues as face us all.





WE WOULD LIKE TO DO A PARALLEL EXPRESSION OF CHURCH FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- WHERE DO WE START?

The good news is there are lots of churches all over the world already doing these types of sessions so you are on a well-trod path.

We would suggest getting in contact with Prospects or Faith and Light. They have lots of resources and can help you set up a group and look after your team.

THE SCOTTISH CO-ORDINATOR FOR PROSPECTS IS IVY BLAIR. EMAIL: IVYB@PROSPECTS.ORG.UK

You will find in the next few pages a session plan from the Prospects website

WWW.PROSPECTS.ORG.UK

it has lots of free resources and session plans. These plans walk you through how to run a session. We have also included a craft sheet for you to use in the session. Either colour it in or take in magazines and cut and stick pictures on to it – it is all about breakfast!





LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS IN EVERYDAY THINGS LIKE BREAKFAST

Shared Resources from www.prospects.org.uk

Prospects accessible teaching series



Learning more about Jesus in everyday things (breakfast)

Prepared by Ivy Blair, Prospects Mission Development Coordinator in Scotland

Aim: To show that Jesus cares about all our needs.



Welcome

What's in the bag? Pass it round and give people the opportunity to feel it and guess what is in it.

Item: Something associated with breakfast – could be a box of cereal, egg cup – maybe even a croissant!!

Learning more about Jesus (Breakfast) Page 1



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Shared Resources from www.prospects.org.uk



Game

Get people to mime preparing items for breakfast – the group have to guess what it is.

Could be

- Making porridge
- Squeezing some orange juice
- Frying an egg
- Making boiled egg and toast "soldiers"
- Making a bacon roll.

Question: What do you have for breakfast? (Talk about all that is good about breakfast and why it is an important meal to get us going for the day ahead)



Bible Reading: John 21: 1-14 The amazing catch of fish.



Drama: A special breakfast (as told by Peter)

Hello there my name is Peter – I was one of Jesus special friends, but then Jesus was killed. Before he died he told us that he would come back to life – that he would not leave us alone. I'm not sure what's happening – I thought I would just get back to my old job as a fisherman and see what happens – I can't stand this waiting around.

So me and some of my friends went out into the boat and started fishing – maybe we were out of practice or maybe there just were no fish – I was tired and fed up – we spent all night fishing and we caught nothing!

Learning more about Jesus (Breakfast) Page 2



©Prospects for People with Learning Disabilities 2015 Registered Office: 69 Honey End Lane, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4EL Registered Charity number 1060571 Scotland SC040944 Very early in the morning – someone shouted to us from the beach "Friends have you caught anything?" – I was a bit surprised that anyone was around so early.

Then he said "throw our nets out again to the right side of the boat and you will catch lots of fish" – I thought he was having a laugh but we might as well try it anyway - then something amazing happened – we caught loads of fish – so many that it was hard to get them all in the boat.

Then I realized that the man on the beach was Jesus – how exciting was that!! I jumped into the water and rushed to meet him on the beach. He had brought some bread and had a BBQ going – he told us to bring some fish to put on the BBQ – once it was cooked Jesus came around and gave us all some bread and fish. That was a great breakfast – good food and with friends. I knew my best friend Jesus was really alive again and here he was looking after us – now that is a wonderful friend. We were all so happy that morning.

Talk:

Jesus liked to spend time with his friends – he enjoyed being with them, he had lots to tell them about God and he really loved them and cared about them. Peter sometimes let Jesus down – he sometimes did the wrong thing or said the wrong thing – Peter was just like us – we often get things wrong – don't we?

Question: What sort of things do we do that we know are wrong? (The answers will help you gauge people's understanding)

Even when we mess things up Jesus never gives up on us – he keeps on loving us – just like Peter. We can say sorry and God forgives us.

Learning more about Jesus (Breakfast) Page 3



Shared Resources from www.prospects.org.uk

Jesus made breakfast on the beach for Peter and the others to show them how much he cared for them in everyday things. Jesus may not come and make our breakfast but he cares that we have enough to eat and that we have people to help us when we need help – Jesus cares about everything in our day to day lives – not just at church on Sundays.

Jesus cares about you.

Prayer time: using bubbles.

Ask people to speak to Jesus quietly about their mistakes
– encourage them to say sorry and then tell them that
when they say sorry God forgives them – that's the end of it.

I am the one who wipes out all your sins. I do this to please myself. I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25.

Blow bubbles and watch them bursting – this helps us to remember that when we say sorry to God he forgives us and our sin is gone.

Possible craft: Make a place mat to take home for the breakfast table – need pictures of breakfast things ready to cut out and stick on. Also something like Jesus loves me (or use person's name or photograph) and an appropriate Bible verse. If possible use a laminator to make the mat durable.





Me

Learning more about Jesus (Breakfast) Page 4



Shared Resources from www.prospects.org.uk



Possible songs

- Thank you Jesus, thank you Lord for loving me.
- Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory
- Jesus the start of it all (Prospects)
- The Bible is the word of God (Prospects)
- God's not dead, no He is alive.

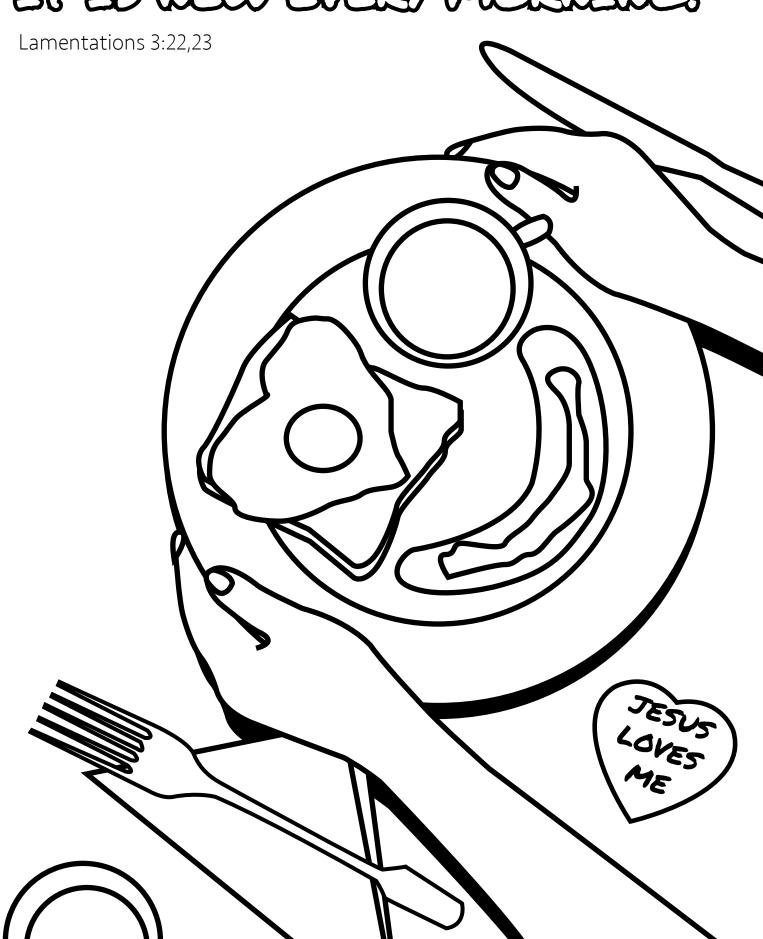
Prepared by Ivy Blair ivyb@prospects.org.uk

Learning more about Jesus (Breakfast) Page 5



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EVALUATION FORM

It is always good to evaluate any project as it goes along. It provides us with an opportunity to think about what we
are trying to achieve and lets us change things as we go along. Use these questions to prompt some evaluation of
your work. Feel free to photocopy this form and give it to your volunteers or work through it with those that you serve.

What did we set out to achieve – what are our goals?
1 2 3 4 5
On a scale of 1 to 5 (with one being the best) how well are we meeting our goals?
Please explain your answer.
Do you have enough resources to meet your goals?
If NO – what do we need?
Do you think the right people are in the right roles? YES NO
If NO what changes do you suggest?
1 1 1 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

What are we doing really well?
Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
How can we build morale?
What is the next step for us?
Do you pray for the group? YES NO
How can we support you?

MEDIA FORM



We are always looking for stories to help raise the profile of our work. This could be in the local community or nationally.

We'd like to hear about what you are doing, your achievements, the new things and the challenging things – the solutions you've found.

Please fill in this form and return it. We will then contact you to discuss.

We will keep everything confidential until we have your consent to share it.

Please write clearly
Title:
Full Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Tel:
Date of Birth:
What would you like to tell us about?
I consent that the Church of Scotland can contact me about sharing our story
Signature Date
Many thanks for all that you do for the Church of Scotland and the community
Please return this form to:
Learning Disability Working Group. Mission and Discipleship Council, Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

TESTIMONIAL FORM

The Church of Scotland

We are always looking for examples of how people are helped and lives are changed by your work. This could be in your family, church, community or nationally.

Do you have a heart warming story about your work with those with learning disabilities that you could share with us so we can use it to encourage and inspire others?

Please fill in this form and return it. We will then contact you to discuss.

We will keep everything confidential until we have your consent to share it.

Please write clearly
Title:
Full Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Tel:
Date of Birth:
What would you like to tell us about?
I consent that the Church of Scotland can contact me about sharing our story
Signature Date
Many thanks for all that you do for the Church of Scotland and the community
Please return this form to
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Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

LEARN IS AN ONGOING CONGREGATIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE FROM THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL DESIGNED TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE LEARNING AND DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN OUR CONGREGATIONS. THE LEARN INITIATIVE SEEKS TO NURTURE IN ALL A DISCIPLESHIP OF LEARNING AND SERVICE.



For more information, please contact:

Learning Disability Working Group Mission and Discipleship Council 121 George Street Edinburgh, EH2 4YN

Tel: 0131 225 5722 Email:learn@churchofscotland.org.uk

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@churchscotland

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353