

DECLARATION by Engage partners

We believe...

As the Body of Christ, we affirm that all people, including people with disabilities, are created in the image of the Triune God. The church is “OF” all and “FOR” all. Thus, a church that excludes persons with disabilities is incomplete. The Body is made up of different parts and the seemingly weaker parts are indispensable. (1 Cor. 12:22)

The Mission of God is an imperative; *along with* and *for persons with disabilities*; they have potential to be full and active members of the Church, community and society at large.

We repent...

For treating the person with a disability as an object of charity; or of a lesser class. Though disability is prevalent in the world, it is less prevalent in the church. We have accepted traditions and imposed structures, processes and attitudes which prevent those who are affected by disability from accessing the church, the Christian community—and our own programs in India. If we are not actively including people with disabilities, we are passively excluding them; and we have missed the opportunity to show the heart of the Gospel.

We are challenged...

By the Gospel of Christ, in establishing the “reign of God” to work toward justice, love and peace for all; including persons with disabilities. We are motivated by the holistic healing narratives in the Gospels to minister both *to* and *alongside* persons with disabilities. For us as a community of Christian faith, it is a mandate that we accompany one another in reaching the highest potential for which God created us.

We are guided by Christ...

Who furthered this message by coming “to preach good news to the poor and proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind...to release the oppressed.” (Luke 4:14-21) Jesus saw people with disabilities, challenged their marginalization; and He responded with Love. He showed great concern for both physical and mental difficulties as He addressed their spiritual condition.

We are committed to:

- Stand with our Brothers and Sisters who have disabilities, ensuring that they are centrally involved in this process and movement.
- Promote inclusion of those with disabilities in all aspects of the church, our programs, and community.

- Further a theological understanding of disability: that ALL are created equal and in the image of God; and that disabilities are not a result of a person's sin, lack of faith, or an unwillingness to be healed
- Engage *together* for advocacy and inclusion of persons with disabilities in their local communities and society at large
- Be personally and corporately blessed by people with disability serving alongside those without disability

We are guided by the Scriptures...

- ± We value people as being created in God's image and as being called to abundant life
"For You formed my inward parts...I will praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." (Ps. 139: 13, 14)
"I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly."
(John 10:10)
- ± We acknowledge that God's purposes are often worked out through those whom the world has rejected and despised.
"...God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it..."
(1 Cor.12:24-25)
"...My strength is made perfect in weakness..." (2 Cor. 12:9)
- ± We acknowledge that societal structures, including those in Christian communities, can prevent God's people from playing a full role in the body of Christ.
"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6)
"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18)
- ± We value team work and acknowledge that the body of Christ is incomplete without our Brothers and Sisters affected by disabilities.
"...in whom the whole body is united and held together by every ligament with which it is supplied. As each individual part does its job, the body's growth is promoted so that it builds itself up in love." (Eph. 4: 16)
"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (Corinthians 12:18)
- ± We believe that we are loved by God and are called to express His love to others, including those who are marginalized. We exhibit this love through both word and deed.



Engage. Include. Be inspired.

*“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”
(John 15:12) “Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor
and needy” (Prov. 31:9)*

Conclusion

If persons with disabilities are a full part of our church, then we will be blessed

There is blessing when we include those with disability in the church, our programs and in our communities where we work. Created in the image of God, they can enjoy the right to “wholeness”; no longer simply being objects of our benevolence, but enabled to be “givers” themselves. In this way, our paradigm shifts from giver-receiver mode to the “accompanier” mode; and as a result, they can truly experience abundant life.

1Corinthians 12:22 says that the weaker parts of the body are indispensable.

Luke 14:13 says, “invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind...and you will be blessed”.