

BELIEFS

Our most challenging task will not be dismantling physical barriers, but rather addressing the subtle ways society—designed for typical bodies and minds—has shaped our church culture and belief system. Biblical beliefs for an inclusive community include:

- All humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-2 and Ps. 8:4-5)
- Disability is part of God’s sovereign purpose (Exodus 4) and the law protects people with disabilities (Deuteronomy 27:18, Leviticus 19:14) and includes them in the people of God.
- Inclusion is modeled and mandated by Jesus (Luke 4:18) –Jesus’ treatment of people with impairments displays God’s heart for the excluded and vulnerable.
- The church has many different members and gifts (1 Cor. 12:22) –Diversity is part of God’s design, each member exercising their spiritual gifts for the good of the whole. To extend Paul’s metaphor, the body of Christ is itself “disabled,” –without the presence of people with disabilities.*

**adapted from Joni & Friends’ Ministry and Marc Mallefer’s For All: A Biblical Basis for Becoming a Church “For all People”*

LANGUAGE

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” - 1 PETER 4:8

Because we love one another:

(This list is a starting point, not exhaustive or permanent.)

- Try to avoid words that are needlessly offensive or charged (see below)
- Choose words carefully but, don’t let fear keep you from engaging
- Use names when possible, keeping the person first in description–‘Mari’ or ‘the gal who uses a wheelchair’ (not the ‘wheelchair girl’) and ‘John’ or ‘the man who has vision loss’ (not the ‘blind guy’)
- When conversing, talk directly to the person/child not the parent, spouse or caregiver
- Attitude behind words are paramount: NOT pity, but empathy and value–mutuality of ministry
- Fear of saying or doing something ‘wrong’ can also be a barrier, so keep faith and works in motion–ready to apologize upfront and often

This...

wheelchair/walker/crutch/cane user
non verbal or non speaking
accessible/wheelchair parking
cognitive disability
people without disabilities or typical

Not this...

crippled, handicapped, wheelchair bound
dumb or mute
handicapped/disabled parking
retarded or slow
normal or healthy



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