

The inclusion of adults with learning disabilities

Count Everyone In

Audio file

[CEI audio.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:07

Well hello, everybody and welcome to our part of today a huge sankeys at Katie and all those that have put to get this together and I don't know about the rest of the people that have been speaking but it feels like we're impostors. We've just heard such wonderful stuff.

00:00:25

And just say thank you to everybody that's taken part well, a little bit about us. We've been married 45 years and we've had 20 years of working with adults with learning disability in a spiritual context, and we were formerly part of prospects. And then for a short while with livability.

00:00:43

I've got two adult sons and perhaps we could go on to the next slide. Uhm, 2 adult sons and daughters in law 5 gorgeous children, grandchildren. I would say that, wouldn't I?

00:00:56

Including two autistic grandsons.

00:01:00

We've lived in the Oxford diocese since 2014 and we're part of his church family at Saint Nicks in Newbury where we run a group for adults with learning disability called meet Monday.

00:01:13

So when do we meet?

00:01:14

Oh, it's Monday.

00:01:17

So it's a gathering for people with learning disabilities, adults with learning disabilities to worship, to have fellowship, to have fun.

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Done and at long last last month, one Monday before last we met face to face and we had such fun together. All that time we've been on zoom.

00:01:37

We're also not joined today, but we have Janaka class who works with us. There is a social worker, a makaton tutor, and we have many, many other volunteers who work with us. When we were out on the road, which gradually were beginning to do again.

00:01:56

So next slide please and Christine.

00:01:59

So just a little bit of a background really. You probably know this, but just to fill in any gaps, a learning disability occurs before, during, or very soon after birth, and for example, people with Down syndrome have the extra chromosome, and some babies are starved of oxygen during birth.

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And a learning disability may be associated with other disabilities that affect mobility, hearing, sight, etc. And of course, as we've heard already today, some people with autism may also have a learning



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disability, but not necessarily everyone.

00:02:37

And a learning disability affects the capacity or the speed to carry out everyday tasks at personal care. Managing finance, ability to learn new skills, and many have limited or no literacy skills. So no reading or writing something that we shouldn't make assumptions about.

00:02:57

Because every person is an individual.

00:03:00

And so behind, every disability or syndrome is a person just longing to be accepted and loved as they are not to be.

00:03:11

Pitted, patronised, or even prayed away.

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Many adults for learning disabilities, including some who we've known, have been told that they are useless. They're worthless. They are nuisance hopeless.

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At everything they do, and perhaps even shouldn't have been born. And if they believe that they'll believe that they'll never be good enough for other people or for God and they come to believe it sad.

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Early and we'll find that many will have a propensity to saying sorry even when it's not necessary and having a subservient attitude lacking in self esteem.

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That is a generalisation, but we have to remember that every human being is created by God in his.

00:04:00

Own image.

00:04:01

And God doesn't make mistakes. So let's believe that and treat people with the dignity and value that they deserve.

00:04:10

So let's think about next slide, please.

00:04:14

Just vote.

00:04:14

How your church can be more welcoming and relevant and supportive to adults with learning disabilities and their caregivers.

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So many of our churches are very word orientated and we have somebody in her own church who has learned disability but for a long long time felt well.

00:04:34

I can't be a proper Christian 'cause I can't read. I can't write and a number of us have spent time with him just trying to see that he's valued for who he is.

00:04:44

And that actually you don't have to be able to read to be.

00:04:46

A Christian.

00:04:48

Can we have the next slide piece?

00:04:52

Two slight words on a slide communication, valuing and and. These words have been used already today, but these two things are really important, effective, accessible communication and valuing each individual are so important.

00:05:10

You've heard many, today Speaking of inclusivity and inclusion, which isn't wrong, but count everyone in tries to focus on accessibility. It's not come and join in with what we are doing.

00:05:24

But let's see if we need to change anything so that we can access church together. Access faith together.

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Our vision is for every church in England and Wales to welcome adults with a learning disability so that they can know Jesus and growing him and belong to the community.

00:05:46

As a count, everyone in our focus is on learning disability. You see so often it's lost in the mellow. Forgive me guys, if you have other disabilities but the learning can get lost in amongst everything else.

00:06:02

And sometimes the reality is if they have no voice, they're not heard, and so if you like we join in with them to shout on their behalf and help them to have ways in which they can shout out more coherently in their way.

00:06:17

The Bible teaches us to speak up for those who have no voice, who cannot verbalise their own thoughts or feelings, needs and preferences.

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Let's look at the next slide.

00:06:30

In the UK there is in every 100 adults they're likely to be two with a learning disability. That's 20 in every 1000, but does my church reflect that? How about yours?

00:06:46

Next slide, please.

00:06:49

There's some practical tips how to welcome people so they have the opportunity to belong, engage in conversation, don't ignore them, be direct, and start by giving your own name. Ask questions that they can answer without too much difficulty, but don't assume anything we've said.

00:07:08

Already, not everyone can read.

00:07:11

We have to be sensitive as well because not everyone wants a lengthy conversation. And of course we don't hug at the moment very very much, do we?

00:07:19

We have to be aware of sensitivities at all times at the Christian hug. May be the last thing that people.

00:07:26

Want it's good to offer to show people where to sit, where the toilets are.

00:07:31

And where refreshments, if there are going to be any, are going to be served. But we need to give people time to absorb what we're saying, and to respond.

00:07:42

And it's also good to explain without using jargon. Just what is what they can expect in the church service. Next slide, please.

00:07:53

You've heard lots of words today and we're giving you lots of words too.

00:07:58

But only 1/3 of adults with learning disabilities read well enough to take in the words on a printed notice sheet or a projection screen.

00:08:08

Be sure that the important messages are spoken out.

00:08:13

Or they're there to be visualised. That's a picture or a symbol. Avoid using uppercase letters except for names at the beginning of sentences.

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Lower case is easier to read and you will notice on our slides that we have a round font.

00:08:33

And there are things about that on our website.

00:08:37

But simple signings such as makaton may help some people understand and join in and remember we've heard things about BSL and Makaton earlier, but makaton is keyword signing and helps a lot with people cognitive understanding of things. Symbols are also available and one or two of them.

00:08:58

You'll see popping up on our screen.

00:09:01

Next slide pleased.

00:09:02

So we come to hymns and songs and sermons, and we have to remember that some of the hymns and songs we sing.

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I'm so rich in language which is great if you understand it, but so many guys with learning disabilities don't understand. They might just sing along, but not with any understanding. So let's choose some.

00:09:21

That have simpler words or explain the explain. Perhaps one concept. Don't make it too complicated and why not try speaking the words of the next line of a hymn or song. If it's slow enough to enable non readers to join in.

00:09:38

Now, shorter attention spans can be a problem to add a challenge to preachers, and I think I learned number myself with that.

00:09:48

My attention span is not what it used to be, so let's try in our preaching and our Speaking of any thought to be concise to be visual to tell stories.

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And when we finish move to the next stage of the service, and then perhaps later on, come back to give a two or three sentence summary of the main points.

00:10:07

A key thing is to slow down, keep the interest and it was so good to hear Marianne talk about that, and everyone benefits when we take a little bit more time over what we're saying.

00:10:21

Next slide, please.

00:10:23

Faith, gifts and growth. People with lend disabilities can become Christians. Oh yes they can. I've often been asked, really, can they? Well, yes they can. And if they become Christians then they have spiritual gifts.

00:10:39

And most gifts are there for the building up in the encouragement of the church, and therefore, if we do not allow anybody to use their gifts and the life and the body of the church, then actually the church is bereft.

00:10:54

So we need to learn how to communicate together as the body find roles for people to have not just tokenism, but things that they are good at. Maybe as part of the welcome team, or sharing and leading in prayers.

00:11:08

Support people in their faith.

00:11:11

My personal interest than prayer have available copies of the NIRV, the new International readers version, the Accessible Edition and Psalms are coming out later this month.

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Look at our.

00:11:24

Facebook page and our website to see something of that and you can sign up to look at the launch of Psalms.

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The New Testament is already in print.

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And I've had the privilege of working alongside some of my friends that are on these screens today in actually making these things happen.

00:11:44

But count everyone has put together some Bible reading notes, not just about psalms, but in other parts of the Bible 2 but also on our YouTube channel. And some of those are signed as well with Makaton and consider a small group. I've seen one or two comments coming up on the chat.

00:12:04

Already of people who would like to do that did talk to us. We've got ways in which we can support and help train people to do that. It's fine.

00:12:13

So next slide please.

00:12:15

And just drawing this to a close, what can count everyone in offer? Well we have our know and grow training programme which takes churches and teams of people who are perhaps interested in starting a learning disability ministry right from the starting point through to developing their their Group A team.

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And then our second day goes into more details about issues that face people with learning disabilities and our colleague Yonaka has and is developing a pilot at the moment.

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And Christian Makaton course, which will be validated as the only Christian mchatton workshop. And that's been done in conjunction with the Makaton charity.

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As Peter said, we can offer practical advice and support to churches including preaching and teaching. We have prayer and encouragement groups that have been.

00:13:07

Operating on zoom, but will hopefully go back to being in person as well. We have a friend scheme for groups and churches and for individuals we've mentioned resources, which is a growing thing that we've been able to develop during lockdown periods. In particular, and we'll be back at the Christian festivals hopefully next year.

00:13:26

Offering accessible programmes of worship and teaching and that would be Keswick, Spring, Harvest word alive and others. And that's where we have lovely volunteers who work with us.

00:13:39

So next screen please, as with everybody else, there's some contact details there and we.

00:13:45

Would love to.

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Help you to look at how your church can be accessible to adults with learning disability.

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And we would say this wouldn't work, but if you make it accessible for guys with learning disabilities, then you actually make it.

00:13:59

More accessible for all of us. Thank you so much for listening. Thank you.

00:14:08

There's me pressing the wrong button on my laptop again. You think I'd know how to work this thing by now?

00:14:13

And it's a real privilege to have pink listing with us, and I've known them through churches for all network for some time, and I'm always moved by their passion and and their desire to actually see this this hidden group.

00:14:28

Of people step up and be recognised and recognisable, and growing confidence and one of the things I want to ask you Pete and Christine. Whoever wants to go first is do you?

00:14:41

From your experience of talking to adults with learning disabilities, do you find that quite often when people know they have learning disabilities, people then treat them like children, so there's an infantilization of adults, as though they've never progressed beyond childhood. Do you find that?

00:14:59

Kate yeah Casey sadly yes. And and it it's still true. It's not as bad as it used to be, but I still remember back in particularly in my prospects days, doing some training to churches and a particular church with leaders there and they had some of the guys with learning disability.

00:15:20

And I had to very gently go up to a lady in the back row when we were doing acting out some of the stories from the Bible kneeled down beside her and said, please, will you stop?

00:15:32

Because every time somebody with a learning disability did something.

00:15:36

She made again. Oh, that's so good.

00:15:40

And I went there, adults not children. And actually I'm not sure you want to do it like that with children either. And she said, oh Pete, you're so boring.

00:15:52

And I said, well, I'm sorry, but I'll carry on being boring then.

00:15:57

There can be people can be so patronising with all the best intentions.

00:16:02

But people have got life experience and if you get too well, we've got people with learning disabilities who are in their 50s and 60s who may be even older than us well.

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I'm I'm not pulling that face again.

00:16:18

Just thinking about so the the Australian disability activist his name was Stella Young she she died a few years ago and there's a great YouTube clip of a Ted talk.

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She did and it's entitled. I am not your inspiration ****

00:16:38

If you don't like that last word, that's fine. And and she talked about the fact that disabled people and people with learning disabilities are viewed as these wonderful angelic, isn't it?

00:16:49

Amazing, you can even get out of bed in the morning and she's like not really. Otherwise I wouldn't involve myself in life in society.

00:16:58

And there is that danger, exactly as you said, the people that applaud every little thing we do. I mean, like there's no need to do that. And like you say, don't we? Don't applaud. We do applaud children.

00:17:08

But still not sure about that, but Infantilization is a really tough thing and we're not there to inspire you.

00:17:16

We're there to be alongside you as community, and we've had a question about the makaton training. Can you tell us a bit more about that and how it might be funded?

00:17:25

OK.

00:17:26

Uhm, at the moment it's very much in its infancy.

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Uhm, mchatton I hope are on the point of actually recognising it as a bona fide eamcet on package.

00:17:39

Certainly we've worked hand in hand with them all the time. In fact, I've got a call in to talk to the CEO again today to try and put some of those things together.

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We are running pilots for it, but don't rush at us at the moment. But yes, we're interested in helping you to do that.

00:17:57

And it does make a difference, but we've already seen in the one or two churches where we have done that as pilots, that the attitude of the church has already changed when they realised that.

00:18:09

Actually, even if all you learn, and this is true of birsel, sorry guys, I'm not going to do it very well, but if you'd say Jesus and that's the one word that you have learned, you are helping somebody and it's about learning that vocabulary.

00:18:24

So that's very much what it is, but we are still looking for one or two of the symbols.

00:18:30

They are being produced as we speak.

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And the package should be ready to roll out. I've been saying that for the last 12 months, but it should be ready to roll out soon.

00:18:41

But there are some pilots taking place, and as far as charging is concerned, I mean obviously this is going to have to be finalised, but we it is to be accessible so therefore we would.

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Asked it, asked for a payment for mileage for the tutor and and also do we say the the sum of.



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00:19:01

Yeah, candy.

00:19:02

With pounds ahead, so we're not.

00:19:02

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00:19:04

Including a manual.

00:19:06

Which from even makaton that's good, but they haven't agreed it yet.

00:19:13

So really, it's watch this space. It's keep an eye on your website and as soon as these things go live then you'll get it up there and people can get in touch with you and in terms of getting in touch with you a number of our focus said oh, this sounds really amazing. What you're doing. I have a real call to do that.

00:19:29

Two, I don't know where to start so people can contact you to do what you're doing locally where they are and to work in partnership.

00:19:35

With you absolutely.

00:19:36

Please that would be brilliant.

00:19:39

And as far as the makaton course is concerned, do get in touch because we can at least register your interest with Janaka so she can take note that all there's a call for a course in that area, and so on and so forth. But it needs to be hosted by local churches.

00:19:55

Absolutely. And if church leaders are here today thinking, gosh, it sounds really. I use the inspiring word, but the small I, amazing, inspiring and I can identify people in my congregation who I think could probably got learning this.

00:20:08

Illities, what's the least cringe worthy way of that church leader engaging with the person who may have learning disabilities without sounding weird by going? Are you learning disabled and and making a mess of the conversation? How can they best approach that?

00:20:24

Most of us shouldn't walk up to somebody who uses the wheelchair and said, oh, are you a wheelchair user? So in that sense it's no different, Katie?

00:20:32

Yes, I am. Why do you ask?

00:20:33

Quite a spending time people with a learning disability.

00:20:37

We are probably less reticent about using that term than we are in approaching them, but it is befriending, getting into conversation using simple questions that people can ask.

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And then it.

00:20:51

Very quickly leads to the fact that they they know that they are registered disabled because of a learning disability.

00:20:58



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Yeah, that's why they can go to college or they can have certain certain benefits. No, life is not rosy for people with learning disabilities.

00:21:07

There's a lot of deprivation and loneliness that.

00:21:10

Actually one thing.

00:21:10

I'm mental health.

00:21:10

We didn't notice we didn't say was that.

00:21:13

There is so much loneliness, even if churches can't offer a ministry group as such.

00:21:19

Just to have a place where people can go and the kettle is put on and those friendship offered and a cup of tea and maybe a biscuit or.

00:21:27

Even cake.

00:21:29

Cake, I like the I. I know the sign for cake.

00:21:32

That's the one I learned part from Jesus.

00:21:36

So thank you very much for being with us from my. My leg keeps jumping and kicking the table.

That's annoying.

00:21:41

Thank you so much for being with us and thank you for giving us your time. People will get in touch with you and then together that work can grow and I'm reminded in what you said of when Jesus approaches people and says, what is it I can do for you or the turn around? What is it you need from me?

00:21:57

And that's exactly it, isn't it lovely, thank you.

00:21:58

Yeah, the police don't pray for their healing either.

00:22:02

No, yeah I can. I'll have a rant about that when I do my final thoughts.

00:22:07

Pete and Christine, thank you so much for being with us and you can camera off if you wish. Have a cup of tea and put your feet up. Thank you.