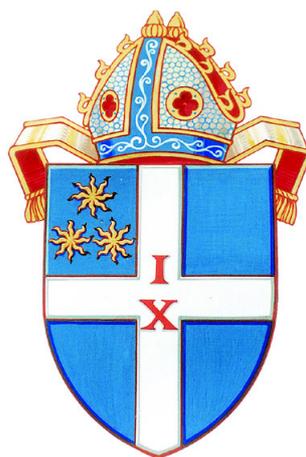




**A POLICY OF THE ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH
FOR MINISTRY WITH PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES**



Diocese of Christchurch



BISHOP'S COMMENT

As our Diocese begins to implement a Policy for Ministry with People with Disabilities, I want to affirm the work of those who have prepared and shaped the policy document. Most sectors of our community already have such a policy and in some ways we are rather late arriving!

I sometimes hear the comment "we have nobody here who needs facilities for disability". Obviously, if the facilities are lacking then it's not surprising if people look elsewhere!

I hope we can celebrate this new policy so that we can really say with integrity that we are an inclusive church.

Bishop David Coles
July 2003



A POLICY OF THE DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH FOR MINISTRY WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- * **The Church will:**
 - **so order its life that people with disabilities are included and encouraged to be part of its membership, worship, service and witness.**
 - **engage in education, advocacy and chaplaincy activities which express its commitment to inclusive ministry with all people with disabilities.**

- * **Ministry Units will be expected to:**
 - **Celebrate the God given diversity and gifts of parishioners.**
 - **Increase the awareness of barriers to full participation for those with disability within our communities.**
 - **To explore ways of furthering mission and ministry by and to all.**

- * **Ministry Units will be expected to:**
 1. **Complete an audit on**
 - i) **the make-up of their congregation and community**
 - ii) **the “accessibility status” of their church and facilities in terms of buildings, attitudes, theology and practice by 31 May 2004.**

 2. **Prepare a 5 year programme to implement the findings of the audit by 31 August 2004.**

 3. **Make provision for all people to be able to participate and receive the sacraments of the Church in the most inclusive way possible.**



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PHRASE "A PERSON WITH DISABILITY"?

Based on the World Health Organisation definition, a person with disability may be any person whose physical, mental or social wellbeing is temporarily or permanently impaired - visibly or invisibly – congenitally, through age, illness, accident or general environmental conditions - with the result that his/her self dependence is impeded.

An increasing proportion of the people in our church will be living with disability, all of whom will be people who want to be accepted as equal members of the community. They are people with gifts to share with others.

Disability and the Law

In New Zealand the Human Rights Act 1993 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with disabilities in areas of employment, education and training, provision of goods and services, access to public places, vehicles and facilities and accommodation.

Terminology

The language and terminology that we use is important because it conveys our attitudes towards those being addressed. Currently it is recognised that there are a number of terms to refer to people with disabilities. In this policy we use the term '**people with disabilities**' to include people of all ages with any form of disability



DISABILITY AND THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

- * Within the gospels we are aware of the special care that Jesus demonstrated, and the call that he gave, to those who have been marginalised by disability or in any other way. As a Church we take seriously our calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all.
- * We believe that we are all created in the image of God and that every person has a unique value in the sight of God.
- * People with disabilities bring gifts to the Church, contributing towards the Body of Christ.
- * We further believe that the gifts of **all** people must be explored, identified, utilised, and honoured.
- * When people with disabilities take their place in the faith community and in ministry, they challenge the church to include them as people equally loved by God.
- * The Church empowers the whole community when issues of disability are acknowledged and addressed.
- * The call to join in inclusive ministry is a call to;
 - * an enlarged understanding of who God is and where God is at work
 - * an enlarged understanding of ourselves and others
 - * an enlarged understanding of who the people of God are



A VISION FOR THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH - MINISTRY WHICH INCLUDES PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- * A vision of ministry units where people together, and in the presence of God face life day by day, with all its joys, achievements, challenges, commitments and opportunities for service.
- * A vision of a Church which lives out a commitment to its *Mission Statement* and *Long-term Objectives* in its local and diocesan life.

The present *Long-term Objectives* which have particular relevance for our ministry and mission to and with people with disabilities and their caregivers are:

- *At both diocesan and parish level we will establish effective caring of others.*
 - *We will work actively for an end to all forms of poverty, discrimination, injustice and violence within the church and society.*
 - *Every church member will be encouraged to see all of their life as a ministry with Christ.*
 - *As a whanau we will express interdependence at all levels.*
- * A vision of church members who accept people with disabilities as people with gifts of heart, mind and spirit to share in building up the body of Christ.



INCLUSIVE MINISTRY IN OUR DIOCESE

In order to engage in ministry that includes people with disabilities, congregations will:

- * provide a welcoming and accessible environment
- * empower all its members to grow in faith in God as revealed in Jesus;
- * enable people with disabilities to participate as teachers and leaders in education, worship and service;
- * accept all as people first and develop relationships accordingly;
- * accept fellowship offered by people with disabilities;
- * identify needs in the local community and provide assistance to people with disabilities, their families and caregivers as appropriate;
- * be prepared to employ people with disabilities;
- * consult with people with disabilities and their caregivers about alterations and innovations, complementing this with professional advice and noting Diocesan requirements;
- * be educated about disability issues.



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH OF THIS POLICY

The policy requires :

- * Education to help people understand the significance of ministry which includes people with disabilities;
- * Examination of the ethical issues surrounding the dignity of human life regardless of ability;
- * Recognition of theological, ethical and advocacy considerations in all aspects of ministry involving people with disabilities, their families and caregivers;
- * Recognition that inclusive ministry may require new strategies for incorporating people with disabilities into the life of ministry units, Diocesan Committees and the Synod.
- * Appointments and employment within the Diocese of Christchurch will comply in all respects with relevant legislation including the Human Rights Act and its amendments;
- * An audit of all ministry units and Diocesan Structures for compliance with this policy

SUMMARY

The Diocese of Christchurch is a dynamic, diverse *and inclusive* community of faith that is made up of people with differing abilities and disabilities. We therefore affirm the Diocesan Vision Statement as follows:

“We the Diocese of Christchurch, in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, as part of the wider Christian Church

- * *seek to be a dynamic and diverse community*
- * *making Christ known in the society around us*
- * *through faithful worship, work and witness.”*



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