

BELONGING



10 Ways to Belong

Supporting children, young people and young adults with additional needs to belong in your church



10 ways for your church to be a place of belonging

What should church be like for children, young people and young adults with additional needs and disabilities?

We asked some young people for their insights and, drawing on their thoughts and those of others, have come up with 10 ways for churches to be inclusive and to promote belonging for all.

This resource gives your church an opportunity to become better at welcoming and supporting those with additional needs.

It includes:

- questions for reflection
- points to put into action.

Why not choose 2 or 3 that are relevant for your church and commit to improving them in the next 12 months?



Let's help everyone to belong!

After completing your reflections on 10 ways for your church to be a place of belonging, we hope you and your church will have discovered new ways to welcome children, young people and young adults. To help them to belong even better, see other resources, ideas and support recommended on the Belonging webpage: www.methodist.org.uk/belongingconference

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Although the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is the approved Scripture used across the Methodist Church, the Belonging Team has chosen to quote from the New International Reader's Version because we find it gives greater access and understanding for all. Find out more about this edition of the Bible from Urban Saints at www.urbansaints.org/stories/466

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At church, we will:

1. Value and respect everyone equally; we are *all* made in God's image

“ So God created human beings in his own likeness. He created them to be like himself. **Genesis 1:27a** ”

Let us behave towards others as we would want people to behave towards us, treating everyone equally, and recognising that we are all created in the image of God.

- **Reflect on:** What do you appreciate about how others treat you?
 - **Act on:** What one thing could your church do that would remind everyone they are made in the image of God?
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2. Invite everyone to come; we won't leave anyone out

“ Join me in giving glory to the LORD. Let us honour him together. **Psalms 34:3** ”

Let us ask all people to come and worship with us, giving everyone the opportunity to join in and to take an active part in everything that our church community does together.

- **Reflect on:** How do we feel when we are excluded?
- **Act on:** How could we help those with additional needs to be included?

3. Welcome everyone in love; Jesus calls us all to love each other

Finally, I want all of you to agree with one another.

“ *Be understanding. Love one another. Be kind and tender. Be humble. 1 Peter 3:8* ”

Let the first thing that people experience when they come to us be love. Let love be in how we welcome them, how we speak with them, how we care for them, how we serve them. Let us be known for being loving.

- **Reflect on:** Think of a time you felt warmly welcomed. What made the difference?
- **Act on:** What one thing could your church do to welcome people better?

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4. Create a safe and comfortable environment where everyone belongs

The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything

“ *I need. He lets me lie down in fields of green grass. He leads me beside quiet waters. Psalm 23:1-2* ”

Let us help make our church a place where everyone can be who they are: a place that allows everyone to respond to what we are doing together in whatever way that they feel led to, a place that recognises diversity and difference and celebrates these.

- **Reflect on:** How much do you feel able to be who you are in church?
- **Act on:** How can your church reassure people that whatever additional needs they have, it is a place they can belong?

5. Proactively ensure that everyone is supported to take part in all that we do

“ *Don't forget to do good. Don't forget to share with others. God is pleased with those kinds of offerings. Hebrews 13:16* ”

Let us be a place where we recognise that everyone has something to offer, that everyone can respond to God, that no limits are placed on what someone can do.

- **Reflect on:** How do you best like to participate in church?
- **Act on:** What could your church do for supporting those with additional needs to take part more fully in church life?



6. Be friends, knowing each other, and missing each other when we're not there

“ *A friend loves at all times. They are there to help when trouble comes. Proverbs 17:17* ”

Let us look out for each other – be interested in each other; take care of each other – and in doing so, let us also do all that we can to show God's love to each other.

- **Reflect on:** When did you last let a friend know you were looking out for them? What did you do?
- **Act on:** What could your church do to help people deepen friendships?

7. Build a church community where everyone is accepted for who they are

“Christ has accepted you. So accept one another in order to bring praise to God. **Romans 15:7**”

Let us be a place that celebrates diversity and difference. A community that recognises and understands that we all come from different places and have different life experiences. A place where the scars we all carry can be used to glorify God and serve each other.

- **Reflect on:** What unique characteristics do you have that make you who you are?
 - **Act on:** How could your church better recognise differences and celebrate this diversity?
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8. Communicate in ways that everyone can understand and follow

“Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Learn how to make your words what people want to hear. Then you will know how to answer everyone. **Colossians 4:6**”

Let us all take care with what we say, making sure that we speak clearly, carefully and kindly. Let us remember that not everyone communicates best through speech, so learn to communicate with everyone in the ways that help most.

- **Reflect on:** Think back to the last kind comment someone said to you. How did it make you feel?
- **Act on:** What other ways could your church use to communicate besides spoken language or the written word?

9. Use the gifts and abilities of all; Jesus called us all to serve

There are different ways to serve. But they all come from the same Lord. There are different ways the Spirit works. But the same God is working in all these ways and in all people.

1 Corinthians 12:5-6

Let us be a place where those with additional needs believe they have been called. Where everyone can test out their calling, taking risks to serve in the ways that they are gifted and able. Let nothing be off-limits to anyone whose gifting and ability in an area of ministry is clear.

- **Reflect on:** How do you enjoy serving in church?
- **Act on:** How could those with additional needs find a way to explore their calling and tell you how they would like to take part more fully or serve in church?

10. Learn to follow God, grow in our faith, and to serve God, together

*Anyone who serves me must follow me. And where I am, my servant will also be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. **John 12:26***

Let us be a community that goes together on this journey of following Christ Jesus: working out what it means for each one of us, leaving no one behind, supporting each other and serving each other as we go.

- **Reflect on:** Who has supported and encouraged you as a disciple?
- **Act on:** Can you identify barriers in your church that hinder people in their journeys of faith? How could those barriers be removed?