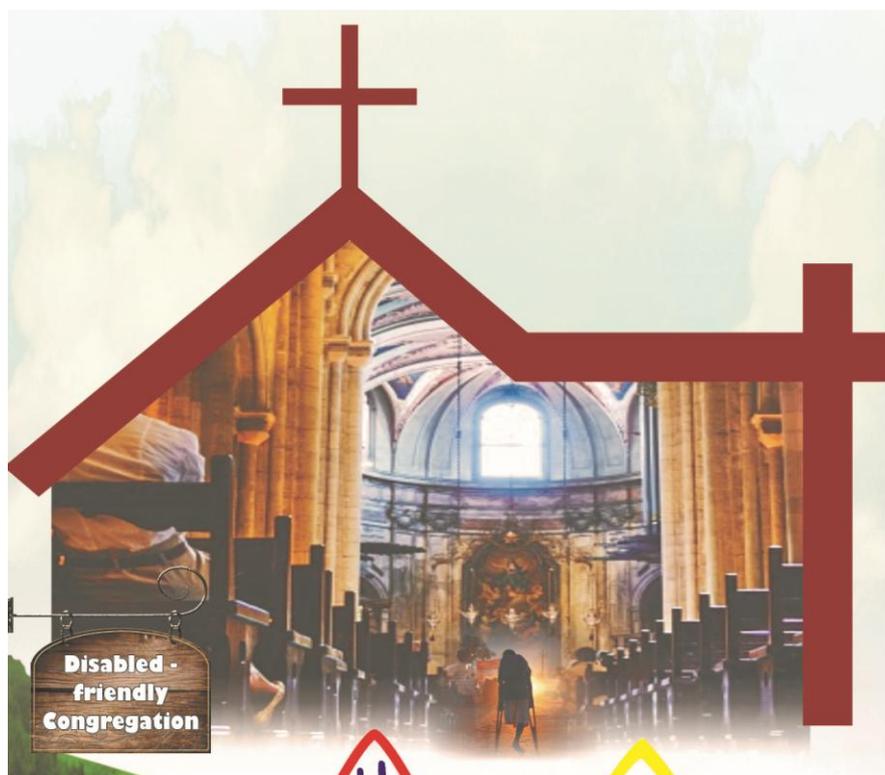


# **Towards Inclusive Church... Disability Inclusion Policy Guidelines - 2019**

**For the Churches and related Organisations**

*(Received and Adopted by the Honourable Executive Committee of the  
National Council of Churches in India on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019)*



*Facilitation:*



**National Council of Churches in India**

*'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10)*

*'In Christ, there is no difference between Jew and Greek. There is no difference between male and female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus.'* (Gal 3:28)

## Preface

The National Council of Churches in India - Indian Disability Ecumenical Accompaniment (NCCI-IDEA) is an Ecumenical Initiative of the NCCI, accompanied by Unity and Mission. NCCI-IDEA theologically motivates ministerial interventions of its constituencies by encouraging and facilitating the Indian Churches to be inclusive and disabled friendly. Considering the significance of inclusivity, the XXVIII Quadrennial Assembly of NCCI has chosen a theme for this quadrennial as *'Towards Just and Inclusive Communities'*. Hence, the Members of NCCI would be encouraged to ensure that their ministerial interventions result in inclusivity.

Since 2009 NCCI - IDEA along with its constituent members, other ecumenical organizations, local congregations and institutions involve in: bringing the theologically trained and ordained ministers with disabilities together, networking of the church related care giving organisations, articulating disability theologies by and with the PWDs and motivating the churches to practice physical accessibility and transparent inclusion. Several member churches and care-giving organisations were benefited out of the missional and ministerial interventions of the NCCI -IDEA.

NCCI-IDEA has been a facilitator of the conversations with communities both within the Church and Society at large, for advocacy of disability rights. From its inception, the NCCI - IDEA has focused on 'An Inclusive Church', through its sermons, urging the Church, to move from being charitable, to becoming an accompanier, seeking justice 'for', 'by' and 'with' persons with disabilities.

The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, enacted by the Government of India in 2016 has become a motivating element in suggesting a policy guidelines on disability for the Indian church and society at large.

The NCCI - IDEA recommends that all Churches, Congregations and Institutions adhere to the Right of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, by customising, adapting or adopting the suggested policies, in order to practice inclusion through our missional, ministerial and diaconal interventions.

**The Policy Guidelines:** are principles adopted based on the Right of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. These policy guidelines tell us what is demanded and expected by the law enacted in 2016 with administrative, theological and ministerial motivations.

**Procedures:** These are detailed directions / suggestions developed by the NCCI - IDEA to put the policy guidelines into practice. All members and like minded organisations and institutions are encouraged either to adapt or adopt the suggestions.

### **Purpose of the Policy Guidelines:**

1. To uphold the mission, vision and goals of the XXVIII Quadrennial Theme: "*Towards Just and Inclusive Communities*" of NCCI
2. To provide the constituent members of the NCCI an opportunity to practice inclusion theologically, ministerial and diaconally on the basis of the legal requirements.
3. To ensure the access and inclusion in our worshipping and working premises.
4. To avoid or minimize situations which exclude PWD's.
5. To be accountable to the law of the land, and to the demand of the Gospel of Christ.
6. To allow the members to operate efficiently in practicing inclusion.
7. To provide the basis for a legal record.

### **Points to be Considered / Remembered:**

**Legal References:** Legal references indicate the section of the law, the amendments, etc., which are pertinent to the policy. Other laws and/or court decisions may also be applicable to a particular policy. It also explains terms and abbreviations used in the legal references.

**Theological References:** Certain policies / related laws are found as a Gospel Demand. Hence there are attempts made to theologise those laws and policies in order to spiritually motivate the Churches and Church related organisations to abide by them.

**Order of Precedence:** These policies and guidelines must be read and interpreted in the light of applicable laws, court rulings, and state regulations. Wherever inconsistencies of interpretation arise, the applicable laws, court rulings, and state regulations prevail.

### **How to Make Suggestions for Improving this Policy Manual**

The NCCI - IDEA's Policy development is a continuing process. Suggestions may be made by writing to the Staff in charge or the General Secretary of the NCCI for revisions and appropriation.

## *Disability Inclusion Policy Guidelines*

*As children of God,  
we have a new dignity and  
God calls us to fullness of life.*

### **Faith Stance:**

All of us are created in the image of God, and all are equally important and significant in the sight of God. In God, there is no distinction between female and male, Greek and Jew, bond and free – disabled and able.

We all, have privileges and responsibilities in the practice and outworking of our faith irrespective of our status. Just as there is a 'preferential option to the poor' so there is a Biblical imperative of corporate responsibility to those in the edges of societies and within the structures of our churches at large.

These policy Guidelines enshrines the biblical principle that all people can access services offered by the constituent member churches and institutions of the NCCI.

### **Preamble:**

- The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 was enacted by the Government of India in 2016.
- This new law ensures protection PWDs in India from various forms of discrimination, guarantees equal access and enhances their social participation.
- We, as the Church are also required as per the law to respond to the subject of disability and this has a bearing on NCCI and its Constituent Members our Council both as a service provider and also as an employer.
- Rights of the Persons with Disability Act (2016) states that ~~the~~ all institutions must take reasonable measures to ensure that its policies, practices and procedures enable PWD'S (lay and ordained) to have an access to and fully participate in all aspects of life and work of the Church.
- This requires changes within institutions and organisations infrastructure at all levels namely constructing PWD accessible buildings, provision of loop systems for hearing aid users, and sign language for hearing impaired people etc.
- It will influence the congregations to fulfil their commitment to implement the guidelines and carry out audit at regular intervals to ensure its practice.
- What we do as a Christian community for PWD's are not voluntary concessions but, a mandate required as per the law.
- There are necessary obligations laid on us in terms of the theological and legal imperatives of the Act.
- The Law necessitates both service providers and employers to make necessary provisions so that PWD's can exercise their right to equal opportunity in employment.

## **Features of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:**

In fact, the Disabilities Act of 2016 is in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and replaces the previous Act of 1995.

The Disabilities Act, 2016 broadens the definition of PWD's. This definition is inclusive and categorizes 21 types of disabilities as 'specific disabilities'.

This Act applies to both Government establishments, and Private establishments. Under the law, private establishments refer to a company, firm, cooperative or other society, associations, trust, agency, institution, organization, union, factory, or such other establishment specified by the government. Hence, the implications fits well with ~~the~~ faith based organisations like churches, ecumenical organisations and their institutions too.

The Act requires all establishments including Church and Church Related Organisations to frame and publish an Equal Opportunities Policy.

All forms of discriminations and omitting, against the PWD is prohibited by the law.

Hence, we as the Church and related organisations ought to abide by the law, in ensuring inclusion, equal space and access to the PWDs in our premises, and in the 'life and work (mission)' of the Church.

### **Rights:**

The very purpose of making laws is not to punish the citizens but rather to facilitate them to adhere to the common code of ethics that defends, protects and promotes the life and Rights of all the vulnerable communities.

The spirit of the constitution is to uphold social justice and the Rights 'OF' all - Rights 'FOR' all aspect enshrined in it.

Accordingly, this implies faith pilgrims ~~to~~ have a 'Right to Worship', 'Right to Participate' in the mission and ministries of the Church, and Right to Access the Worship places, Holy Shrines, their Scriptures, Sermons, Chanting, Prayers and above all 'Right to be ministered and Right to minister unto'

Church as a community that believes and affirms the Rights of Equality and Social Justice of each and every smallest atom in the community needs to relook at its commitment to the communities at large and particularly PWD's, that are socially, religiously, historically and culturally neglected, stigmatised, discriminated and live in the fringes of the societies.

This is not only to abide by the law of our land but it's a theological and ministerial call to affirm and practice 'God's Preferential Option'.

Therefore, NCCI - IDEA's policy guidelines encourages all its members to consider positively and ~~to~~ re-commit ourselves and our ministries to edify and enable the theologically and ministerially neglected communities like PWDs.

## **Moot Points:**

### **a. Disability as Diversity:**

#### **Disability is a Design of God (Exodus 3)**

Often, disability is seen as a wrath or punishment of God. Moses' experience in Exodus chapter 3 is an evidence that, God created the persons with disabilities and disability is a design and part of God's creation. If disability is a wrath of God, Moses would not have had such ministerial call to be partner in establishing the reign of God against the oppressive Pharaoh and favouring the oppressed.

The God-Moses conversations are clear in exemplifying the recognition to the PWDs by God the creator. The similar conversations have happened between God and Jeremiah too. It is evident that God of the Bible is the Creator of the People with Disability and became disabled through Son Jesus Christ on the Cross. *Therefore, the resurrected Christ is a Disabled Christ. And so Disability is a Design of God.*

#### **The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)**

*Are People with Disabilities part of Body of Christ?*

The traditional ministerial and diaconal interventions which minister to PWDs consider them as the body of Christ rather than, the (members) parts of the body with their own spiritual gifts to offer.

To accept and recognise the PWD's as fully part of the body requires a paradigm shift in our perceptions of what disability is. In deed we have developed opinions on people with differences or different from us on the basis of our pre-conceived notions.

We have been traditionally oriented with two models to handle the issue of disability:

The first one is 'Medical Model'. This model looks at people with disabilities as the problem of (with) an individual, a deviation from what is normal. This model believes that, if an individual cannot access something they shouldn't expect the same life as 'normal' people. This model makes access into a luxury to be implemented if we have enough time and money, and potentially. And portrays PWD's into helpless objects who should be grateful for whatever they get. The medical model makes the society to look on PWD's as a burden or less-citizens.

The other model is known as 'Community Model' which looks at disability as an impairment. That means, the (one or many) part of the individual does not work normally and properly and those have become the restricting components for the people with disabilities for public access. However, in this model, access is about the whole community taking responsibility for making sure all are included as a matter of justice.

Church as a community believes and affirms the gospel values of social-justice and liberation should see the profound liberative aspect of this social model from the St. Paul's water mark visualization of the Body of Christ in this community model. This is a vision of the Church that affirms and recognises that all members will have an equal access and space to play their roles together with all other members as a full member of the Church. This is an inspiration that, the Church gains from Verse 22, 'the members of the body that seems to be weaker are indispensable are to be treated with honour and respect. If it does not happen, the whole body will suffer.

**b. Ministry as Accompaniment:**

**The Biblical - Theological Imperative:**

*"Towards Just and Inclusive Communities"* is a biblical, theological and ministerial call. Realising this importance and need the NCCI XVIII Quadrennial Assembly met in Jabalpur, India on 27 - 30, April 2016 mandated all its members to work towards the theme 'Towards Just and Inclusive Communities. All programmes, ministerial and diaconal involvements are expected to aim at the theme during this quadrennial to assure and ensure that no one is left behind in our faith and societal journey. This document is one of the tools in encouraging and motivating the members and all other individuals and communities who believe, affirm and promote inclusion through their lives and works. Establishing the reign of God is nothing but building inclusive communities 'OF' all, 'BY' all, 'FOR' all and 'WITH' all. Therefore, let our ministries consciously and responsibly involve in inculcating the Gospel values of Justice, Peace, Love towards inclusion and establishment of the 'kin'dom of God.

**c. Inclusion as Attitude:**

**Written in the Law**

The Right of the Persons with the Disabilities Act 2016 has made it illegal and offensive to discriminate, omit, avoid and neglect against anyone on the grounds of disability within India. "Failure, reject or refusal to provide an access or services that are to be offered to other people to a disabled person is discrimination is offensive."

Places of worship such as Churches and Church related service providing institutions are implied as examples of the everyday services to which people with disabilities should be able to avail access.

According to the law, the 'Reasonable accommodation' means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the access, enjoyment or exercise of rights equally with others.

According to the laws we could make 'reasonable accommodation' so that members of the congregation and visitors who have disabilities can access our churches just like any other so called "able bodied" members of the congregation.

Obviously the law should be obeyed, but as Christians and Churches do we only do what the law requires? Jesus posed his challenge to the lawyer in the Gospel of Luke (10:26) before telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which he suggests that our call to love our neighbour goes far beyond what the law requires. What this means for us is that as Christians, the Right of the Persons With Disabilities Act 2016, becomes a tool to enable us to further fulfil our call to love and serve our neglected neighbour. It is not just our buildings but also our attitudes.

We as Church can break down barriers that make it difficult for people with disabilities to access all that Christ offers through the church. Examining and re-looking at our attitude to our neighbour, who has a disability, costs nothing and can make all the difference between PWD's feeling rejected, not just by the church but by the God the church represents; and PWD's feeling welcomed and loved and valued as God of the Bible values them.

**d. Integration as Praxis:**

**One in Christ:** (Galatians 3:26-28)

Well, if we look for more theological and biblical reasons, and justification for adopting and accepting the 'Community Model', it can be also be seen again in Paul's letter to the Galatians. In Galatians 3:26-28, Paul triumphantly asserts that all who have been baptized are clothed with Christ and that is the only criteria that matters before God. There are no distinctions based on race or gender or indeed denomination, social background, disability or age.

This passage also rings a bell for us to be 'very' careful and cautious in the words we use towards and about other people. We know, 'Jew' or 'Greek' could be used to insult and divide as well as describe others. In the same way labelling someone as deaf and treating them as stupid or assuming someone with mental health problems as violent is insulting PWD's. Often we mean well, but still ask the carer not the person with disability, if they want sugar, or make assumptions about what someone can or can't do.

In the sight of God, we all are people first and disability should come second. So our terminology needs to reflect the fact of God's intentions. We are people with disabilities not the disabled, we are wheelchair users not wheelchair bound, we are deaf without speech not deaf and dumb, and we have learning difficulties not mental handicaps. Each of us will have our preferred way of describing ourselves.

**All are one in Christ; let our ways of thinking and speaking reflect that fact.**

*Reign of God:* Revelation 7:9-12, Luke 14:12-24

The purpose of Jesus' presence in this world was to proclaim the 'Reign of God' Mark 1: 15. The above ~~two~~ passages will help us clearly ~~to~~ understand what the Reign of God means for the Churches at large and the People with Disabilities.

Revelation 7:9 talks about the culmination of the histories of all nations, kinds, tribes, people, language are equal before the throne and in front of the Lamb, worshipping together.

The parable of great feast has been documented vividly in Luke 14:12-24. This parable explicitly expounds the nature of reign of God, where Jesus mentions people with disabilities in particular where they are specifically being invited to the table.

We, as church (communities), have a distinctive and unique opportunity to exhibit an 'inclusive' character of the reign of God as our faith expressions. This model of inclusiveness shall be proactively expressed through our missional, ministerial and diaconal interventions in the everyday life of our being and existence by inviting and welcoming all people irrespective of who they are.

The bottom line for the Biblical Imperative is that we all are 'One in Christ'.

These guidelines encourage the Churches at large to take a biblical, theological, ministerial and administrative application and to try to become more accessible and more inclusive of people with disabilities for a variety of reasons. Indeed, at every move or stage we shall consider the skills and experiences of the people with disabilities and who work and care for the People living with disabilities to advise and meet the specific contexts and situations.

Whatever our reasons, this document attempts to outline the process for us to follow by suggesting a few practical actions that we may consider to express our desire to be accessible and inclusive whilst, our duty to care in putting into practice the recommendations of the Right of the Persons with the Disabilities Act 2016.

According to the Right of the Persons with Disability Act 2016, there are several components to be considered, committed, abided and followed. This document tries to include all of them or most of the appropriate section by facilitating the Churches and Church Related Organisations to be accessible and inclusive under three headings such as Attitude, Access and Inclusion.

**Attitude** is a feeling, opinion and how we think about the People with Disabilities, the expressions and language we use to talk to them about them and how we relate to them directly.

**Access** is a component or components to ensure a one or many to immediately think of receiving and welcoming by making reasonable adoptions or needed changes to the Church and Institutions buildings so that, regardless of all people with disabilities can enter, see, hear and participate in the very life and work of the Church. Some of these adoptions do not need more money or time however that attitude matters.

**Inclusion** means, the action(s) and enshrining the rights of persons with disabilities into the policies and laws of the Land. It is also a state of including or of being included within a group or structure without any restrictions and reservations. These actions basically promote the Church 'OF' - Church 'FOR' all. In fact, Churches have to practice transparent inclusion by moving from the idea of mere accommodation to affirmation theologically and ministerially.

This document aims that the churches would adapt very practical measures in terms of meeting every possible needs of the People with the Disabilities who might come to our premises. Churches should also be aware that, it could spot the needs as their arise and have ideas how to minister them. A PWD Conscious church will take necessary attempts to know where its shortcomings lie and how to rectify or address them for better improvement. Such process will make the presence and existence of the churches become a place of access and welcome as God's people.

### **Access:**

- The Church and Institutions shall ensure 'physical accessibility' to all who need by their structure, appearance and nature.
- Even the outward structural changes will be symbolic of the accessibility.
- The initiation of 'accessibility audit' is the ever first effort for this process.
- It is important that, the whole church or congregation or institution is made aware before one initiate and solicit their support and accompaniment in responsible implementation.
- This audit also could be at any time including a request or suggestion from the people with disabilities or any one. This also will cover the Rights and Entitlement mentioned in the Chapter 2 of the RTPWD Act - 2016 and its sections of the Rights to the Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.
- The Church / institution shall have a disability advisor or consultant, who could offer advice, if necessary visit the premises and buildings and suggest a reasonable adoption of change and improvements in the structure that could facilitate a fuller participation of the people with disabilities in the life and work of the Church.
- The Churches and the members of the congregations should be encouraged along with providing access be reasonable adoptions and to advertise and share the information with sign boards or painting and also by using other social, main media and other means of communication like house visits to the PWDs to get attention.
- sign boards must be kept at appropriate places to ensure PWD's have complete access and are welcome to the church or institution. E.g. availability of ramp, sign interpretation or larger font worship materials or Worship materials in Braille.

### **Attitude:**

There is no financial implication for the attitudinal change. It is hard to explain but easy to understand. The congregation / institution collectively express their love, respect and acceptance for the persons with disabilities though their good and positive attitudes such as ensuring their physical entries and presence though our words and practices.

- In fact the good attitude will see person as one, created by God in God's image first not their disabilities.
- Good attitude will also facilitates the congregations to minister to the People with Disabilities by consulting them where ever is required over their needs, requirements and expectations and how they could be met both ministerially and structurally. It shall also facilitate a conversation to positively and whole heartedly engage in ministering to the PWDs. Like inviting volunteers, ushers, helpers and carers to be available at the gate to ensure the dignified and respectful entries of the PWDs onto our premises.

- The good attitude will also engage to identify and recognise the gifts of people with disabilities and facilitate their fuller participation, involvement and leadership to the very 'life', 'work', 'mission' and 'ministries' of the congregations.
- The congregations with the good attitude consult the people with disabilities before adapting the physical and structural changes, for example, the ramps and toilets will get proper scientific dimensions for accessibility to the people who use wheel chairs rather adapt them unscientifically for symbolical reasons or to fulfil the legal requirements to public access.
- Good attitude also means our sensitiveness about the language used in referring and describing PWDs with their disabilities like, disabled, handicapped, deaf, dumb, spastic, mentally abnormal and to avoid such descriptions that would hurt and eliminate the PWDs from their public access.
- The good attitude also ensures the respect, dignity and human rights of each and every member of the congregations and each is considered as an essential part of what it means to be Christian community / congregation.
- Good attitude will also involve the ability to proactively involve in attending to the needs of the people with disabilities without any instruction and formal requests and to strive immediately or sooner to attend them.
- Adopting and practicing a disability-equality and inclusion policy and making sure that it is implemented and practiced by the members whole heartedly.

### **Inclusion:**

One might ask that, is inclusion not an attitude? Of course it is but, it is to be expressed more outwardly to ensure and assure the fuller participation of the people with disabilities in the life and work of the congregations with all others. This will not involve in separate and special attention to the People with Disabilities rather it will facilitate the congregations to minister 'TO', 'WITH' and 'BY' the people with disabilities. It shall facilitate the congregation to adopt an integrated ministerial approach rather than considering it as a separate ministry.

- Inclusion is not the one that the abled 'offer' or 'give' to the People with disabilities as an act of philanthropy or charity rather as our duty and right.
- Inclusion is an 'attitude' not a 'symbolic expression' that happens outside the structures / building instead inside the buildings and hearts.
- Inclusion needs to be transparent not a token.
- Inclusion shall ensure the comfort, dignity and respect of every individual.
- Inclusion is an acceptance of everyone as they are.
- Inclusion will facilitate us to de-construct the pre-conceived notions about disabilities and help the congregations to be a part to establish the reign of God that is Just and Inclusive.
- Inclusion will facilitate all members who read and reflect the Word on issues of disabilities and differences through reading the Bible together with people with disabilities and listening to their interpretations of the passages. This will facilitate the congregations to read the bible from the eyes and the experiences of people with disabilities and practice inclusion as their faith expression.
- Inclusion will also involve in developing or translating, to making available large font worship materials for the use of people with disabilities and consciously organising sign interpretation of every act of worship as mandatory.

## **Special Focus:**

### **1. Ministering the PWDs:**

The popular pastoral ministry shall include the following in their ministry to the PWDs with the special focus:

- There shall be data base on PWDs and their families and care-giving congregations in their neighbourhood for each congregations.
- There shall be a conversation on disability among the congregation along with the PWD members.
- The pastoral ministry shall facilitate the congregation to adopt the ministry of accompaniment along with their charity approach.

### **2. Doing Disability Theology:**

- Most of the Disability theologies today have been articulated by the so-called 'able' scholars and theologians.
- The people with disabilities or their siblings, or care givers shall involve in articulating authentic disability theologies.
- The faith stories of PWDs are to be documented.
- The PWDs shall be encouraged to become theological students and ordained ministries of the Church.

### **3. Care-givers:**

- The role of care-giving organisations and institutions are very important in terms of ministerially and diaconally engaging the PWDs, therefore:
- Introducing and facilitating them to adapt the modern technologies and methods in serving the PWDs.
- Along with the PWDs their siblings also must be ministered though the diaconal interventions.
- The Care-givers shall be encouraged to work among the congregations and societies, not to look and consider the PWDs as objects of charity.
- The care givers shall work towards community based diaconal interventions rather isolating and displacing the PWDs from the families and societies to the hostel or residence based diaconal interventions.

## **Possible Application Strategies:**

- Each Church or Organisation shall have their own policies to support the practice of the change in lives by adopting changed inclusive attitudes and becoming catalysts and promote inclusion.
- Encourage the well informed advocacy of inclusion by suggesting and practicing inclusive language in common conversations, public address and written communications.
- Initiate awareness activities to the leaders and members of the churches and organisations as service provider and employer to create ~~and~~ physical accessibility for all and practice inclusion with all. By the awareness initiatives we respond to the theological, ministerial and legal imperatives related to the issue.

- Facilitate the members of the Churches and Institution to visit the accessible and inclusive premises and churches / organisations to get motivated and to practice and become accessible and inclusive.
- As a legal requirement and a good practice the churches and institutions are encouraged to appoint both paid persons and volunteers and appoint representations in the committees to work and contribute towards the life and work of the church / organisations.
- Organise 'suyamwarams' (bride-match) and run marriage bureau for the PWD members as a ministry, in particular for the women with disabilities
- Proactively participate in the struggles of the PWDs to establish justice, especially in the areas of sexual abuse of PWDs, denial of education and employment opportunities based on their disabilities.
- Constitutionally reserve spaces for the PWDs to be part of the theological educations / trainings, ordain ministries of the Churches and to participate in the decision making bodies and governance by making necessary amendments in the constitutions.

### **Possible Implementation Strategy:**

The Churches / Organisations shall ensure the accessibility, changes in their building structures, attitudes and inclusion by developing and following good practices in the areas covered in this policy guidelines.

Suggested Good practice:

- Coming to the table of God for the communion at the altar is the heart of Christian worship. Therefore develop a fully 'accessible altar' by which the people with disabilities shall have an access to the altar rather than pastors serve the sacraments at the pews where the people with disabilities seated.
- Assure the physical and spiritual space for singing in the choir, serving, chalice assistants, reading lessons, leading intercessions, are all part of worship and where appropriate should be accessible to all.
- Identify and engage sign interpreter(s) to interpret the entire worship to benefit the required people.
- Make available the worship orders, song books, pew slips, news bulletin and other worship related resources in Braille and in large (font) prints.
- Ensure the inclusive language in your premises and even inform your guest speakers, ministers and visitors that your congregation is an 'inclusive congregation'.
- Ensure a space and attitude to include the people with disabilities as equals and to enable their fuller participation where possible in both ministering the Word, reading the scriptures and leading the worships as and when possible or regularly as we engage others.
- Ensuring the independent accessibility even with their wheel chairs, canes or other mobility aids to the entire premises with needed sign boards and directions.
- Where possible, the obstructive structures and steps be removed inside the church and in church premises too.

- Where possible, there should be accessible seating arrangements with needed heights, arms and size.
- All meetings, gathering and fellowships including the committee meetings should be held in fully accessible locations and buildings. And the materials use for those meetings be made available on large prints and Braille.
- The Synods, Assemblies, Councils and Dioceses, shall have their own Construction of Building Policies and a guide to 'Access Appraisal of Church Buildings as on the Government and legal guide lines.
- The help shall be sought from our own congregation members who are experts like architects, civil engineers and who too serve in the governments.

Other possible interventions of the Church as institution:

- Follow the best practice for equal opportunities in employment not only as a statutory obligation (4%) but as our faith expression including the PWDs in ordained ministries.
- A clear equal opportunities policy with access be incorporated, which ensures the work / employment requirements apply to all posts - clerics, lay, paid, casual, contract, voluntary and others.
- A social protection policy guidelines of the government be adopted and practiced.
- Job advertisements should clearly indicate the “all eligible” including people with disabilities shall apply.
- Our buildings , communications including website shall comply with 'best practice' standards for access of information.

**Language:**

It is mandatory to use the language that does not reinforce negative images, incorrect assumptions and stereotypes associated with the (people with) disabilities. These are few of the common usage while we address or converse. So, all are encouraged to shift to use of inclusive language in all our conversation not only during the worship, public meetings and writings.

**Do Say**

- Person with a disability/ who is disabled, person with reduced mobility
- Little person, little people
- Non-disabled, able-bodied
- Uses wheelchair, uses assistive device
- Birth injury, congenital disability
- Person with a physical disability
- Person who is deaf/hard of hearing
- Has a speech disability
- Person who is blind/has low vision
- Person with an intellectual, cognitive, or developmental disability
- Person living with epilepsy/seizure disability
- Person with a psychiatric disability

## Don't Say

- The disabled, handicapped, invalid, physically challenged
- Midget, dwarf
- Normal, healthy
- Wheelchair bound, confined to wheelchair
- Birth defect, deformity, deformed
- Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, gimp
- The deaf, hearing impaired, deaf mute
- Has a speech defect, dumb
- The blind, blind people, visually impaired
- Stupid, retard, retarded, slow, subnormal, mentally challenged
- Epileptic, has fits, spastic
- Crazy, nuts, loony

Suggestions:

Use "People First" terminology such as person who is blind or people with disabilities since this acknowledges them as people first rather than their disability. Avoid referring to groups of people by their condition or disability such as the blind or the deaf, or the "ADA person." Avoid sensational descriptive words when referring to a person's disability such as suffers from, is a victim of, or is afflicted with. Use disabled, disability or accessible rather than handicapped. Avoid condescending euphemisms such as differently abled, physically challenged, mentally different or handicapable."

## Accessibility Symbols:

These symbols should be used to indicate the accessible and inclusive nature of our premises and communities:



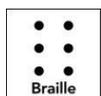
Indicates accessible facilities, paths, toilets and parking areas for people with limited mobility.



Indicates enhanced hearing devices or technology are provided.



Indicates sign language is provided.



Indicates print materials available in Braille upon request.



Signifies print in 18 point or larger

## **Prayer for Inclusive Church**

*God our Creator, Creator of the people with disabilities  
we ask your blessing on our churches.*

*May the doorways be wide enough to welcome all who need.*

*Your love and ours narrow enough to shut out evil and strife.*

*May the thresholds be smooth enough to present no stumbling blocks to children, nor  
barriers to those who are elderly and disabled. May the doors be strong to turn back  
the tempter's power but open and inviting to those who are your guests.*

*May they be doorways to your eternal kingdom.*

*We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.*

### **Working Team:**

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Rev. Kennedy Dhanabalan - Evangelical Fellowship of India - Commission on Relief  
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Rev. Devajothi Kumar - NCCI - IDEA  
Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad - NCCI  
Rev. Asir Ebenezer - NCCI  
Rev. R. Christopher Rajkumar NCCI - (Convenor)*

### **Appendix:**

- *Being and Becoming*  
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2016/the-gift-of-being>
- *Church 'of' All - Church 'for' All*  
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/ix-other-study-processes/a-church-of-all-and-for-all-an-interim-statement>
- *Asia Mission Conference - Disability Pre-assembly Communiqué*  
[www.cca.org.hk/amc](http://www.cca.org.hk/amc)
- *Government of India's Right of the Persons with Disability Act - 2016*

### **Facilitation:**

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