



National Council  
of Churches  
in India



# **DISABILITY** ADVOCACY SUNDAY

## **26th November 2023**

(December 03, International Day of Persons with Disabilities)

## **Liturgical Resource**

Theme:



# **LET MY PEOPLE LEAD**

## **LEADERSHIP OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

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# **NCCI-IDEA**

## **Disability Advocacy Sunday**

### **Liturgical Resource - 2023**



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## Foreword

Disability Advocacy Sunday is an annual observance of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) to build commitments to inclusion from a diversity perspective. Churches and institutions associated with the NCCI are encouraged to observe this on the Sunday before Advent Sunday - the 26th of November this year.

This initiative of the NCCI has helped member churches and institutions to be aware of disability as diversity, develop accompaniment ministries, grow in the attitude of diversity and build praxis models based on integration.

Over the years NCCI has developed resources on disability inclusion, promoted best practices, awarded those who have served in the cause of promoting disability- diversity, and motivated use of technology in identifying and promoting accessibility spaces.

We urge all churches and institutions to use the liturgical resources on Disability Advocacy Sunday (26.11. 2023) or any occasion/ Sunday thereafter. Please integrate persons with disabilities beginning in such worship and in all activities of the churches. We request you to orient/ guide/ enable persons with disabilities in leadership roles at different and all levels.

May God continue to guide us in this ministry

**Rev. Dr Asir Ebenezer,  
General Secretary, NCCI**

**NCCI-IDEA Disability Advocacy Sunday 2023**  
**Theme: “Let My People Lead: Leadership of**  
**Persons with Disabilities” Exodus 3:10**

**Liturgical Resource**

**Call to Worship I**

**L:** Come, let us worship the Lord, our creator, who uniquely made each of us in the likeness of God.

**C: We come together as one body in Christ.**

**L:** Let us worship God who calls us to be active partners in the mission, rather than judging each other according to our strengths and weaknesses.

**C: We join together realizing that everyone possesses a unique set of abilities.**

**or**

**Call to Worship II**

God, we embrace both vulnerabilities and abilities, celebrating the innate leadership within persons with disabilities. Your call inspires us to empower one another and foster an all-inclusive community. In this sacred space, we bring our imperfections to lead unto You. With unwavering resilience, we rediscover the true essence of persons with disabilities. Through our vulnerabilities, we find the strength to reshape the narrative of leadership, recognizing it as a reflection of divine creation's tapestry.

## **Opening prayer**

As we gather in worship today, we offer gratitude for Your all-embracing call, knowing no boundaries based on abilities. Inspire us to value and embrace every individual as a potential leader. In the spirit of “Let My People Lead”, we open our hearts to the wisdom of all, recognizing each person’s unique role in our shared faith journey. May this inclusivity extend into our daily lives, fostering comprehensive diversity policies to recognize that Your love can transcend all barriers.

## **Call to Confession**

It is not our disabilities that prevent us from entering into conversation with our Creator. Rather, it is our sin. So, let us examine ourselves and confess our shortcomings.

### **Confession I**

**L:** Lord, we confess that we have neglected the life and witness of persons with disabilities. We have been hesitant to accept their leadership.

**C: Forgive us Lord, and grant us hearts of acceptance.**

**L:** We haven’t valued our friends who are persons with disabilities . We have frequently overlooked their abilities and endowments in favor of viewing them as pitiful objects.

**C: Forgive us Lord, and grant us hearts of acceptance.**

**L:** We have sinned against You by treating persons with disabilities with disrespect, whom You have created in Your image. We are still unaware of many barriers that making places inaccessible for our friends in our churches and society.

**C: Forgive us Lord, and grant us hearts of acceptance.**

**L:** Lord, we, the persons with disabilities feel frightened and reluctant to seize opportunities. We are concerned about our frailty, yet we forget that Your grace has been sufficient for us.

**C: Forgive us Lord, and grant the healing in our hearts.**

or

## **Confession II**

In genuine confession, we come before You, Compassionate and Forgiving God. We seek Your forgiveness for our past misconceptions, where charity overshadowed the importance of granting equal opportunities to persons with disabilities. We humbly acknowledge our shortcomings in recognizing their intrinsic worth and the leadership potential they possess. We deeply repent for our past actions of segregating persons with disabilities and perpetuating the notion that they are "special" or different.

Within our faith communities, we admit that full accessibility for persons with disabilities remains an unfulfilled goal. We lament the times when our churches failed to provide a welcoming atmosphere for all. We confess our inadequacies in offering necessary support to those with intellectual impairments, the Hearing impaired , and the visually impaired . We earnestly ask for Your forgiveness for not actively striving to create a more inclusive and accessible worship environment.

In this moment of confession, we acknowledge the historical dominance of risk that has, at times, limited the potential for disability justice. However, our focus now shifts to recognizing the pivotal leadership of persons with disabilities, who bring unique insights and contributions.

Haunted by concerns related to disability, we delve into the intricate conversations surrounding the grading of psychiatric risk, often necessitating continuous monitoring and intervention. Through this reflection, we gain insight into the contemporary transformation of disability through the lens of spectral risk.

In our heartfelt confession, we earnestly request a critical examination of how the concept of disability haunting can illuminate the consequences of the past and present. Help us to work towards a more equitable and just future.

As we move forward, may our hearts remain open to the ongoing transformative work. Grant us the wisdom and determination to fully realize our vision of an inclusive community. In the spirit of “Let My People Lead”, we pray for a world where every individual is valued, where every voice is heard, and where every heart is welcomed as a leader.

We offer this confession in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who welcomed all and valued every person's unique contribution. **Amen.**

### **Assurance**

The God of forgiveness pardons all of the transgressions that cause us to shun all those who are called to leadership roles, helps us to embrace each other with love, restores us to the likeness of God and makes us sin no more. **Amen.**



## **Thanksgiving**

Gracious and Loving God, in the realm of leadership, we are profoundly grateful for the remarkable contributions and insights that persons with disabilities bring to our communities. Their strength, determination, and diverse perspectives serve as a wellspring of inspiration, challenging and enriching our understanding of leadership.

We give thanks for the innovations and adaptations that stem from persons with disabilities and their community, as they not only enhance accessibility but also foster innovative leadership approaches. These innovations remind us that leadership knows no boundaries.

The advocacy and awareness efforts of persons with disabilities leaders and organizations are a testament to their commitment to justice and equity. They propel us to advocate for inclusive leadership, realizing the transformative potential it holds.

We acknowledge the importance of community and mutual support within the landscape of leadership of persons with disabilities. These networks empower individuals to take on leadership roles, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared wisdom.

The legal protections and rights that have been established to ensure the equality and well-being of persons with disabilities leaders represent a significant step toward more inclusive leadership practices. We are grateful for the progress made in recognizing the value of leadership in all its forms.

Ultimately, we are thankful for the enduring strength of the human spirit, exemplified by persons with disabilities leaders who overcome challenges and redefine the narrative of leadership. They inspire us to lead with empathy, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to inclusivity.

May we always honor and celebrate the leadership potential of persons with disabilities as we work together to create a more equitable world of leadership. **Amen.**

### **Intercessory prayer I**

Dear Parent God, we come before You with humble hearts, seeking Your guidance and grace as we lift a special intercession for those who are called to lead despite the challenges of disability. Lord, we recognize that Your love knows no boundaries, and Your grace empowers all who answer Your call. We pray for those persons with disabilities who are chosen to lead and inspire others, asking for Your blessings upon their journey.

We pray for strength, wisdom, and perseverance for the leaders. Help them/us overcome obstacles and adversity with the resilience that comes from knowing that You are with us every step of the way. May they/we be granted the ability to lead with compassion, empathy, and understanding. Help us to go beyond ourselves and experience the joy of community. Lord, grant them/us the insight to see the potential in others and to create a supportive and inclusive environment.

We ask that You open doors of opportunity, remove barriers, and provide the resources needed to fulfill their/our missions. Give us the perseverance to see that everyone has something special to offer. May society recognize and value the unique perspectives and gifts that persons with disabilities bring to leadership roles. Make us aware of the opportunity to be genuine, with all of our abilities and disabilities.

Loving God, we also pray for the families and communities of the leaders. Grant them the strength and patience to support their loved ones in their leadership journey. We entrust the leaders into Your hands, dear God. May they/we be shining examples of Your grace and power, showing the world that Your strength is made perfect in weakness. We thank You for their/our lives and the inspiration they bring to all of us. In Your most holy name, we pray. **Amen.**

**or**

### **Intercessory Prayers II**

**Access to Education and Opportunities:** We pray, dear Lord, for increased access to quality education and leadership development programs for persons with disabilities. May they have the tools and skills needed for leadership roles. We also seek mentorship programs that enable persons with disabilities leaders to learn from experienced mentors, further nurturing their leadership abilities.

**Strengthening Communities:** We ask for strengthening the communities that support persons with disabilities leaders and provide networks for growth and collaboration. May these communities be places of encouragement, guidance, and collective effort in nurturing leadership potential.

**Policy and Legal Support:** We request the implementation of policies and legal measures that protect and support the rights and aspirations of persons with disabilities leaders. May the legal framework be a source of empowerment and protection for those who aim to lead.

**Collaboration and Cooperation:** We pray for collaboration and cooperation among individuals, organizations, and communities. May they come together to create a more inclusive and equitable world where everyone's leadership potential is recognized and encouraged. Let unity be the driving force for change.

**Awareness and Understanding:** We seek greater awareness and understanding within society about the capabilities and potential of persons with disabilities leaders. May stereotypes and biases be overcome as awareness grows, opening the doors for persons with disabilities to take on leadership roles.

**For organizations:** Loving God, we come together in gratitude for the organizations that tirelessly serve persons with disabilities in India. With hearts filled with thanks, we ask for Your blessings upon them. May they be abundantly provided with the resources they need to continue their vital work, empowering them to champion inclusion and break down the barriers that stand before those they serve. We pray for the well-being of their dedicated staff and volunteers that they may find the strength and inspiration to carry out their mission. Inspire innovation and creative solutions within their efforts, and foster collaboration among these organizations, multiplying their collective impact.

Amplify their voices in advocacy, raising awareness and driving change, and help them celebrate the diversity of those they serve, recognizing and embracing the unique worth of each individual. As they labor with love, compassion, and unwavering dedication, may their work fulfill Your plan for a more inclusive, empathetic, and equitable world. **Amen.**

As we lift these prayers, may Your guiding light shine on the path toward a world where every person, regardless of ability, is given the opportunity to lead, inspire, and make a difference. **Amen.**

### **Collect I**

O Lord our God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the great healer of every kind of illness: grant peace to those who are torn by conflicts, strengthen and uphold them with the power of Your Spirit. Let the Church be a channel of Your love and care to them; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord who affirmed the dignity of all, even the persons with disabilities and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**or**

### **Collect II**

Dear God, we gather in humble awe, embracing the leadership of persons with disabilities and the principles of disability justice. We acknowledge that every person, regardless of ability, is essential in shaping a just and equitable society. Grant us the courage to challenge narratives of cure and inspire us to fully embrace the unique contributions of persons with disabilities Help us advocate for a world where independence and productivity are not prerequisites for existence, and where all voices are heard and valued. **Amen.**

## Scripture Reading

**Exodus 3:10**

**II Corinthians 12:9-10**

**John 5:1-9**

### Sermon:

#### **Let My People Lead: Leadership of Persons with Disabilities**

Leadership is a strong eminence that marks the capacity of an individual or a group of people to guide the members of an organized institution and the society at large to work out for a greater impact. Most of the time, people who are mentally and physically capable of leading and accomplishing the set objectives are considered to be leaders. We need to go past these outdated stereotypes and the stigmas associated with leadership roles to comprehend the leadership potential of persons with disabilities. The scripture includes examples of God enabling persons with disabilities to actively participate in and assume responsible leadership roles, at a time when it was anticipated that able-bodied people would assume these duties. God is using it as a countermovement to the political and cultural hurdles that traditional thinking about leadership has established.

God confirms the leadership of persons with disabilities at three different levels under these appearances.

## **A Reaffirming Call for Leadership (Exodus 3:10)**

“So now, go I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt,”

Moses was a magnificent leader who brought the people who had been in slavery and were nomads together into a covenant society. In addition, he was the first disabled leader in the scriptures and the first one summoned to lead an enormous crowd. Moses was described as a disabled man with a stammering tongue (slow speaking) when he was called by God. He refuses to follow God’s instruction and bemoans the fact that he is unfit to fill such a role because he is obsessed with the idea that only the abled ones can be leaders. When Moses points out his infirmity, the scripture says nothing about him being healed by God. God sent him just as he was, demonstrating that his disability is unimportant and will not hinder him from being a leader. Instead, Moses was entrusted with Aaron as an assistant to aid him in speaking with the populace, thereby solidifying his role as the key character in the Israelites’ liberation. God’s reaffirming call is comprehensible in reaching out to Moses despite his initial hesitations and the limitations he had. Even though the Exodus event was a far bigger undertaking at first, Moses’ disability allowed him to play an equal role in accomplishing the mission. Moses’ call confirms God’s decision to choose disabled individuals to participate in leadership roles. It is a reaffirming appeal for individuals to strengthen inclusive leadership attributes. Inclusive leadership paves the way for persons with disabilities to actively participate in the church ministry and mission as it was done by Moses.



## **A Radical Call for Leadership (John 5:1-9)**

### **“Stand up, take your mat and walk”**

Jesus' command to the ill man—likely a paralyzed man—to get up and walk after he had been sick for 38 years is a potent illustration of the need for radical leadership. The leadership quality is found in the way Jesus encourages him to be actively involved in getting healed. It was a radical leadership promoted by Jesus, in the context of healing on the Sabbath day which was seen as a sign of breaking the Jewish law. The ill man blamed others for not letting him enter into the pool of Bethesda, which shows that he seeks the help of others to let him be healed. But here is Jesus who probed with questions on his self-efforts to be healed. All that Jesus asked of him in terms of self-effort was willingness and desire to be healed. Jesus' instructions to get up, pick up the mat, and walk are not just a means of promoting healing; they also catalyze releasing oneself from limitations and disadvantages. Due to his 38-year disability, the man had been confined to a specific location, sedentary, and focusing solely on being healed. It's unclear if his physical ailment was fully cured, but Jesus' instruction to get up and move had a significant impact on him and gave him the drive to understand that his condition did not prevent him from moving.

Therefore, Jesus' instruction and the healing of the ill man provide a model for radical leadership in which the church must learn to embrace the responsibility of allowing persons with disabilities to stand alongside people of equal ability.



## **A Reconstructive Call for Leadership (II Corinthians 12:9-10)**

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul’s concern for the Corinthian church was envisaged with his visions and revelations. He exhorts believers to have faith in God’s power, which is made possible by grace. Paul talks about how, by God’s grace, he was able to revitalize his leadership and ministry life. In the process of completing a goal, it is normal for a leader to encounter difficulties, suffering, bewilderment, an inability to manage disorder, insults, and weakness. Paul makes the point that it is imperative to face one’s weakness head-on and triumph over it rather than letting it rule one’s actions. When Paul pleads with Jesus three times to remove the thorn from the flesh, which means to remove the stage of being too elated, he receives the promise that God’s power will make him stronger in his weakness. The “sufficiency” of grace leads to the unfailing strength that God gives in the time of utter weakness. Therefore, he rejoices in his hardships and weaknesses so that the power would reconstruct him well once again.

It is a compelling call for reconstructive leadership within the church community, recognizing that God’s grace empowers us to overcome limitations and obstacles. This action, guided by grace, should be the tangible expression of our faith. The church community is motivated to actively engage in the transformative process of making their church accessible and inclusive, both physically and spiritually. In the ministerial life dismantling barriers, not just physically in the building, but also within hearts and minds, fostering an environment of repentance, forgiveness, and acceptance is needed. Scripture in action emphasizes the transformative power of God’s grace in acknowledging weaknesses and finding strength in challenges which is a call to reconstruct inaccessible buildings.

Therefore, let us encourage one another to view this initiative as an embodiment of God's grace, enabling everyone to contribute their unique strengths and talents, and fostering a truly inclusive and accessible church environment.

In all three levels God's call to be affirmative, radical and reconstructive leads to a profound leadership role in the church and society. It calls for an inclusive leadership ascription towards persons with disabilities. The weakness and disability of a person does not limit God's choices of electing people to be a leader in the church and elsewhere. May the Lord make us inclusive in our approach towards persons with disabilities and overcome the ableism which sides with the traditional and stereotyping attributes of leadership provenances. Let the people of God with different abilities and capacities be encouraged to be leaders in all endeavors. **Amen.**

### **Closing prayer**

Dear God, we come before You in gratitude for the opportunity to celebrate Disability Sunday. We pray that You continue to renew and refine our thoughts, allowing us to redefine and rediscover our relationship with persons with disabilities as they lead.

Grant us the wisdom to discern with strength and see the abilities that shine from persons with disabilities. Give us the courage to accept their new form of leadership and inspire us to abide by Your love and unwavering support. **Amen.**

**Benediction I**

As we go out to the world, may our hearts be filled with understanding, commitment and willingness to follow the leadership of persons with disabilities fostering stronger communities, and supporting inclusive policies. Let us break down stereotypes, collaborate effectively, and appreciate the diversity and worth of every individual.

May the boundless grace of the wounded Christ empower the Church to accept the potential of all people, growing in disability advocacy and inclusion. May God's Love embrace all leaders regardless of their abilities and may we be guided by the constant fellowship of enabling the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**or**

**Benediction II**

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: May we recognize the perfection of God in all who are created in the image of God, embrace humanity with its many gifts and struggles and create a new order without any discrimination. **Amen.**

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Themes of Previous Advocacy Sundays

- 2014:** *Church 'of' All - Church 'for' All*
- 2015:** *Inclusive and Accessible Church*
- 2016:** *Under the Roof... Step Beyond the Stairs*
- 2017:** *Creator of the Disabled Reform your Creation*
- 2018:** *God of the Disabled: Walking Together, Serving Justice Peace and Inclusion*
- 2020:** *Disability as Diversity in the Design of God*
- 2021:** *Digital Inclusion: Not Charity But Justice*
- 2022:** *Invisible Disability: Illuminating the Potential of Invisible Communities*



**idea**  
Indian Disability Ecumenical Accompaniment

From  
**Towards Inclusive Church - Disability Inclusion Policy Guidelines - 2019**

**Disability as Diversity**

It is the God of the Bible who is the creator of people with disabilities 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

**Accompaniment as Ministry**

"Towards Just and Inclusive Communities" is a biblical, theological and ministerial call, to assure and ensure that no one is left behind in our faith and societal journey.

Establishing the reign of God is nothing but building inclusive communities 'OF' all, 'BY' all, 'FOR' all and 'WITH' all.

**Inclusion as Attitude**

It is illegal and offending to discriminate, omit, avoid, and neglect against anyone on grounds of disability within India. (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016). Therefore, it is legally binding that places of worship and church related institutions providing services be accessible to persons with disabilities. Ensuring persons with disabilities the access, enjoyment, and exercise of their rights equally with others exemplifies inclusion as an attitude.

**Integration as Praxis**



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, gender, denomination, social background, disability or age. We need to be careful and cautious in the words we use towards and about other people. In the sight of God, we all are people first and other aspects of our personality are secondary. Our terminology needs to reflect the fact of God's intentions.



Scan to read the full version of Disability Inclusion Policy Guidelines  
Email: [idea@ncci1914.com](mailto:idea@ncci1914.com)




Received and Adopted by the Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches in India on the 1st March 2019


**National Council of Churches in India  
Indian Disability Ecumenical Accompaniment**

**ACCESS TOGETHER CAMPAIGN**




**Mark Your Location to Make a Change**


**Step 1:** Download Google Maps, sign into your google account, locate nearby places to review




**Step 2:** Upload Details, Add Photos of Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities , Add Photos of Barriers for sensitizing Change and submit your contribution



**Step 3:** Share your contribution in social media platforms with #Access\_Together\_Campaign and encourage others to participate



**Step 4:** Take a Screenshot of Your Google Review and share it with us through the QR Code below



**Award Ceremony will be held on Dec 3 (Sunday) along with other participants during the Mega Event on International Day of Persons with Disabilities.**

