

Motion # 6

Disability Responsiveness in the Church (update from 2018 GSTHW motion)

Mover: Rev'd Toby Behan **Seconder:** Ms Mira Martin

Preamble

In 2018 General Synod Te Hīnota Whānui recognised and affirmed the biblical imperative to love one another, the church's call to work for social justice and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by encouraging inclusive hospitality and accessibility in church environments and activities.

Specifically, General Synod Te Hīnota Whānui affirmed the work of the Disability Portfolio group (now The Anglican Disability Network / Te Taura Whaikaha Mihinare) and had the foresight to enable the development of disability focused resources, supporting the development of theological discussion, and supporting awareness raising initiatives focused on disability, spirituality and the church.

As a result, the Anglican Disability Network / Te Taura Whaikaha Mihinare has:

- Employed two Disability Ministry Educators (0.5 FTE each) to develop viable sustainable relationships and produce practical disability responsiveness resources to support front line ministry, since May 2022.
- Surveyed disability needs and awareness within the church in 2022 and 2024.
- Developed a living framework for a Theological Statement on Disability for the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia.
- Completed 24 liaison and education visits to a variety of places and spaces within the hui amorangi and dioceses, and other three tikanga communities.
- Facilitated the completion of 8 accessibility audits for ministry units and parishes, communities, amorangi and dioceses, and St John's Theological College.
- Produced 13 liturgical resources to support ministry teams in specific liturgical seasons.
- Produced 21 posters on disability related themes and 8 newsletters since December 2023 to support ministry teams.
- Established a website that is intentionally formatted to be accessible to all users.
- Ensured a voice on disability issues for Anglican Taonga.
- Provided submissions on legislation, regulations and universal design impacting on the disability community.
- Contributed to Anglican published scholarship, including the three-Tikanga Colloquium book, "Tui, tui, tuituia mātou," published in 2026, and the Anglican Journal of Theology in Aotearoa and Oceania.

- Contributed to new student orientation at St John's Theological College in 2024 and 2025.
- In June 2026 will host and facilitate the inaugural Te Hui Taumata Whaikaha Mihinare / The Anglican Disability Summit 2026.

In 2023 the NZ Household Disability Survey reported that one in six people in New Zealand identify as having a disability. Disability is not always visible.

The ratio rises significantly to one in three in those 65 years and over, much of which is invisible and unnoticed.

This current data and church demographic demonstrate an ongoing need for church responsiveness to disability by ensuring the work of the Anglican Disability Network / Te Taura Whaikaha Mihinare and the Disability Ministry Educators can continue beyond the current funding limit of 2027.

This motion recognises an established need for the continuation of a church response to disability awareness and ensures practical action and support to build church inclusiveness and accessibility for all people.

Therefore, this General Synod Te Hīnota Whānui 2026:

Affirms the work of The Anglican Disability Network / Te Taura Whaikaha Mihinare, and in response to the established need in our parishes, ministry units, and the province, General Synod Te Hīnota Whānui commits to seeking ongoing funding of the two Disability Ministry Education roles as an educational priority.

Supports and encourages all license holders and staff in amorangi and dioceses in the province, to complete disability-themed education provided by The Anglican Disability Network / Te Taura Whaikaha Mihinare as part of their mandatory Health and Safety programmes.

Supports and encourages all Ministry units /each parish to complete an annual Access Assessment Form as provided by The Anglican Disability Network / Te Taura Whaikaha Mihinare.

Notes to Motion 6:

ANGLICAN DISABILITY - INCLUSION PROGRAMME

Programme Presenter: Cheryl Thompson, Disability Ministry Educator

Contact details: engagement@anglicandisability.org

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia, through The Anglican Disability Network (TADN), has employed 2 Educators to raise awareness of Inclusion of disabled people within every aspect of the church through Education, Engagement and Information.

The Inclusion programme is designed to support the church to be more inclusive and accessible for disabled people.

This programme is available to all ministry, staff, parishioners, disabled people and their whanau within the Anglican Church.

The programme is held in the church, Parish, rohe, Amorangi of your choice; the places and spaces, we already use.

The programme runs for a minimum of 3 hours.

There is no cost, however, we ask that you provide us with a space to meet.

Outline for the onsite Inclusion programme

1. Introductions – whakawhanaungatanga, ‘know me, know my space’ – 20 mins

2. Workshop 1 – Disability – Inclusion – Accessible - 45 mins

Brainstorm, Feedback, Discussion session

Exploring the words, their meaning and how they are really seen in our community.

3. Refreshment break – 15 mins

4. Workshop 2 – Triple A Form – 60 minutes

Practical explanation and demonstration of the ‘Access Assess Assist’ Form.

This form was established to Assist those on the programme to assess their own awareness of Inclusion and accessibility within Anglican church spaces.

We work through the form answering questions with a practical demonstration of the space we are in.

This is not a checkpoint for us (TADN) but rather a baseline for the space and people using it, how it may be improved at all, for better access or inclusion of all.

By reviewing this annually, as part of the Health & Safety requirements, we can ensure that we are inclusive and accessible for disabled people, and we can measure any benefits to our community.

Part of the practical demonstration could include examples of resources e.g. straws or large handled cups for catering, noise cancelling headphones, visual aids (large print sheets, NZSL).

5. Summary – Questions and clarification of the days work and how to put this in place into our daily work within the church – 15 minutes.

Accessible and Inclusive Church

Access Assess Assist

A resource to help you/your parish or community provide more inclusive services or programmes

Access - the means or opportunity to approach or enter a place, space, information or resource

Assess - evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of

Assist -help (someone), typically by doing a share of the work

Space_____

Date first viewed_____

Website	Easy to find	Easy to read	Choice to listen	Ability to contact
www.				
Signage	On street	Welcoming to All	car park	facilities
Street appeal	Incl from street	All access front	Tikanga Toru	Sensory
Buildings	Phys access	seating	lighting	bathrooms
Written material	Print	Visually displayed	Recorded	Other e.g app,website
Other area i.e	Positive language			

You are welcome to fill out on your own or contact me to go through with you.

Cherryl Thompson - ADN Engagement- engagement@anglicandisability.org

We welcome your ideas to help improve inclusion and disability awareness within all the places and spaces of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Pasifika

Vicki Terrell- ADN Resources - resources@anglicandisability.org

Produced by the Disability Ministry Educators, Anglican Disability Network, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

How to use your Access Assess Assist (AAA) sheet

1. Fill in the name of the space you are assessing, with the date of the assessment.
2. How to fill in the table – Here are some examples or ideas to help you assess your spaces.

Website	Easy to find	Easy to read	Choice to listen	Opp. To contact
www. What is your website address	Is it linked to the anglicanchurch.org Website? How would we find it?	Are the words clear? Is it very visual? Too busy? Is there a choice for font?	Can we listen, rather than read content?	Are there opportunities to chat with site? Are there many different ways to engage?

Signage	On street	welcoming to All	car park	facilities
Written board Neon board Digital	On verge /berm of street outside building encouraging people to come	How many languages Intl. access sign to notify of accessibility	Clearly marked spaces for mobility users, seniors, families with a baby etc	Picture signs or sensory signs what facilities are available

Street appeal	Incl from street	All access front	Tikanga Toru	Sensory
Take a photo of your space from the arrival point	If you are an inclusive site – is it on your street sign	Does everybody access the building from the same space	Is your signange welcoming in all Tikanga Toru languages	Have you included tactile signs ?

Buildings	Phys access	seating	lighting	bathrooms
How many buildings on your site	Are they all accessible to everyone	Do you have seating areas reserved for visually impaired, wheelchair spaces stc	Are light switches accessible to all Does lighting allow for best results for all- no flickering lights	Do bathroom facilities cater for wheelchair, walker. Puchchair users etc

Written material	Print	Visually displayed	Recorded	Other e.g app,website
	Is the information available in different fonts, languages	Is a screen available? Ipads easy to swipe?	Can we watch at our own pace. later	Can I download an app

We recommend you add this in your Health and Safety Plan or your RAMS forms for activities, etc, so it is a part of what you already do. Not all spaces may apply to you, mark as N/A. Kia kaha!

A theological statement on Disability in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

As Anglicans, we believe that each person is made in, and bears the image of God. We believe that through our baptism we are all ministers of the Gospel as members of the Body of Christ. As human beings, we all live within the diversity of humanity, yet by God's grace we are given gifts for building up the Body of Christ and building the Kingdom. Because disability is part of our human experience, disabled people also bear the image of God, and by virtue of baptism, are partners in the mission and ministry of the church.

In Scripture we see that personal impairments need not be a barrier to answering God's call. For example, when Moses protested to God about his calling, citing his speech impairment as a barrier to ministry, he was supported in his calling by Aaron (Exodus 4:10-17). The story of Moses challenges our assumptions about independence and autonomy in relation to ministry and reminds us that impairment need not be a barrier to it. In the incarnation, Jesus' humanity, in his life, death and resurrection, challenges and gives hope that, in vulnerability as well as in strength, we are called to be bearers of the Gospel and full participants in the Body of Christ.

We recognise that some understandings of disability can create stigma and ultimately exclusion from full participation in the life of the church. We also recognise that the concept of healing can be challenging in the context of disability. When Jesus healed in the Gospels, it always included people being restored to their community. We affirm that healing can be experienced as full inclusion in the life of the community of faith. Healing can also come from being loved and accepted for who we are, in all our diversity in the community of faith, and being invited as full members to contribute to the ministry of that community. The community becomes whole when we all work together, and thus reflecting the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity.

We affirm that we want to live out the Gospel in ways that are mana-enhancing for all. As a church we therefore commit ourselves to the principles of manaakitanga as we foster a culture of full inclusion. We are committed to pathways of education and advocacy to nurture a culture of **faka'apa'apa** / **highest respect** and **tauhi va** / **healthy relationships** for our mutual flourishing. Manaakitanga is expressed not just in our community life, but also extends to the way we structure our environments to be accessible to all. The need for physical access is understood as a matter of hospitality and inclusion for all people.

In the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia we commit ourselves to offering space to learn from the experiences of disabled people. Disability reminds us of the diversity of our humanity and our need for one another as the people of God. We affirm the mana of all people, regardless of their experience of being human. We are committed to the full inclusion of all people as God's image-bearers and full members of the church, that together we may become more fully the Body of Christ.