



# TIME TO BUILD

Building lives, homes & communities

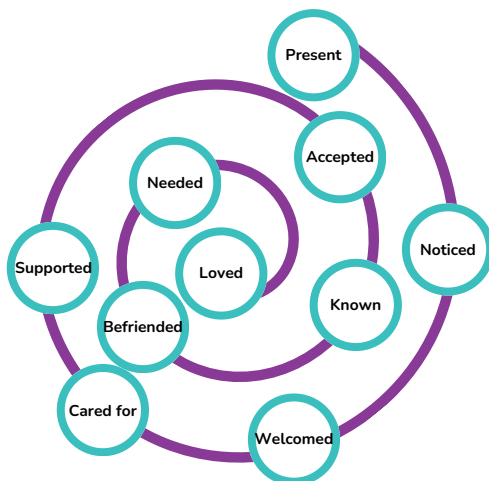
Newsletter of Our Place Christian Communities  
and Hope Christian Homes - MAY 2024

## Dimensions of Belonging: Part 1

We would all say we want our churches to be places of welcome and belonging. But how can we know that our church really is?

Some fascinating research involved interviewing 25 parents of young people living with intellectual and/or developmental disability (think Down Syndrome, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and so on.) When the interviews were analysed, ten dimensions of really belonging emerged. They help us to ask great questions about what we do in our church communities. This newsletter will reflect on the first 5 dimensions and part 2 will be in our August newsletter.

Reference: Carter, E. W., Biggs, E. E., & Boehm, T. L. (2016). Being present versus having a presence: dimensions of belonging for young people with disabilities and their families. *Christian Education Journal*, 13(1), 127 - 146.



**Present:** are there people with disability at your church? Why? Or why not?

**Noticed:** do people get treated as individuals? Is there a culture of feeling comfortable with positive and thoughtful conversations about disability?

**Welcomed:** do people with disability receive more than superficial greeting? Authentic friendliness and genuine hospitality go a long way.

**Accepted:** would people say this of your church: “[Members at my church] really know and believe in their hearts that we’re all put together differently, and we are all put together in this community for a reason.” (p135)

**Supported:** do you ask the simple question “How can we support you? What do you need?”

# Belonging at CRU Galston Gorge

On Tuesday 30th April, Our Place was invited to CRU Camps at Galston Gorge to train their staff on disability, trauma and working with children with disability on camps. Kirk Patston presented a biblical framework for disability. Kelly Peters is currently the children's minister at Menai Anglican, former principal of a specialist school for children with autism and/or intellectual disabilities and a member of Our Place. Kelly presented on common diagnoses, how they may present and strategies to help leaders work with children with disability on camp. Finally, Our Place committee member and social worker Simon Shead gave practical steps in how to debrief with a child after a crisis.

Heidi, one of the CRU participants, commented that "I feel much better equipped to recognise different disabilities and to support kids living with them on camp."

The team at CRU identified some different areas where changes can be made to how camp is run. We look forward to hearing how some of these things are implemented in the future to make camp accessible and welcoming for all!

Update from Kirk Patston  
As mentioned in our last newsletter Kirk was required to take some medical leave due to his ongoing battle with Long Covid. Thankfully, the time resting has enabled Kirk to return to work at Our Place as our CEO as well as SMBC from the end of April. We are so thankful for all of your prayers during this time. Please continue to pray for Kirk and his health as he continues recovery.



Kelly Peters presenting at CRU Belonging



# Welcome Home Springwood News

## What is Welcome Home Springwood (WHS)?

Many people new to our organisation may be wondering what WHS is and how it fits with Our Place Christian Communities. Here is some information to help explain the relationship between the various organisations. OPCC seeks to nurture and disciple mixed-ability, neurodiverse residential Christian communities that are linked to local churches. WHS is the first home which we support and is owned and managed by Hope Christian Homes. Currently WHS is home to housemates Jerrah and Simon as well as providing overnight accommodation for Jerrah's carers.

We love to share stories from the house to demonstrate the beautiful mixed-ability community this housing model creates. In the last few months Jerrah has continued to host his young adults bible study for a meal and fellowship each month as well as other family and friends of both Jerrah and Simon for meals. The housemates enjoyed a trip to Brigadoon in the Southern Highlands despite the rain, completed a fundraising walk and celebrated Jerrah's birthday with a community celebration and drumming circle! Jerrah's support workers have assisted Jerrah in writing and performing a puppet show for church and co-wrote a song called 'Jesus reigns over all'. These are wonderful examples of the how this house and its residents are a blessing to the local Christian church through connection and support.



Simon and Jerrah at Brigadoon



Jerrah with puppets at church



Jerrah's birthday celebration



## Fizzy and Suds

Our ambassador Jerrah has been busy working on a theme song for the new ABC kids television series Fizzy and Suds! The show centres around two animated bubbles that explore the real world and share with their viewers everything they discover about different topics. It celebrates curiosity and out-of-the-box thinking. It is the first ABC production that has been certified as Inclusively Made, produced inclusively with people living with disability from start to finish! We are very proud of Jerrah's work on the show!



Continue to support our work by partnering in prayer with us. Our prayer points for May:



- Give thanks for Kirk's improvement in health and pray for his ongoing recovery from Long Covid.
- Give thanks for the recent training at CRU. Pray for Christian organisations as they seek to be inclusive for all people.
- Pray for wisdom for the HCH Board as they continue to make decisions regarding next steps for WHS



Book a Belonging workshop for your church. Express your interest in Our Place training by completing an expression of interest form at:  
<https://ourplacecc.org.au/belonging/>



Your generous financial gifts enable Our Place Christian Communities to resource churches and make communities. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. To make a donation please visit our website at:  
<https://ourplacecc.org.au/donate/>