



TIME TO BUILD

Building lives, homes & communities

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

Dimensions of Belonging: Part 2

This is the second instalment of our 10 dimensions of belonging series. These elements were identified by Carter et al in their research interviews of 25 families with adult children with disability as being central to belonging within a church community. These dimensions are helpful in our reflections on how our own church communities are going in being inclusive. The first five dimensions (present, noticed, welcomed, accepted and supported) were covered in our May newsletter. The next five are considered here with some questions of reflection for you and your church leadership teams.

Cared for: do our churches offer care for people with disability and their families beyond Sunday? Ask them what is most helpful is all areas - practical, emotional, social and spiritual.

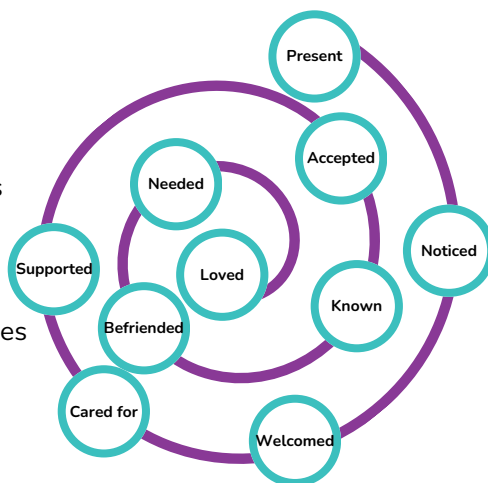
Known: Are people with disability known personally and individually? Do you know their names, strengths, and passions?

Befriended: do our churches create opportunities for mixed-ability friendships to be formed and deepened? Inclusive practices are crucial for this.

Needed: do we help and encourage people with disability to serve others and use their gifts for the building up and encouragement of the church?

Loved: are we demonstrating love that is lavish, unconditional, patient and deep that compels us to pursue the other dimensions of belonging?

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.



Breaking down barriers

A few years ago Olivia, who has a family member with disability, recognised that a barrier to church attendance and connection for many people was the struggle to understand the weekly sermon. Tricky concepts and jargon meant many people in her church found the service inaccessible and therefore were disconnected from the weekly gathering. To address this barrier, Olivia and her husband created a group that meets each week before their service to work through the sermon passage. The group aims to break down “barriers of comprehension” by helping their members understand the key language that will be used by the preacher and focusing in on one key point that will be made. This key point is provided via the sermon note outline made available in advance for the group leaders to use.

Olivia has been stunned by the results of running this group. Some of the noticeable outcomes has been that members now stay after church longer to socialise and regularly spend time together beyond the church gathering. There is also growth in biblical understanding and maturity for the members. Olivia comments that for some members “they have come to understand the gospel for the first time” as the language used is simple, often visual and time is taken to explain Christian concepts to support understanding.

Olivia believes other churches could follow their example in breaking down comprehension barriers. They recommend a ratio of 1:2 leaders for participants and leaving expectations and assumptions of bible knowledge at the door advising to keep it simple and help each other to understand.



Prayer Points for August



- Families dealing with NDIS - for fair, transparent and timely decisions and for wisdom and patience navigating the system.
- Families needing encouragement to persevere. That our churches will provide support, care and belonging for these families.
- Thanks for the new house in Springwood (see next page) and pray that God will put together a thriving community.
- For upcoming Belonging workshops.

Welcome Home Springwood News

Welcome Home Springwood is on the move! In June, God provided an amazing opportunity for Hope Christian Homes (HCH) to purchase a new property in Springwood which better met the needs of the residential community of WHS. Through generous donations and the sale of the current property, HCH is closer to fulfilling its vision of creating mixed-ability, neurodiverse homes providing security, choice and connection to its residents. We pray that this will be the first of many HCH properties. The home will be able to accommodate three residents, their overnight care givers and a house “neighbour”. The HCH board is very thankful to all the generous supporters that have enabled this to happen both financially and practically (gardening, cleaning, moving etc).

The housemates are looking forward to moving into the new house around the start of October!



A place to belong

Anna is a young Christian woman who lives with an intellectual disability. She is an outgoing people person who loves attending her local Anglican church. From the first week she attended with her mum around the age of 16, the church community welcomed them in allowing her to be involved in the kids' ministry and setting up a buddy program. Now in her 30s, Anna is a loved member of the congregation. She is rostered on to help introduce the bible reading and assist with the prayer times. She is the first to laugh at the jokes in the sermon and expressed empathy for others when sharing their life story. She is a blessing to the church community! Her mum, Wendy, commented that church is one of the only safe places where Anna can be free and not shadowed by a carer!

Anna currently lives in supported independent living accommodation. Her mum, Wendy, dreams of the possibility of Anna being able to live with other young Christian women - with and without disability. Wendy has been in conversation with OPCC as both work towards making this dream a reality. Wendy sees OPCC and its partner organisations as great role models, trail-blazing the way to this model of choice. “But I just have to be patient. Remember that God is in charge. He knows Anna and loves Anna.”





Our Place Christian Communities' work to resource churches and support mixed-ability communities is only possible through generous donations. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Please consider giving to OPCC today at: <https://ourplacecc.org.au/donate>



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>

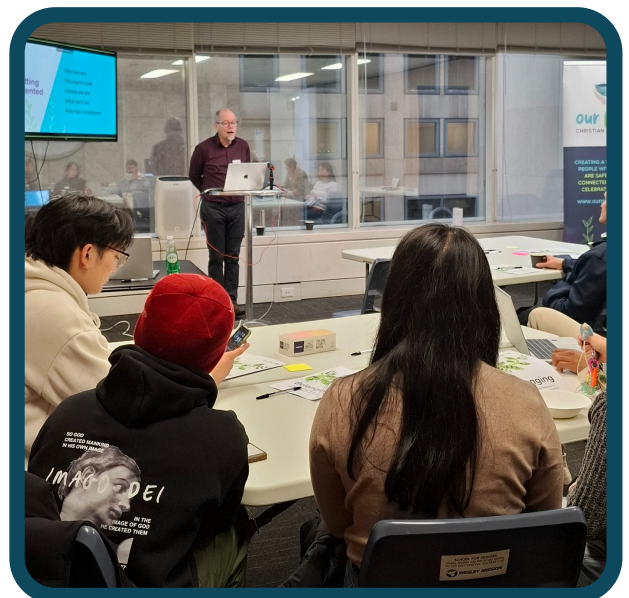


Thank you!

Simon Shead has recently stepped down from the OPCC committee. We are thankful for all his work, wisdom energy and commitment in service of OPCC. Simon continues to partner with us as a resident neighbour at Welcome Home Springwood.

Belonging at Wesley Mission

On Sunday 23 June, Kirk Patston and Kelly Peters were invited to run a workshop with the youth and children's leaders at Wesley Mission City and Ryde via zoom link. The session focussed on explaining different models of disability, what the bible teaches about disability and how these shape our ministry practice. Kelly explained different common diagnoses for youth and children and presented strategies to help leaders work with children and families in their own ministry context. Many of the participants highlighted new practices that they would love to see implemented so that all children and youth at Wesley would feel comfortable and included in their programs. We look forward to hearing more from Wesley in the future as they work towards these changes.



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