

# Welcoming All of God's Children in His House

## Supporting Families of Children with Disabilities

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How many members of  
your ward have  
disabilities?

# Average Ward

432 members  
50 with disabilities

- 13 with chronic mental illness
- 10 with learning disabilities
- 8 with intellectual disabilities
- 6 with communication disorders
- 4 with hearing impairments
- 2 with behavior disorders
- 2 with chronic health impairments
- 2 with motor & orthopedic impairments
- 2 with visual impairments
- 1 with multiple disabilities

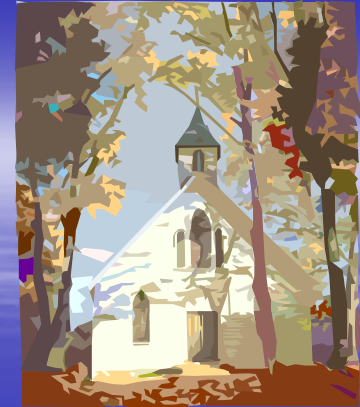


# The Empty Pew



- Where are the people with disabilities in your ward?
- Are some invisible to you?
- Are some not attending church?

# Are members with disabilities welcome in God's house?



- Are they attending Sacrament meeting?
- Are they attending Priesthood, Relief Society, YM/YW, Primary meetings/activities?
- Are they visited by sensitive Home/Visiting Teachers?
- Are they given callings to serve others in the ward/stake?
- Are they receiving all of the blessings of the gospel that are afforded those without disabilities?

# Religious/Spiritual Challenges of Families with a Child with Disabilities

- Finding meaning in the experience
- Ambivalence regarding how religion can help
  - misguided advice from members of the church community
  - fear of not fitting into the church community
  - family dissonance in church participation

# The Church's Unique Role

- Many governmental programs exist to help people with disabilities and their families with their temporal needs
- The church exists to help them with their spiritual needs



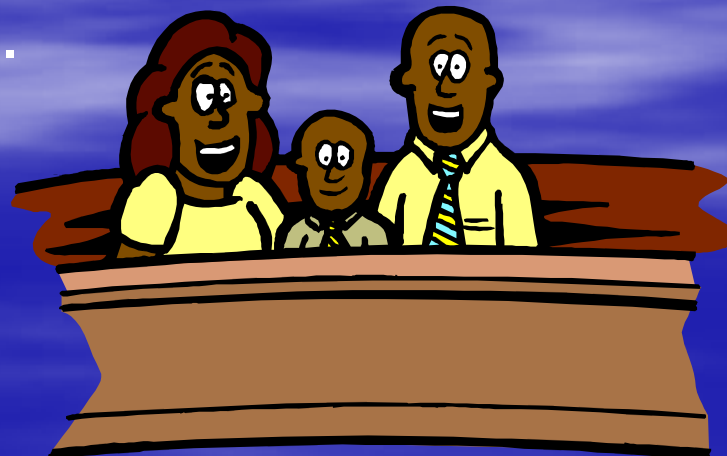
# How helpful are church members?

- Helpful services:
  - Schools
  - Government services
  - Private organizations
  - Extended family
  - Friends and neighbors
  - Medical professionals
  - Support groups
- Church members and wards were rarely mentioned!



# None are Forbidden

Behold, hath he commanded that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men ... but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.



# How Church Members Can Help

- Know and love the families of the child with special needs
- Invite them to participate and contribute
- Provide respite care
- Help each member learn about the Savior and His gospel
- Make the church building accessible



# Know and love the families

- Best vehicle is home/visiting teaching
- Ascertain their needs – how can we help them participate more fully?
- Reduce the barriers that keep families at home rather than at church
  - Opportunity barriers
    - Policy
    - Practice
    - Attitude
    - Knowledge
    - Skills
  - Access barriers
    - Environment



Beukelman & Mirenda, 1992

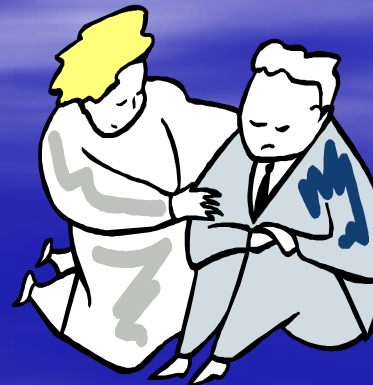


## Invite them to participate and contribute

- Some families may need transportation
- Some families may just need an invitation
- Provide callings or responsibilities that fit the needs of the church and the member with disabilities
- Don't assume that just because they have a disability, they cannot enjoy the blessings of the gospel

# Provide respite care

- Tend the child with a disability so the parents can attend their church meetings
- Sit with the family and help if the child is restless or disruptive in church
- Avoid giving harsh looks when a child is disruptive in church; show increased love and understanding



# Help each member learn about the Savior and His gospel



- Invite a disability specialist to provide inservice to church leaders and teachers
- Consider integrating children with disabilities with nondisabled peers to maximum extent appropriate



- Use ideas from *Teaching – No Greater Call*
- Use resources from LDS Special Curriculum and Materials for Members with Disabilities
- Adapt curriculum and/or instruction as necessary - *Beginning Course Kit*

# Make the church building accessible



- Does your church provide:
  - Transportation?
  - Marked accessible parking places?
  - Ramp with reasonable slope and sufficient width?
  - Pew cuts at scattered sites?
  - Accessible bathrooms?
  - Accessible water fountains?
  - Elevator or chair lift?
  - Air filters or fragrance-free sections?
  - Large print materials, sign language interpreters, sound amplification?

# Every Member

- “The body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect.” D&C 84:110



# I'll Walk with You

If you don't walk as most people  
do,  
Some people walk away from you,  
But I won't! I won't!

If you don't talk as most people do,  
Some people talk and laugh at  
you,  
But I won't! I won't!

I'll walk with you.  
I'll talk with you.  
That's how I'll show my love for  
you.



Jesus walked away from none.  
He gave his love to everyone.  
So I will! I will!

Jesus blessed all he could see.  
Then turned and said, "Come  
follow me."  
And I will! I will! I will! I will!

I'll walk with you.  
I'll talk with you.  
That's how I'll show my love for  
you.

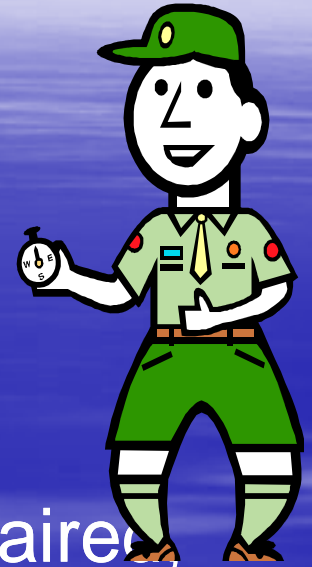


# LDS Church Resources

- *Members with Disabilities*
- *Including Those with Disabilities*
- *Members with Disabilities: Index to Periodicals of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, (July, 2004)*
- *Material Listing for those with Hearing Impairments, (2004)*
- *Materials Listing for Those with Visual and Physical Disabilities, (2004)*

# Materials from the Boy Scouts of America

- *Merit Badge: Disability Awareness*
  - Disability Awareness Pamphlet \$2.75
- *Booklets: Scouting for Youth with . . .*
  - Emotional Disabilities, Blind/Visually Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Learning Disabled, Physical Disabilities, Mental Retardation, Emotional Disabilities (approx. \$4.50 - 8.00)
- Phone: (800) 323-0732 or [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org)



# General Religious Resources

- [www.disabilityresources.org/RELIGION.html](http://www.disabilityresources.org/RELIGION.html)

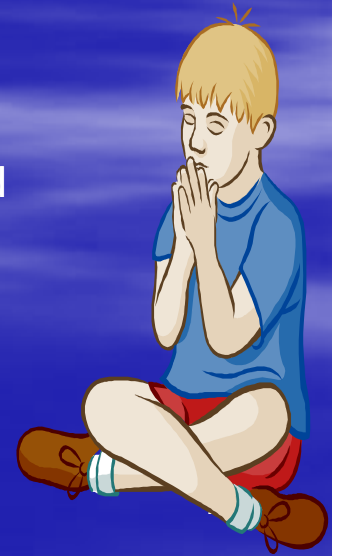
- Includes links to web sites which provide information designed to encourage and support the accessibility of religious organizations and facilities.

- [www.nod.org/religion/index.cfm](http://www.nod.org/religion/index.cfm)

- The [Religion and Disability Program](#) of the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) is an interfaith effort, urging national faith groups, local congregations and seminaries to identify and remove barriers of architecture, communications, and attitudes.

- [www.faithability.org](http://www.faithability.org)

- Includes a collection of resources on the topic of religion, spirituality and disability



# Come Unto Christ

