

**Accessibility:**

“Let us build a house where love can dwell

And all can safely live,

A place where saints and children tell

How hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,

Rock of faith and vault of grace,

Here the love of Christ shall end divisions,

All are welcome in this place!”

Singing the Faith 409, Marty Haugen

*This is our working draft document, adopted at the AGM as a description of what currently happen, and a way to identify an aspirational direction of travel. In this document, and for the purposes of the AGM, items still to be addressed or completed are contained in boxes, and collated at the end of the document alongside the accessibility audit.*

**A theological underpinning (borrowed from the Church of England):**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Equal_Access_to_Church_Buildings.pdf>

Without good access there is, intentionally or not, exclusion of part of our community. This undermines the Church each time we say ‘everybody welcome’.

Without good access, there is an implicit resignation on the part of the Church from its call to share the Good News with all people.

Without good access, there is fundamental damage done to the offer to belong to the community of Christ’s disciples, and to people’s ability to take up that offer.

Without good access, there is a lack of dialogue with excluded groups, and therefore the Church is disabled in understanding or addressing its own prejudices and biases.

‘A Church without disabled people is a disabled Church.’ Belonging to a community requires being with other members of that community. This involves bringing together the ways we view and treat people, alongside the ways we arrange our buildings physically and how we worship in them. Whenever we deny someone the opportunity to belong, the whole Church is diminished.

What do we mean by ‘disabled people’? The Bible teaches that all are made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). We do not categorise people and say that some bear God’s image fully while others are somehow deficient, like ‘factory seconds’.

We believe that the Imago Dei is present in every person, that all can say with the Psalmist: “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139: 13-14a)

God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)

Ability / disability is not binary, neither is it fixed. It is, in fact, the common human experience. It is simply not possible to reduce our thinking to two pigeonholes, ‘able’ and ‘disabled’. We are all on a spectrum of ability/ disability for all sorts of conditions and our positions on these spectra will shift over time.

The risen Christ was recognised by his wounds, and he took those wounds into the life and heart of God (John 20: 24-29). Why? Because woundedness and disability is part of the universal human experience. We are all embodied creatures, in bodies that are not perfect – and often seem to get less perfect as we age! We all live with challenges – physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional – and in the end we are all mortal. But we are also made in the image of God, all worthy of dignity, respect, inclusion and participation, and all made for each other.

We are by nature relational and interdependent, made for community.

We are called to belong, and we are called to live now, as best as we can, the life of the kingdom of God in which no-one is excluded – in fact, the last shall be first.

The Bible is clear: You shall not curse the deaf, or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord”. (Leviticus 19:14) The Lord calls out behaviour that will especially disadvantage disabled people. We may not speak ill of someone in the security of their not hearing us, nor intentionally put a stumbling block in front of a blind person. More widely, any behaviour that puts stumbling blocks in the way of disabled people contradicts the character of the God whom we serve. A concern for the marginalised brings integrity to the Church.

The gifts of God’s grace are given freely to all people, without distinction.

The call to ministry applies to all the baptised, without exception. Just as all are made in the image of God, so all are called by God to enrich the life of the whole Church, to live out and share the Good News, and to embody God’s kingdom.

If we begin from this starting point, our approach becomes one of nurturing in each other the vocation and ministries to which God calls each one of us, and helps us avoid the trap of ‘othering’ people, failing to include them as fellow disciples and ministers. Traditional responses to disability tend to focus either on support to help people achieve independence ‘from’ their disabilities, or the mere removal of hindrances and obstacles that prevent a fuller participation in society.

Both are important, but they are not enough.

It is true that there are often aspects of a disabling condition which may require medical intervention or other support, to alleviate their effects. It is also true that there are many barriers to disabled people’s full participation in our common life. But focusing only on one or both of these issues makes the disabled person into the object of our thinking, not a fellow participant – and hinders engagement with the fundamental issues of personhood and relationship which are at the heart of both a Christian understanding of our identity in God, and of the call to human flourishing which flows from it.

We are the one Body of Christ, one body with many members, and all are called to play their part.

The Church has too often responded to disabled people (not only those with visible disability) in an ‘othering’ way, as though they are people who must receive ministry, rather than offer it – yet the Biblical, kingdom, aspiration is for inter-dependence; a way of relating, of being, in which all minister and are ministered-to, all serve and are served, all flourish through enabling all to flourish. For Christians, the focus needs to be on mutuality.

To help us be one Body of Christ, we need to be always learning from each other, travelling together, and open to one another’s wisdom and experience. The voice, the experience, the wisdom of disabled people (of all sorts) needs to be at the centre of our approach. Alongside the voice of lived experience, the experience of carers and other professionals have their part. (Disabled people, like all others in society, will never have a complete view of the whole – we all need to work together).

**How does this impact what we do, here?**

At Trinity (and beyond) we are trying to provide a safe and inclusive space for the whole community. This means that we take decisions, and provide resources, to enable as many people as possible to find ways to access our space and our services – on a Sunday and beyond. We aim to offer a safe space for all, including people from the LGBTQ+ community, those living with disabilities or life limiting conditions, and those who are marginalised from society.

The nature of the community building means that a lot of our resources are kept in the Auditorium area, but we are happy for things to be moved and used where they are most needed (although it would help if things were put back so that we can make sure they are available for other people and groups who might need them. The building is divided into 3 zones – the Auditorium, the Lounge, and the Hall.

We do not have everything right, and we are always happy to hear about how we can make people’s experience with us (and with God) a better one – so if there is further work that we can do, please feel free to help us. The things in this booklet represent where we have got to so far. There is much more that we can do, and we keen to hear people’s stories of encounter with us and with God in this place.

Access and inclusion means different things to different people. We are offering a space, relationships, and tools, to help as many people as possible find a safe space. Some of the language that you see in this booklet (and perhaps even heard), is contested language. Some people find the term ‘disabled’ helpful – others a label of limitation, preferring ‘living with a disability.’ Some people consider their learning and access needs to be a private and hidden matter and find their own ways of managing and coping in social situations. Some people are happy to share their stories, others are not.

With this in mind:

* We will ask “how are you” – we will not ask “what is wrong.”
* If we are unsure, we will ask if there is anything else that we can help with (such as “which chair can I move so that you are able to sit where you would like to?”)
* Please ask if there are things that you need, or any support that you may require.
* All the tools and resources mentioned here are available for everyone to use. Please do so without judgement or awkwardness.
* During the service we are likely to invite people to stand to sing. If today isn’t a day that you want to do that, for whatever reason, we don’t mind you staying seated.
* The sermon part of the service can last around 25 minutes, which can be a long time to sit and concentrate. If you need to move around please do so. As is noted later in this booklet, there are resources available for your use throughout the building.
* There are times when we associate ourselves with various campaigns or projects – such as the Dementia Friendly Church. We will make sure that these events, resources, and principle are made available to everyone, although if we know your story, we might ask specifically if you would like to be involved. There is no pressure, and no expectation that participation labels any of us.
* We all have mental health. Some of us have poor mental health. Sometimes that is a permanent feature of our lives. We will try and talk about wellbeing rather than mental health.
* Our healing ministry is important to us, because we believe that God meets us in our need. We do not treat diagnoses as a direct prayer request. We will offer simple prayers of blessing, and the opportunity to share your prayer requests with those you trust. We believe that everyone is called to participate in God’s adventure – just as they are.
* We want to ensure that our actions in church also impacts wider society. It is often society which dis-ables people, not the individual. To this end, we will campaign for justice and we will listen to the lived experience of people in order to frame our justice work.
* We are learning. We won’t always get it right, but please help us to do better.
* Because we don’t always get things right, all members of the leadership team and those who are trustees of the building are committed to undertaking EDI training, safeguarding training and annual updates.

“We cannot say ‘All Welcome’ and leave some people to find that they can’t access our building or our activities. We shouldn’t use the language of being inclusive, welcoming and accessible if that ignores the limitations of that inclusion, accessibility, or welcome. To do otherwise leaves us open to challenges of dishonesty and hypocrisy.” A disabled church member.

**So what can I expect around the building that helps welcome and include everyone?**

**Lighting**

The Auditorium Space is lit by sunlight, and by dimmable LED lighting. Please ask the person on the sound desk if you need the lights adjusting – we can do that in sections. Where the sunlight from our skylight causes difficulty, sunglasses are highly recommended.

The Hall space has a range of lighting options, so please find the one that best suits your requirements.

At Christmas we use fairy lights on the tree – these are set to remain on, rather than flicker.

At our Memorial services and Carol services, we use dimmed lighting, and candles. Please make yourself known to a steward if this is likely to cause you any problems or if you will need any assistance.

**Audio-Visual**

We expect everyone presenting in the auditorium to use a microphone. We have a variety of microphones to ensure clarity of sound and consistency of use. There are currently no permanent AV provisions in the Hall or the Lounge areas.

We have a Loop system in the Auditorium available for those who need it. Our sound system in the auditorium is compatible with most digital hearing aids.

All of the words to prayers and hymns are shown on the 3 screens around the Auditorium. This helps those who cannot hold a hymnbook, as well as meaning we have less paper around our ministry. We have large print hymnbooks and Bibles available if the screens are too bright or unclear. We are also able to print out the content of PowerPoint slides, should you require them. Usually, words which are in **bold type** are to be read aloud by everyone who feels able to do so.

When videos or tactile resources are used in worship, we try and provide a clear explanation of what is happening for those who cannot engage easily. Please let the stewards know if you would find this support helpful as we do not always know in advance what our those leading will be including in their presentation.

We are gradually updating our website and our social media presence. Where there are images posted online, we add visual descriptions of what is there. Our website is compatible with many accessibility apps that are available.

Need to add commentary for images posted on social media

**Large Print**

We have a small number of large print Bibles, Hymnbooks, and Worship Books available. These are kept in the foyer area of the church, so please help yourself or let us know if we can help.

We have a pack of coloured filters available for those who find a different colour to read, easier to do so. Please use the colour filter which best supports your needs.

Need to purchase coloured filters and have them available

**Noticeboards**

Our noticeboards contain information from around the community, so we cannot guarantee that the notices are always easy to read.

Our regular notices are emailed out using a Word Document (which can be interfaced with additional software in order to be listened to). When we send out a letter, this will always be using a dyslexia-friendly font, and in at least 12pt font.

Emergency information is available in all 3 zones in the building.

All exits are clearly marked and lit with emergency lighting.

We will continue to implement the advice provided by <https://signdesignsociety.co.uk/> and the National Dyslexia Association in our productions.

Need to follow the SSS/NDA guidelines for printed materials.

Need to have a protocol for who and when the noticeboards get tidied by

**Sensory resources**

Some of us need to keep our bodies busy in order to concentrate. Each of our three zones have a box of sensory resources for you to use whilst you are in our building. In this box of resources you will find things that:

* Spin
* Stretch
* Squeeze

as well as a pair of headphones for when the music is too loud, a pair of sunglasses for when the light is too bright, and some copies of mindfulness colouring for those who like to be creative.

We have a Lego table (located in the Auditorium) for those who like to build things (or deconstruct things). There are additional boxes of Lego on the table, if you would prefer to have a small kit near you rather than moving elsewhere.

In the backs of some chairs you will find ‘twiddlemuffs’ – these are wool-based tools to help you if you need help staying centred or concentrating. The design will keep your hands warm, for those with circulation problems, and all contain some stitched items which can be used to fiddle and fidget with. Please use these, and leave them in the back of the chair in front of you at the end of the service.

Need to buy and build the sensory kits for the 3 zones (and for Brewood)

**Broadcasting**

Attending church can be difficult for all sort of reasons. We aim to broadcast all our services through Zoom – the link can be requested from codsallmethodist@gmail.com In addition, edited versions of the service are available on our YouTube Channel. All our services have closed captions available for those online through both Zoom and YouTube. These are configurable by the end user. They are also auto-generated, and may not always be accurate, especially when religious terms are used.

For people in the Auditorium, there is a safe-zone protected from the cameras at the back left of the church. Please use these seats if you do not want to appear online for any reason at all.

Need to label the safe zone, as per our image policy

**Communion**

Everyone is welcome to receive bread and wine.

The bread is gluten free, and the wine is non-alcoholic – all to ensure that our celebration together is as inclusive as possible.

The wine is provided in compostable single use paper cups, which are easy for everyone to handle.

If today is difficult to come to the front to receive, or standing up for any length of time is difficult for any reason, we are able to come to you in your seat. Please indicate that you would like this during the communion distribution, and we will serve you where you are.

Occasionally you will asked to ‘share the peace’ with people around you. If you are uncomfortable shaking hands, or need more space today – please feel free to stay where you are, or use the British Sign Language “peace”. We will try to use language around this part of the service which provides you with different options about how you respond to people around you.

Need to embed the change from single glasses to paper cups

**Doorways and Entrances**

All of our external doors have sensor opening mechanisms. If this is not enabled, please let us know (occasionally some of our users need to shut it off for safeguarding purposes).

Our internal doors can be heavy, and as fire doors they need to be kept shut during some safeguarded activities and when the building is not in use. They all, however, have magnetic locks on them which means they can (and should) remain unlocked whilst the building is in use.

We have an inclusive and adapted toilet near the rear entrance. There are two additional toilet blocks (one at the front and one at the rear). These are clearly signposted.

Free period products are available in the women’s toilets and the inclusive toilets. Please take what you need, or leave what you can. We sometimes also have incontinence pads for adults, and nappies for children, available in the cupboards of the rear toilet block.

**Parking**

There are marked parking spaces near the front and the rear entrances to the building.

When we have a funeral, some of the spaces (including one of the front marked bays) will be unavailable. This is so that the hearse and the funeral cars have sufficient room to manoeuvre in the car park.

If all the marked bays are taken, please feel free to drop people at the nearest exit. The one way system around the car park enables enough flow of cars even when there are stationery vehicles.

**Seating**

All our rooms have flexible seating options. Where chairs are set out, we will always provide spaces for wheelchair users, and those with walking aids, and assistance dogs. If you would prefer to be somewhere else, we are happy to move our furniture to best accommodate you and your needs. Some of our chairs have arms on them – please use these if you need extra help in standing up.

**Assistance Dogs**

Assistance dogs are welcome in all areas of our building except the kitchen. Many of our congregation are aware that they should not touch or distract working dogs.

We also know that working dogs are a vital part of the wider community, and so the Minister may ask if there are ways to include the dog in communion – either through a blessing or offering them a treat.

**Mobility Scooters**

We know that being active and independent is important, and we invite folk to use the aids they feel most comfortable with using. This includes the use of mobility scooters inside the building.

In order to keep everyone safe, we do ask that these are kept at low speed, and that only one person rides on the scooter whilst inside the building.

**Inclusive Language**

We are grateful to be part of a church that is teaching us all about the power of our language. For this reason, we are trying to pay attention to the

Inclusive Language Guide <https://d1yuutt686hfi0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/ILG_designed_update_October_2023v2.pdf>

and the Inclusive Image Guide

<https://d1yuutt686hfi0.cloudfront.net/media/documents/inclusive-image-guide.pdf>

The Church hasn’t been the safest of places when it comes to our language, specifically around people who may be LGBTQ+ , and we are on a journey towards more inclusive language. Our hymns and Bible translation use gender-neutral terms when referring to humans. When speaking about God, we use a variety of metaphors to describe God’s character.

We will ask for your preferred pronouns, and will refer to you as you ask us to.

We will aim to use the most widely accepted terms for disability and race and we will not use outdated slurs. All of our leadership have undertaken EDI and Unconscious Bias training, and are committed to ongoing reflective practice in accordance with the Methodist Church policies.

Need an EDI training audit

Need to begin to use the EDI assessment tool for events and planning

Need to check Bible translations for gendered language for people.

**Food preparation and provision**

We will always provide a vegetarian option when we are catering for events. Our aim is to serve the options for gluten free in our catering – including providing gluten free options at communion.

We recognise that we need to pay particular attention to some food allergies. If you are able to let us know prior to an event we can ensure that we maintain a secure preparation environment. If we are not informed prior to the event, we are sorry but we cannot guarantee that the preparation area will be allergen free. This is because we are proud to have a shared kitchen, which other users are able to access.

All Methodist premises are alcohol free. Please do not bring alcohol onto our premises at any time.

**Medical incident protocol**

Having an unplanned medical emergency can be scary for everyone involved. In order to help limit anxiety and panic, we have a medical incident protocol in place.

Should anyone become seriously ill, regardless of who is accompanying them, the steward on duty will ring for an ambulance. Depending if they are also the first aider on duty, they may delegate this task.

A record of the incident will be recorded in the incident file, and may be used for safeguarding or insurance purposes.

If the individual wants to refuse an ambulance or take a different course of action, then this needs to be noted and signed in the accident/incident file kept in the kitchen.

We are a diverse community, and we do not always know what the agreed duties of care are for folk. We will always try to include the ambulance service in supporting and triaging a serious accident or medical incident.

**Accessibility Audit and Action Plan**

We will carry out an annual accessibility audit and action plan, and review this through the Church Council and/or AGM.

We will produce a social story to support accessibility throughout the building, and host this on our website. All external users will be invited to access this through the website.

Need to complete an accessibility audit for this year

**Social Story**

We know that our premises are used by a wide range of groups and people throughout the week, and that it is not always easy working out where things are in an unfamiliar setting. We have a Social Story available to download, to help anyone find their way into and around our building. We hope that this helps to help you feel as welcome and safe as possible.

Need to write a social story for the chapel

**Advocacy**

We know that it can sometimes just be a challenge to show up to a venue, let alone find the right person and the right words to communicate what you need. In addition to the provisions included in this accessibility document, we are also committed to:

* Ongoing training and resourcing in all areas of EDI for all of our key leaders and volunteers.
* Registering with Dementia Friendly Churches, Autism Friendly Churches, Open Church Network, Inclusive Church, and other activist groups to help us keep improving.
* Engage in campaign work especially around disability. We will not attend an event where fully accessible facilities are not provided on site, and we will advocate for fully inclusive provisions at community events.

Do we agree to all these points?

**COLLATION OF ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED OR COMPLETED**

Re: Audio Visual: Need to add commentary for images posted on social media

Local preachers need to be asked to provide an explanation of visual media for those who need it

Re: Large Print: Need to purchase coloured filters and have them available

Re: Notice Boards: Need to follow the SSS/NDA guidelines for printed materials. Need to have a protocol for who and when the noticeboards get tidied by

Re: Sensory resources Need to buy and build the sensory kits for the 3 zones (and for Brewood

Re: Broadcasting: Need to label the safe zone, as per our image policy

Re: Communion: Need to embed the change from single glasses to paper cups

Need to reinforce and teach the BSL ‘Peace’

Re: Inclusive Language: Need an EDI training audit Need to begin to use the EDI assessment tool for events and planning Need to check Bible translations for gendered language for people.

Re: Accessibility Audit and Action Plan: Need to complete an accessibility audit for this year

Re: Social Story: Need to write a social story for the chapel

Need to make images up for around the premises