**Motion # 15**

**Disability Responsiveness in the Church**

**Mover:** Ms A Napier **Seconder:** The Ven Dr P Reynolds

***Social justice, is the heartbeat of the church.***

*We can’t talk theology, we can’t talk pastoral care, we can’t talk ministry* ***without doing social justice it’s the heart of our community****.” Archbishop Winston Halapua*

**Preamble**

In the 2013 census it was noted that 24% of New Zealanders live with disability. It is time to consider whether ministry with disabled people empowers the church to live into the fullness of the Gospel where all Christians are called to serve and be servants of one another in the body of Christ.

For the last decade through the Lectionary our church has recognised the third Sunday in June as Disability Awareness Sunday. For the last 18 months the Small Working Group on Disability has been meeting to examine the state of Disability ministry within the Anglican Church. This motion brings together these stirrings of the Holy Spirit around disability ministry.

At the last Supper Jesus commanded his disciples to love another as he loved them. As a practical demonstration of that love he washed the feet of his disciples. Jesus created a new community based on mutual respect for each other. The Gospel calls us to break down barriers between people and enlarge our vision from people being divided into “us” and “them” to **all** people being part of “us”. The Gospel challenge to love calls the body of Christ to move beyond providing ramps and accessible toilets to embrace disabled people as sisters and brothers who are called to serve and be served as part of the Body of Christ.

In this Decade of Mission it is timely to consider how the church is doing in the mission to and with disabled people. The five-fold mission statement encourages us to view mission as a holistic activity that involves proclaiming the Good News, nurturing believers, loving service and challenging unjust structures. How do we make the Good News accessible to all people? How do we nurture believers with learning disabilities? Is it possible for people using wheelchairs to be involved in loving service? How do we, as a church, challenge our structures to be inclusive so all people are able to offer the ministry God calls to offer? Do we stand with disabled people to challenge our society so all may enjoy full and equal human rights?

The call to join in inclusive/accessible ministry is a call to a fuller understanding of who we are as church as the body of Christ and where God is at work. It is deeply theological work to become more fully the body of Christ, where no one is excluded or left behind. We need to create inclusive communities within our churches where all God’s people in all their uniqueness are welcomed, celebrated and empowered to be the people God calls them to be. We also need to embrace the gift and challenge that disability brings to the church.

As well as the biblical imperative to love one another and the call to just relationships we acknowledge the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) as a key document in the context of Disability ministry. The purpose of the UNCRPD is to promote and protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. The New Zealand Disability Strategy is the other document to guide this ministry.

**Therefore, this General Synod / Te Hīnota Whānui 2018:**

Encourages the church to become more hospitable by ensuring our buildings are accessible and our activities are inclusive so all people can participate and

* affirms the work of the Small Working Group on Disability as a portfolio group of the Social Justice Commission
* funds the development of resources that enable parishes to become more accessible and inclusive of all people, particularly disabled people
* supports the development of a theological discussion around issues of disability
* supports Social Justice Week noting this year’s focus is on Disability. 9-15 September 2018
* supports conferences, seminars and training focused on disability, spirituality and the church