

Citizenship in God's Household

“You are no longer foreigners and aliens but Fellow Citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” Ephesians 2:19

In Ephesians 2, we see that the church is made up of individuals who have different abilities and need. They are brought together by Jesus Christ dying on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins. There was a time when we were all excluded from citizenship in God’s household but through the blood of Jesus we are all able to be members of God’s household, the Church.

Despite these promises, there are many people, including people with a disability, who feel that they remain aliens in God’s household, the church.

To be a citizen of a nation like Australia provides a person with rights, responsibilities and duties. Some rights of an Australian Citizen include: freedom to speak and to be heard, to move about as they wish; and participating in the national activities like voting for our leaders.

Citizens also have responsibilities including: Following the rules of the land and respecting; other people. Their duties include swearing allegiance to the Crown and to participating in the running the nation.

A citizen of God’s household has similar rights, responsibilities and duties. For instance a Christian has a right to hear from God’s word and to have it explained to them as part of a church. In return members have a responsibility to be involved in the mission of the church and to serve others.

Christians with disabilities have a desire to be citizens of God’s household rather than just attending the service and being observers. They are wanting opportunities to serve and to be involved in the mission of the church. For people with disabilities to be able to take a greater role in the life of the church requires the leaders and other members looking for opportunities to enable their brothers and sisters in Christ to participate in church activities.

Over the past decade the secular literature discussing social issues relating to disability has used the term citizenship to describe how people with disability have been left on the fringe of society and membership of social groups. Most people with a disability are now living in the community but are not connecting with it.

Some people may be attending church but they are not being given the opportunity to be full participants in church activities as there may be a social, economic or architectural barrier. Citizens with disabilities have rights,

responsibilities and duties to the groups to which they belong.

Web Page. www.pas.tor.net.net.au/crossrds/cc

Citizenship recognises that all people, including people with a disability, have gifts, talents and abilities which they can use to contribute to the functioning of the group. It has been observed that when a person is given an opportunity

to contribute to a group they experience an increase in self-esteem and self worth. Other members of the group benefit from seeing a person with a disability contributing to the outcome of the group.

Case Examples:

Jane

Jane, who has an intellectual disability spent the first 32 years of her life living in a large institution up on the hill.

Five years ago Jane moved into a community house and started attending St Paul's. One Sunday morning recently Jane told Kim (another member of the church) that she was doing a cooking course at TAFE and she was learning how to cook cakes.

Kim said to Jane "I am on the morning tea roster next Sunday. Do you wanted to cook a cake and then help serve the morning tea"

Jane went home that week with a big smile on her face because after 4 ½ years attending the church someone asked her to minister to others rather than just take from others. Jane now regularly serves on the morning tea roster.

Peter

Peter has been a member of his church for about five yeas but did not really feel part of the congregation until he was asked to operate the computer, to putting words up on the screen during the service. Since Peter has been doing this job he has been going to every service on Sunday. Peter is also making friends with the technos at the church because he has a common topic to talk about



** Martin Butcher heads up **Creating Christian Communities**. Members of the team who have disabilities are available to speak to churches and run seminar on how to be an inclusive church*