

Ability Sunday - September 2019 - An introduction

Bishop Steven invites and encourages every church in the Oxford Diocese to take part in Ability Sunday.

In the Diocese of Oxford, we celebrate the inclusion, contribution and ministry of disabled people, recognising that the church community is only complete when all are welcomed, included and fully belong.

Ability Sunday provides an opportunity for churches to hear from disabled people, family members and care workers about how God is working in their lives. It's an opportunity to move from just a church that welcomes disabled people, to a church that enables everyone to fully participate and share their gifts.

Ability Sunday is a themed annual service in the same way that a church might run Christingle. This year our theme is "made in God's image", using Psalm 139 and Genesis 1. There is no specific date, but a Sunday early in September works well as this is in the season of creation.

History

Ability Sunday was founded by the Christian charity Prospects in 2015 – later becoming part of Livability – to encourage churches to celebrate the gifts and abilities that God has given to disabled people (particularly with learning disabilities). In the first year over 220 churches registered for Ability Sunday. Many churches reported the service had a huge impact with their congregations.

There were some extraordinary gifts discovered. In Jubilee Church, Becky Tyler a teenage girl spoke for their first Ability Sunday service. Becky is non-verbal with quadriplegic cerebral palsy and uses a computer aid synthetic voice operated by eye-gaze technology. Her talk, filmed and placed on social media, went viral. Becky was later asked to preach at arts and faith festival Greenbelt's main Communion Service to a congregation of more than 6,500. Becky featured on the cover of the Church Times.

Ability Sunday gives churches the opportunity to celebrate all God's people and all our gifts, as we recognise that we are all made in God's image.

For more information contact Katie Tupling katie.tupling@oxford.anglican.org

Find resources on the Diocesan website:

<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/faith-in-action/disability/>