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Preacher: Mark Arnold

[0:00] Ah, press record. Good evening, everyone. It is half past seven, so we will make a start.

! Welcome to our Wednesday evening meeting.! Slightly different things going on this evening.

We're very pleased to welcome Mark, who's going to speak to us this evening.

Hello. Hello. I'm sure you'll introduce yourself to us properly in a moment. But let me just start by reading a few verses from a psalm and praying for our evening together.

Psalms 146 says, Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, my soul. I will praise the Lord all of my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings who cannot save. When their spirits depart, they return to the ground. On that very day, their plans come to nothing.

[1:10] Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. He is the maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them.

He remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord gives sight to the blinds.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and widly.

But he frustrates the ways of the wicked. The Lord reigns forever. Your God, O Zion, for all generations, praise the Lord. The Lord.

Let's pray to this God together. Father God, we come before you. The Lord who reigns, who is the maker of all things.

[2:12] And we thank you that you have a heart for the outsiders, for those that people in our world may ignore.

And Father, we thank you that you have had a heart of love for us. And bringing us who are outsiders, who are sinners into your kingdom. And Father, we pray that you would help us to learn to love all people who come into our church building.

And those that we meet outside. The heart of love and compassion for them. Please help Mark this evening as he speaks to us.

And please help us as we listen and engage with this. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Thanks, Mark. Brilliant. Thanks, Daniel.

Good evening, everybody. Lovely to be here with you. Nice evening for it, isn't it? I'm Mark Arnold. I work for Urban Saints. We're a national children's and youth work organization.

[3:24] If you've not heard of us as Urban Saints, you might have heard of us in our previous incarnation up until 18 years ago where we were Crusaders. So, yeah, a few nods to that as well.

And I've done different things within the organization. But for quite a few years now, I've had the privilege to look after our additional needs work and ministry. And it's a real passion for me.

It's a passion drawn from being a children's and youth worker for many years and journeying with lots of children and young people with additional needs during that time. I'll tell a story in a few minutes that helps to illustrate a little bit of that, too.

But I'm also dad to two grown-up children. My daughter, Phoebe, is 25. She got married last year and she's in full-time Christian ministry herself and enjoying doing that.

James, our son, is 22. When James was two, he was diagnosed as autistic and with learning disability. And then 15, epilepsy and anxiety arrived.

[4:27] And there are various other things going on for James as well. So, yeah, for us, this is a journey that's sort of personal for us as family, important for us as church.

My church is St. Paul's Church through just to the north of Bournemouth. I live in Bournemouth. And so that's our church. And then in the work I do at Urban Saints. So that's just a little bit about me. More importantly, this evening, we're going to be exploring this topic of how to support children and young people with additional needs. I hope that's what you've come along for.

And to help us with that, you've got a couple of workbooks that are on the tables in front of you. You've got one each of these to keep. The one with a picture of a young lady called Kay on the front is our training guide for this evening.

So, for example, most of the slides, actually all of the slides that will appear up on the screen, are in your workbook. So you shouldn't need to write too much down.

[5:29] This session that we've got from now till 9 o'clock is sort of a little over half of a longer training session that I sometimes run. So all the slides are in there.

You'll have to sort of jump forward when we skip a few. But you've also got this additional needs information book. And there are 25 different additional needs that are outlined in there.

Bits of information about them, about how to support children and young people that journey with that particular additional need. We could have produced a book with 250 different additional needs in there and still have only scratched the surface.

But at Urban Saints and with our friends at Youthscape, we picked the ones that we bumped into most in our children's and youth work. And those are the ones that have gone in the books.

So those are resources for you to use. If you need a pen, there are pens there as well. So do have a look at those. And as we spend our time this evening thinking about this topic, though, I don't know about you, but I always think it's really important when we're thinking about and talking about a particular group of people that we hear from them, that their voice becomes part of our conversation.

[6:47] And so during the evening, there's going to be at least a couple of times where I'll play you a very short video clip that gives you their voice, their input into our session this evening.

And in the first one, you're going to hear from Kieran and his mum, Lynette. Now, Kieran's a young adult now, but they talk a bit about their journey. And there are two really important things in this 60-second clip that I just want to get you to think about in advance.

One of them is language is really important in this area. It's an area, language is something that people sometimes can be a bit nervous about, worried about saying the wrong thing, upsetting somebody, that kind of thing.

In this video clip, Kieran identifies himself as having Asperger syndrome. Now, we don't commonly use that description these days. It's sort of gone out of favour.

But Kieran individually is absolutely at liberty to use that to describe himself. More generically, we would talk about autistic children and young people.

[7:55] And that's the sort of language that we'd use to cover everybody. But individually, Kieran can refer to himself however he likes. But more important even than that is the challenge that Kieran gives us at the end of this 60-second clip.

And I hope that will inspire us and stay in our hearts and minds as we go through our evening together. So here's Kieran and Lynette. As a mum, inclusion for me is really important.

I mean, if we look at the Bible, Jesus included everybody. You know, and quite often, it was the ones that were on the edges of society. So it would be the women, the children, the disabled and the sick.

My name's Kieran. That's kind of as far as I'd ever go. Someone with Asperger's syndrome is somewhat on the autistic spectrum who has a... might still struggle socially or emotionally with their day-to-day life and just needed that extra support.

Outside of church, my son has been ignored a lot by when he was at school. He would be the last person that would be included with anything or to be asked to parties or anything.

[9:12] Those invitations rarely came. We're just like anyone else. We want to be a part of everything that's going on. Let us.

Really powerful statement there at the end from Kieran, isn't it? We're just like everyone else. We want to be a part of everything that's going on. Let us. So, yeah, let that be a challenge that keeps us going through the evening as we work on this together.

There are lots of things that I'm going to pass around during the evening so that you've got stuff that you can touch and feel and play with and look at to help us through our evening together.

First of them is my mood octopus. Anybody seen a mood octopus before? Yeah? Yeah? You've got one or two mood octopus fans? So, for those of you that haven't seen a mood octopus, this is a really helpful tool that can help us to equip a child or young person that might have little verbal communication to be able to share with us how they're feeling.

At the moment, my mood octopus is smiling. But if I was feeling a bit sad or grumpy, I can turn mood octopus inside out. The mood octopus has got a little bit of a sad, grumpy face.

[10:27] Simple but effective tool, isn't it? Just to be able to give a child or young person the ability to share with us simply and easily how they're feeling, how they're getting on. So, I'll pass mood octopus around.

We'll start mood octopus off here and it can work its way around as well. Another thing that I'll talk about in a little bit, but that I'll hand around for you to have a look at during our time together, is my fidget box.

So, we're sensory creatures. As sensory creatures, we tend to have that need, that sensory need to fidget with things, to hold something in our hand.

Perhaps we might click a pen, we might chew our glasses, we might doodle. A couple of friends of mine crochet or knit when they're in church because that's a great way of them occupying their hands and fidgeting.

So, I'm going to send my fidget box around. I'll talk a bit more about them a little later, but I'll start it off here. Do borrow something from the fidget box that can help you to focus and concentrate a little bit this evening.

[11:36] And hopefully that will be a help to you as well. As that's coming around, just a little brief introduction to the sort of scale of the topic that we're talking about this evening really.

Because one in five children and young people have an additional need of some kind. It's a big, big topic. A big area for us. It's two and a half million children and young people across the UK as a whole.

And, you know, that's a big number and that can be hard to get our heads around. So, hold that number in our hearts because I think, you know, for me and I think for all of us, we can see that there's a real ministry opportunity there for the children and young people that we meet with, that we know, that we're engaging with.

But actually, there's a big mission opportunity there for us too. 95% of those children and the families they're a part of are outside of the church and have no connection with church.

So, there's a real opportunity there to meet those families, those children and young people because they're struggling. At Urban Saints, we're part of something called the Disabled Children's Partnership. And we, over the last few years, have been surveying and asking families of children with additional needs how they're doing.

[12:48] And through COVID and the cost of living crisis and the shutdown of so many secular services, what they're telling us is they're really struggling, really finding it hard.

So, there's a real mission opportunity for us there too, to be able to reach out to them. So, think about the children, young people that you already know, that you're already engaging with, and recognize that they're not alone.

They're one of that 2.5 million that are across the UK that have additional needs. But let me tell you the story of one that I know. Let me tell you Martin's story.

So, for Martin's story, come with me, if you will, to my home church down in Bournemouth. Now, on a lovely evening like it is tonight, I want you to imagine a beautiful July summer's evening.

You know, it's a hot day, it's a lovely evening, the sun's been shining, and it's club night for our 8, 9 to sort of 13-year-olds.

[13:51] And I'm at the entrance to our church hall, greeting the young people as they arrive, and saying hello to the adults that are dropping them off. And a car draws up, and the mum and her lad get out that I've not seen before.

But as they're coming up the path towards me, I can sense a really powerful story is coming with them. And when they reach me, Martin's mum introduces herself and Martin, and asks a bit about the club that we run, and asks, you know, can anybody come along, or do you have to be part of the church?

And so I explain that we're open to everybody and the things we do, and all the stuff you normally chat with a new family about. But I could see that there was something that she wanted to tell me, and she was plucking up the courage to let it out.

And suddenly, out it came. And she said, only Martin's autistic. And he's also got ADHD. And there's info in your black books on both of those areas that you can look at a bit later.

Martin's autistic, and he's got ADHD. And we've tried to get him into other groups, into other clubs, but they've always said no. And then she shared the story with me of the church that said that they wouldn't be able to take Martin because they didn't have enough volunteers.

[15:09] I've yet to meet a church children's or youth team that's got enough volunteers. We're always struggling, wanting more, aren't we? But that's what they said. Another group said that they had volunteers, but they're not trained in how to support children and young people with additional needs.

But they didn't seem as though they were looking to get that training at all. A third group said that they were worried that Martin might be a health and safety risk to the other children and young people and leaders.

Heartbreaking, isn't it? My heart was breaking as Martin's mum was sharing these stories with me. And 90% of my attention was absolutely wrapped up in what she was telling me.

And if you're wondering what the other 10% was doing, well, that was being horribly distracted by the absolute carnage that was going on in the room behind me. There were blood-curdling screams. There were young people climbing the walls.

I was wondering where the rest of my team were that were supposed to be doing some stuff with them. We talked about not having enough volunteers. And on one particular scream, I don't know if you've ever heard somebody scream and then it suddenly cuts off abruptly.

[16:15] And that happened. And I thought, oh my goodness, what on earth has happened? And I looked behind me to see. Thankfully, everything was fine. But several things happened in that moment. The first thing that happened was that I noticed the several other children and young people that we have been journeying with who have additional needs of different kinds.

One like Martin, who is autistic and has ADHD. I also heard Martin's mum ask me the key question. Can Martin come here? Can I hear?

And I heard the tremble in her voice when she asked it and that broke my heart again. But then I also sensed God whispering in my ear and saying, there's room for another one, you know.

There's room for another one. And so I turned back to Martin and his mum. And what struck me about Martin's mum was the look on her face. It had gone blank.

She was waiting for another no, another excuse, another reason why Martin wouldn't be able to join in. And I found myself saying, you know, we would love for Martin to be a part of our group.

[17:21] And as those words escaped from my mouth, an even louder scream from somebody behind me gave me the opportunity to turn and say, and as you can see, he'll fit right in.

And she laughed. And as she laughed, the light came back into her eyes. The weight lifted from her shoulders. Somebody had said yes to her boy. You know, this stuff matters, doesn't it?

This stuff really, really matters. So important. And so, yeah, we got to know Martin and we got to know his mum and his dad. We got to know his sister. Because many children with additional needs

have siblings too.

And those siblings are really important for us to think about in all of this. I mentioned about James and his different additional needs. But I also mentioned Phoebe, his big sister.

And she's grown up with a brother with complex additional needs herself. And, yeah, you know, she's had some challenging times as a consequence of that.

[18:24] So it's a big picture for us as we think about those families and the children and young people that are a part of them. Important that we say yes. What about the boss?

What does Jesus have to say about all of this? Quite a bit, as it turns out. Because so many of Jesus' encounters with people in the Gospels were encounters with people with different disabilities, additional needs, health conditions of various kinds.

There were lots of examples that I could have picked. But Bartimaeus is one of my favourites because there's a really important teaching point for us in Bartimaeus' story.

So Bartimaeus is a man who is blind and who begs for a living at the side of the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. And on this particular day, Jesus and his disciples and a crowd of people are going by.

And Bartimaeus hears all the commotion and asks what's going on. Somebody tells him. And so Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus. He obviously has heard about Jesus.

[19:29] He's heard about who Jesus is and what Jesus has been doing. Can anybody remember what Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus? Jesus of David. Yeah, yeah.

Jesus, son of David. Jesus of Nazareth. Have mercy on me. And then, can anybody remember what happens to Bartimaeus when he shouts that out?

Yeah. The crowd say, yeah, be quiet. Yeah, don't bother the master. And isn't that what can often happen to children, young people with additional needs today?

You know, if they make noise, if they act differently, they can be told to be quiet. You know, to keep out of the way, to not be a bother. Thankfully, Bartimaeus didn't listen to that advice.

And he cried out again, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus heard him and invited Bartimaeus to come to him. And so there's Bartimaeus, a man who's blind in front of Jesus, who's been going around teaching and preaching and healing people.

[20:34] And the crowd would have gathered round, wouldn't they? Many of them would have heard the stories of what Jesus had been doing. Some of them would have seen the miracles that Jesus had already done.

And I imagine that if it was happening today, everybody would have their phones out, wouldn't they? They'd all be videoing it. They'd all be uploading it onto TikTok and hoping theirs was the one that went viral.

And there's expectancy in the air. But then Jesus does something unexpected. And it's the unexpected thing that Jesus does that's a really important teaching point for us today.

Can anybody remember what Jesus does or what he says to Bartimaeus? Yeah. What do you want me to do for you? What would you have me do for you? You can imagine the crowd.

They must have been incredulous. You know, it's Bartimaeus. He's blind. You've been going around healing people. What on earth do you think he wants from you? But Jesus didn't assume.

[21:35] He didn't decide on Bartimaeus' behalf what Bartimaeus wanted from him. Now, you know, it doesn't say this in the Gospels. But I'm as sure as I can be that Jesus, as a human being, knew that Bartimaeus was blind.

And I'm as sure as I can be that, as God made flesh, he knew what Bartimaeus wanted from him. But he didn't decide on Bartimaeus' behalf. He gave Bartimaeus the dignity and the respect to be able to say for himself how he wanted to be helped.

And sometimes we can miss that. Sometimes we can just put things in place for a child, a young person or an adult without involving them, without asking them, without engaging with them and saying, what do you struggle with?

What are the things that are hard? What barriers do you experience in church? What would you have us do for you to help you and your child to be able to thrive and to be able to get the most of your time here at church?

So, really important point for us to draw from that message that Jesus gives us from 2,000 years ago. What would you have us do for you?

[22:48] I've got another of those short video clips for you now. And in this video clip, you're actually going to meet a whole bunch of American school kids. They're going to share with their teacher, but through the video with us, a bit about themselves and a bit about what they would like their teachers to do to support them.

They're answering that question that Jesus asked for Bartimaeus. And you will recognize some of the answers that they give in the children and young people you're journeying with as well.

So, let's hear from them. Dear teacher, I know it doesn't always seem like it, but I really do want to listen and learn.

It's just my brain. It's kind of different. So, this is what I'd like you to know about me. I have to move, or I really can't pay attention.

Even though I'm not looking at you, I can still listen to what you're saying. If you tell me, sit up straight, now I have to use all of my brain to do just that.

[24:04] It makes me feel sad when you tell me to try harder, even though I've already tried as hard as I can. I actually listen better when I'm rocking in my chair.

When you give me a bunch of directions, I start to think, I will never remember all of this.

Sometimes my mom or dad ends up doing all of my homework.

So, here's how you could maybe help. Let me get up and move while I'm learning. Let me look wherever I want when you talk to me. Let me rock or slouch in my chair.

No matter what, please don't take away my recess. Give me hope I could do all by myself. Make directions very short.

Just ask me, what does your brain need right now? And one more thing. My brain might be different than yours, but it's still amazing. Sincerely, your student.

[25:09] Your student. Your student. Your student. Your student. Great kids, aren't they? So much wisdom there. So many things that they shared with us there that are really, really helpful.

Now, if you missed any of the bits and pieces that they were saying there and you think, oh, you know, I'd love to see that again. The good news is that in your workbooks, on the inside front cover of your workbooks, there's a web link.

UrbanSaints.org slash all-inclusive videos. And the video of Kieran and Lynette, the video of the kids that we've just watched, I might have a chance to sneak another video in later, but a whole bunch of other stuff too is in a playlist that that link will take you to.

So if you want to look at those videos again or if members of your team didn't make it tonight and you want to share that video with them, you can find it on that web link.

So what other things can we do that can make a real difference for children and young people with additional needs and their families? Well, other than listening to them, hearing from them, understanding how we can support them better.

[26:23] Equal first with that is having somebody in our church that owns this, that leads this, that champions this. Somebody who can be an inclusion champion for us to look out for the families that have children and young people with additional needs.

And can liaise with the other members of our team, whether it's folk that welcome on the door or folk that are leading us in song or folk that are leading our children's and youth team or whatever it might be.

To make sure that we're doing all we can to support the children and young people and families that are coming along. Let me tell you another story to help to illustrate how an inclusion champion can transform things.

So this time I'm going to tell you Timmy's story. So Timmy is, gosh I think Timmy might be 10 now. And this story is from a couple of years ago, so he was eight or maybe getting on towards nine. Timmy is autistic and he also has various sensory processing challenges as well. And he would often find himself becoming completely overwhelmed in church and having what we might commonly know as a meltdown.

[27:43] Timmy goes to a city church and they serve all sorts of food and refreshments before their 10 o'clock Sunday morning service. So the entrance area to the church is always absolutely crammed full of people at about 10 to 10, which is when Timmy and his family would arrive.

And Timmy would walk into a wall of people and noise and smells and bright lights and would immediately start to become overwhelmed. And then they'd be heading through to the worship area and they'd get a bit bumped and jostled as they went because everybody's trying to get through. And for Timmy that would be painful. He needs personal space around him because those bumps and jostles he can be quite sensitive to. So that would be hard for him.

And then he'd come into the worship area and hit that wall of noise from a worship band cranked up to 11 on the dial. And, you know, his head's spinning from that.

Then they've got to try and find somewhere to sit. And that's hard too. And Timmy craves routine and consistency and for things to be the same each time. And they wouldn't be because they'd be over one place this week and then next week they'd be somewhere else.

[28:56] And the week after that they might have to stand at the back because there's nowhere left to sit. And Timmy would find that hard too. And he, by then, would have no idea what was going on. What's happening now? What's happening next?

When he's going to be going to the children's group? What they're going to be doing when he gets there? And the anxiety about all of that would often be the final straw that would break the camel's back and spiral Timmy into having a meltdown.

But the inclusion champion spotted Timmy's struggles and got alongside Timmy and his family and remembering to do inclusion with them and not unto them.

The inclusion champion said, let's think about a better way for you to arrive at church on Sunday morning. And so now Timmy arrives with his family just after 10 o'clock.

There's still people to greet him when he arrives and his family as well. But the folk that greet Timmy are aware and have been trained not to come rushing up to Timmy, not to give him a great big hug because that's quite painful for him, but just to quietly welcome him and make sure that if he wants something to eat, then he can get that.

[30:07] And then Timmy and his family head into the worship area down a calm, quiet walkway because everybody else is already there.

And on the way, Timmy picks up some ear defenders. Now, I've only got enough for three. So if this table, when you've finished, can pass it to the table at the front, that would be brilliant. Timmy finds some ear defenders and pops those on.

And so when he gets to the worship area, that means that he's protected from the loud noise. And it means that he's comfortable and safe in that space.

And then Timmy and his family head to the reserved seats that are there for them every week. The same place Timmy himself helped to pick out where those reserved seats would be, his favorite place in church.

And when Timmy gets to those reserved seats, he finds a little visual timetable there. I'll talk about visual timetables in just a bit. But a timetable that uses symbols to help Timmy know what's happening now, what's coming next, and when he's going to be going out to the children's group.

[31:17] And there would also be some resources left there for him by the children's worker that would give him something to do in that 10, 15 minutes before he goes out to his group, but that would be themed around what they're going to be looking at when he gets out there.

Now, Timmy likes doing colorings. He likes doing word searches. So it might be something like that. But it would be themed around that story, topic, or theme that the group would be looking at.

So he gets a bit more processing time, a bit more opportunity to have a look at and a think about that before he gets out there. And that takes away a lot of the anxiety that otherwise he would have had.

So all those things that have been put in place, the inclusion champion played a part in. And it really helped Timmy. Timmy doesn't have meltdowns at church anymore.

He feels comfortable and safe there now. And the interesting thing is that none of what's been put in place to support Timmy has made... Excuse me.

[32:20] Has had an adverse effect on church for anybody else. Church, you know, is often a place where change can be hard. But all those changes that were put in place for Timmy have made church better for Timmy, but have actually made church better for everyone else as well.

Because everybody found it hard when Timmy was struggling. And so now Timmy doesn't struggle and things are better. Inclusion champions can play a big role there.

And again, linking back to families, linking back to parents, carers, guardians. It's so important that we hear from them and understand what we can do to support them better.

But also, what good ideas can we bring in from other places where a child or young person goes?

Because we might just see a child for an hour or two on a Sunday or on a club night.

But actually, that child will be at school, at home, maybe going to other clubs. What good ideas can we draw in from there? Having those conversations with families can be really, really important.

[33:31] And there's a great tool that we can use to help us with those conversations. And it's called a one-page profile. So I'm going to hand a few examples of these around so that you can see some.

I've got a couple of filled-in ones. So I'm going to put a filled-in one there and a filled-in one over here so that you can have a look.

But please pass those around. You can download one-page profiles from the Chef Kids website. It's up there on the screen. It's in your books. It's a website run by Sheffield City Council Children's Team.

And there are loads of different styles of these one-page profiles. So from small children all the way up to teenagers, you can pick different styles that will work for the age group that you're connecting with.

And they ask these three things. What people like and admire about me. That's a great place to start. It's a narrative changer, isn't it? Because so often children and young people with additional needs can have a sort of cloud of negativity that can follow them around.

[34:42] People always see the negatives, the things that are challenging, the things that are difficult. But rarely does anybody stop to ask, what are the positive things?

What do people like and admire about you? It's really important that we hear that story too. And hear the positives. And hear the affirming things. And that we give children and young people the opportunity to share those with us.

I know families that have been reduced to tears when they've been given a one-page profile to fill in with their child. Because nobody's ever asked them that before. Nobody's ever asked them that before.

And then, what makes me happy? If we know what makes them happy, what they enjoy doing, then we can use that to help them to learn. In a moment, I'll share just three ideas that might come through from asking that question.

But you'll get 101 different answers to that question. But using what makes them happy, what they enjoy doing, helps them to stay connected. Helps them to stay focused.

[35:44] Helps them to use that ability, that interest they've got in that particular topic or thing to be able to engage.

And I'll explain a bit more about that in just a moment. And then, how I want to be supported. That's really important for us to know as well, isn't it? How I want to be supported is a little bit like what those American school kids were sharing with us just now.

And if we can learn that from the children and young people and the families that are a part of that we're journeying with, then that can give us some tools to help and include those children and young people better.

I would recommend doing one-page profiles with all of the children and young people you journey with. Not just ones with additional needs, but all of them. And a sort of rule of thumb for this, but you know the kids you're working with better than I do.

But for me, the rule of thumb is for children, maybe get them to do them with their families. So they do it together. You know, you could one week say, hey, come in to where the children are five, ten minutes earlier than you normally would.

[36:55] Because we've got a little thing for you to have a go at with your child when you arrive. And they come and they do the one-page profiles together. Young people might be able to do them for themselves.

Some might need a bit of support and help to do that. But you know the children and young people you're working with and how they'll get on with that. But have a go at doing one-page profiles and you'll learn loads about everyone that you journey with.

Here's three examples of different things that might come back from that. So we've got jigsaws, Lego and Minecraft. Jigsaws because it's a gratuitous opportunity to get James in here somewhere. That's James as a younger boy. He loves jigsaws. On the floor of his den, where he might be at this stage of the day, there are jigsaws laid out across his floor that he still does today.

James learns through doing jigsaws. And in this particular occasion, we were learning about the value of friendship, the importance of friendship. Now we could have sat James with his peers and talked about Ruth and Naomi or David and Jonathan.

[38:08] He had friends in the Bible. But James would have only stayed connected there for about 30 seconds. And so giving him a jigsaw that's Mickey Mouse and friends. So you've got Mickey and Minnie and Donald and Pluto.

All friends together. Having fun. He was able to put the jigsaw together because he can do that and he enjoys doing that. It's tactile. It's sensory.

And it also builds that picture of friends together. And we could use that as an example to help him understand a bit more about friends. It might not be jigsaws.

It might be Lego. I've got some of my Lego brick Bibles here. So let me pass. Old Testament can start that way. And New Testament can start this way.

And so the brick Bible tells some of the Bible stories through the medium of Lego. Now we are aware, are we not, that there's quite a bit of violence in the Bible.

[39:11] Quite a lot goes on in the Bible. And the brick Bibles can sometimes portray that quite graphically. So make sure that it's age appropriate for the children and young people that you're journeying with.

There are brick Bible videos and Lego videos as well. So check those out first. Don't fall into the trap that a church leader did who was preparing for an all-age service.

Wanted a video to illustrate the theme. Found a Lego or brick Bible video. Watched the first half of it and thought, yeah, that's great. I'll use that on Sunday.

Only watching the second half of it live with his congregation on the Sunday morning. And the video ended with the story, the Old Testament story of JL with the tent peg and the mallet and the brains and gore.

The kids loved it. They thought it was great. They still remember that story because of the brick Bible video. But I think the church leader and half his congregation are still in therapy.

[40:21] So check it out first. There's some great stuff there, a box of Lego. You can see a couple of little illustrations there. The top one is the Temple of Jerusalem, constructed by some eight to ten-year-olds who are autistic or have ADHD or I think in one case both.

In their version of the Temple of Jerusalem, which they were learning about in their group and were able to then build from Lego because they love Lego. In their version of it, the high priest is played by Darth Vader.

So there might be a little bit of theology to work through there. But they understood about the temple because they could build it. The little diorama below that is actually depicting Abraham and Isaac up the mountain.

Where Isaac was going to be sacrificed. Abraham's got a knife in his hand. And in the background, you can just make out the ram caught in the thicket there. Again, they were learning about that story in their group and they needed Lego to help them understand it because they could build the story. And that helped them to understand it better. So, you know, it could be Lego that's the thing. A lot of young people like the world of Minecraft. So let me send my unofficial Bible for Minecrafters on its journey round.

[41:47] Again, telling those Bible stories through the medium of Minecraft. For young people that enjoy the world of Minecraft, there's a website called Pixel Heart Bible.

P-I-X-E-L, Pixel Heart Bible. And Pixel Heart Bible is a YouTube channel that's got lots of Bible stories recreated within the world of Minecraft.

So if you've got a child or young person that loves Minecraft, you might be able to find something there. I know some groups that have brought in like a tablet computer. And it's got Minecraft on it. So that if a couple of the young people that love Minecraft are there, then they're able to be given the job of recreating within Minecraft what the group are talking about.

One that I heard about was where the group were talking about when the Israelites reached Jericho. And what happened with the Minecraft version of this was that a couple of the young people built Jericho, marched their characters round and round and round, and then knocked Jericho down again.

[43:03] And they learned the story because they were able to recreate it in something they enjoy and love. So find out what they like. It might not be any of those things.

It might be unicorns. It might be dolphins. It could be whatever. But find out what they enjoy doing and think about how to include that in the story or the theme or the stuff that you're doing with the children and young people.

Do excuse me. I've had a bit of a cold and a bit of a cough is still there. So I might in a bit have another of my soothers to keep me going. But we're doing all right. We're going well.

Another resource that gets used a lot in the education world that we can cross over into our church world is something called a social story.

So a social story uses symbols and pictures and things to fill in to help us to help a child or young person understand something that might be a bit more complex or a bit newer for them.

[44:20] In this case, the one that's coming around is all about going to joy club in church, the children's club in church. And when you see it, you'll see that there are pictures and symbols that explain a little bit about what joy club does, who's there, what you do when you're in joy club, and what happens after joy club has finished.

And it's a really great effective tool that we can use to help us to take something that might be anxiety producing for a child or young person with additional needs, making it easier for them to understand it and to work with it.

So this version that's coming around, along with a lot of the stuff that I'm handing around for you to have a look at, I'm going to email versions of these through to Daniel, probably tomorrow, certainly by the end of the week, so that he can then make those available to you all as well.

So you might take something like the social story about going to joy club and think about, could you create one of those for your children's group and have that as something you could give to a child or young person and their family to help them understand a bit more about the club that you run.

Another thing we can do is to make our stories as sensory as we can. So I'm going to hand around my sensory story box for how God made the weather.

[46:00] And in here, there's a torch for the sun. There's a plant sprayer for the rain. We don't need the plant sprayers as much tonight. But there's an ice pack for the cold and the snow.

There's a fan for the wind. There's a little button on the side that turns that on. So you can have a go at that. There's a rain stick or a tambourine for the thunder and the lightning.

So let me hand this round for you to have a look at. Do have a play. Do try out the different things that are in the sensory story box. But in doing that, have a think about how when you are putting a story together for the children or the young people, you can employ as many of the senses as you can.

Can you give them something that they can look at? Something they can touch? Something they can hear? Maybe even something they can taste.

As well as just employing as many of the senses as we can. The more senses that we use, the more effective that story will be.

[47:10] And the more children will be able to understand it and learn from it. So, yeah, do think about how to make the stories you tell as sensory as you possibly can.

Now, if you are, let me just ask, actually. Are any of you engaged with children or young people who might spend time in the church service during a sermon or a talk?

Does that happen sometimes? Yeah, occasionally. Yeah. So, I'll hand around a copy of the church notes. Church notes can go one way. Sermon notes, similar sort of idea, can come the other way. Again, I'll share these. You can use these as just a template to help you to create something like this for yourselves. But it's a sheet that you can give to a child or young person who's going to be sat in a church service whilst there's talks going on and a sermon and all that sort of thing. And they can doodle on it. They can write things on it. I love the one that's in the middle there, the church notes one that has a little sort of almost like word bingo. If they hear a certain word, they tick a box.

[48:24] And it keeps them listening. It keeps them engaged. It gives them something to do, something that's tactile, something that's sensory. So, again, I'll send examples of these to you so that you can use those and create one that works for you.

And then, yeah, I mentioned a little earlier about our fidget box. Our fidget box is here. So, what we'll do is we'll send it round again then, please.

Send the fidget box on its way round. You can swap out and use a different fidget if you want to try something else. But a couple of things that I wanted to share with you about fidget boxes that will be really, really helpful for you to know.

First of them is that there are two different kinds of fidget toys. Two different kinds of fidget toys. Sensory calming fidgets and sensory stimulating fidgets.

Now, to give you an example of each, has anybody got one of the soft toys? There's like soft dinosaurs and things. Yeah, there we go. So, that's a calming fidget because you can stroke it.

[49:37] You can gently squeeze it. It's quite calming to use one of those. Has anybody got one of the glitter ones? Anybody got one of those nearby? Yeah, yeah, there we go.

That's quite calming as well, isn't it? To look at that with all the glitter just gently flowing. Those kind of fidget toys are really helpful for a child or young person.

There you go. For a child or young person who is feeling a bit overwhelmed and needs something to help them to calm and to regain a sort of sense of control of their senses.

So, if you've got a child or young person who's really struggling to remain calm, who's a bit overwhelmed, then give them a calming fidget like that. But if you've got a child or young person who needs their senses woken up, you know, they're struggling to focus, they're struggling to concentrate, then the other kind of fidget toy is useful for that.

Things like the fidget cube, which clicks and does different things, or a finger spinner that you can hold in your fingers and spin. Yeah, there we go.

[50:46] There's the finger spinner. Or there's a ball in there that you bounce it and it lights up. Those are stimulating fidgets and those are helpful for a child or young person who needs to wake their senses up a little bit.

The other thing to say about fidgets is that the first couple of times that you bring a box of fidgets to your children's group or your youth group, it's going to be a bit of a distraction.

So, pick your time to bring that along. You know, don't bring a fidget box along for the first time on Easter Sunday, you know, when you're trying to talk to them about Christ's resurrection.

And all they're doing is playing with the fidgets. You know, the first couple of weeks, it's all going to be new and interesting and they'll want to have a look at everything. But it settles down and then they get to be used appropriately for the things that we want them to be used for, to help children and young people who need to use those fidgets.

So, do have a go with fidgets. Those can be really, really helpful for children and young people as well. Earlier I mentioned about visual timetables.

[52:00] Let me pass out a little printout of James' visual timetable so that you can have a look at that. So, there's James' visual timetable.

So, this is a timetable that we used with James a few years ago now when he was in some of the youth work, younger youth work. And there's a strip of Velcro down the middle and James moves his picture down the Velcro as we go through the session.

Actually, the symbols that are on the left there would also be on a strip of Velcro on the original one so that we could swap things around if we needed to. But for James, this was really useful because he could know what was happening now, what's coming next.

We'd sometimes get to church and James would put his picture straight down to snack time and look rather hopeful. And we'd have to explain that snack time is later.

It's circle time first. But he would know that snack time would come. So, we'd sort of mournfully accept that it's circle time now. But it was also helpful for James to know that at the bottom it says home time.

[53:15] And he would know that we would be heading home at the end of the session. He wouldn't be at church for the rest of his life. So, that's one form of a visual timetable.

Some children or young people will have them going from left to right and move their picture across that way. For James, it just worked better that way around. So, that's one version that you could think about. Another simpler version is a Now and Next board.

Now and Next boards are great because, as the name suggests, you've got symbols that you can stick on under Now and under Next. So, at the moment, we've got Story Time under Now and we've got Arts and Crafts under Next.

And so, when we've finished with Story Time, we take Story off. We move Arts and Crafts across to Now. And then we introduce the new thing under Next, in this case, Snack Time.

And it's a really simple way of a child or young person understanding what's going on. What's happening now? What's happening next? You can get three part ones that have Now, Next and Later as an option as well.

[54:23] So, you know, those can be really good. Because whether it's a more complex visual timetable like James's or a Now Next board that you can have a look at too, something like that takes away a lot of that anxiety and stress that otherwise could lead a child or young person to end up becoming completely overwhelmed.

Because, you know, that anxiety can be really powerful. That uncertainty of what's going on, what's coming next, how long they're going to be there, can be really difficult for them to understand and process.

So, giving them the tools to help them do that can make a difference. One-to-ones and buddies. Now, we talked earlier about how, you know, we all need more volunteers to help out in our children's work, our youth work.

And here I am saying, yeah, get some more to be one-to-ones or buddies. I've made the mistake of standing up in front of my congregation at my church in Bournemouth and saying, hey, we need some more wonderful people to come and join our amazing children's team.

And in that moment, I've seen 99% of the congregation switch off. They'll keep half an ear open, not because they're listening to my notice, but because they want to know when I've stopped and when the next notice starts, because that might be about cake.

[55:54] And, you know, that's going to be important. But, yeah, we've actually found it's a really great way. Getting me up to do that announcement is a really great way of getting people to engage with their pew Bibles, because they'll suddenly find something else to do instead of listening to me talking about children's work, and they'll look at their Bibles instead.

So, yeah, that's not a strategy that works. But there are strategies that can work. And the strategies that we found that can be helpful include, for example, inviting people to come and be a one-to-one helper at a one-off event, like a light party or a Christmas party or a holiday club or something like that, because people are much more willing to say, yeah, I'll come along for that afternoon, or I'll come along for that two or three days of holiday club or whatever it might be to help out and to look after a child or young person that just needs a bit of extra support.

But once they've had a go and once they've bonded with that child or young person, then often they become much more interested in actually doing that on a more regular basis.

Why have I got this bunch of folk up on the screen? Well, Alison, Ian and Rich have all been one-to-one helpers for James. Ian was actually with James most of yesterday, because yesterday I was in Gloucester running some training for the diocese there.

And my wife's in primary education, so we needed somebody to be with James. He's 22, but we can't leave him on his own. So Ian was there to look after him and has been looking after him for many, many years.

[57:39] But starting off, coming along to help out at a light party. The other thing to think about with one-to-ones is we're not looking for more children's workers.

We're not looking for people to lead games and songs and talks and things. We're looking for somebody who's a bit more pastoral, really, who will get alongside a child or young person and see how they're doing and encourage them and listen to them.

And if they're struggling, help them to get back on track and to know what to do. So it's much more of a pastoral kind of a role than it is an out-and-out children's worker kind of a role.

So if you're thinking of how you can recruit some more team to help out with one-to-one support, then, yeah, pick your opportunities and invite somebody to come and help out at a light party or a Christmas party or something.

We've got both of those coming up. I know we have anyway. So two opportunities there in the next few weeks that we could recruit some more one-to-ones. And with all of this, build strategies with the families, with the children and young people themselves, but also make sure that all our team know what the things are that we're going to do and the things are that we're going to try and use.

[59:01] If you run a rota for a team, then if you happen to be working with a child or young person this week and there's a breakthrough, you tried something and it's worked, don't wait until next month when you're back on rota again.

But think about how that information gets relayed from one team to the next, from one person to the next, so that that can continue to develop and grow.

And think about how you can journey with others. So on the inside back cover or just inside the back cover of your training workbooks, there's some information about the Additional Needs Alliance.

The Additional Needs Alliance is a collective of children's, youth, families, workers, church leaders, parents, carers and guardians, practitioners from different fields, people who are passionate about supporting children and young people with additional needs.

There's about 3,500 of us now. There's a Facebook group. If you use Facebook, join the group. It's a great place. There's loads of lively conversation that happens.

[60:13] And there's a website. And amongst the things that are on the website is a map and directory of accessible churches, churches that are great for children and young people with additional needs of different kinds.

Have a look. I think there are some around here. There's about 100 of them on the map altogether. So there might be somewhere not too far away that you could partner with and say, hey, you know, can we come along and see what you do?

Can we journey together and learn from each other? That might be good to explore too. So that's all in the Additional Needs Alliance. And of course, the most important thing to do is to pray, to remember to include God as we are thinking about how to include the children and young people that we're journeying with.

Because, yeah, if we pray, as we did at the beginning of our session, for God to be with us, then, yeah, you know, we know from Jesus' interactions with people that he met, how wonderfully inclusive he was and how God wants everyone to know him.

And of course, we want that for all the children and young people we're journeying with. I'm always encouraged by the story where the disciples are trying to stop parents bringing their children to meet Jesus.

[61:41] You remember that story? And Jesus interrupts and says, no, let the children come to me, because the kingdom of God is made of such as these.

And he didn't go on to say, oh, except that one over there who can't walk very well, or that one over there who makes a bit of noise, or that one over there who can't hear.

He didn't say that. He said, let them all come. And so, yeah, let's bring all of them into God's presence and ask him to give us the skills we need, the words that he wants to give us, and to raise these children up into his presence.

So important that we pray. I've been talking for a bit now. I've got a few more bits to share with you, but I also want to give you a chance just to have a little bit of a conversation about this around your tables as well.

So that gives me an opportunity to use another teaching opportunity here to introduce a timer. It could be a sand timer. It could be a digital timer.

[62:49] It could be a clock on the screen. But giving children and young people a bit of a countdown of how long it is until we're moving on to the next thing can really, really help. It gives them processing time, preparation time, to know that we're moving on from one thing to the next.

So I'm going to give you five minutes. This is a five-minute sand timer. Just to have a chat around your tables about the things that we've looked at. We've done a lot, haven't we? We've passed loads of stuff around for you to look at.

What might work for you? What stood out for you? Maybe in the stories that I shared about Martin or Timmy or Bartimaeus. What of the tools that we've shared around have you found really interesting and could be helpful for you?

So I'm going to give you five minutes or so to have a chat about that. There's a couple more things I want to share with you as we come back from that.

And then hopefully we'll have a bit of time for some Q&A; at the end. That sound okay? Brilliant.

Your five minutes has begun. Thank you. I have a useful opportunity for you just to be able to have a quick chat and a quick check-in about some of the things that we've been looking at.

[64:15] Was that useful? Yeah. Yeah. Good. Good. Okay. Well, something else that I hope will be useful for you as well is the third and final of those short video clips that I mentioned.

In this video clip, you're going to meet Philippa. There's a brief introduction from me. But then you meet Philippa, who is a young adult in this video clip, but talks about how, as she grew up in her church, her church met her needs in really, really thoughtful and helpful ways.

Little things that they did that made a big, big difference, but also a couple of really big things that they did as well. But I'll let Philippa share her story because she'll do it much better than me.

So after this brief intro from me on the video, you'll hear from Philippa, who, yeah, will tell you her story. What difference does it make to the life of a child or young person with a disability or with a special need to have that kind of inclusion provided by the church, to really have that at the heart of what a church or a group offers?

What would you say to them as somebody who obviously has benefited from that in your own life? I'd say that it makes all the difference in the world.

[65:42] I mean, my church, I was born totally blind, and my church have been so supportive and inclusive my whole life. So I was included in Sunday school, and rather than adapt everything that they taught, they just adapted one little thing so I could remember the Bible stories.

Instead of having a worksheet, I had things that I made. So a pair of cardboard feet to represent the story where a woman washes Jesus' feet with her tears.

And I've always remembered that story because of what I was able to make. So it was a tactile representation of the story. They've also been very inclusive in the fact that my pastor's wife learnt Braille so that she could Braille out the worksheets for Sunday school and the hymns for church.

Later on they got a hymn book developed in Braille so that I could carry on being part of the worship. So they've been so supportive and inclusive that it really shows up when I go to a church when I'm on holiday, and I walk in between my parents, and they'll greet my parents and not me.

And the one thing that they could do is just say hello. You know, I'm a normal person just like anyone else, just because I can't see. It scares people, which is fine. I mean, I understand that people are going to be scared because it's something different.

[67:02] But what I want to say really is if you just make that one small effort, even if it's just greeting somebody, you've then established a link with them. If you don't talk to them at all, if they're blind, they're not even going to be really aware that you're around.

There's just going to be a whole bunch of people, and no one in that church has really been supportive. And it just makes such a difference if I feel welcome in a church. And that's a really big thing.

I mean, I know in my church I've grown up there, and everybody knows me, so I can walk in and everybody will greet me. But if I go away on holiday, I sometimes feel really, really isolated because no one's even said hello.

So it's just those tiny, tiny little adaptations or changes, little efforts that people can make that make the most difference. She tells the story really well, doesn't she?

And the little things that have made a big, big difference, just that welcome, people saying hello. That's really important, isn't it? And just to welcome the children, young people that we're journeying with, to be genuinely pleased to see them.

[68:08] You know, that really goes a long way. They made her resources that she could make to help her remember the story. She talked about the pair of cardboard feet that she made to help her remember the story of Mary washing Jesus' feet with her tears.

She remembers that story today because she was able to create that resource, that tactile, sensory resource. It links back to what we were talking about with making our stories as sensory as possible.

And yeah, they did some big things too. There's a little comment in there about the pastor's wife learning Braille. That's not a small thing. That's a really big thing. But what a difference it's made to Philippa.

Philippa's a really gifted children's worker herself. She's been on a mission overseas, working with street kids, has a real gift for sharing the gospel. Because people said hello.

Because people helped her make cardboard feet. Because people learned Braille to create resources for her. But most of all, because people treated her as family. As somebody precious.

[69:13] As somebody to love and give the love of Jesus to. And surely that's the most important lesson of the evening for us. Is having that heart for the children and young people that we're journeying with.

So yeah, let Philippa's story perhaps go a long way towards answering that challenge that Kieran gave us. Right at the beginning. We're just like everyone else.

We want to be a part of everything that's going on. Let us. Let us. I'm just going to quickly just highlight one or two resources.

And also slight changes to some info that's in your workbook. So in your training workbook, page 18 and 19 particularly.

We'll come to that in a moment. I've referenced already the videos though. That video playlist. Amongst the other videos that are on that playlist. There's a video about putting together a fidget box.

[70:16] There's a video about being an inclusion champion. And there's some more info in the workbook about that too. All sorts of things that will be helpful for you on that playlist.

So do have a look at that. In your workbooks there on page 18, just over halfway down, there's a web address for Aslan. Aslan is a teaching resources website.

There's loads of weekly meeting plan kind of resources there that are particularly geared around working with children and young people with additional needs. But the web address has slightly changed since we printed our workbooks.

They've taken out the Tombridge Baptist bit. So it's now just aslan.church. So do amend that in your workbooks.

Sadly, a couple of the websites that we'd found really helpful in the past no longer exist. The organizations that ran them have disappeared. So a bit further down that same page, you've got All Belong.

[71:19] And at the bottom, you've got Mustard Seed Games. I'm afraid they've gone now. So put a line through those or something just to help you know. But all the others that are there on those two pages, you'll find helpful.

And some of the things that I've been talking about this evening are there, like Pixel Heart Bible, for example. And the last one on the bottom of page 19 is my blog page.

There's all sorts of things there that you might find helpful too. The Additional Needs Blogfather.com. So do have a look at that. But I'll also mention John Hardwick's website, which is there on page 19.

John is a wonderfully gifted children's worker. He's got loads of resources on his website that include signing with Makaton and BSL signing and with captions.

So those might be helpful. If you're looking for somebody to run a holiday club, you could do a lot worse than to get in touch with John for that. He's been running holiday clubs.

[72:21] I think Noah probably went to one of John's holiday clubs. So, yeah, it's a real gift of his. Definitely have a look at him for that. You might use parachutes in your children's work for songs and for games.

But I wonder if you've ever thought about using a parachute to tell Bible stories. Well, Through the Roof, who, as the name suggests, are a Christian disability organization, have created parachute Bible stories.

20 Bible stories recreated using a parachute to tell the story. Really inclusive. Really accessible. I think it's five pounds for a copy.

So well worth investing in that. I would definitely recommend a copy. I've talked about the Additional Needs Alliance, so I won't labour the point. But do join the Facebook group if you use Facebook. Have a look at the website. Think about adding your church here to the churches that are on the map and directory. We'd love to welcome you there. And if you look on the map and directory, there's a green button you can press.

[73:30] And it sends you to a little form to fill in. And then we can add you in. But I did promise you some question and answer time at the end. I think we've got about ten minutes left.

Just before we go into any questions that you've got, has this been a helpful evening for you? Yeah. Good. Good. You've got what you wanted from it. Brilliant.

It's worth coming out on a horrible night for it. That's good to hear. Any questions? Yes. Sorry, Steve.

Oh, sorry. Yeah. Roving microphone. One thing we discussed in our group here when we were discussing is how you get the other children in a group to be inclusive.

Have you any advice on that? Great question. So how do you take the other children and young people in the group with you? So I'm going to give you the sort of nine to 13-year-olds answer to this.

[74:27] But you could adjust it either way to work. So at my church, when I'm hanging out with the children and young people, it's generally the nine to 13-year-olds.

And what we do every now and then is we have a bit of a conversation about times when we've all needed a bit of help and what that looked like and how that made us feel.

So there'll be Jack who fell out of a tree and broke his wrist. And so his wrist and his arm were in plaster for six weeks. It was his writing hand, so he couldn't write very well.

And it was a real struggle for him. But one or two of his friends helped him out with things and made life a bit easier for him. And then there's a girl in the group, Tammy, whose pet dog died.

And she loved her dog. And she was absolutely devastated when her dog died. But some of her friends got alongside her and just were there with her as she grieved for her dog.

[75:33] And they'll all have stories about times when they've struggled or been upset, but they've been helped. And what that felt like and how that made them feel.

And usually the answer is that it made them feel really good and really special that somebody cared about them and their friends were there for them. And that can then lead us into a conversation about how, in our group, there are members of our group that might need a bit of help and support

occasionally, like Jack when he fell out of the tree.

And there are members in our group that might need help a bit more often. But, you know, as a group, we're here to care for each other and to look after each other. And remembering those stories of how each of them have been helped and what that's felt like.

You know, we remind them then of the importance of looking out for each other in our group, helping each other, supporting each other. And they get it because they're coming into that through the gateway of their own experience, their own story.

And that helps them then to think, yeah, okay, that's why we're helping Timmy in the way that we help Timmy. And they get it and it works. But because they're coming into it through their own experience and their own understanding.

[76:56] Does that help? Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And absolutely, you know, what we look for is, you know, what Timmy is gifted in that he can use.

So, for example, you know, a bit further down the road in this case, but Kieran that we met at the beginning is brilliant at tech. At tech, technology.

So, his church started to spot that when he was in his teens and encouraged him to help out on the sound desk. And then, you know, off he went doing that.

Now, he runs the sound desk and he actually goes to Christian festivals and helps with tech there as well. Because his church saw that that was something he was interested in and nourished that. And helped him to then serve the rest of his church community. Yeah, so a really important point. Thank you for reminding us. I think that, like, children to be included in, like, not just in children's group, but in church life generally.

[78:07] For instance, church lunch. And you can help them to, they can set the tables or they can do other things. Yeah, absolutely. They can help clear the plates. I think it's great, you know, to see children and young people in the heart of everything we're doing.

You know, not just disappearing off out to their groups and coming back at the end and that's all we ever see from them. Yeah. What I always like as well is even where they disappear off out to their groups and then come back towards the end is to maybe get some of them to come and share what they've been doing.

So they don't just get reunited with their families and go home. The rest of the congregation gets to hear and see a little bit of what they've been up to. And, you know, what I've found when we do that in our church is half the congregation fancy going out to the children's group next week rather than staying in the main congregation.

Because they're having much more fun over there. So, yeah, that can be good too. Yes. Oh, microphone's incoming.

I think this has been my question ever since I came to the UK. Because what would be the best way to kind of make someone's needs known to everyone in the church?

[79:26] Because I think that's a very good point when Philippa said, everyone in the church knows me and what I need. Yes. And that's where we should start.

Yeah. And she kind of reminded me of my cousin who grew up with me in my church back in Korea. Yeah. So she's severely, like, extremely autistic.

And everyone in the church knew her, knew her family, parents, what she needs. So she always had someone who takes care of her all the time.

So I think that's where we should start. Yeah, absolutely. So how would you introduce or, like, make someone known to everyone in the church? So, yeah, that's a really big question.

It's a really good question. And it's going to be different for every family, for each child or young person. In Philippa's case, you know, she's blind.

[80:25] For the rest of the congregation, you know, they're likely to quite quickly be able to understand that she is blind, that she's got that particular disability.

And when my lad James was going to church, he's autistic, has all sorts of other learning difficulties and epilepsy and so on.

But he could walk into church and there would be no immediate visible sign that he has those additional needs and disabilities. So in our case, as family, you know, we had the opportunity to

share a bit of our story, share a bit of James' story with the congregation.

And be able to tell them a bit about the things that they could do to help James. And that was great for us. Some families might struggle more with that or they, you know, just either would be too nervous to do that or they wouldn't want to share so much information.

So that's where things like the one page profiles that I mentioned can be helpful because then at least if they can fill in one of those, there's some helpful conversation starters in there.

[81:41] But it also gives us something as a team to start with. And we can then help to make sure that we're supporting that particular child or young person in the ways that they've, in the one page profile, asked us to.

So different ways that we can do it. And it depends really on each family, each child and young person. But it's really important that we, yeah, try and find that information out and share it where we can, obviously with their permission, so that we can support their child or young person as well as we can.

Does that help? Yeah. Any other questions anybody's got? We've got the microphone on its way, I think.

Have you got a question? I don't think I've probably got a question. I've got lots of things rolling out of it. Okay. Yeah, well, you know, if beyond this evening, those thoughts sort of coalesce into something you want to chat about, then all my contact details are in the workbook.

So, you know, I'd love to hear from you. Please be in touch. Yeah. Oh, we've got a question here. Microphones have just arrived.

[83:06] Mine's not a question. Just to say how much I've appreciated what you've had to share. Oh, thank you. And how much it's opened my eyes.

And may have stirred something in me as well. Oh, bless you. Thank you. Even though you brought me. Well, God brought you here.

Our time has disappeared. But nine o'clock. Apart from the clock there, which is...