

# *Church for All*

Making Church Accessible to All  
– a Policy Statement

Developed by Föreningen Furuboda  
in collaboration with a committee  
of representatives from churches  
of the Christian Council of Sweden

Christian Council of Sweden publication No. 12 c  
Sveriges kristna råds skriftserie nr 12 c



# *Church for All*

Making Church Accessible to All  
– a Policy Statement

Developed by Föreningen Furuboda\*  
in collaboration with a committee  
of representatives from churches  
of the Christian Council of Sweden

Agreed by the board of the Christian Council of Sweden

\* Furuboda is a non-profit organization founded in 1960 to promote independent and responsible living with full participation in an inclusive and accessible society. With some 4000 members throughout Sweden it provides educational and vocational courses, as well as personal advice and support.

# *Contents*

Introduction .....	5
Theological Basis .....	6
Challenge to the Churches .....	8
Aims .....	10

Christian Council of Sweden publication No. 12 c  
Sveriges kristna råds skriftserie nr 12 c

The Christian Council of Sweden has released a number of publications in a series of publication called “Sveriges kristna råds skriftserie”. The rest of the publications are published in Swedish. For more information, see [www.skr.org](http://www.skr.org).

Church for All  
Sveriges Kristna Råd  
Box 14038  
167 14 Bromma  
Sweden  
Phone: +46 (0) 8 453 68 00  
Fax: +46 (0) 8 453 68 29  
[info@skr.org](mailto:info@skr.org)  
[www.skr.org](http://www.skr.org)

Original title: En kyrka för alla. Ett policydokument kring kyrkornas arbete med frågor om funktionshinder.

Translation: William Jewson

Printing: Skilltryck AB

ISSN: 1650-9196

© Christian Council of Sweden / Sveriges kristna råd 2013

# *Introduction*

Commissioned by the Christian Council of Sweden, Föreningen Furuboda, in collaboration with a committee of representatives from various churches in Sweden, consider issues regarding church and disability. The assignment includes producing documents, stimulating discussion and undertaking training schemes.

Central to the committee's deliberations has been the issue of protecting the equal value of every person, as well as recognizing our dependence on God and our mutual dependence on each other. Each of us is needed and has something to contribute.

Sadly, reality often paints a different picture. If we are to change things, then we need theological reflection and consideration of our attitudes and values pertaining to how we handle each other as well as issues of accessibility. It is extremely important that issues of disability should be central to our thinking and action in our respective fellowships. Our own commitment to these issues can also help to influence how society views matters pertaining to accessibility and disabilities.

We very much hope that this document will stimulate our churches to undertake a self-critical scrutiny of their activities so that every person has the opportunity to become fully what she or he was intended to be.

*Föreningen Furuboda and  
the Christian Council of Sweden's committee  
pertaining to churches and disability issues*

# ***Theological Basis***

## ***1. Made in the Image of God***

God has created every one of us in his own image. To be a person is to have received a divine dignity. Each of us carries within us the image of God, “the icon of God”. There is an innate value attached to being a person. And so churches have a duty to treat everyone with respect.

*Biblical texts for further reading: Genesis 1:27; Romans 12:16*

*– Christ calls us to treat every person with respect.*

## ***2. Salvation***

We are at the mercy of evil, of everything that threatens and destroys God’s creation. For our salvation God sent his son Jesus Christ who, in his person and his deeds, has demonstrated God’s love of all humanity and his creation, and has opened up the possibility of redemption and freedom. By means of the incarnation – that God became man – God has made himself accessible to humanity and has opened up a union between himself and the entire people of God. Christ was sent into the world in order to seek out and save those who are lost.

*Biblical texts for further reading: Isaiah 53:6; Luke 4:18-19; John 3:16; Romans 3:23-24, 8:32; Hebrews 9:11-12; 1 John 4:9*

*– Christ calls us to realize the fellowship with God and with humanity for which God created a path through his incarnation*

### *3. Sending and the Work of the Spirit*

Jesus sends out his disciples just as the Father sent him. Based on the principle of reconciliation they are to testify to the love of God. The disciples are sent into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit God builds his church, in which each of us is integrated as a living stone in a spiritual temple. The Holy Spirit appears in each of us so that we become useful. Each limb of the church, the body of Christ, has received gifts from the Spirit to the edification of all of us. If we fail to make use of a single person's gifts, the church is bereft of whatever God wanted to use that person for.

*Biblical texts for further reading: John 17:18; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 12-27; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Peter 2:4-5*

*– Christ calls us to make it possible for each person to use her or his gifts*

### *4. Strength is Fulfilled in Weakness*

In one of the Old Testament prophecies the Messiah is described as a man of suffering, familiar with pain. God shows his strength in what we consider weak and vulnerable, in the fact that Christ himself takes on situations that many people with disabilities can identify with. Whoever seeks to remain faithful to God is open to this perception. The kingdom of God challenges us with a scale of values that is different from what we meet in the world of our own time, which relies on power as a precondition for success. But weakness and vulnerability testify to God's secret power and to the mystery of faith.

*Biblical texts for further reading: Isaiah 53:3; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, 13:4*

*– Christ calls us to demonstrate by our actions the scale of values inherent in the kingdom of God*

# ***Challenges to the Churches***

## ***1. Accessibility***

It is with due regard to this theological basis that the churches need to approach issues pertaining to human disabilities. Everywhere we find people with disabilities who feel that they are not granted their rightful place. They do not feel welcome, no one asks for their gifts, they are shunned and discriminated against.

Someone can live with a physical, mental or intellectual *impairment*. It is the environment that gives rise to the *disability*; for example, physical barriers, inaccessible premises, the lack of a loudspeaker system and an inductive loop, or inadequate information and communication. Ultimately it is a matter of disparaging attitudes or of not taking people seriously.

## ***2. Participation***

Church services are an important aspect of church life. When the people of God assemble for a service before the face of God they are shaped and their faith is expressed. Does everyone feel that they are a part of the celebrating fellowship? Do we celebrate our church services in such a way that everyone present is able to experience themselves as part of the people that comes before the face of God? When liturgical expression or other activities are excluding we need to develop strategies to counter this. This can be done in innumerable ways.



### *3. Self-critical Scrutiny*

The churches need to scrutinize their life and operations. We need to ask ourselves what changes are required if a church is to be a place where a disabled person can meet the love of God – places where people can mature in their commitment and, together with the entirety of God's people, answer the call to demonstrate faith in their own lives. When churches ask this question they will discover that it is not just a matter of minor adjustments. We need to develop an understanding of humanity that finds room for the experiences of disabled persons of what it means to be a person and a Christian.

The ways in which churches allow people with disabilities to become part of their lives is, in point of fact, a call to repentance, to a new way of life. We need to work at discovering the resources of the Christian tradition, discovering the riches that are to be found in Christian fellowship where everyone is needed. We are all called to become members of the body of Christ, mutually supporting and assisting each other.

### *4. Pray and Work*

The changes that the churches need to accomplish can be realized through the traditional road of prayer and work.

The churches need to pray for guidance and help from God in finding forms of expression for the faith in which everyone can take part, so that the people of God may become one and that the world shall believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and the saviour of the world.

# ***We Promise***

– *As churches we promise* to seek to discover the richness found in a Christian fellowship in which everyone is needed and is a part of this fellowship.

– *As churches we promise* to work for increased participation for all and to recognize our mutual dependence.

– *As churches we promise* to work for a greater understanding and awareness of disability issues.

– *As churches we promise* to acquire knowledge of aids and educational methods that make it possible for people with disabilities to absorb the message of Christianity.

– *As churches we promise* to strive to ensure that different forms of expression are accessible to everyone.

– *As churches we promise* to work to ensure that all church premises and activities are accessible to everyone.

– *As churches we promise* to work to provide greater opportunities for persons with disabilities to take leading roles in churches and fellowships.



# *Church for All*

## Making Church Accessible to All – a Policy Statement

Commissioned by the Christian Council of Sweden, Föreningen Furuboda, in collaboration with a committee of representatives from various churches in Sweden, has considered issues regarding church and disability. The assignment includes producing documents, stimulating discussion and undertaking training schemes.

We sincerely hope that this document will encourage churches and fellowships to undertake a self-critical scrutiny of their activities and shape a church for all that enables every one of us to become what we were created to be.



CHRISTIAN  
COUNCIL OF  
SWEDEN

*Kyrkorna tillsammans*

KONTAKT: 08-453 68 00, [info@skr.org](mailto:info@skr.org)  
[www.skr.org](http://www.skr.org) Facebook: Sveriges kristna råd  
POSTADRESS: Box 14038, 167 14 Bromma

ISSN 1650-9196