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**Anabaptist Theology and Supportive Care
for Persons with Disabilities**
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From <i>Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective</i>, 1995	Article number & name	Implication for caring communities	Related quote from SC booklet
Reconciling Community: “In Christ, we are reconciled with God and brought into the reconciling community of God’s people.”	8. Salvation	Since salvation involves twofold reconciliation, it occurs not in isolation but in the context of community. All human beings come to God and to the reconciling community in brokenness.	“Christ during his earthly ministry exemplified love for those who were sick, poor and disabled. He ...restored them to wholeness” (6).
Salvation and discipleship: “Our response [to the good news of the love of God] includes ...joining the fellowship of the redeemed and showing forth the obedience of faith in word and deed.”	8. Salvation	Participation in the fellowship of the redeemed and faithful living are inseparable from other appropriate responses to God’s gift of grace. As we share in the body of Christ we experience salvation.	“Jesus calls us to a radical discipleship of love and care” (4). “One cannot truly know Christ unless [one] follows him in life” (6).
The church as sign of God’s reign: “The church is the new community of disciples sent into the world to proclaim the reign of God and to provide a foretaste of the church’s glorious hope.”	9. Church of Jesus Christ	The church embodies God’s promise of a new humanity, the reconciliation of all humanity in rudimentary form. We pray and sing: “Kindle in us love’s compassion, so that everyone may see in our fellowship the promise of the new humanity” (<i>Hymnal: A Worship Book</i> , 420).	“The church is challenged to recapture the early New Testament church’s vision for caring for its own and the needy within the family of faith” (4).

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<p>Mutual commitment and care: “Commitment to one another is shown in loving one another as God loves, in sharing material and spiritual resources, in exercising mutual care and discipline, and in showing hospitality to all.”</p>	<p>9. Church of Jesus Christ</p>	<p>Commitment to one another is expressed concretely in diverse forms. Loving as God loves is a means of expressing commitment to the body available to those whose disability makes it difficult to express commitment to Christ verbally.</p>	<p>“As we serve in mutuality, even those who are perceived to be weaker will exhibit their gifts to us ... The early church ... took seriously Christ’s call to care for ... persons who were poor and disabled” (6).</p>
<p>An interdependent, inclusive family: “The church is the household, or family, of God. ...The church welcomes all people who join themselves to Christ to become part of the family of God.”</p>	<p>9. Church of Jesus Christ</p>	<p>Metaphors of household and family suggest interdependence and inclusion without regard to age & ability</p>	<p>“Our challenge is to find the courage to reactivate that original vision of the church as a spiritual and physical family prepared to care for its own in a radical ministry of interdependent care” (5).</p>
<p>Service and mission: “Christ invites all Christians to minister to each other in the church and on behalf of the church beyond its boundaries.” (Harder’s commentary on the Confession links above statement with Matt 25:40: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me.”)</p>	<p>15. Ministry and Leadership</p>	<p>In sharing with the hungry, thirsty, naked, estranged, imprisoned (those in human need), we encounter Christ himself. Our response to this encounter is a fundamental measure of faithfulness (Matt 25:46). But viewing others as “the least of these” can encourage condescension.</p>	<p>Persons with disabilities “can represent the presence of Jesus which draws out the gifts of all in His body” (4). “What better way to stimulate church growth than to invite people into a body that cares and supports all its members with special needs?” (6).</p>