

A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright pink shawl and a red and yellow floral patterned dress, is seated in a green and blue wheelchair. She is positioned in the center of the frame, facing the camera with a slight smile. The wheelchair has a wooden footrest and a small basket attached to the front. Behind her is a building constructed from corrugated metal sheets, with a corrugated metal roof. To the left, another similar building is visible, and some laundry is hanging on a line. The ground is a light-colored concrete or dirt path. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage. The overall scene is set in a rural or semi-rural environment.

**PREPARED
TO HOPE**

**CHURCH
RESOURCE
KIT**



Contents

Introduction	1
About CBM Australia	1
Involve your church.....	2
Stories of Hope	3
Seta – Fiji	4
Nelly – Vanuatu	6
Shilpy – Bangladesh	8
Sujan – Nepal	10
Kazol – Bangladesh	12
Sahir – Bangladesh	14
Devotionals on Hope.....	16
Luke 10:25-27 – Hope for our Neighbours.....	16
Genesis 6:9-22 – Hope in the Extremes	18
Luke 14:7-14 – Access to Hope.....	20
Luke 5:17-39 – Advocating for Hope	22
Genesis 41:41-57 – Prepared for Hope	24
Isaiah 56:1-8 & 57:14-15 – Hope for All	26
Stevie’s Poem	28
Prayer Resources	30
Creative Prayer	30
Contemplative Prayer	33
Small Group Activity	36
Being Prepared with Your Support	37

Introduction

Welcome to CBM Australia's Prepared to Hope – Church Resource Kit.

We are encouraged that you are Prepared to Hope on the journey to Easter as we unite in ending the cycle of poverty and disability. We believe that God calls us all to build resilient, inclusive communities that are prepared for and overcoming disasters.

In this resource kit you will find a range of stories from the field, biblical reflections, prayers and activities that explore themes of hope, resilience and inclusion. Because we know every church is different, please use and adapt these resources for use within your church or small group.

We hope these resources will help deepen your understanding of the impacts of disasters on people with disabilities as well as provide opportunities to reflect on the hope and transformative change experienced by people with disabilities and their communities in some of the poorest places around the world.

If you have questions or would like to consider partnership opportunities, please reach out to Joe Pinkard, CBM Australia's Church & Community Engagement Manager, via email prayer@cbm.org.au or phone 1800 678 069.

About CBM Australia

CBM is a global leader in disability inclusive development, devoted to ending the cycle of disability and poverty.

Our work, supported generously by our loyal supporters and the Australian Government, was founded 115 years ago on the core Christian values of social justice, human rights, compassion and servant leadership.

These same values guide our staff and organisation today. They inspire us to walk beside people with disabilities in some of the poorest communities around the world; to serve, empower and enable each individual and their community.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus, our work is dedicated to ensuring all people can achieve their full potential, irrespective of race, gender, age, location, religion or social status. Our work reaches those who, because of disability, prejudice and social stigma, are the hardest to reach.

Together with you, we work to transform the lives of 10 million people each year. During our 40-plus years in Australia, hundreds of thousands of people have supported our vision and mission.

We are unwavering in our commitment to leaving no one behind and ending the cycle of poverty and disability. And we invite you to continue, or join, this mission with us.

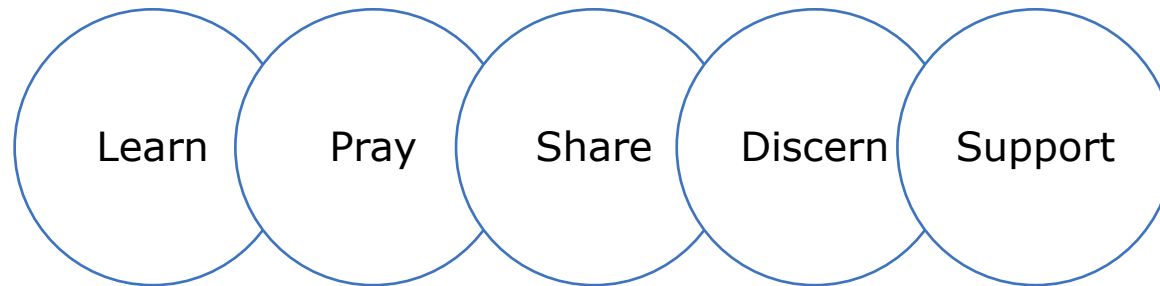
Find out more about CBM Australia [here](#).



Involve your church

If you are passionate about CBM's work and the Prepared to Hope series, why not spread the word with your church or Christian community?

Together, we can inspire more people to put God's love into action, to help some of the world's most vulnerable people during disasters. And with the support of your church, we can work together to build a world where everyone is loved, included and accepted, just as God intended.



Learn more about the Prepared to Hope series and CBM's work by reading through the stories, devotionals, resources and activities in this kit.

Pray about how your church could get involved in the Prepared to Hope series and support CBM's work.

Share the Prepared to Hope Church Resource Kit or one of the stories, devotionals or resources with those in your church community and explain why you are passionate about it.

Discern by talking to those in your church community, including a church leader, about the Prepared to Hope series and explore together what might be possible in your community.

Support CBM's work to bring hope and ensure we can make the necessary preparations alongside people with disabilities for the next time disaster strikes.

Stories of Hope



Seta – Fiji

When he was growing up, Seta did not ever imagine he would one day experience life with a disability. At age 17, he suddenly lost his vision and everything changed.

"The world became different to me. More unjust, more unwelcoming, unfriendly, excluding. I had to work twice if not three times as hard," he says.

"That triggered my desire to change what it means to be a person with disability. I made myself a personal goal and a commitment – why should those with disabilities coming after me go through the same hell that I did? If I can do something to make it better for them, I will."

Seta lives in Fiji, where the tropical climate and other factors make the environment particularly prone to natural disasters including cyclones, floods, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis and rising sea levels. In April 2020, the Category 5 Cyclone Harold caused widespread destruction across Fiji and neighbouring countries.

People with disabilities are at a higher risk during natural disasters and often face barriers in accessing safety and response efforts after an emergency.

That is why Seta is a strong advocate for the development of more resilient communities by ensuring people with disabilities can play active roles in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

"We need to be in the space to be involved and engaged to ensure that our issues of persons with disabilities are included in the preparedness, response and also during disasters," he says.

"If we are not part of that, we are at risk of what is called globally 'being left behind'. We do not want to be left behind. We want to be part of the planning, the preparation, the right process and also legislation."

Seta says that if people with disabilities are not involved in planning and preparing for disasters, responses put in place may not recognise the variety of challenges and barriers they can face.

"When evacuation centres are not accessible, people with disabilities would generally prefer to stay in the confines of their homes. Evacuation centres may not be a safe place also," he says.



"Persons with disabilities are able to provide that feedback. Are distribution points in an accessible location? Are the tarpaulins and tents that are brought in?"

It is also vital that early warning systems, which provide alerts for tsunamis and other looming disasters, are inclusive.

"For people who are blind, if they cannot read then what is the alternative? Early warning signals must be adapted to be inclusive, to ensure that all members of the public including people with disabilities are benefiting from the services."

Seta's goal is to ensure that the voices and lived experience of people with disabilities are always part of disaster risk-reduction planning.

"They need to be involved in the design; they need to be consulted. The need for the engagement, the involvement, for them to be consulted is critical for disability-inclusive disaster risk-reduction programs and strategies to be effective and meaningful."

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Nelly – Vanuatu

According to the UN University WorldRiskIndex, Vanuatu is the world's most at-risk country for natural disasters. The South Pacific nation, comprising dozens of islands, experiences a five-month tropical cyclone season each year as well as volcanic activity, floods, droughts, earthquakes and tsunamis.

People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable during disasters and emergencies. However, in Vanuatu, community leaders like Nelly are ensuring that fewer people with disabilities are left behind when crisis hits.

"I am the National Coordinator for the Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association (VDPA), the national disabled people's organisation of Vanuatu, established in 1999. Its mandate is to advocate for rights and promote abilities of people with disabilities," says Nelly, who is vision impaired.

The effectiveness of the association's work was demonstrated in the aftermath of the Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold, which caused devastation throughout Vanuatu in April 2020.

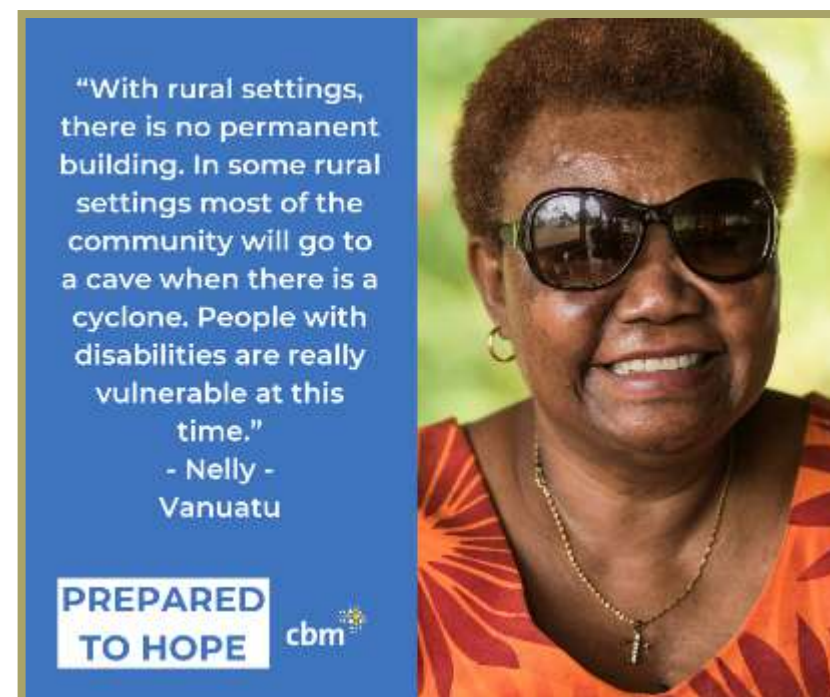
"We had a disaster study which took place during Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2014 and the findings this year are totally different from 2015. We could see that the government is coming in to assist, and some partners came in to assist disability organisations to make sure we didn't leave anyone behind during the response and recovery to Tropical Cyclone Harold. Things are slowly changing," says Nelly.

The work of people like Nelly is supporting the development of more inclusive and resilient communities. But the practical impact of Tropical Cyclone Harold is still being felt.

"So many members of our community are without houses, most of them are living in tents. It would be very high risk for them if there is a cyclone coming soon."

Where people with disabilities evacuate to when a disaster strikes depends on whether they reside in a town or a rural setting.

"In towns there are some places that are accessible to people with disabilities; they have lights and accessible toilets. But the challenge is that they are too crowded and someone with a mobility device cannot move around.





"With rural settings, there is no permanent building. In some rural settings most of the community will go to a cave when there is a cyclone. People with disabilities are really vulnerable at this time."

When cyclone warnings arrive, the VDPA coordinates warnings to the 28 local disabled people's organisations across Vanuatu. This provides challenges of its own.

"The network coverage is really bad, and for people with disability to access the message they have to climb up a hill to get the message or speak to us. It really is a challenge for our members when a cyclone is coming."

The VDPA continues to strive to improve outcomes, partnering with the Vanuatu Society for People with Disabilities, the Vanuatu Skills Partnership and other organisations to form a disability sub-cluster to help with disaster response and recovery planning.

"We train our members on how to speak up, so they can advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities. They could tell people, 'If you are going to this area, don't forget the 21 people with disabilities there.'"

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Shilpy – Bangladesh

One of the worst natural disasters to ever strike Bangladesh was Tropical Cyclone Sidr. In November 2007, the storm took the lives of up to 10,000 people and caused extensive damage to homes, crops and livelihoods.

Shilpy, who lives in a Bangladeshi village, will never forget its impact.

"I had my baby boy at that moment – he was two or three months old. I was running fast to evacuate. There's a tree in Bangladesh that has thorns in its branches, and when I was passing that tree my hair got tangled in it and there was no other option but to cut my hair. Just as I was free from that situation, a big tree fell at that place. In a matter of moments I would have faced the ultimate," she recalls.

Shilpy has been vision impaired since she was in school, following an accident in a garment factory.

She now works as an elected official where she has responsibility for three local wards.

"If there is a dispute between family matters, I have to settle things. If anyone is facing any kind of problems they come to me, and if there's anything to be done in my jurisdiction I do that."

A committed member of the Ward Disaster Management Committee, Shilpy says the skills and knowledge she has learned about disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction mean she is far better prepared to respond to another disaster like that of 2007.

By sharing her learnings with peers and colleagues, Shilpy works towards ensuring that people with disabilities are not left behind when a disaster strikes.

"My colleagues and I discuss what we're going to do if there's a situation like a flood. For example, our shelter doesn't have a ramp, but we have applied for one. Some other shelters have ramps now and are more accessible to people with disabilities," she says.

"We also ensure that the shelter is kept clean before people come and the bathroom is clean and usable."





As Shilpy points out, disability-inclusive disaster planning not only benefits people with disabilities themselves but also the broader community.

"I am a person with a disability but not every member of my family has a disability. So when we include people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction, isn't it beneficial to their whole family?"

Reflecting on some of the natural disasters she has experienced, Shilpy believes that people with disabilities are more included now in decisions about disaster risk reduction than they previously were.

Thanks to advocacy of non-government organisations like those CBM partners with, as well as government policies, Shilpy has seen the creation of more inclusive and resilient communities.

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Sujan – Nepal

In any natural disaster or humanitarian emergency, people with disabilities are at heightened vulnerability.

This is borne out by statistics, which show that people with disabilities are two to four times more likely to be killed in disasters than non-disabled people. It is also observed in the lived experience of Nepalese man Sujan, a member of the local disabled people's organisation.

"It is vital for persons with disabilities to engage in disaster preparedness activities in order to maintain independence and cope with the consequences of disaster. It is important to be prepared to meet our own basic and personal needs after the disaster as well," he says.

"We know that disaster has negative repercussions on our basic needs, health and hygiene, education, work opportunities and independence."

Sujan lives in a community, where floods, landslides, earthquakes and fires are commonplace. The COVID-19 pandemic is a new type of disaster his community is facing.

"People with disability in my community have started to have issues in the maintenance of assistive devices such as crutches, hearing aids, canes, wheelchairs and glasses. Although complete lockdown has been lifted, people still fear accessing health services and that has led to deteriorating health conditions such as muscle weakness, headaches and increased mental health problems.

"For people with chronic illness, accessing daily usage medications remains a challenge."

Disabled people's organisations like the one Sujan is involved in play a crucial role in ensuring that people with disabilities are included in all levels of disaster risk planning.

This ultimately means that people with disabilities are not let behind when a disaster strikes, and that communities are more resilient, cohesive and inclusive.



“Disabled people’s organisations represent people with all types of disability, and the involvement of these organisations in disaster preparedness planning and activity helps them express the needs of the disability community amidst disaster, response and rescue efforts,” he says.

“The effectiveness of the disability-inclusive plan and response can be determined only with the direct involvement of persons with disabilities.”



Some of the key factors in ensuring people with disabilities are prepared for a disaster include clear information about how to meet specific needs, such as medications, battery power and assistive devices, as well as clear and effective information on where to receive support at challenging times.

“Information should be accessible for visually impaired persons, the deaf, persons with intellectual disabilities, those with low vision or blindness, those with psychosocial disabilities and so on,” says Sujan.

Disabled people’s organisations have provided vital support to communities during the pandemic, as Sujan explains.

“We have organised assistive devices and a hygiene materials distribution program for local residents, identified by the ward based on socio-economic condition and need. This is one of the safety measures taken by the community in the face of the pandemic.”

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Kazol – Bangladesh

In her travels to other countries over the past decade, Bangladeshi woman Kazol has come to realise the lack of disability access in her home nation in comparison with other parts of the world.

"Here, hospitals, schools and government offices are not accessible. Even transport in European countries is accessible, but there is no accessible transport in Bangladesh. Even the market and other community areas are not accessible."

Kazol, who was paralysed in 2003 following an accident, is determined to ensure better outcomes for people with disabilities in Bangladesh.

That includes working towards the creation of more resilient communities by empowering and supporting people with disabilities to play active roles in disaster planning and response.

Kazol leads a self-help group, is a member of a Disaster Committee and is also a respected community leader who advocates for disability rights to government.

Bangladesh regularly experiences natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes and droughts. Kazol says that with education, training and work on the ground, people with disabilities in her community have been empowered to learn more about inclusive disaster responses.

"In the past, people didn't care about disasters. They had a fatalistic view. Now there is an early warning system and different kinds of activities to reduce our disaster risk. We show flags to indicate the level of flooding, with different colours for different danger levels.

"We have raised two school grounds, and there are now safe shelter spaces for cows and animals. Also increased accessibility and ramps.

"We have used street theatre, flash cards and interactive methodologies to promote interaction on disasters. There is also a visible change – now, before disasters, people prepare dry food, candles, clothes, medication, water-purifying tablets and a list of emergency phone numbers, which is given to the women in the family."

An additional positive by-product of this work has been broader community attitudinal change towards people with disabilities.





"Before we started, there was a belief that people with disability can't do anything. Now they see that people with disability are engaged with different activities, and this changes attitudes. People see us bringing change for everyone. We are respected and we are known."

A change in attitudes improves livelihoods for people with disabilities and ultimately assists people to reach their potential.

"If I have income, I can raise the ground of my house. I can improve my house with stronger, better materials. With money I can also raise and concrete my water pump and tube well, and improve the safety of drinking water," says Kazol.

"Most people with disability do not have earning opportunities and need income. All disaster risk reduction is linked in some way to income.

"I encourage people with disability to join a self-help group. To start one you need to find people, then encourage them and their families to join together. If you can go to training, do it. Learning what you are entitled to gives you information and the chance to make changes. Join together and have strength, help each other, get a voice together and learn not to stay quiet."

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Sahir – Bangladesh

In May 2020, the powerful Tropical Cyclone Amphan tore through Bangladesh and eastern India, tragically killing 118 people and causing more than A\$18.6b damage.

Sahir Alam is a vision-impaired man from a village in Bangladesh that was one of many directly impacted by the natural disaster.

"My house was damaged. I had a shop that I used to run with the help of my wife, which got damaged. I have not recovered from the loss. I think I will need another one to one-and-a-half years," he says.

Sadly, Bangladesh faces more than its fair share of natural disasters. In addition to cyclones, floods, droughts and earthquakes are common occurrences.

Sahir, who has lived with complete vision loss for close to a decade, says these disasters have a profound impact on people with disabilities in Bangladesh.

"The houses we live in get damaged, our income source gets damaged, trees and roads get damaged. These all result in difficulties in walking and movement for people with disabilities like me. We already cannot walk or move much in regular times, but after these damages, it becomes so difficult," he says.

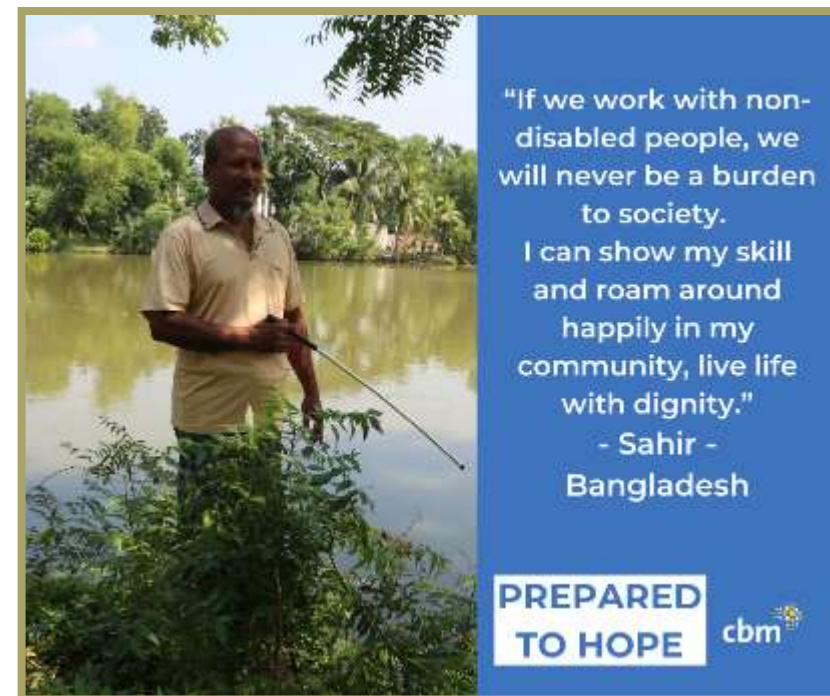
Research by the United Nations shows that people with disabilities are two to four times more likely to be killed in natural disasters.

A separate global survey conducted in 137 countries found that 72 per cent of people with disabilities surveyed had no personal preparedness plan for disasters, and that more than 80 per cent of people with disabilities could face certain difficulty or be unable to evacuate in the event of a disaster.

Including people with disabilities in disaster planning and preparation – and ensuring their voices, opinions and experiences are heard – is a crucial way to create more inclusive and resilient communities.

Sahir is actively supporting this goal through his involvement with a local organisation of people with disabilities.

These groups ensure that people with disabilities are actively engaged in preparing for and responding to disasters, and also provide real-time updates when crisis looms.



"When a disaster comes, they notify us through mobile phone, come to our homes to physically notify us and even take people with disabilities with them to the cyclone shelter. For those who cannot hear, someone from their family lets them know the signals and weather situation. Food is arranged for the people who take shelter there.

"As a result of a disaster-management project that is ongoing, we people with disabilities get training from the self-help organisation, and share our thoughts on disaster and disaster management in our group meetings. This sharing, which includes our suffering in disasters also, has benefited us very much."

Being involved in these groups has given Sahir the confidence that people with disabilities will not be left behind the next time a natural disaster strikes and increased his overall sense of self-worth.

"If we work with non-disabled people, we will never be a burden to society. I can show my skill and roam around happily in my community, live life with dignity."

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Devotionals on Hope

Luke 10:25-27 – Hope for our Neighbours

Reflection by John Jeffries

Over my 33 years at CBM, Jesus' challenge to love my neighbour as myself was never far from my mind.

This is especially so with the way Jesus brilliantly contextualises this challenge in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Here Jesus expands our view of who is our neighbour.

Through CBM, our neighbours become people with disabilities living in the hardest countries of the world. Truly the poorest of the poor. And, as if life were not already tough enough for the people we want to help, their needs are ratcheted up to a new level at times of natural disaster.

I starkly recall hundreds of people with disabilities who were in the path of the slowly descending lava from the volcano near our program in South Asia.

I also recall the courage of our surgeon, Dr Joe, who stayed at his operating table while he could see – and feel the heat from – the lava inevitably creeping closer to his hospital.

Dr Joe kept operating to the very last minute before he was evacuated. And the next day, with tears in his eyes, he met the supply plane CBM had urgently flown in, packed with life-saving emergency supplies that were the key to us moving people with a disability to safety and continuing our medical program.

Dr Joe is just one example of the kind of resilient and committed people, organisations and communities that CBM partners with to prepare, respond to and recover from natural disasters.

In any natural disaster, people with a disability will usually be at the back of the queue for any aid that arrives. Yet they are usually the ones with the greatest need. People with disabilities can also find themselves excluded from preparing community plans for natural disasters because others in the community do not see them as having the abilities to contribute. This often leaves people with disabilities vulnerable and at risk of being left behind.

The exclusion of people with disabilities in natural disasters, and the subsequent hardship they face because of this, challenge us to think about who our neighbour is and whether we are living out Jesus' proclamation in the greatest commandment.



Reflect with the Auslan translation of Luke 10:25-27 [here](#).

For me, the people we helped and the lives we saved during natural disasters were the neighbours we are called to love. They just happened to live in another country.



John served as the CEO of CBM Australia from 1992 to 2015. In 2014 he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to the community, particularly people with a disability.

John currently serves as a coach and mentor to church leaders. He also works one-on-one with leaders of not-for-profits to coach and mentor CEOs and their senior staff.

Application – Practising Hope

Today's invitation is to... share a note or text message of hope and encouragement with one of your neighbours.

Respond as a church this week by... carrying out a prayer walk around the local neighbourhood, listening to God for opportunities to share hope.

Genesis 6:9-22 – Hope in the Extremes

Reflection by Joseph Pinkard

How do you prepare and respond when faced with a challenging and unexpected situation?

Noah finds himself in an extreme situation as God explains to him that, in response to the violence caused by the people on earth and their corrupted ways, there is no option but to destroy the earth and its people. We read that Noah is a righteous, faithful and blameless man whom God enters into a covenantal relationship with. God provides Noah with specific instructions on how he should build the ark and who should join him in it to overcome this disaster. Noah is asked to be protector for all the living creatures on the ark.

Despite the extreme nature of God's punishment on his people, reflecting on this passage I am somewhat reassured by the specific information God provides Noah to prepare for this impending disaster. I am an anxious person who often considers the worst that could happen in a situation and prepares for the possibility of this happening so as not to be caught by surprise. This often results in sleepless nights as the cogs in my mind refuse to slow down. So the level of detail God goes into is comforting in what is disastrous situation.

The reality, though, is that I cannot always know what is coming, and therefore I find myself in situations where I am not as prepared as I would like to be to respond. Volatility and uncertainty have become characteristics of our world and mean that we must all develop resilience in order to overcome challenging and unexpected situations.

I recently had the privilege of speaking to Nelly, who is the National Coordinator of one of CBM's partners in Vanuatu. Nelly told me how her community prepares for and responds to the annual cyclone season that affects her region. I was challenged by some of the things I heard. I learnt about the local materials that houses are often built out of and how they struggle to withstand the strong winds; the fact that communities will sometimes have no choice but to seek shelter in caves during cyclones; and how phone reception can sometimes be so limited that people are unable to be informed that a disaster is looming.

In spite of these challenging facts, I was also encouraged that the community is doing more and more each year to better prepare and respond to these disasters – to ensure that everyone is included and no one is left behind. Things like making sure everyone has an opportunity to be part of disaster-planning meetings, keeping information of the whereabouts of vulnerable people up to date, and



Engage with the Auslan translation of Genesis 6:9-22 [here](#).

providing early warning systems that use a variety of channels to reach people who experience barriers to communication such as vision impairments.

The kind of specific instructions God gave to Noah are not always available to us, so we need to discern how we as individuals and communities can prepare and respond to difficult situations. Ensuring that everyone is included in both the preparation and response is something that Nelly's example challenges us to reflect on in our own community.



Joseph Pinkard is the Church & Community Engagement Manager at CBM Australia. He has studied theology and worked as a disability support worker in Melbourne.

Joseph enjoys exploring how churches and Christian communities can be more inclusive of people with disabilities through CBM's Luke14 initiative.

Application – Practising Hope

Today's invitation is to... prepare a meal for someone in your local community.

Respond as a church this week by... looking through the prayer resources in the Prepared to Hope Church Resource Kit and consider using one during an upcoming church service.

Luke 14:7-14 – Access to Hope

Reflection by Louise Gosbell

One of the first things we did when the COVID-19 lockdown happened was rearrange our furniture.

Like many families, we found ourselves having to adapt our home to create functional work and study spaces for the whole family (including our cats!). This rearranging took some creativity and a lot of thinking outside of the box, but we made it work. While it was a disruption to the way we had always done things, it was amazing how quickly we were able to adapt to a new kind of normal.

Luke 14 shows Jesus at a banquet in the home of a prominent Pharisee. While there, Jesus noticed those guests attempting to take seats of higher honour (for example, the seats that were closer to the banquet host or special guests). These seats were more desirable because where a person sat at a feast was considered a direct reflection of their value and worth among their peers: the higher a person sat, the greater honour and respect were offered to them by other guests.

The problem with this ranking system was that there was no room at all for those who were poor or marginalised.

But as Jesus watched the arguments among these religious leaders about where they would sit, He offered them a challenge: take the seats of lower honour for yourself and allow the seats of higher honour to be taken up by those who you never normally invite to such banquets – the poor and people with disabilities.

I can imagine that the Pharisees might have felt a little awkward about being called out on their petty behaviour. But I can also imagine the Pharisees feeling a little like I did when we went into lockdown: they were happy with the way things were and didn't much fancy having to rearrange the furniture, especially not to accommodate people they did not consider to be their social equals. They were comfortable with the status quo.

But Jesus' point here is that the message of the gospel is far from the status quo. In fact, the gospel turns the status quo completely on its head. Jesus says that the marginalised and overlooked members of society should not only be given places at the table with everyone else but should be given the places of honour.

The message of the gospel challenges us to reprioritise the honour of others over ourselves. Sometimes this will mean we need to rearrange the furniture a little in order to make room for the marginalised at our table. Or, in some cases, rather than just rearranging, it



Explore the Auslan translation of Luke 14:7-14 [here](#).

might mean we need to act like the men in Mark 2 who completely dismantled the roof of a house to provide their paralysed friend with access to Jesus.

Making changes to our church communities to help facilitate the inclusion of the marginalised and people with disability might take some rearranging of furniture. It also might take some dismantling of our expectations of what church should look like. But as we begin to make changes that will provide greater access and inclusion – whether that's captioning on videos, large-print Bibles and bulletins or ramps into all church buildings – we will soon find ourselves with a new idea of normal, and hopefully one that far better reflects the diversity and inclusion Jesus' envisages in Luke 14.



Louise Gosbell is an Australian theologian working in the overlap of disability and biblical studies. Louise completed her PhD in Ancient History at Macquarie University in 2015.

Louise is Dean of Students and Lecturer in New Testament at Mary Andrews College.

Louise has been involved with CBM Australia's Luke14 program for over 10 years, helping train churches and Christian organisations on disability and inclusion.

Application – Practising Hope

Today's invitation is to... invite someone you do not know well from your church community over for a coffee or a meal and spend some time getting to know them.

Respond as a church this week by... looking through the Auslan Bible translation videos and considering using one during an upcoming church service or Bible study.

Luke 5:17-39 – Advocating for Hope

Reflection by Michael Pilbrow

Every time I read this passage, I am blown away by the amazing love and friendship the men showed for the paralysed man. They didn't just wish him well; they didn't just pray for him; they didn't even settle at getting him close to Jesus.

They ripped a roof open. They vandalised someone else's house. They took action. They risked repercussions. Their friendship was tangible and dangerous.

They created a community that included a vulnerable person in actions not words. They were persistent and didn't give up when their first attempt didn't work – they were creative and audacious.

And they got the outcome. They managed to get their friend right in front of Jesus. And what was Jesus' immediate reaction? It was not about any one individual but about the collective – "Jesus saw their faith!"

I have recently been in contact with a few small rural communities in Australia that have been through drought and water shortages over many years. They are also dealing with COVID-19, the future risk of bushfire and the regular floods that seem to come when they are not in drought. Across these communities, there are a lot of things that they could complain about – the weather, government policy, the global economy.

But what struck me is their care for people. In each community they knew who was alone, who had disability, who was elderly – everyone who needed community help in the event of a disaster – and who would go to them, pick them up, look after them when a disaster struck. And at a central level they maintained a vulnerable persons' list, although I got the clear impression that this would hardly be needed given the very localised care for each other. In the same way, the four men in Luke 5 didn't need a central register to tell them that their paralysed friend needed a lift to see Jesus.

This passage tells me that inclusion is about community. The four men were community to the paralysed man. They put the needs of their friend above other things they could've been doing that day – like binge watching their favourite TV show. They worked together with their skills and strengths to get their friend to the place he needed to be – to make sure he wasn't left behind, both on that day and for the rest of his life.



Engage with the Auslan translation of Luke 5:17-39 [here](#).

Disasters require action in the moment, on a particular day. Any community aspiring to be resilient would do well to take to heart this story. Practical, inclusive teamwork in adversity is how a community stays strong in preparing, responding and recovering from disasters. And in order to save a life and connect people with Jesus, you might sometimes have to break a roof.



Michael Pilbrow leads Strategic Development Group, a professional services firm that provides strategy, governance, program design, evaluation and community engagement expertise to clients in Australia and internationally.

Michael co-founded and was Board Chair of the National Health Cooperative, was a Director and Chair of Sport Matters, and is currently a Director of CBM Australia.

Application – Practising Hope

Today's invitation is to... pray for people with disabilities experiencing the catastrophic impacts of disasters, including COVID-19.

Respond as a church this week by... sharing the "Leave No One Behind" activity from the Prepared to Hope Church Resource Kit with your small group leaders.

Genesis 41:41-57 – Prepared for Hope

Reflection by Monica Short

Are you experiencing the complexities of life?

The extremes of life nurtured Joseph into adulthood. Joseph knew what it was like to live with a large family and also with loneliness; he knew freedom and slavery; isolation and social inclusion; injustice and power; trauma and reconciliation; abundance and famine.

We do not know if Joseph was living with disabilities. What we do know is that God and Joseph knew each other. God knew the details of the traumas and injustices Joseph experienced. God never forgot Joseph. Knowing God made Joseph resilient. God also gifted him with the abilities to interpret dreams.

Further, our passage reminds us that Joseph became a public servant and implemented an impressive food security strategy which famine-proofed Egypt and surrounds. Joseph was a blessing to his community.

What does the Joseph story mean for us?

As with Joseph, God knows our needs intimately and never forgets us. God can guide us and teach us how to bless others around us, regardless of our situation. How do we know this?

One way we know is through people's testimonies about how God is currently guiding them. Joel's is one such testimony (details anonymised). I met Joel through the Rural Anglican Churches' "Engaging with People Living with Disabilities" research project (CBM's Luke14 program was one of the wonderful partners with this project). Joel lives with multiple impairments. Similar to Joseph in the Bible, Joel's formative years were at times complicated. As a child, Joel went to a school that specialised in teaching children living with disabilities. He found reading and writing hard and often had falls. People felt Joel could not learn, and he left school early. In reality, Joel learns differently.

Joel, now an adult, attends multiple Bible studies and church services. He loves to learn. He also thinks it is essential we all know the Old Testament because the Bible teaches us to be "kindful". Joel explained that because he is a Christian, he volunteers at a Kids' Club and youth group, opens the community food service for local people, is on church rosters and mows the lawns of people who need help – for free. Joel desires that people know they are not alone and that Jesus blesses us and brings us into a relationship with God. Joel, in his way, blesses his community and makes it a more "kindful" place. God is with Joel.

What can the stories of Joseph's and Joel's lives teach us?



Reflect on the Auslan translation of Genesis 41:41-57 [here](#).

Their lives remind us that God is with us. The truth is that complexity, (dis)ability and trouble do not define us. God matters, and His enabling makes us resilient. Everyone can choose to celebrate knowing God and blessing those around them.

Thanks to God, and similar to Joseph and Joel, you and I have a yesterday that makes us resilient, a today to bless others and a tomorrow for which to plan.

My prayer is that you will remember God loves you and that you are never alone.



Monica Short is a lecturer and social science researcher at Charles Sturt University, including investigating, in partnership with CBM-Australia's Luke14 program and Bush Church Aid, the experiences of people living with disabilities engaging with rural Anglican Churches.

Monica is a proud member of the Anglican Church of Australia, is married to Mark Short, who is the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, and has two adult children.

Application – Practising Hope

Today's invitation is to... consider donating to support CBM's work with people like Kazol and her community in Bangladesh.

Respond as a church this week by... inviting a person with a disability to share their testimony.

Isaiah 56:1-8 & 57:14-15 – Hope for All

Reflection by Stacey Wilson

There are many people who expect to be excluded. For most of us there are places and situations that make us wonder how welcome we would be, but to know with absolute certainty that we will be rejected is a devastating experience.

These texts were written to people who had lived through the destruction of their land, society and culture. The nations of Israel and Judah had been conquered, the temple desecrated and torn down. Many were taken into slavery while those who remained lived in poverty, oppressed by a powerful foreign empire. This section of Isaiah speaks to these people as they try to rebuild, not just their homes and community, but also their sense of identity.

Isaiah 56 opens with these words from YHWH: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed."

Yet despite these powerful words of hope and renewal, the prophet draws attention to two groups of people on the margins of this renewed community – foreigners and eunuchs.

A common tool used by empires to suppress uprising is forced migration; as a result the region of Israel was inhabited by people from across the Babylonian empire. The passages in Isaiah 56 and 57 address the internal conflict growing between those who called for national and religious purity and those who hoped for a new, more inclusive vision of community.

The eunuchs were male slaves who had their ability to have children taken away through painful and forced body modification. For the people of Judah, this practice also marked the eunuchs as collaborators and excluded them from participation in religious ceremonies.

To these two groups the prophet speaks these remarkable words of hope: "Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.' And let no eunuch complain, 'I am only a dry tree.'"



Explore the Auslan translation of Isaiah 56:1-8 [here](#).



Engage with the Auslan translation of Isaiah 57:14-15 [here](#).

What follows is the promise of inclusion. No more is required of them than is required of any other person. This welcome is grounded in the work and character of YHWH: "The Sovereign LORD declares – he who gathers the exiles of Israel: 'I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.'"

In chapter 57 we are reminded that inclusion is not passive, it requires action. It is not enough to like the idea of inclusion; we are called to actively remove the obstacles that people face.

Our community is in the midst of preparing for the next fire season. I am surrounded by signs advertising CFA education sessions and fire planning tools. My family's "go bags" will be packed soon, filled not only with precious items and important paperwork but also medication, N95 masks and noise-cancelling headphones. This is a season of weather watching and late-night emergency alerts. The fire seasons of 1983, 2009 and 2019 changed our community. We are more prepared, and we have been reminded that there are things more valuable than houses. We are also aware that there are people in our community who need extra support during this time.

Taking the time to prepare, while often overwhelming, is also a source of hope. In Isaiah 56 and 57 we see the ground being cleared for the work of Jesus, when the God of the high and holy places joined the most marginalised and forgotten, welcoming them into His joy.



Stacey Wilson works for Intergen, an organisation that has been supporting ministry with children and families in Victoria for 150 years. Her role includes intergenerational resource development, training and mentoring.

Stacey has also been a passionate volunteer and supporter of CBM's Luke14 initiative for the last six years. An enthusiastic advocate, former paediatric occupational therapist and discerning coffee consumer, Stacey can often be found in her local café writing essays on theology for her master's degree.

Application – Practising Hope

Today's invitation is to... share one of CBM Australia's #preparedtohope social media posts with your followers and explain why it matters to you.

Respond as a church this week by... taking up an offering to help support the efforts of CBM and its partners working to bring hope for people with disabilities.

Stevie's Poem

Violin's Bow

By Stevie Wills

I breathed in deeply
the salt
carried by the breeze as it
raced the ocean to the shore.

That ocean called my name
beckoned me to find myself in it
to discover oneness with it
discover the oneness with the current of
the ocean
and the longing of my heart
my longing for the world
for stomachs to be filled
for people to dance free
from rods bent across their backs
their shoulders
for power to no longer be used
to abuse
to rise above
to place feet on another's shoulders
another's face.

I long
tears form
drop from my heart
form a puddle
in the bottom of my stomach
as his belly grows with emptiness
and her skin bears shades of grey and

purple
I sit amongst the ashes
dust lodged in my throat
I choke
as someone is being stripped
of clothing
self-knowing
behind bolted doors
and fake passports
and elusive networks.
Those who know
cannot speak
for a debt they owe.

I long
for we share humanity.
I bleed because he bleeds.
I ache because she is beaten.
I thirst because their crops thirst
the roots of drought reap barrenness.
I hunger for more than this
for she is my sister
and he is my brother
and I am connected
blood relatives of human race.

My longing
a bleeding
from knife wound

wounded by knowing
of man's hand against flesh
of man's hand over children
in sugar-cane fields working
backbreaking
sun scorching
pockets lining.

Can a river run from the hearts
of those who bleed compassion
into the hearts of those who are bled
empty
scavenging daily for enough
just enough for her son's belly?

I groan
in song with creation.
As violin's bow slides its belly along
strings
one haunting note forevermore
echoing down dark, cool, tunnels
underground.
These tunnels curve through the earth.
These tunnels, the veins of the earth.
One haunting note forevermore
low
gut rumbling
disturbing
molecules of water gather

quietly
solemnly
a funeral's procession
down veins of the earth.
A flicker of a light
a light that was once
a life that was once
faintly echoing
a memory
of a story that was told once
a story that was us once.

I yearn
I rage against the boundaries of my
capacity
throw myself against the walls of my
abilities
the laws and realities of gravity
geography.
My passion
an ocean
waves thrash, crash
love spills out
throws itself forward
stretching to reach someone
comfort someone.

Oh that my empathy
Had legs and arms to cross oceans
to fly a plane to you
to hold you
hold you close to my heart
close to my body
that you would feel my comfort

feel my tenderness.
Would you be comforted?
That I would breathe with you
bleed with you.
I guess I do bleed with you.

Bleed within sorrow
within bindings
wound in hunger for power
wound, stripping power, leaving hunger
wound, enabling systems
that clasp the wrists of self-efficacy
sustaining position, security
dependence and instability
maintaining feet upon shoulders.
When will change be?
When will change be?
Real change
systemic change
love change
connecting change.

I long
as many long
in pockets, in networks and fragments,
networking, intertwining resources, skills,
knowledge
working to bring change into being
real change
systemic change
love change
connecting change.

Change is coming
but it's not enough today.

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Stevie Wills is the Community Education Officer at CBM Australia.

Stevie is a performance poet, writer and public speaker.

Stevie has had cerebral palsy since birth. She has had faith and a relationship with Jesus Christ since she was fourteen.

Prayer Resources

Creative Prayer

This Creative Prayer Activity is intended for use with intergenerational groups. It involves conversation, collaboration, reflection and prayer through the construction of a [Rube Goldberg machine](#).

The following is written as a guide for the leader of the activity; however you might need to adapt it depending on your location, participants and time available.

If you are running this with children, please ensure they are supervised at all times by a responsible adult to ensure everyone's safety.

Before starting you will need the following:

- A screen or projector with internet connection to watch the Prepared to Hope video [here](#).
- A print out of the prayer cards. Download them [here](#).
- Collect some of the following items:
 - Things that roll: marbles, balls, toy cars, skateboard, roller skates, wheels...
 - Things that move: dominoes, fan, mousetrap, toaster...
 - Ramps: toy train tracks, marble runs, books, trays, pipes, guttering, tubes...
 - Recyclables: cardboard, cereal boxes, paper tubes, plastic bottles, cans, aluminium foil...
 - Kitchen materials: chopsticks, icy pole sticks, plates, bowls, vinegar, baking soda...
 - Stationary: tape, ruler, string, pins...
 - Outdoor materials: sand, watering can, hose, water...

These prayer resources were developed in collaboration between [Intergen](#) and CBM Australia.



Step 1 – Watch the video and discuss

Watch the Prepared to Hope video together.

Talk About

What kind of things are described in the video as being difficult for people living with disabilities during a natural disaster?

(NB: Many communities in Australia have their own experiences of natural disasters. These discussions will need to be handled with care in such places. This activity may be an opportunity to explore the ways your community has prepared, responded to and recovered from these disasters. It may also help you to respond empathically to others across the world.)

When CBM partners with a community, like the one shown in the video, the aim is to ensure that everyone in that community is included in the preparation and responses to a natural disaster.

Talk About

How did you see this happening in the video?

Step 2 – Explain the activity

The purpose of a Rube Goldberg Machine is to achieve a goal in an imaginative way. We chose this activity because it illustrates, in a small way, the type of experimentation, creativity and problem-solving that go into responding to a natural disaster.

Taking the time to build one of these “machines” allows you to experience the benefits of working together – it is much harder to do it on your own. It also lets you experience just how tricky teamwork can be. You will need to negotiate and compromise. You might also find that some of the best ideas come from the most unexpected places.

Your packs include seven prayer cards. Each one has a picture on it. Your challenge is to include as many of these items as you can in your machine. Whenever you include one of the items pictured, read out the prayer.

(NB: You might like to show a [YouTube clip of a Rube Goldberg Machine](#) in action. Be aware that it takes a long time to develop the kind of complex machines in these clips. Building requires patience, trial and error, and may become frustrating for young children.)

Step 3 – Gather your supplies

If you haven't already, gather your supplies for your Rube Goldberg Machine. If you are doing this at home you can make this part of the activity. If you are working in a group (kids or youth program, Bible study), it is good to gather your supplies beforehand. We strongly suggest that you work with what you have – you don't need to go out and spend a lot of money – everyday items and recycled materials work really well. The idea is to encourage creative thinking while avoiding unnecessary waste.

Your supplies should ideally include the following items, each one of which matches one of the prayer cards:

- dominoes – matches with the Prayer for Adoration card
- balloon – matches with the Prayer of Invocation card
- ball – matches with the Prayer of Confession card
- tracks – matches with the Prayers for the World card
- recycled materials – matches with the Prayers for the Church card
- sticky tape – matches with the Prayers for the People card
- natural materials (e.g. sand) – matches with the Prayers for Communities Who Have Experienced Natural Disasters card.

Step 4 – Open in prayer

Lay out the printed prayer cards (download them [here](#)) and remind the group that throughout the activity you will be stopping and asking someone to pray when particular items are used from the above categories.

Invite someone in the group to read out the prayer card labelled “Call to Worship” with the hands icon on it.

Step 5 – Begin construction

Experiment. Start simple then go from there. Encourage the group to be patient and work together.

Remember to pause and use the prayer cards when particular materials are being used.

You might like to film this as a time-lapse process.

Step 6 – Run the machine

Give the group a countdown to finish construction.

Gather everyone and run the machine.

You might like to film each attempt until you are successful and include one of the prayers in your video.

The more steps you include, the longer this process will take.

Step 7 – Debrief & Pray

If you have time, debrief with the group on what the activity was like working together and then close in prayer. Some questions you might like to ask are: Did everyone feel included? What characteristics were required to successfully run the machine?

Contemplative Prayer

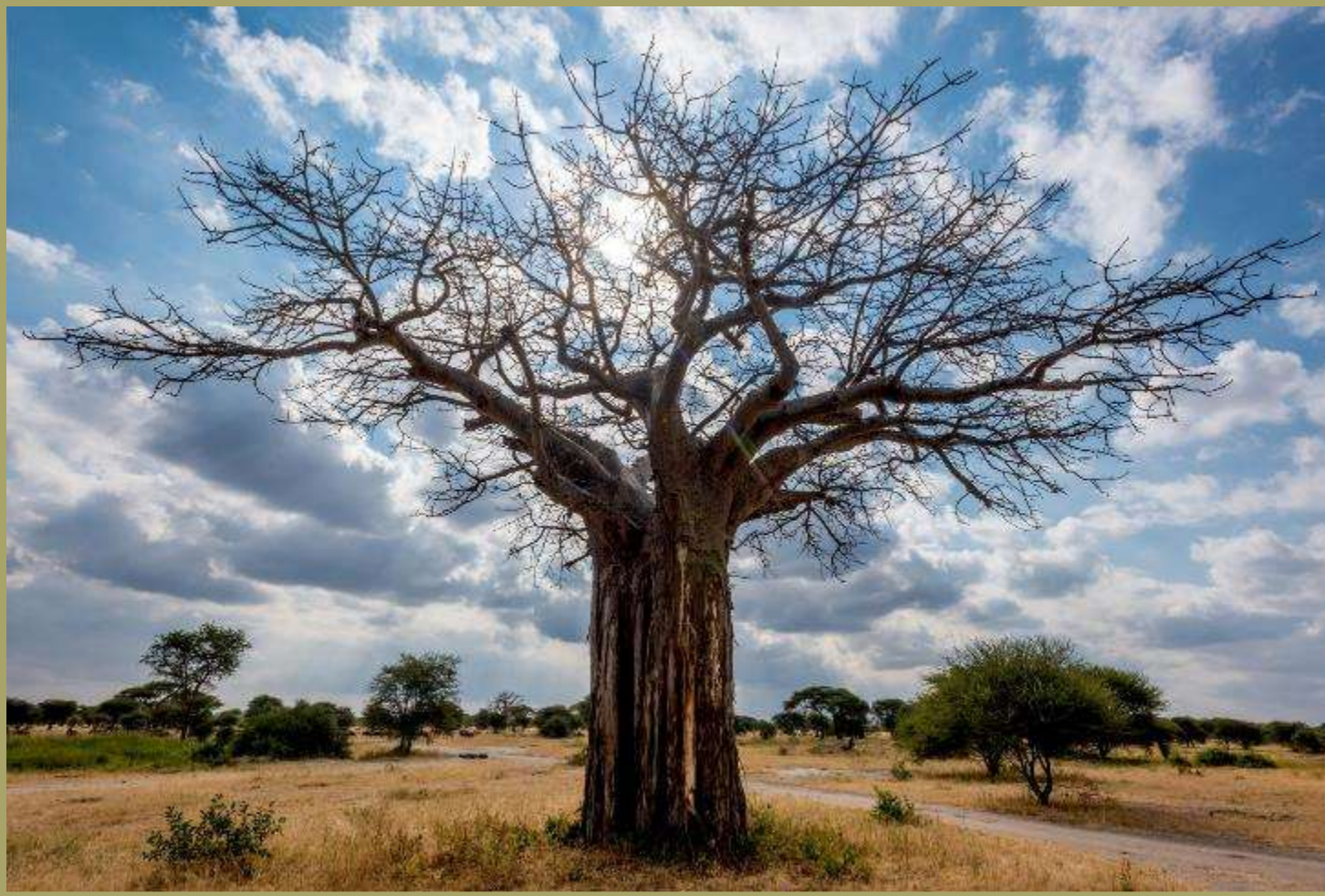
This section contains two images with contemplative prayer prompts based on the Isaiah 56.

You could print these pages and invite people to sit and reflect on them in silent prayer.

As an alternative, the image could be shared on a screen and the prayer prompt read out.

It can also be helpful to provide people with an opportunity to respond to the symbolism – for example, for the first image, invite people to write their name on a piece of dead wood or take home some seeds from a tree that grows locally.

Some people might value the opportunity to share their responses to these prayer prompts. However, it is also important to give space to those who do not wish to do so.



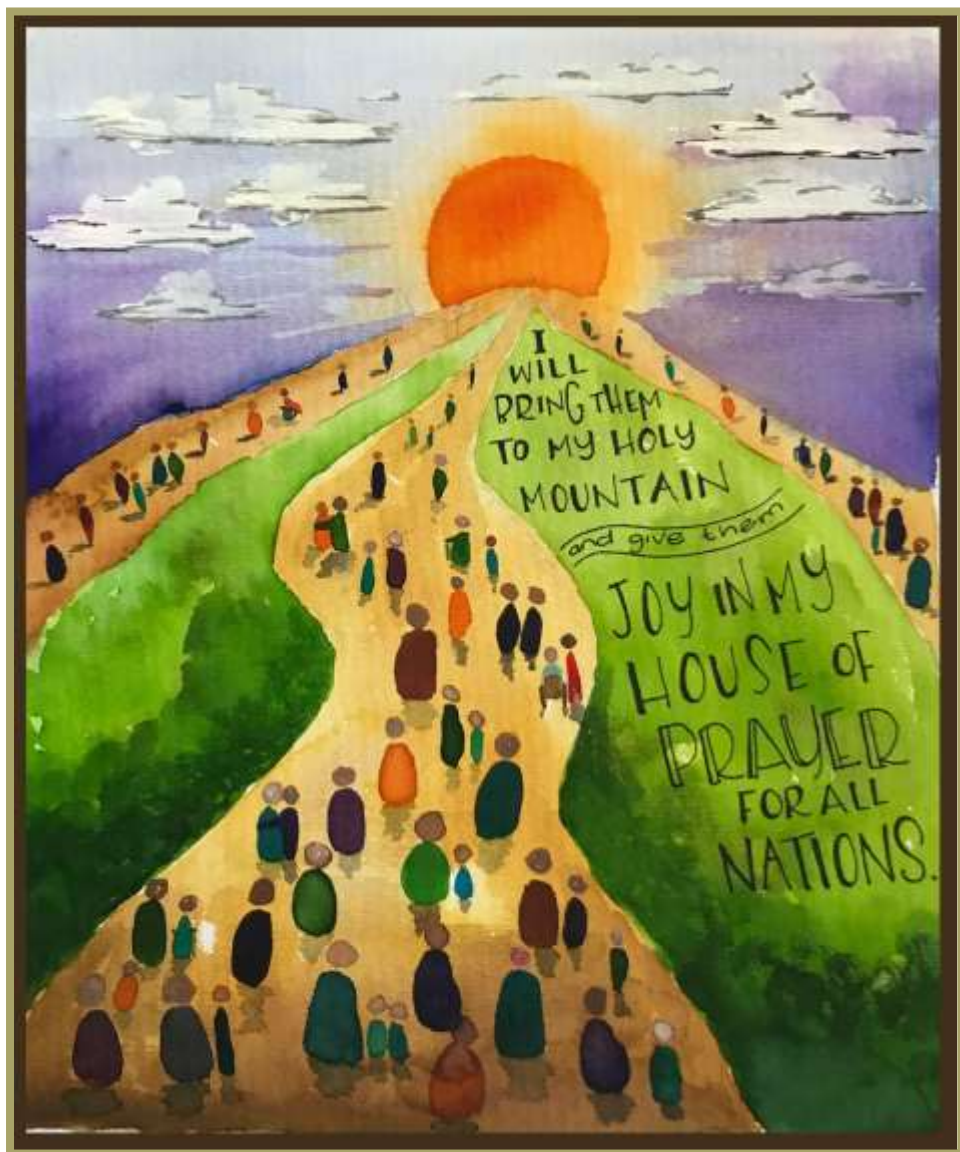
"I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever."

As you consider this image, reflect on whether there has ever been a time or a situation where you felt like nothing more than a dead tree in the blazing sun.

How does God's promise speak into this situation?

Respond in prayer.

Spend some time resting in the presence of God.



Take a moment to sit quietly and invite the Holy Spirit to speak.

Consider this picture and the verse it includes from Isaiah 56.

Reflect on what the Holy Spirit has brought to your attention.

Respond in prayer.

Spend some time resting in the presence of God.

Original artwork by Beck Finger from [Intergen](https://www.intergen.org/).

Small Group Activity

Leave No One Behind

Introduction

The Leave No One Behind – Choose Your Own Adventure activity has been created to be shared with church small groups that want to learn more about CBM Australia's work partnering with people with disabilities and their communities to prepare for emergencies and environmental disasters.

Through this session we hope that you also can reflect and gain a deeper understanding of the barriers experienced by people with disabilities to participating in society, and how through inclusion and togetherness we can create more resilient communities.

The following is a guide to assist facilitators in preparing and running the activity.

Who is it best suited for?

It is suited to adult small groups as there is quite a bit of reading involved and some themes might be confronting for younger people. In saying that, it has been run before with teenagers, so it could be run with a mature group of youth. The activity is best suited to groups of five to seven people and can be run with multiple groups at the same time.

Time

The activity will take 30-45 minutes in total depending on the speed of the group and the amount of discussion they have during the activity. This is important to be aware of if you have multiple groups running at the same time; you will need to monitor their progress as you ideally want them to finish at a similar time and debrief all together.

What will you need?

- The activity cards and the Facilitator Notes PDF file (download [here](#)).
- A computer and projector or SMART TV with speakers to play the videos for your group and present the slides.
- If you have one group you will need a printer to print out the "Roles" cards. It is recommended to just print the "Roles" cards and use one set of the "Instructions", "Story" and "Chapter" cards per group so that you can have everyone focused on the same step.
- If you have multiple groups running concurrently, you will need a printer to print out the "Instructions", "Story", "Roles" and "Chapter" cards.



Being Prepared with Your Support

Responding to the upheaval of natural disasters requires ample preparation, and CBM needs your help to support the efforts of those working to bring hope.

Currently over one billion people around the world have disabilities and they are unduly impacted during times of crisis and disaster. It is imperative that CBM continues to work with our partners to ensure no one is left behind.

We know that disability inclusive disaster planning is paramount to ensuring all people with disabilities receive the support and resources they need to navigate the catastrophic impacts of disasters.

If you or your church are in a position to financially support CBM's work, your donation will ensure we can help even more communities develop and implement disability inclusive disaster planning so that next time disaster strikes, no one is left behind.

CBM's disaster preparedness work, alongside its partners, includes ensuring people with disabilities are included in disaster preparedness, training community leaders in disability inclusion, creating accessible evacuation centres, equipping people with disabilities to develop resilient livelihoods, and providing access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene.

Find out more about donating to CBM [here](#).



CBM Australia acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the [Australian NGO Cooperation Program](#) (ANCP).

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright pink shawl over a red and orange patterned sari, sitting in a green metal wheelchair. She is positioned in the lower-left foreground, looking towards the right. The setting is an outdoor courtyard or street between buildings with corrugated metal walls. A concrete ramp leads up to a building on the right. In the background, there are trees and more buildings. A white rectangular box with blue text is in the upper right corner. The bottom of the image has a blue and tan wavy graphic overlay.

PREPARED TO HOPE

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