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# ROOTED IN FAITH

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How faith and work come together in the  
ministry of Karis Disability Services.

***2025 ABRIDGED EDITION***





## Introduction

Welcome to ***Rooted in Faith***. From its beginning, Karis Disability Services (formerly Christian Horizons) has drawn strength and nourishment from its roots in the Christian faith tradition. Our intent is that this document, *Rooted in Faith*, communicates *why* and *how* this faith is at the core of everything we do.

Whatever your personal beliefs or religious affiliation, we pray that you will find points of connection and encouragement in these pages. We hope to foster an inviting and hospitable organizational culture, a kind of “shared dwelling place” that forms our identity and sense of what it means to be together.<sup>1</sup>



*Kevin outside of his apartment in Cobourg.*

Karis employees and the people who choose our services come from diverse religious traditions. This document promotes understanding and appreciation for one another as we help people experience Karis’ core values and work together for a world where *everybody belongs*.

Each of these topics could be a book in itself! *Rooted in Faith* is not intended to be comprehensive; simply an introduction to theology and disability and how their intersection helps inform our work.

As Karis continues its journey of learning how best to “*Honour God and value people in all we do and with all our resources*,” we invite further conversation. Please send me an email at [kdow@karis.org](mailto:kdow@karis.org) with your thoughts or questions.

Grace and peace,

Janet Noel-Annable  
Chief Executive Officer

Keith Dow, PhD  
Manager of Organizational and  
Spiritual Life

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas E Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 54.



## A Story of Faith

### The Reese Journey

On March 5, 1963, the celebratory words “Congratulations! It’s a boy” were soon followed by the news that Steven Reese, son of Reverend Jim and Adrienne Reese, had been born with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Jim’s younger brother had grown up with brain damage caused by a fall, and Jim was daunted by the challenges that might come with raising a child with a disability. At a time when “disability” was understood only as an impairment and a disadvantage, it was difficult to celebrate the gift that Steven was to their growing family. The Psalm that came to Jim was one that he and Adrienne had memorized years before,

“Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!”<sup>2</sup>

Divine comfort soothed his fears. In the hospital, Adrienne had received her own verse, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!”<sup>3</sup> Jim reflects,

***Wait on the Lord and rejoice in the Lord. What a blessed combination! As we’ve watched Steven grow up in our home, we’ve had much reason both to wait and to rejoice, assured that God is at work doing something wonderful.***

God’s message to and through the Reeses was clear: God was actively at work in and through Steven’s life. Like every child, this child was God’s gift to his family and community. Out of this revelation, it was natural that the Reeses’ vision began in the form of a question: “*Why don’t Christians make themselves more visible in ministry with people with disabilities?*”

In 1965, Rev. Jim and Adrienne Reese enlisted the help of other families and began an organization that could fill the need for Christian faith-based services for their son Steven and for others desiring the same opportunity. They

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 27:14, NKJV

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 4:4. All biblical references are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.



recognized not only that it was difficult to find faith-sensitive supports and services but that, at the time, it was expected that people with developmental disabilities would go live in an institution, separated from their family, friends, and community. The Reeses were early leaders in the community living movement that has gone on to reshape supports and services for people with disabilities in Canada and beyond.



*The Reese Family*

The ministry that began in 1965 as the *Ontario Christian Association for Exceptional Children* was renamed “Christian Horizons” in 1976 and then “Karis Disability Services” in 2023. It has expanded to serve children and adults in a variety of settings. The first summer camping ministry now includes diverse service options in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and around the world.

Jim and Adrienne Reese desired that Steven receive support that recognized not only the physical, intellectual, and emotional aspects of Steven’s life but also Steven’s *spiritual needs* as a person created in God’s image. Karis Disability Services continues to prioritize the role of each person and their family in guiding someone’s faith journey, whether they are part of the Christian faith or another tradition.

Drawing from these roots, we strive to support people and work together in an environment that embodies what is written in the Bible as the *fruit of the Spirit*: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.<sup>4</sup>



*Jim and Adrienne Reese*

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<sup>4</sup> Galatians 5:22–23.





## DIGGING DEEPER

You can learn more about the story of Karis Disability Services through Cardus' [Case Study](#) and the [Christian Horizons 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee documentary](#).

## 1. Why rebrand as “Karis Disability Services?”

In 2023, Christian Horizons – with the full support of its board and representatives of the founding family – made the momentous decision to rebrand as “Karis Disability Services.”

**The change came after a lot of prayer, research, and consultation. We realized that people who didn't yet know the organization were unclear if they were welcomed or belonged.**



Christian Horizons



karis Disability Services

People who heard our name often thought we were a church. Some people felt that they wouldn't be welcomed at Christian Horizons as an employee or as someone who uses services because of their existing perception of what “Christian” means, which might be based on past experiences of exclusion.

Dr. Erik Carter's research demonstrates that as many as 1 in 3 families with a disabled family member have left faith communities in the past after facing exclusion. While this *Rooted in Faith* document conveys that “*everybody belongs*” lies at the heart of Christian service, our research affirmed that many people didn't enter into conversation with us long enough to hear what we mean when we say we are a Christian ministry.

It was also difficult to convey the kinds of services we provide, which is why “disability services” is now front-and-centre. We embrace the word “disability” as an essential aspect of human diversity. Using the word “disability” is the preferred language of many people in the disability community. It recognizes





that – as Jim and Adrienne were reminded early on – everybody is a ‘reason’ to “rejoice in the Lord.” Human diversity is what makes life in community so rewarding (along with the challenges and the barriers it reveals). Using “disability” helps to normalize talking about this vital aspect of community life and people’s experiences.

**As the landscape of developmental services evolves in Canada, and people with disabilities increasingly shape their own journeys, we welcome everybody who chooses our services to find the supports that are right for them. Our name might be new, but our commitment to our faith roots, values, vision and mission continues.**

## DIGGING DEEPER



You can view our “[why rebrand](#)” document along with our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the change.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?



If you are an employee, person who uses services, or family member with a disability and/or who is neurodivergent, use of the word “disability” is an invitation to continue to share what this word and your experience mean to you! Whether you use identity-first or person-first language, we celebrate that *how* people relate to their embodiment is an important aspect of human diversity too.

## 2. “Karis” as a guiding light for our work

Knowing that a name change was needed didn’t make choosing a new name easy! It was a long process to consider which name suited us best. There was a rich history and legacy to the name “Christian Horizons,” and we knew we needed something that would do it justice.

The name we chose was “Karis,” a phonetic variation on the Greek word χάρις (charis). It can mean grace, favour, and loving-kindness and is related to the word χάρισμα (charisma) for “gift.” Karis expresses our conviction that all people have value and unique God-given gifts to share. Everybody is a gracious gift to their communities, and their communities are not whole without them or the gifts they share. So, this name reflects both our legacy and our future.





We read in John 1:16 (ESV), “For from [Jesus’] fullness we have all received, grace [χάριν] upon grace [χάριτος].” John reminds us that grace – not judgment – is central to the good news message and ministry of Jesus Christ. God’s radically accessible goodness comes to us through Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection. This goodness is available to *everybody*, and Karis believes that we have a part to play in conveying this good news, through Christian service, to the world.

Later on we will write about our core value of *celebrating gifts*. Did you know that this core value used to be “respecting gifts?” While we won’t stop respecting and encouraging people’s gifts and contribution to their communities, we also want to ensure we celebrate what everybody brings to those around them!



Image from the [Why Karis](#) video

You will see that 1 Peter 4:10 helps us to understand what “gifting” looks like in communities. Peter writes that each person has received a grace-gift [χάρισμα] to serve others [διακονοῦντες] as faithful stewards of the grace already given to us [χάριτος].<sup>5</sup> In receiving God’s grace (charis) and gifts (charismata), we are called to serve our neighbours. These gifts are not for private gain but for the building up of community. In these ways and more, “Karis” conveys our organization’s Christian heart of service in response to God’s grace and the value and giftedness of all people created in God’s image, including those who are too often marginalized or devalued in light of their perceived limits.

### DIGGING DEEPER



Dr. Keith Dow recorded a video helping to explain and describe the transition to “Karis” from a theological perspective. You are welcome to watch it [here](#).

If you want to get a sense of the *gifting* of everybody, watch our “[Why Karis](#)?” video!

<sup>5</sup> “As each has received a gift, [χάρισμα] use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace [χάριτος]” (1 Peter 4:10, ESV).



## 3. One Vision, One Ministry

Jim and Adrienne Reese's desire for a Christian service option available to people with disabilities lives on in the work of Karis Disability Services. This faith basis is integral to Karis, as shown in its founding documents. Our Letters Patent indicate that our purpose is:

**“To imitate the work of Jesus Christ by serving those in need.”**

This statement has many aspects, one of which is a longstanding emphasis on the *imitation Christi* or the “imitation of Christ” in the Christian tradition. CEO Janet Noel-Annable puts it simply,

Part of the influence [of our faith] is the concept of justice, but it's much deeper than that. It's really about thinking about how Jesus lived his life: he had a place . . . for anybody and took the time to slow down or to adjust his posture or his activities to include people that society had often not included and missed out on.<sup>6</sup>

Values  
Vision  
Mission



**Rooted in Faith**

Karis is registered in Canada as a religious charity to fulfill its mission. This category includes houses of worship, religious schools, universities, and hospitals, the operation of entities to support these enterprises and more. Along with our heartfelt desire to stay true to our values, vision, and mission, Karis is obligated to ensure that religious purposes continue to guide its observances and practices.<sup>7</sup>

As demonstrated by the passion and purpose of the Reese family, the faith roots of Karis run deeper than obligation. God has called Karis to imitate the

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<sup>6</sup> Cardus Interview with Janet Noel-Annable, Chief Executive Officer, September 18, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> The wording of the CRA concerns the “advancement of religion,” which you can learn more about [here](#).



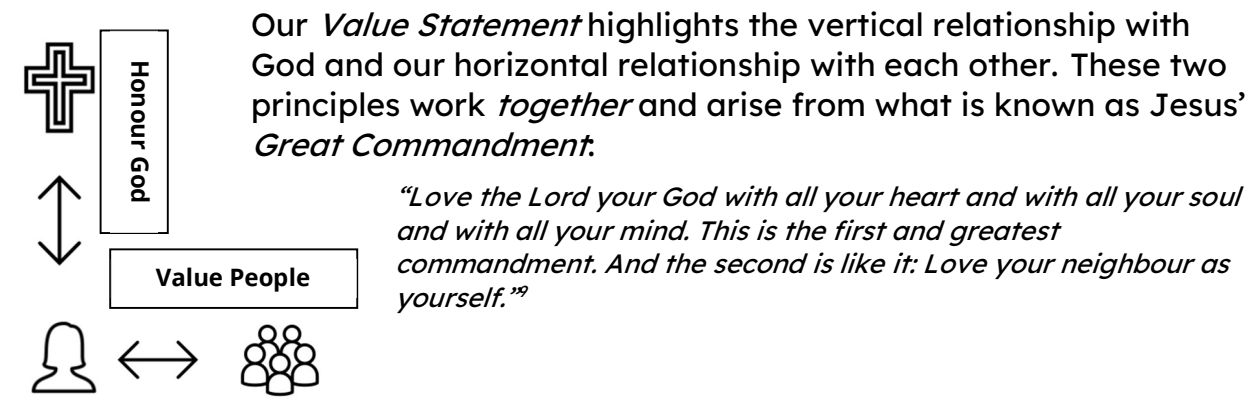
work of Jesus Christ in serving, supporting, and learning from people with disabilities and their families.

As a Christian ministry, Karis affirms the Holy Bible to be the authoritative Word of God and the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds to faithfully represent the essential beliefs of the Christian faith.<sup>8</sup> Drawing from Scripture and two millennia of Christian witness, Karis professes the following:

VALUES	VISION	MISSION
<p>"We will honour God and value people in all we do and with all our resources."</p> <p><b>CORE VALUES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valuing People</li> <li>Fostering Belonging</li> <li>Serving Others</li> <li>Celebrating Gifts</li> </ul>	<p>"People with disabilities belong to communities in which their God-given gifts are valued and celebrated."</p>	<p>"As an expression of Christian faith, we work together with people with disabilities to accomplish their goals and nurture communities where everybody belongs."</p>

From these commitments, **three primary outcomes** bring clarity to our work:

1. People's experience services that reflect our Christian core values.
2. People experience services consistent with our service principles.
3. People experience communities where everybody belongs.



<sup>8</sup> See the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. "Catholic" within in the Apostle's creed is understood to mean "general, universal, concerning the whole" and is not synonymous with "Roman Catholic."

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 22:36-39.





## ROOTED IN FAITH

The belief that love for God must be partnered with love for one's neighbour is the foundation of thousands of years of Christian service.

As early as the first century AD, it was reported that “there were no needy people among [the Christian community] because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to give to those in need.”<sup>10</sup> While our way of meeting people's needs looks different than it did for early Christians, Karis continues the tradition of responding to our neighbours with the love and grace of Christ.

### DIGGING DEEPER



You can find videos highlighting the work, ministry, and organizational values of Karis Disability Services on our YouTube channel. Also, see the “About Us,” “Who We Are” section of [karis.org](https://www.karis.org) for our Values, Vision, and Mission.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?



If you are an employee with Karis Disability Services, you can find the expectations for employees that arise out of our Value, Vision, and Mission Statements in our reference manual.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 4:34–35, NLT

<sup>11</sup> Our **Expectations for Employees** can be found in Section E of the Reference Manual and in P03:11 Values, Vision, and Mission under HR Forms on Karis Connect.





## Our Core Values

### 1. Valuing People

Karis Disability Services values everybody as created in the Image of God (*imago Dei*). Every person is celebrated not only because of their gifts, abilities, and attributes but due to their intrinsic worth.<sup>12</sup>

Karis advocates for each person's freedom of self-determination. We seek an equitable society that meets the holistic needs of people with disabilities, including the need for spiritual support and meaningful relationships.<sup>13</sup>



### 2. Fostering Belonging

Karis recognizes human beings' inherent vulnerability, interdependence, limits, and our need for mutual support, hospitality, and relational healing.<sup>14</sup> We all need to belong.

We confront barriers that prevent people with disabilities and their families from experiencing belonging. We promote communities of belonging in society, in our partnerships, with employees, and with people who use our services.



### 3. Serving Others

Imitating the work of Christ, Karis serves others with dignity and respect. Service is not our end goal but the way we accomplish our mission.<sup>15</sup>



In service and advocacy, Karis recognizes the *tactile* and *embodied* nature of the gospel. Christ's "good news" is experienced in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.<sup>16</sup>

### 4. Celebrating Gifts



Everybody has gifts to share. These gifts are indispensable to our communities.<sup>17</sup>

Karis, as our name indicates, respects people's gifts and celebrates how their gifts are shared in community. We challenge societal preconceptions about abilities, gifts, and talents so that everybody contributes and belongs to communities in which their God-given gifts are valued and celebrated.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13, 16

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 103:15, John 9, Mark 2, Matthew 8:8

<sup>15</sup> Luke 22:26-27, John 13:14-17, Mark 10:42-45, Philippians 2:3-4

<sup>16</sup> 1 John 1:1, John 1:14, Luke 4:18-19, Proverbs 31:8-9, Matthew 25, 4, James 2:14-17, Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>17</sup> 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, Romans 12:4-5, RIF 20

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 25



## Valuing People

Each person is created in God's image (*imago Dei*), fearfully and wonderfully made (*Ps 139:13–16*). Because every human being reflects God's likeness (*Gen 1:26–27*), we value people for who they are—not for productivity, independence, or ability.

Valuing people means recognizing each person as a whole person with full citizenship and inherent dignity. We advocate for rights and responsibilities to be exercised in community life, not kept at the margins. (*Gen 1:27; Ps 139:16*).

We honour each person's freedom to shape their own life. Sometimes their choices differ from the ones we might make; we accompany with respect, offering information and support without control or coercion (*Rev 3:20; Gen 1:26*).

Human beings are relational by design. Serving our neighbour is how we meet Christ himself (*Matt 25*), so our daily practice is “with, not for”: listening first, protecting consent, and fostering participation in worship, work, and community. In this way, valuing people becomes a lived confession—honouring God by affirming the sacred worth, agency, and belonging of every person.

Scriptural foundations	
<b>Genesis 1:26–27</b> <b>Psalms 139:13–16</b> <b>Revelation 3:20</b> <b>Matthew 25</b>	Image of God → intrinsic worth. Known, formed, loved. Invitation, not coercion. Serving neighbours = serving Christ.
Key insights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-person dignity &amp; full citizenship (rights/responsibilities in community).</li> <li>• Self-determination with support (“do with, not for”).</li> <li>• Relational life together (created for relationship).</li> </ul>	
Summary Statement	
<b>We honour God by upholding each person's God-given worth, freedom, and place in community.</b>	





## Fostering Belonging

Belonging is more than inclusion; it is being known, wanted, and missed when absent. Through Christ, we are “no longer strangers and aliens, but members of God’s household” (Eph 2:19). Jesus’ parable of the banquet (Luke 14:21–23) shows that God’s invitation is for everyone, especially those left out.

Each person brings a story and a gift that the community needs. Paul describes the church as a body where “the parts that seem weaker are indispensable” (1 Cor 12:22–26). Belonging happens when our communities make space for mutual care, shared leadership, and genuine friendship rather than token participation.

We practice belonging by removing barriers—physical, social, and attitudinal—and by welcoming difference as a sign of grace. When we love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34–35), we reflect God’s hospitality and help one another discover the joy of being “home.”

Scriptural foundations	
<b>Ephesians 2:19</b>	Members of God’s household
<b>Luke 14:21–23</b>	Invitation for all
<b>1 Corinthians 12:22–26</b>	“Weaker” parts indispensable
<b>John 13:34–35</b>	Known by love
Key insights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove barriers: physical, social, attitudinal</li><li>• Honour interdependence and shared voice</li><li>• Practice hospitality as shared leadership</li></ul>	
Summary Statement	
<b>Belonging is God’s welcome made visible.</b> <b>We’re no longer guests, but family.</b>	







## Serving Others

To serve others is to follow Christ’s own pattern of love in action. Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45), and He invites us into that same posture. Service is not an act of charity but a way of living that recognizes the image of God in every person.

At Karis, serving others means accompanying people with dignity and respect, working alongside rather than over them. True service is relational and embodied; it requires patience, presence, and attention to people’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40).

When we serve, we learn dependence on one another and on God’s sustaining grace. We discover that the giver and receiver are both transformed. Serving others becomes a daily discipline of love—expressing faith through practical compassion and honouring God by tending to the flourishing of all.

Scriptural foundations	
<b>Mark 10:45</b>	Jesus came to serve
<b>John 13:14–15</b>	Wash one another’s feet
<b>Matthew 25:40</b>	Service to others is service to Christ
<b>Galatians 5:13</b>	Serve one another in love
Key insights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service expresses faith through love</li><li>• Work <i>with</i>, not <i>for</i>, others</li><li>• Embodied care reflects the gospel</li></ul>	
Summary Statement	
<b>Serving others is love made tangible.</b> <b>Sharing Christ’s grace in every act of care.</b>	





## Celebrating Gifts

Every person has gifts to share. These gifts are not earned by talent or status; they are received from God and entrusted for the good of others. Scripture teaches that “each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others” (1 Peter 4:10). Gifts are given in variety but share one source and one purpose: to build up the body of Christ and bless our neighbours (1 Corinthians 12:4–7; Romans 12:4–8).

Celebrating gifts means more than noticing abilities. We actively make space for people to offer what God has placed in them—voice, creativity, prayer, leadership, friendship, perseverance, and joy. We name gifts where they appear, resource them, and remove obstacles that keep them hidden. Rather than assigning people to roles that fit our assumptions, we listen first and co-design opportunities that align with a person’s passions and call.

When communities celebrate gifts, everyone is strengthened. Those who seem less visible often reveal indispensable graces; their contributions re-center our life together on gratitude and mutual service (1 Corinthians 12:22–26; James 1:17). To celebrate gifts is to honour the Giver, recognize each person’s vocation, and rejoice as God’s grace becomes tangible among us.

Scriptural foundations	
<b>1 Peter 4:10</b>	Gifts received to serve
<b>1 Corinthians 12:4–7</b>	Many gifts one Spirit
<b>Romans 12:4–8</b>	Different gifts one body
<b>1 Corinthians 12:22–26</b>	Indispensable members
<b>James 1:17</b>	Every good gift from above
Key insights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifts are given for others’ good</li> <li>• Listen first; invite and resource participation</li> <li>• Celebrate visible and hidden contributions</li> </ul>	
Summary Statement	
Celebrate the Giver by welcoming every person’s God-given contribution.	

These four core values summarize how faith and work come together in the ministry of Karis Disability Services. To learn more or continue the conversation, contact Keith Dow, Manager of Organizational and Spiritual Life, at [kdow@karis.org](mailto:kdow@karis.org).



## Karis' Values, Vision and Mission

Built on our values, our vision drives our mission. It answers the question of 'what we do at Karis Disability Services.' Our values are the 'why we do it,' and our vision – that people with disabilities belong to communities in which their God-given gifts are valued and celebrated – is 'where we are going.'

### Value Statement

***We will honour God and value people in all we do and with all our resources***

As a Christian faith-based organization, Karis holds to this value statement that forms our unique identity while welcoming people of all faiths and backgrounds who share our vision, subscribe to Karis' values, and wish to join in our mission to be part of the exciting organization that is Karis Disability Services.<sup>19</sup> There are several elements to this statement:

**Honour God:**<sup>20</sup> We are cognizant that people look to Karis expecting to see values and behaviours that reflect our faith roots. Thus, employees of the organization should, in representing Karis, demonstrate qualities including honesty<sup>21</sup>, integrity<sup>22</sup>, patience, kindness and self-control.<sup>23</sup> As indicated above, the way in which we seek to honour God is to imitate the work of Jesus Christ.

**Value people:** The way that we value people is predicated on the belief that people are image-bearers of their Creator.<sup>24</sup> To us, valuing people means treating each person with respect and dignity, expecting the best from them and striving to see the best in them.<sup>25</sup> "People" is not limited

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<sup>19</sup> The Core Competencies document acknowledges that need for employees to show "... concern for, and sensitivity to, the fundamental values and ethics of the agency/organization/sector."

<sup>20</sup> People may honour God through service to those in need (Proverbs 14:31), through caring for themselves (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and in treating others well (Ill John 1:6). In addition, theologically we understand that God may be honoured by happenings irrespective of whether people involved acknowledge God.

<sup>21</sup> Proverbs 16:11, 24:26

<sup>22</sup> Proverbs 13:6, Titus 2:7

<sup>23</sup> Galatian 5:22-23. Note that self-control is a threshold competency.

<sup>24</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>25</sup> 1 Corinthians 13



but includes persons supported, employees, agency partners, and others.<sup>26</sup> Specifically related to Karis' services, valuing people relates to fostering inclusion and belonging.

**Reflecting this in all we do:** We recognize that the values we espouse must be reflected in every aspect<sup>27</sup> of the work that we do at Karis Disability Services. Seeking to imitate the vulnerability and strength of Christ necessitates embodying servant leadership.

**With all our resources:** While resources come in many forms (government funding, donations, gifts and talents of employees and volunteers), we see God as the ultimate source of our resources.<sup>28</sup> In recognizing God as the ultimate source of our resources, we are to respond faithfully and with integrity while being stewards of the resources available.<sup>29</sup> This response is first of all to God but necessitates responding faithfully with all stakeholders to whom we are accountable, including the government, donors, families, persons supported, and the board of directors.

### Vision Statement

**People with disabilities belong to communities in which their God-given gifts are valued and celebrated.**

- Our vision includes that people **belong to communities**.
  - We reject the notion that people with disabilities should be isolated, marginalized or excluded.<sup>30</sup>
  - We support people with disabilities to be included in faith communities<sup>31</sup>, clubs, recreational groups, interest groups, hobby groups, community organizations, etc.

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<sup>26</sup> Biblically speaking, the concept of "other" is expressed at times as "neighbour" but also as "alien" or "stranger." Regardless of how it is expressed, there are numerous instructions to treat the person well. (e.g., Leviticus 25:35, Matthew 25:35, Mark 12:31, Hebrews 13:2, III John 1:5)

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22, I Peter 1:15

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 1:28, 9:1 & 7.

<sup>29</sup> Luke 12:42, Peter 4:10. Note that Resource Management (effectively managing resources) is a Core Competency.

<sup>30</sup> In Genesis 2:18, in the context of creation, God expresses that "It is not good for ... man to be alone"

<sup>31</sup> In particular, Christian faith communities have a calling to be inclusive, to include the stranger (Matthew 25, II John 1:5) and to be hospitable (Hebrews 13).



- We work to encourage open and accepting communities by
  - modeling healthy and positive relationships based on valuing and respecting the person and
  - coming alongside communities and groups to help them explore what it means to be inclusive.
- Our vision includes that **people have gifts**
  - Where some people may see disabilities and limitations, we see and seek creative ways in which people with disabilities may use their gifts to enrich society.<sup>32</sup>
- Our vision includes that gifts **are God-given**
  - We believe that all people reflect the image of God to the world.<sup>33</sup> This reflection occurs in what we do, how we do it, and how we see others. Seeing people's gifts as God-given<sup>34</sup> challenges any notion that a person's gifts might be overlooked, ignored or devalued.<sup>35</sup>
- Our vision includes that **gifts are valued and celebrated**<sup>36</sup>

Given that all people have gifts to share and can make a positive contribution, we support people with developmental disabilities to be fully-functioning, contributing members of society. Thus, we support people to share their gifts through various methods - which may include volunteering, pursuing a vocation, pursuing an artistic endeavor, etc. - and to participate in activities of citizenship - which may include participation in social action, voting, and other political processes.

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<sup>32</sup> Ephesians 4:7-12, I Peter 4:10, Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 12:11. Although some parts of scripture concentrate on spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12) other parts of scripture makes it clear that gifts include vocations (Exodus 31:6)

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>34</sup> Henri Nouwen in his book "Adam – God's Beloved" describes a young man who has multiple, severe disabilities as actually being very gifted and being "my friend, my teacher, my guide."

<sup>35</sup> I Corinthians 12:4, I Corinthians 16:10-11, I Timothy 4:12-14

<sup>36</sup> I Corinthians 12:4, I Corinthians 16:10-11, I Timothy 4:12-14



## Mission Statement

*As an expression of Christian faith, we work together with people with disabilities to accomplish their goals and nurture communities where everybody belongs.*

**As an expression of Christian faith:** Karis Disability Services is a Christian faith-based organization, deeply rooted in biblical truths. While Karis upholds Christian values, the organization welcomes people of all faiths and non-religious backgrounds to join in our Mission. Karis makes our work accessible to everyone by describing the approach to service that reflects the Christian faith through our various documents including the Expectations for Employees, which outlines the role we have in supporting people.

**we work together with people:** We work together as teams, as an organization, with communities, with the government, faith communities and most importantly with the person using services and their family. “Working together” takes many forms, each of which recognizes that service is not to be provided from a position above another or below another, but as equals created in the image of God. We continue to move from a place of doing things for people toward doing things with people and ultimately, being led by people receiving our services.

**with disabilities:** We work together with the person who has disabilities and many others including their family and community – all of those people “experience disabilities” in some way. Therefore, “with disabilities” is intentionally inclusive of the person, their family, their community, and the broader Christian community. Our work in Canada is primarily to support people with a developmental disability, yet many people we support have concurrent disabilities.

**to accomplish their goals:** Respecting the leading of a person and their goals, implementing plans to get there, and accomplishing those goals, through person-centered support, is at the heart of what we do at Karis. Working alongside people to grow and develop is also vital to our vision to see people with disabilities actively engaged in communities where their God-given gifts are valued and celebrated. When people of all abilities contribute their gifts, the whole community benefits.





**and nurture communities:** Our role is to motivate and equip communities to fulfill their potential, best realized when everybody belongs and contributes. Our role is not to build the communities and have people belong to them – rather, we strive to work within communities, encouraging them to recognize the value of everybody’s gifts and contributions.

**where everybody belongs:** “Everybody belongs” draws from the biblical analogy of Christ’s body, where each member – every person – is indispensable (1 Corinthians 12) and “each member belongs to one another” (Rom 12:5). Relatedly, the incarnation (the Word became Flesh, John 1:14) highlights that *bodies matter*. As human beings, our physical bodies are the sites of marginalization and stigma or of welcome and experiences of belonging. Everybody has the right to dignity, respect, and self-determination. Everybody seeks a community of belonging.





## Karis' Service Principles

Karis Disability Services seeks to provide services in a manner consistent with its perspective that all people have intrinsic value as image-bearers of God. In keeping with its vision, mission and values, we will provide services and supports consistent with the following principles.

**We recognize each person's right to self-determination:** We believe that all people want to have choice and control in their lives. We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk of not having their right to self-determination respected; therefore, we will respect and will follow each person's direction for their life, help access information to assist in making informed decisions, and foster independence in ways that are meaningful to the person.

**We work to enhance relationships:** We recognize that each person has a need to associate with others. We believe relationships are essential to a person's quality of life. We believe that family and friends play a significant role in helping a person realize his or her full potential. We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk of being marginalized and excluded; therefore, we seek to assist each person to develop valuable and positive interpersonal relationships.

**We promote full citizenship:** We understand full citizenship to mean that people are treated with dignity and respect and are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities as accepted members of society. We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk of not benefitting fully from the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship; therefore, we seek to assist each person to realize those benefits and, when necessary, will advocate with people so they can experience full citizenship.

**We seek to value peoples' gifts:** We believe every person has gifts to share. We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk of not having their gifts recognized and valued, therefore, we will work to enhance the recognition of people's gifts and to empower people to share their gifts and skills in their community through employment, volunteering, belonging, etc.

**We encourage continuous growth and development:** We believe that people grow and develop throughout their life. We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk for not having access to opportunities for growth and





development, therefore, we will work to support people to explore opportunities to try new things and pursue their goals.

**We recognize the need for holistic supports.** We believe that a person is more than the sum of his or her parts. It is impossible to encapsulate a person's existence into a few words and phrases. We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk for being seen in a fragmented way, with needs in various areas; therefore we will work to provide supports in a holistic fashion, addressing areas such as:

- **Physical needs.** Recognizing each person's unique physical abilities and interests, we will work to enhance each person's acceptance of their physical characteristics, and assist them to achieve physical development according to their needs, desires and abilities.
- **Intellectual needs.** Recognizing each person's unique intellectual development, we will support each person to acquire the necessary skills, or direct them to resources to equip them to address life's challenges. We will support each person to develop and grow to their maximum potential, enabling them to make positive choices and to participate in beneficial aspects of life.
- **Emotional needs.** Recognizing each person's unique emotional development, we will work to strengthen each person's ability to function positively and to create healthy and stable environments that will minimize negative stress.

**Spiritual needs.** Recognizing each person's right to freedom of religion, we will work to support each person in undertaking and pursuing faith-based activities that they chose, that are meaningful to them, that will enhance their personal life.





## Appendix: Scripture References

This is not an exhaustive list. It contains the verses and passages specifically referenced in this document. New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

### Introduction: A Story of Faith

#### The Reese Journey

Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait I say on the Lord Psalms 27:14, KJV

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. Philippians 4:4

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

#### One Vision, One Ministry

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:36-39

there were no needy people among [the Christian community], because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to give to those in need.” Acts 4:34-35, NLT

### Valuing People

*Karis values each human being as a person created in the Image of God (imago Dei), to be celebrated not only because of their gifts, abilities, and attributes but in light of their intrinsic worth (Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13, 16). As an image-bearer of God we recognize each person’s freedom of self-determination and their holistic needs, including spiritual support and the desire for meaningful relationships (Genesis 1:26).*

#### Created in God’s image

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:13

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26, 27



## Human beings are persons

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:16

## People have the right to self-determination

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” Revelation 3:20, NLT

## People are relational

Let us create human beings in our Image, to be like us. Genesis 1:26, NLT

It is not good for the man to be alone Genesis 2:18

## Fostering Belonging

*Karis recognizes the shared vulnerability of the human person and the necessity of mutual support, hospitality, and relational healing (Psalm 103:15, John 9, Mark 2, Matthew 8:8). This is described as the need to belong. Karis works to build communities of belonging in its own partnerships as well with each person we support.*

## The beauty of vulnerability

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him...  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Isaiah 53:2-4

The life of mortals is like grass,  
they flourish like a flower of the field; Psalm 103:15

He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Philippians 2:7

Surely God is my help;  
the Lord is the one who sustains me. Psalm 54:4

If one part [of the Body] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 1 Corinthians 12:26

## Hospitality and welcome

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. Acts 4:32

The parable of the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32

Christ’s encounters with a blind man, someone who is paralyzed, and a centurion, and a host of others. John 9, Mark 2, and Mat 8:8



**Belonging to community**

Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

1 Corinthians 12:21

**Relational healing**

Christ's disciples ask him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Their impression was that disability was a result of sin. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," replied Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him

John 9:2,3

The friends of a paralyzed man lower him through the roof in order to get past the crowds to Jesus. When Jesus sees their faith, he first says to the man "Son, your sins are forgiven." Only then does he go on to physically heal the man in order to demonstrate that he has the power to forgive sins.

Mark 2:4

**Serving others**

*In imitating the work of Christ, Karis emphasizes the importance of serving one another so that each person can exercise their own ability to lead and contribute (Luke 22:26-27, John 13:14-17, Mark 10:42-45, Philippians 2:3-4). In doing so, Karis emphasizes the tactile nature of the gospel: it is in demonstrating love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control that the Good News is made known (1 John 1:1, John 1:14, Luke 4:18-19, Proverbs 31:8-9, Matthew 25, 4, James 2:14-17, Galatians 5:22-23).*

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:3-5

**Redemptive and restorative work**

In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves."

Luke 22:26-27, NLT

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants

1 Peter 5:2-4





you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

## Justice and advocacy

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4:18-19

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9

## The tactile gospel: Serving every body

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

1 John 1:1

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Mark 9:41

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Matthew 25:37-40

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Galatians 5:22,  
NLT

## Celebrating Gifts

*As indicated by the writers of the New Testament, each person has gifts to share and these gifts are indispensable to the community (1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:14-20, Romans 12:4-5). Often, preconceptions about gifts and talents need to be challenged in order that each person can effectively steward their gifts and belong to communities in which their God-given gifts are valued and celebrated.*







## ROOTED IN FAITH

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. 1 Peter 4:10, NLT

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. 1 Corinthians 12:21-22

People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart 1 Samuel 16:7, NLT

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" Genesis 2:23

