



Committed to INCLUSION

Ways to Become More Inclusive for Worship

Many places of worship may find inclusion a challenge and may not fully understand what it involves. Have you ever wondered if your place of worship has physical barriers that prevent others from accessing

services and activities? Making places of worship accessible and inclusive for people of all abilities not only increases fellowship but benefits everyone and helps to create a more inclusive society.

Here are some tips to promote accessibility and inclusion in your place of worship

1. Make it clear that you welcome people with additional needs on your website

Give a list of the accessible arrangements you have, anything from large print or Braille song sheets to ramps and wireless headphones. Don't forget to list contact information if someone has a question about additional needs.

2. Appoint a designated person

Have a designated person that oversees and coordinates the support and overall vision of inclusion, including what practical steps need to take place in order to support people with additional needs.

3. Understand what families are going through

For some families, every day is "full on" as parents and caregivers may never have the chance to switch off. They often do not have time to look after themselves and give more of themselves to help others. Sometimes they feel grumpy and may be short of patience. They may be sleep deprived and coming to church is not a break or a rest.

4. Listen

It's important to listen to a child or adult with additional needs because they know themselves best and they know what they like and don't like. If they cannot speak, spend time observing and learning how they communicate.

5. Don't let your congregation judge

Encourage the congregation to be accepting and try to make it clear that even a disapproving look can be off putting and judgemental. Parents and caregivers of people with additional needs get plenty of that outside of the church doors.

6. Get church leaders trained

Everyone who leads or volunteers for anything should be involved. Arrange for speakers, take training sessions and keep talking about diversity.

7. Ask practical and patient questions

Simply asking what is needed goes a long way. "What works for you? What works at school or daycare? Are there any of these things that we could do to make our place of worship better and easier?" Then do the things you can from the answers. One small thing can make a huge difference. When you've done one thing...do another thing... and another.

8. Have high expectations

Think highly of what people can understand and achieve. Find ways to open up the world of scripture. It may mean doing weekly services a bit different and it may mean preaching takes on a different style completely. Also consider using different forms of communication in your services, including digital media.

9. Celebrate diversity outside

Watch and listen to people with additional needs and let them show how they connect with their beliefs. Encourage outside connection with people with additional needs in the community. Approach and be friendly to people with disabilities.

10. And finally

Remember that you don't need any qualifications or even experience to be a place of worship that makes people feel welcome and a part of their congregation.



If you have questions or want more information on how to make your church more accessible, call us at 330-725-7751; option 3.