



***OPEN HEARTS  
OPEN MINDS  
OPEN DOORS***

**IDEA GUIDE**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to the Reader	4
Affirmation	5-8
Communication	9-12
Accessibility	13-15
Keeping Inclusion "Alive"	16
Inclusive Prayers of Petition	17
Example of Easy-to-Read Music	18
Other Helpful Sources	18
How I Can Make a Difference	19-20
Personal Accounts	21-22

## What is Inclusion?

**Inclusion means to offer the same respect and opportunities to all people.**

**Inclusion in churches means giving people with disabilities/differences the opportunity to serve in Liturgy and worship life.**

## PATHWAYS AWARENESS FOUNDATION

Dear Reader,

There are some wonderful inclusive faith practices already happening for persons with disabilities or differences. You will find inside this guide some of the best inclusion examples we have found.

This Idea Guide is designed to stimulate religious councils and committees to identify the needs of their own congregations and to develop short and long term plans for implementation.



It is important to keep inclusion "alive" by the creation of a committee on inclusion which reports to the head of the church council. Please see page 13 for ideas.

Due to the overwhelming response to the Inclusion Conference held in Chicago called by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, we produced this video and guide to make the information available to a wider audience. The video Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors could change your life and the way persons of all abilities could better serve one another in ministry.

*Shirley Welsh Ryan*  
Chairman

*Maggie C. Daley*  
President



# AFFIRMATION

“Inclusion begins in our hearts. It begins with affirmation. We should open our hearts to one another and recognize the strengths of every person . . . When we open our hearts and our community to the gifts each person brings, we are all strengthened.”

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

1.

Could children, youth and adults with disabilities be given more opportunity to serve others in Liturgy and in church life (as altar server, Eucharistic minister, lector, cantor, usher, musician, etc.)?

- Which committee could make inclusion happen on a routine basis?



5

2.

Could we form a well-rounded committee on inclusion to increase meaningful participation for persons with disabilities?

- Please see page 13.



3.

Could we hold focus groups or conduct a church survey to personalize our church needs and to prioritize inclusion improvements (large print materials, better sound systems or lighting, front row access, etc.)?

- Who in our church would be good to lead this effort?

“One of the great gifts of people with visible disabilities is to help us who have invisible disabilities or vulnerabilities to get in touch with them . . . To realize that I am impatient, that I am full of anxieties and fears, that I have my broken relationship, that I am poor . . . God says ‘Blessed are the poor.’ ”

Henri Nouwen

6

“The great mystery of our faith is that we get closest to God when we are willing to be vulnerable . . . when we are willing to say ‘I need somebody else.’ ”

Henri Nouwen

4.

Could ushers and lay leaders be trained to act as role models to include and welcome persons with disabilities and their families?

- What church member who uses a chair or walker could be a good trainer?





5.

Could we move meetings to the ground floor so that anyone would be welcome?



6.

Could we make our prayers and petitions more inclusive?

Please see page 14.

7.

Could we announce that children with special needs are welcome in religious education classes and that parents can talk to the coordinator and teachers to discuss ideas?

- Which youth leaders could welcome and include children with differences?



8.

Could we place an 'inclusion box' in the church with paper and pencils for church members to easily express suggestions for better inclusion?

9.

Where can we use the word "typical" instead of "normal"? Can we say "sit or kneel," or "sit or stand" to include all abilities?

10.

Do we need a "Connection Committee" for persons with disabilities, families, and caregivers who may need breaks, social visits, or shopping assistance so all may feel the warmth of God's love?

- Who would be a good 'Connection' leader?

"God created you with unimaginable gifts. It is the affirmation of others that makes that gift possible. You only know you have a gift when there is someone to say 'Thank you' . . . Affirmation creates community."

Henri Nouwen

QUESTIONS? - IDEAS?

Call Pathways Awareness Foundation

1-800-955-2445



# COMMUNICATION

“Communication begins with an open mind. When we unite with one another in a community of love, we learn to communicate in open, caring ways. We need to be sensitive to how we communicate with one another, with our children, with ourselves.”

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin

1.

Can we use large print or Braille prayer books, missals or bulletins?

(Note: This 14 point bold sans serif print works for most persons, especially those with limited vision and could be used for all church publications.)



2.

Could we provide a sign-language interpreter at a regular time?

- How can we work with our religious education leaders to include persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing?



3.

How can we encourage people-first language which puts the person first and their difference second? Examples of people-first language:

- How do we refer to people with disabilities? Can we use people-first language in homilies, bulletins, and signs?

## PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

USE

Person with a Disability

USE

Persons with Disabilities

USE

A Man Who Uses a Wheelchair

NOT

~~Handicapped Person~~

NOT

~~The Disabled~~

NOT

~~A Wheelchair-bound Man~~



4.

Could we use the accessibility logo on outside signs, posters, telephone directories to welcome all persons and their families?

- How important is it to let people with disabilities know that our church welcomes them?



ACCESSIBILITY LOGO

5.

Who could help us check our amplifying sound system and lighting for quality?

- (FM wireless is available and is relatively inexpensive to improve hearing)



QUALITY SOUND SYSTEM

6.

Who could help us audio tape or print large-print homilies and promote them in the bulletin?

7.

Who could look into adding a TDD in the church office to enable a person without hearing to communicate?

8.

Can we use large print or Braille music sheets or hymnals?

Please see page 15.

9.

Could we use a homily with theological insights about inclusion (using people-first language)?

10.

Could we present Liturgy verbally and visually, dramatically and musically for different learning styles?



DRAMATIZE READINGS

“One in five Americans has a disability - physical, mental, or sensory.”

National Council on Disability

QUESTIONS? - THOUGHTS?

Call Pathways Awareness Foundation  
1-800-955-2445

“... the question is not how can we help people with disabilities (which is an important question) ... a more important question is how can people with disabilities give their spiritual gifts to us and ... call us to love?”

Henri Nouwen



# ACCESSIBILITY

“We can do no great things, only small things with great love. Together, these small things will add up to monumental change.”

Mother Theresa

**C**hanges in access to our church and buildings benefit all of us . . . people with strollers, people with a temporary cast, crutches, cane, or chair, as well as persons needing accessibility on a more permanent basis.

1.

Could we include a person who uses a wheelchair, walker or crutches or a family member on our committee for planning renovations or additions to our Church?

2.

Can a person in a chair move from a car to church services without going up or down a step?

- The ramped side of any building should be closest to the street or parking area.



OUTDOOR RAMPS

3.

Can we provide marked accessible parking spaces for cars and vans close to accessible entrances?



4.

Who could benefit from a bathroom with wheelchair facilities available on the worship floor or an elevator?



ACCESSIBLE WASHROOMS

5.

Could a person in a wheelchair or walker sit in the front pew with their family?



REMOVE FRONT KNEELER

6.

Is our altar accessible? Is the podium or microphone adjustable for a person's height?



RAMPS TO ALTAR



7.

Could we hold religious education classes, teen and adult meetings in rooms on ground floor, without stairs?

- Which classes are now not available to persons with disabilities?

8.

Could we add a curb-cut to help make sidewalks and ramps accessible?



**CURB CUTS**

9.

Can a person in a wheelchair participate on the altar?

- How could we build access to the altar?

10.

Should we set short, medium and long-term fund raising goals for accessibility?

- Could our church raise funds with an auction, flower sales or Christmas greens?
- Would someone donate a ramp or elevator as a memorial to a family member?



**AUTOMATIC DOORS**

## KEEPING INCLUSION "ALIVE"

**AN INCLUSION COMMITTEE CAN RECOMMEND IDEAS TO KEEP INCLUSION "ALIVE".**

An inclusion committee should involve people of all abilities in order to reflect the needs of the entire congregation.

- A person with either visible or invisible disabilities who can offer insight on the needs of the parish (person in a wheelchair, person with a hearing impairment, a family member)
- A designer or builder who knows how to direct changes to the structure of parish buildings.

- A Liturgy planner who will implement changes in the Liturgy to better involve people of all abilities
- A person who can help develop a campaign to raise small and large funds to implement changes
- A writer or communicator who can define the needs of the parish and the inclusion efforts taking place
- **THE INCLUSION COMMITTEE SHOULD BEST REPORT TO THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL.**

**QUESTIONS?**

Call: Pathways  
Awareness Foundation  
1-800-955-2445



# INCLUSIVE PRAYERS OF PETITION

- Response** Lord, help us to see each other with your eyes.
- Leader** We pray that we may recognize that each of us has abilities and gifts, each of us has disabilities or weaknesses, each of us seeks fulfillment and wholeness.
- Leader** We pray that we may grow more interdependent with persons of differing abilities and disabilities, as we come closer to the truth of the Gospel.
- Leader** We pray we all may extend open arms to the baby with difficulties or to the person with medical concerns so that all persons can feel the warmth of God's love.
- Response** "We praise you, O God, for all your gifts are wonderful."

## An Example of "Easy-to-Read" Music

### Amazing Grace - Newton

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, That saved and set me free! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see. (14 Point Bold)

### INFORMATION SOURCES

- Pathways Awareness Foundation**  
1-800-955-2445 1-800-326-8154 (TDD)  
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors Video and Idea Guide \$20, Idea Guide \$4, (Qty. Disc. Avl.)  
Henri Nouwen Audio Tape and Booklet  
"The Vulnerable Journey" \$7 (includes S/H)
- 
- ADA Cost Catalogue for Access Modification**  
1-800-341-7874 Ext. 347 \$40 (includes S/H)
- 
- Elizabeth Ministry**  
200 E. Bethany Dr., Allen, TX 75002  
1-800-822-6701 1-800-688-8356 (Fax)  
www.rclweb.com  
A wonderful way for your parish to reach out to women during times of pregnancy, birth, adoption, miscarriage and infertility.
- 
- National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities**  
202-529-2933 (Tel & TDD)  
ADA Packet - Parish Awareness Packet, etc.
- 
- National Organization on Disability**  
202-293-5960 (Tel) 202-293-5968 (TDD)  
That All May Worship (an interfaith handbook) \$10 (includes S/H)



# HOW I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

People with disabilities creatively address their needs and serve society in many ways, yet they often desire a greater opportunity to be involved in religious activities.

There are many things that you, as an individual, can do to help people with disabilities in your house of worship.

1.

I will speak directly to the person with a disability or difference, not only to the nearby companion, family member, interpreter or the canine companion.

2.

I will offer to shake hands when introduced to a person with a disability (persons with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb usually can shake hands. Shaking the left hand is O.K., too.)

3.

I will place myself in a chair at eye level for easy conversation with a person using a wheelchair or walker.

4.

I will offer assistance and wait until the offer is accepted. I will wait for instructions but not insist.

5.

I will give my whole, unhurried attention to a person who has difficulty speaking rather than speaking for the person. I may help by asking short questions that require short answers, a nod or a shake of the head, or a written answer.

6.

I will encourage a person with a disability to serve on the altar, to distribute communion, to be a reader or to bear gifts.

7.

I will treat adults with developmental disabilities as adults, not as children. I will use first names only when using the same familiarity for all persons.

8.

I will get the attention of someone who is hearing-impaired by lightly tapping their elbow or shoulder, or by waving my hand. I will look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish if the person can read my lips.

9.

I will offer to read the weekly church bulletin to a person who is blind.

10.

I will guide a person with visual impairments by giving verbal clues to steps, doors, curbs or escalators. I will first identify myself.



## Personal Account



Eight years ago, I had no idea what God had in mind for me. I was becoming tired of being talked about in the third person. My companion would be there and they would say to her or to

him, "What's wrong with her?" . . . like I wasn't even there.

One Sunday, I picked up a bulletin and in it was a request for catechists. With much trepidation and hesitation, I made the phone call that transformed my life.

Well, not only did I become a catechist - I also went on to chair a Liturgy board, I was a Liturgy planner, I'm on Art & Environment, and I facilitated a Bible study group. I have been blessed. I have been accepted and embraced by a wonderful faith-filled community . . . A community that demonstrates to me over and over again what God has had in mind for me.

## Personal Account

Let me explain a little about myself. I was not born blind. I lost my sight through a roller skating accident when I was ten years old. When this happened, it seemed as though life was over . . .

but somehow in my heart, I knew that that wasn't true. I got to think about this fall in the skating rink as my "Felix Culpa". It's a beautiful Latin word from the Easter Vigil . . . and what it means is "happy fault"



. . . that something terrible has happened, but many good things come from it . . . I think this has been very true in my life. The insightful decision of our Bishop to include me in a regular school began my inclusion into society. I also attended Rosary College, where I met my husband-to-be, the father of our five children. I was included on the basis of my qualifications at Niles College, at Mundelein, at Loyola where I was accepted in this difference . . . blindness . . . which can neither be denied nor overlooked.

The cost of inclusion is "metanoia", a changing of hearts, which integrates everyone into society. When we are all accepted, the wall of strangeness that separates us will come down, and we can share the gifts that God has given to each of us.





**Cardinal Bernardin, archbishop of Chicago, celebrated diversity and life. Although a man of great honor and power, the Cardinal was known for his humility . . . The Cardinal's understanding of disability increased as he lived with cancer and osteoporosis.**

**These extraordinary men, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and Father Henri Nouwen, generously gave their insights and guidance to the inclusion of persons with disabilities into Liturgy and church life.**

**Henri Nouwen proclaimed the power of vulnerability, authored 30 books, and taught at Harvard, Yale and Notre Dame. Father Nouwen lived as Chaplain at L'Arche in Toronto, a community for persons with mental disabilities whom he called his best teachers about love and life.**

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**A PROJECT OF  
PATHWAYS AWARENESS FOUNDATION**

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