

Affirmation

Some good ideas used by congregations to welcome worshippers of all abilities and their families in the area of affirmation:

- The faith community recognizes the talents and/or gifts of individuals. Rarely are people described by their disabilities, instead they are recognized for their gifts. For example, a woman who is blind proclaims the Scripture using Braille, and a man who is a guitar player and who uses a wheelchair performs with a music ministry.
- A survey of congregant needs is used to determine the individual needs of the congregation and to help prioritize improvements such as accessible parking, large-print materials, improved sound system and lighting, wheelchair access, inclusive religious education classes, etc. See “Survey of Congregant Needs”.
- Adults and children with disabilities are given opportunities to serve others within the worship service and in the outreach programs of the faith community.
- Worshippers with invisible disabilities are active members in the faith community (Invisible disabilities include learning disabilities, mental conditions, seizures, the many forms of cancer, arthritis, lupus, heart disease, stroke, etc.).
- Children of all abilities are included in religious education classes with appropriate supports.
- A religious or lay leader who has acquired a serious disability continues to serve in worship services and church leadership if he/she desires.
- A “Care Committee” has been created to connect the congregation to families affected by disability by means of weekly social visits, shopping assistance, caregiver break time, or babysitting. Committee members are trained to communicate appropriately and to extend open-arms to the new baby with difficulties or to the person with a new injury/condition so that all families can feel the warmth of God’s love.