

TEN EASY WAYS TO WELCOME PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE AREA OF AFFIRMATION

1. Include children, youth and adults with disabilities in worship as cantors, ushers, musicians, altar servers, gift bearers, lectors, etc.
2. Make a well-rounded committee on inclusion part of your congregation's governing council to increase meaningful participation for worshippers with disabilities.
3. Educate the entire congregation about disability issues by periodically running pieces in your bulletin about hospitality and welcome. See "How You Can Make a Difference" in this toolkit.
4. Train ushers and lay leaders as role models to include and welcome worshippers with disabilities and their families.
5. Reinterpret disability narratives in the scripture as "healing" not "curing" stories or reference biblical leaders who had disabilities in homilies and sermons.
6. Place an "inclusion box" in the worship space with paper and pencils for suggestions for better inclusion.
7. Observe an annual Inclusion Awareness Day to celebrate how your congregation welcomes worshippers with disabilities. Visit www.teambelong.org for ideas.
8. Consult a person who uses a wheelchair, walker or crutches when planning renovation or additions.
9. Understand that previous negative experiences may cause individuals with disabilities to initially decline your invitation to participate. Don't hesitate to extend additional invitations.
10. List accessible features and supports available in a permanent "For your comfort and convenience..." section of the bulletin or worship aide.