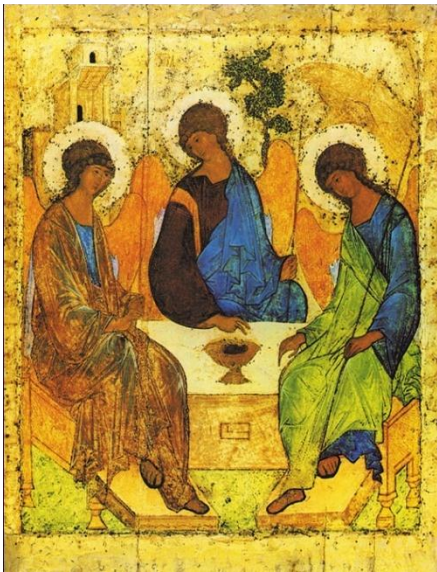




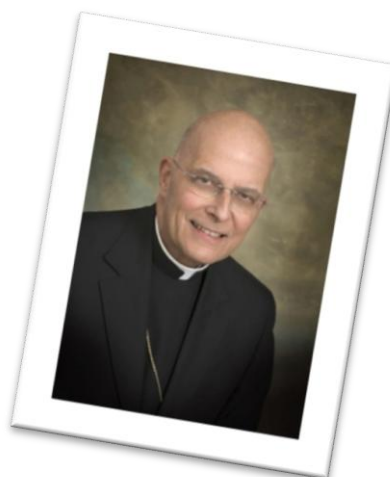
INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY WORKBOOK

*Intentionally Welcoming
Worshippers of All Abilities*

Roman Catholic Edition



LOOK INSIDE FOR
Liturgy Planning Aids • Bulletin Articles
• Activities for Children and Teens



DEDICATION:

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and Father Henri Nouwen generously gave their insight and guidance to the Open Hearts, Open Minds movement, which was inaugurated at the 1996 Inclusion in Worship Conference sponsored by Pathways Foundation in partnership with the Archdiocese of Chicago. Cardinal Francis George continued the legacy with the TEAM Belong movement in the Archdiocese of Chicago, inaugurating the parish Inclusion Representative program. This workbook is dedicated to their memories.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Pathways.org is grateful to Cardinal Blase Cupich for his ongoing support of TEAM Belong and his dedication to opening hearts, minds and doors to parishioners of all abilities in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Special thanks to Pathways.org's Open Hearts Round Table of Advisors for their continued guidance and support.

ON THE COVER: Clockwise from top left to right: automatic door opener at 2012 Open Hearts Award winning Incarnation Catholic Church, Palos Heights, IL, altar servers on Inclusion Awareness Day at 2008 Open Hearts Award winning Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, Glenview, IL, icon from the Inclusion Awareness Day prayer card available for downloading at www.teambelong.org, ramp to the altar designed and installed by parishioners at 2006 and 2007 Open Hearts Award winning Church of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Schaumburg, IL .

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“The parish is a beacon of faith and an advocate for justice and peace, reaching out in love to all ...”

Blase Cardinal Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago
Renew My Church
February, 2016

“The creation of a fully accessible parish reaches beyond mere physical accommodations to encompass the attitudes of all parishioners toward persons with disabilities. Pastoral ministers are encouraged to develop specific programs aimed at forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all of God's people around the table of the Lord.”

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments #6



Student's Inclusion Awareness Day artwork from 2013 Open Hearts Award winning St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL and 2002 Junior Open Hearts Award winning artwork from St. Mary Catholic Church, Buffalo Grove, IL.

INTRODUCTION AND INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES



From left to right: accessible washroom at 2011 Open Hearts Award winning Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Cincinnati, OH, flexible seating area with some higher arm chairs for parishioners who find it difficult to rise to stand at Infant Jesus of Prague Catholic Church, Flossmoor, IL., curb cut, approved by the city of New York, from West 15th Street to the accessible entrance at 2011 Open Hearts Award winning Church of St. Francis Xavier, New York, N.Y.

“Parishes making decisions about the design of a church must consider how the various aspects and choices they make will affect the ability of all the members to participate fully in liturgical celebrations.”

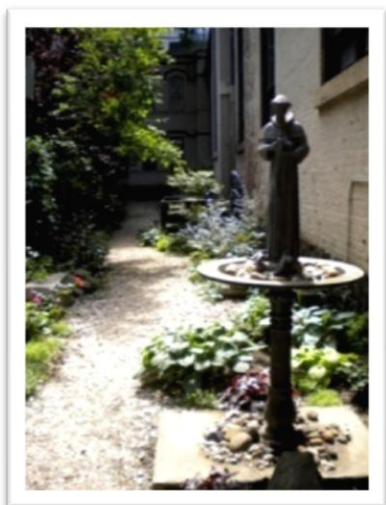
United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship #31

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion Awareness Day is one way to focus on how well we are welcoming parishioners with disabilities in our parishes. We invite your parish to observe **Inclusion Awareness Day the second weekend in October**. Please consider this date **or another date in the fall** to renew your parish's commitment to intentionally including parishioners of all abilities. The Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Roman Catholic faith communities is provided to encourage your participation.

Since 1996 TEAM Belong has grown into a national, interfaith movement. Congregations in the Chicago area and across the United States have used our materials, Open Hearts Awards and Junior Open Hearts Awards cash grants and annual Inclusion Awareness Day celebrations to become accessible and welcoming to worshippers with disabilities.

Please join us in opening hearts, minds and doors to parishioners of all abilities, not only on Inclusion Awareness Day, but every day of the year. Together we can ensure that parishioners with differing abilities and their families can share their gifts, enjoy their full Baptismal rights and build up the Kingdom as co-workers in our worshipping communities.



2012 Open Hearts Award winning St. Charles Borromeo parish, Brooklyn, NY, created a Prayer and Contemplation Garden along the north side of the church to offer solace to parishioners with emotional and physical health concerns.

INCLUSION IN WORSHIP AND FATHER HENRI NOUWEN

Father Henri Nouwen laid the theological framework for Inclusion in Worship with his keynote address, *The Vulnerable Journey*. In his talk at the 1996 Inclusion in Worship Conference, Father Nouwen challenges us to place the most vulnerable in the center of liturgical life.



“In the center of the Eucharist stands the vulnerable Jesus. And that means that in the center of liturgical life, those who are most vulnerable belong.”

Henri Nouwen
The Vulnerable Journey DVD

Father Nouwen also shares his expertise in the *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* video when he explains practical ways we can welcome individuals with disabilities into our faith communities.

“And I want you to hear this very well, because the question finally is not, how can we help people with disabilities, which is a good question, but a much more important question is, how can we allow people with disabilities to give their spiritual gifts to us, and call us to conversion, call us to wholeness, call us to love.”

Henri Nouwen
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors DVD

The Vulnerable Journey and Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors videos, published by Pathways Foundation, are available for viewing online at www.teambelong.org.

INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITIES

Plan your parish's event with ideas from the three areas of inclusion:

AFFIRMATION

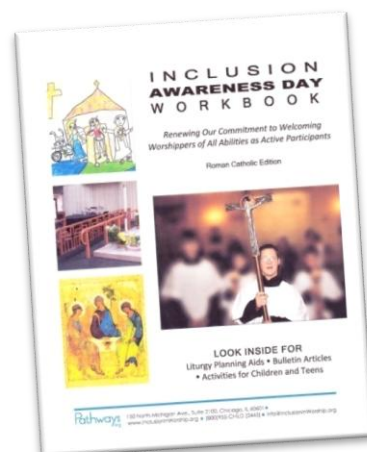
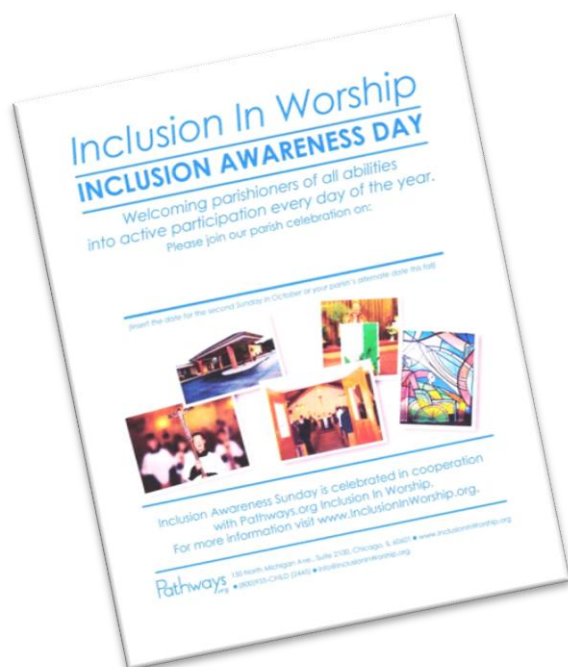
- Designate the second weekend in October or your alternate date as Inclusion Awareness Day weekend and plan liturgies that showcase how you welcome and include all parishioners. (See *the Liturgy Planning Ideas on p.15.*)
- Invite parishioners with disabilities to inaugurate their liturgical ministries on Inclusion Awareness Day. Provide accommodations, training and mentors well in advance so that the inauguration is successful and ministry continues beyond Inclusion Awareness Day.
- Plan children, teen and family activities that teach about dignity and respect for all. (See *the Inclusion Awareness Day Activities for Children and Teens on p. 25.*)
- With the pastor's blessing, ask your Parish Council to approve an inclusion committee under one of the commissions. Use Inclusion Awareness Day to commission members for the parish inclusion ministry. (See the *Commissioning Ceremony on p.18.*)
- Celebrate your parish's [Open Hearts or Junior Open Hearts Award](#) grant on Inclusion Awareness Day. Nomination forms for grants of up to \$1,000 to help fund access projects are available at www.teambelong.org.



Students from 2011 and 2013 Junior Open Hearts Award winning St. Catherine Laboure parish, Glenview, IL decorate the vestibule of the church with their inclusion artwork on Inclusion Awareness Day.

COMMUNICATION

- Teach parish leaders about preaching and speaking about disabilities with dignity and respect. (See *People First Language* on p. 21.)
- Use posters and articles in your bulletin to explain the parish effort to show dignity, respect and welcome to all members on Inclusion Awareness Day and throughout the year. (See the *Inclusion Awareness Day Bulletin Articles* on p. 11.)
- Educate the parish about interacting with parishioners of all abilities so they feel confident they are acting appropriately. (See *How You Can Make a Difference* on p. 13.)
- Print the [Inclusion Awareness Day prayer card](http://www.teambelong.org) available at www.teambelong.org. Train teens to greet and distribute the cards at all liturgies on Inclusion Awareness Day. (Use the *Guidelines for Ushers and Lay Leaders* on p. 31 for disability etiquette training for teens.)



Inclusion Awareness Day posters/ bulletin covers, [prayer card](http://www.teambelong.org) and workbooks are available for downloading at www.teambelong.org.

ACCESSIBILITY

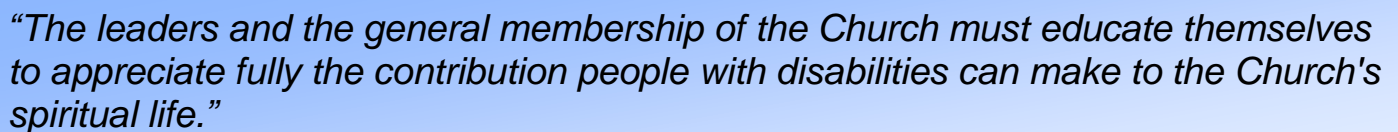
- Walk through your facilities before Inclusion Awareness Day using the [Facilities Survey](http://www.teambelong.org) available at www.teambelong.org. Note inaccessible areas, and with your parish leaders, make plans to remove those barriers to participation. Announce your plans at your congregation's Inclusion Awareness Day celebration.



An accessible ambo allows open space beneath a height adjustable reading table so that wheelchair foot plates clear the supporting structure. Children and taller or shorter adults also benefit from an accessible ambo. Photo courtesy of Tortorelli Creations, www.tortorelli.com.

“Since many people share in the ministry of the Word, the ambo should be accessible to everyone, including those with physical disabilities.”

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship #61



www.teambelong.org • info@teambelong.org

INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY BULLETIN ARTICLES

EDUCATIONAL BULLETIN SERIES

Download the series of eight [educational bulletin items](http://www.teambelong.org) at www.teambelong.org and run in bulletins, on websites or in help spread awareness about how every parishioner can help to create a more welcoming and inclusive community of faith.



Or use the following bulletin articles:

INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Inclusion Awareness Day focuses on awareness, hospitality and inclusion in our faith community. Our participation in Inclusion Awareness Day affirms our commitment to making our place of worship a place where parishioners of all abilities, even the most vulnerable, are welcomed to share their gifts at the altar.

Participation in Inclusion Awareness Day is just one step toward making our church more accessible. To have a real and lasting impact, we must extend our efforts beyond this special day. Today, on Inclusion Awareness Day, we ask each of you to personally take action to welcome and include parishioners of all abilities into our parish family. Together we can open our community so that everyone feels welcome to participate in worship, ministries and fellowship every day of the year.

Contributed by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago, IL

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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

1. I will treat ALL people as PEOPLE FIRST – as I would like to be treated.
2. I will SPEAK DIRECTLY to the person with a disability, not only to the nearby family member, companion, interpreter, or the canine companion.
3. 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 may shake hands. Shaking the left hand is okay, too.)
4. I will place myself at EYE LEVEL, in front, for easy conversation with a person in a wheelchair, with crutches, or with a walking frame.
5. I will OFFER ASSISTANCE AND WAIT until the offer is accepted. I will wait and then ask for instructions.
6. I will be PATIENT AND WAIT for the person with difficulty to speak, 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.
7. I will see the WHOLENESS OF SPIRIT beneath the surface of someone with a disability and overcome the tendency to turn away or ignore the person.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. I will guide a person with visual impairments by GIVING VERBAL CLUES to steps, curbs, escalators or doors.

BULLETIN ARTICLE TO BEGIN AN INCLUSION MINISTRY ON INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY INAUGURATES NEW MINISTRY

Today, on Inclusion Awareness Day, our parish extends a warm and heartfelt invitation to parishioners to join a new ministry, TEAM Belong. The goals of the ministry are:

- accessibility—surveying the needs of our parish community and providing the necessary accommodations so parishioners of all abilities can participate in worship, ministries, social events and leadership roles
- communication—conveying that all are welcome to participate through print, internet, verbal and nonverbal communications
- affirmation—personally inviting parishioners with disabilities to participate in parish activities.

If you are interested in joining this ministry or if you have any needs or concerns, please contact (name of Inclusion Representative) at (phone number) or (email address). Our first ministry meeting will be on (day and date) at (time) in the (location). All are welcome to attend. For more information about this ministry and TEAM Belong visit www.teambelong.org.

Contributors: Incarnation Catholic Church, Palos Heights, IL and Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Lake Villa, IL

“Pastoral ministers are encouraged to develop specific programs aimed at forming a community of believers known for its joyful inclusion of all God’s people around the table of the Lord.”

*United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments, #6*

INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY LITURGY PLANNING MATERIALS



Stained glass window panels, Adoration Chapel, Incarnation Catholic Church, Palos Heights, IL, a 2012 Open Hearts Award winning congregation.

"Liturgy, if you really want to understand it, is the place where people in their brokenness and weakness meet and discover that right where they come together in mutual vulnerability, there Jesus himself is."

Henri Nouwen
The Vulnerable Journey

HYMNS FOR INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

A Place at the Table	Murray/True
All Are Welcome	Haugen
City of God	Schutte
Holy Is God	Lawton
I Need You to Survive	Walker
One Bread, One Body	Foley, S.J.
One Lord	True
Open Doors*	Martin
Plenty Good Room	Traditional Spiritual, arr. Glover
Sing a New Church	Nettleton/Dufner
Ubi Caritas	Browning
We Come To Your Feast	Joncas

* Download the sheet music ([assembly](#) and [choir versions](#)) and audio of the song “Open Doors” by Sandy Martin at www.teambelong.org.

INTRODUCTION TO WORSHIP SERVICE ON INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Inclusion Awareness Day reminds us to open our hearts to others and to recognize the gifts of every person. When we affirm one another's gifts and talents we enrich our faith community. Today we celebrate and renew our commitment to becoming a fully accessible faith community where everyone is welcome to participate.

Contributor: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Winnetka, IL

“Whether our disabilities are visible or not, we all have them.”

Henri Nouwen
The Vulnerable Journey

OPENING PRAYER FOR INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Loving and Gracious God, we gather together in the welcoming spirit of your love. As you have fashioned each one of us according to your image and embraced each of us with your generous love, may we in turn open our arms and hearts wide in welcome to each other. In our gathering today may we experience the joy and beauty of authentic fellowship where all are valued and all are accepted.

In this hour of worship, turn our hearts to you. Touch us with your Spirit and teach us your truth. Open our hearts to respond to your words and transform our lives into the likeness of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Contributed by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago, IL

OPENING PRAYER: OPTION TWO

Gracious God, you have fashioned each one of us according to your image and embraced each of us with your generous love, may we in turn open our hearts wide and welcome each other. Because you value and accept each one of us, may we also come to accept and value all those you have created. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Contributed by Sacred Heart Church, Winnetka, IL

Automatic door openers assist parishioners who use walkers and wheelchairs as well as parents with strollers, ministry coordinators moving materials and maintenance staff moving equipment and supplies.



PARISH INCLUSION MINISTRY COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

Make long-lasting, appropriate changes by recruiting a group of committed people, including those with disabilities, to form a ministry focusing on disability issues under a commission of the parish council. Commission your parish inclusion ministry on Inclusion Awareness Day.

Presider: Gracious God, you sent Jesus to establish your kingdom and invite all people to experience the fullness of your life. Send your Holy Spirit to be with us as we commission these ministers. Give them the grace to be models of hospitality to parishioners of all abilities, like Jesus your Son. We ask this in Your name.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, God has given you the grace to say “yes” to the invitation to serve as members of the access and inclusion ministry. You now have the opportunity to serve Christ and our parish in a special way.

Presider: Do you accept the responsibility, together with our pastor and parish staff, to provide accommodations so that we can welcome and include parishioners of all abilities into our parish family?

Ministers: Yes, I do.

Presider: Do you accept the responsibility, together with our pastor and parish staff, to educate our parishioners to be a supportive presence so that parishioners of all abilities feel welcome to participate in parish life?

Ministers: Yes, I do.

Presider: Do you accept the responsibility, together with our pastor and parish staff, to foster gospel values and promote the dignity of the human person so that our parish may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ?

Ministers: Yes, I do.

TEAM Belong Ministry banner at Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Lake Villa, IL, a 2006 Open Hearts Award winning parish. Their grant was used for assistive listening devices.



COMMISSIONING CEREMONY (cont'd)

Presider: Glory and praise be to God, who has called each of you by name, and who has brought you to respond now with such generosity and love.

Presider: Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing:

Blessed are you, Lord, God of mercy, who through your Son gave us a marvelous example of charity and the great commandment of love for one another. Send down your blessings on these your servants, who will devote themselves to this ministry. When they are called on in times of need, let them faithfully serve You and our parish family. Guide their efforts as they welcome parishioners of all abilities into active participation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Contributor: Santa Maria Del Popolo Church, Mundelein, IL.



An exterior ramp makes the church wheelchair accessible but can also enhance processions on feast days, the Easter Vigil and Palm Sunday. Pictured is 2011 Open Hearts Award winning St. Patrick Catholic Church, Lexington, VA.

HOMILY HINTS

One in five Americans has a disability—physical, mental, or sensory. Disabilities can occur at any time in life and they increase with age. Most likely every fifth person you greet at church this weekend will have a disability. The challenge today is to increase your own and your congregation's awareness that as the Body of Christ we are called to welcome and include all of our members, especially those who are most vulnerable. The task today is to help all members of the congregation acknowledge their own vulnerabilities—whether hidden or exposed—and see how much we need one another.

Understanding that we all have vulnerabilities and honoring the vulnerability in others is at the heart of our Christian faith. The problem is vulnerability is rarely welcome in our competitive culture. Messages from every quarter encourage us to be the best, the brightest, the greatest, the swiftest, the most powerful, the most beautiful, or the most intelligent.

It's clear from Jesus' ministry that we are called to be compassionately aware of the needs of others. Today as a parish we can become aware of physical or attitudinal barriers that may be preventing some of our members from sharing their gifts and we can make plans to address these issues. Our celebration of Inclusion Awareness Day should remind us that we are the Body of Christ and every member has a contribution to make.



2015 Open Hearts Award winning St. James Catholic Church, Arlington Heights, IL, reaches out to welcome and include families of children with special needs with their Open Doors ministry.

HOMILY HINTS: PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

Words, whether spoken or written, are the basic means by which people communicate. Words are powerful tools that can affirm and empower. At the same time, the misuse of words can belittle and demean. Language used to describe people with disabilities often focuses on lack of ability rather than on competency. Don't reinforce common myths about people with disabilities. When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, words should be chosen with care in order to promote dignity and a positive image. The following suggestions, adapted from guidelines developed by The Research and Training Center on Independent Living, may assist in this process:

- Make reference to the person first, then the disability. Say “a person with a disability” rather than “a disabled person.”
- If the disability isn't germane to the story or conversation, don't mention it.
- A person is not a condition; therefore, avoid describing a person in such a manner. Don't present someone as an “epileptic.” Rather say “a person with epilepsy.”
- Do not portray successful people with disabilities as superhuman, as this raises expectations that all people with disabilities should reach this level.
- Do not sensationalize a disability by use of such terms as “afflicted with,” “victim of,” “suffers from.”
- Do not use generic labels such as “the disabled.”
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Use “walks with crutches” rather than “crippled”.
- Do not use condescending euphemisms. Terms like “handy-capable” and “physically inconvenienced” are considered condescending.
- Do not imply disease. People with disabilities should never be referred to as patients.
- Speak of people with disabilities as active participants in society. They are!

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Add one or two of these prayers to your intentions on Inclusion Awareness Day:

Leader: God, Creator of all, help us to recognize that each of us has abilities and each of us has limitations. And yet we all have a part to play in bringing about Your Kingdom. With a spirit of compassion and solidarity, we ask you to increase our awareness of both the gifts and the needs of those around us.

We Pray to the Lord

Response: Lord Hear Our Prayer

Leader: Compassionate Father; help us to become truly welcoming communities where everyone can find a place at Your Table. Open our hearts to the gifts of every person and help us to acknowledge the vulnerabilities we all have.

We Pray to the Lord

Response: Lord Hear Our Prayer

Leader: Father of Mercy, Help us to emulate the virtues of compassion and justice lived by St. Teresa of Calcutta. Help us to welcome the most vulnerable among us to share their gifts at the altar.

We Pray to the Lord

Response: Lord Hear Our Prayer

Leader: That world leaders work to foster dignity, respect and civil rights for citizens of all abilities.

We pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, Hear our Prayer.

Presider: Loving and merciful God, you care about each of us. Hear our prayers today that one day we all may be united with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL OPTION 2

Belonging...fitting in...being invited... It is often so important to us...for ourselves...that we close the door or block the way for others...others just as eager as we are to be welcomed and invited. For a spirit of openness, hospitality, and welcome in all of our relationships, We pray to the Lord.

Response: *Lord, open our hearts.*

How easy has it become for us to be accomplices of the popular culture? How often do we give our unwitting approval by simply standing back and accepting things the way they are – poverty, injustice, war, and violence? For the courage to step forward...working for equality, prosperity, and peace for all. We pray to the Lord.

Response: *Lord, open our hearts.*

As we celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day in our church community, may we continue to build a home where the welcome of hospitality will always be true and honest ...because all are welcome...everyone's gift is respected...each unique ability is honored... and being church together...in the circle of our Creator's unconditional embrace...is our constant passion. We pray to the Lord.

Response: *Lord, open our hearts.*

Whether first or last...stranger or neighbor...friend or enemy...we all stand at the gate, often so paralyzed by our fears, insecurities, and misgivings...that we cannot imagine a way into God's family. May we be calmed and strengthened by our faith in God's desire for us to live remarkable lives of belonging. We pray to the Lord.

Response: *Lord, open our hearts.*

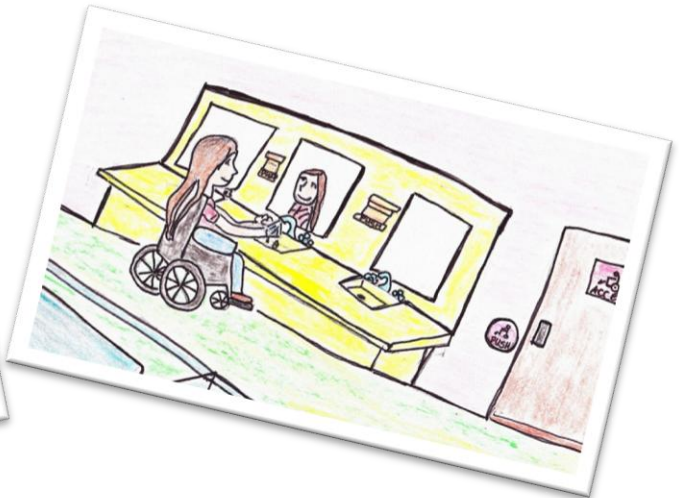
*"You only know you have a gift to give when there is someone to say,
'Thank you.'"*

Henri Nouwen
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

TALKING POINTS FOR INCLUSION REPRESENTATIVES

Parish Inclusion Representatives can use the following talking points to speak about the TEAM Belong program on Inclusion Awareness Day.

- “Today throughout the Archdiocese of Chicago, parishes are celebrating Inclusion Awareness Day and the many ways they welcome parishioners of all abilities into active participation every day of the year.”
- “My name is _____. I have volunteered to act as the Inclusion Representative for our parish.”
- Outline your plans for this ministry. This may include the formation of a committee, surveying parishioner needs, providing accommodations so that everyone can serve in liturgical ministries, etc.
- Explain access features already in place such as large print missalettes, assistive hearing devices, accessible seating etc.
- “Our parish is working hard to create an accessible faith community where parishioners of all abilities can participate. Please contact me if I can be of service to you and your family. Thank you.”



Inclusion Representative Janice Seipp, St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church, Glenview, IL, works closely with her pastor, Father Maina Waithaka, to ensure that parishioners of all abilities can participate in parish life. The church received a 2011 Open Hearts Award grant for architectural plans to make the altar accessible, a Junior Open Hearts Awards grant in 2013 to modify a washroom for access and a 2017 Open Hearts Award grant for assistive listening devices.

INVOLVING CHILDREN AND TEENS IN INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY



The activities in this section focus on welcoming the unique gifts each of us, even the most vulnerable, can bring to our faith communities.

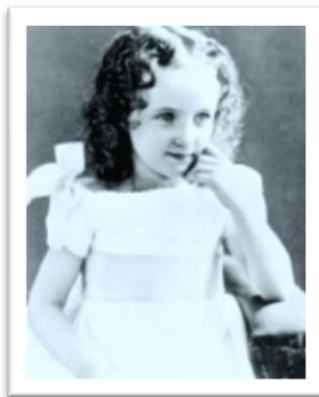
“God created you with unimaginable gifts and it is the affirmation of others that make that gift possible.”

Henri Nouwen
Open Hearts, Open Minds Open Doors

INVOLVING CHILDREN IN INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY (CONT'D.)

Learn About the Gifts of Blessed Mary Virginia Merrick

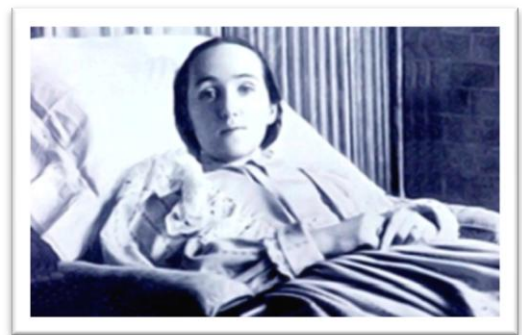
Blessed Mary Virginia Merrick, founder of the Christ Child Society, used a wheelchair most of her life. Read and discuss the information below with elementary students or contact jmeyer@pathways.org if you are interested in the 10 page book Miss Mary by Erin Gibbons. Use the word search as a student activity after you discuss Mary's contributions to the Church.



Mary Virginia Merrick used a wheelchair from the time she was a little girl. That did not keep her from helping others. Mary heard about a new baby in her neighborhood whose mother did not have enough money for baby clothes. Mary asked her friends from her parish to help her sew baby clothes for the new baby. Soon Mary heard of more babies who needed her help. Mary and her friends began to sew hats, blankets and gowns for many new babies in need.

Mary also heard about some children who did not receive Christmas presents because their families could not afford them. She suggested the children write letters to the Christ Child, the *Giver of All Gifts*. Mary and her friends raised money to buy toys for the children. They placed tags that said "From the Christ Child" on the gifts and gave them to the children.

Mary prayed often and she spent her time helping others. Mary's work grew and one day Mary's bishop asked her to start an organization to continue her efforts. Mary called her organization The Christ Child Society. Today Christ Child Society chapters all across the United States give hundreds of babies and children baby clothes and gifts. Some day we hope Mary will be named a saint because of her good works, holiness and generosity.



WORD SEARCH

Name _____

Date _____



Mary Virginia Merrick Word Search

U	R	E	P	R	D	H	H	G	Q	U	P	B	B	I
H	Y	H	X	S	A	I	N	T	T	C	X	H	U	S
B	Z	B	A	B	Y	C	L	O	T	H	E	S	D	C
Y	W	H	E	E	L	C	H	A	I	R	L	H	J	H
W	J	O	C	Z	R	V	I	R	G	I	N	I	A	R
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P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	Q	G	L	N	T	B	R
K	V	D	L	D	S	U	P	P	O	R	T	X	E	E



SEARCH FOR:

MARY

VIRGINIA

MERRICK

COURAGE

WHEELCHAIR

GIFT

SUPPORT

NEED

BABYCLOTHES

HATS

BLANKETS

GOWNS

SHARE

LETTERS

CHRISTMAS

PRESENTS

TOYS

CHRIST CHILD

TAG

SAINT

INVOLVING TEENS IN INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Invite teens to greet and distribute Inclusion Awareness Day prayer cards or an Inclusion Awareness Day bulletin with a special cover and articles about inclusion. Train teens to be sensitive to and respectful of parishioners of all abilities before they serve as greeters.

Sensitivity Training

Read the *Guidelines for Ushers and Lay Leaders* and *How You Can Make a Difference* in this workbook with confirmandi or the teens in your youth group. Discuss ways to convey dignity and respect for parishioners of all abilities. Practice greeting and handing out prayer cards.

Prayer Cards, Booklets or Special Bulletin

Download the bulletin cover or the Inclusion Awareness Day prayer card at www.teambelong.org. Create a special bulletin or print the prayer card on card stock and cut apart. Have teens sign up to serve as greeters. Supervise them as they greet and distribute prayer cards on Inclusion Awareness Day.

Student Display and/or Junior Open Hearts Award Nomination

Ask teens up to 18 years old to prepare essays, artwork or videos about access and inclusion at your parish for an Inclusion Awareness Day display. Use the *Different Gifts but the Same Spirit* lesson plans at www.teambelong.org to facilitate this activity. Submit the best work to Pathways.org for a Junior Open Hearts Award grant.



St. Nicholas Church, Evanston, IL, used Open Hearts Awards grants in 2006, 2005 and 2000 to expand their inclusion efforts.

INVOLVING TEENS IN INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY (CONT'D.)

Different Gifts but the Same Spirit Lesson Plans

Use the [High School level Different Gifts but the Same Spirit](http://www.teambelong.org) lesson plans (available at www.teambelong.org or from Loyola Press) at your Youth Group meeting. Discuss everyone's gifts. Have the students do a walkthrough of your parish plant noting inaccessible areas. The [Facilities Survey](#) can help with this activity. Discuss ways your parish could be more accessible. Ask students to create a video explaining how they would use a \$1,000 grant from TEAM Belong to improve access at their church. For ideas see the video by students from St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School in Phoenix, Arizona on www.teambelong.org. With the approval of your pastor submit the video for a Junior Open Hearts Award grant. Different Gifts but the Same Spirit lesson plans are also available online for elementary and junior high students.



Teens from Our Lady of Light Catholic Church, Cubero, New Mexico learned about access and inclusion from the Different Gifts but the Same Spirit Lesson Plans available at www.teambelong.org or in booklet form from Loyola Press. The teens educated parishioners, applied for Junior Open Hearts Awards grants and made accessible parking spaces, brighter interior lighting and pew cut outs for wheelchairs possible at their mission church.

GUIDELINES FOR USHERS AND LAY LEADERS

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What do you say when you meet a person with a disability? How about “Hello?”
2. Because each person has gifts and abilities, ask a person with a disability to usher, to read, etc.
3. Speak directly to the person with a disability or difference, not only to the family member, companion, interpreter, or canine companion.
4. Ask the person with the disability if you can help. Respect any refusal.
5. Be sensitive to where a person wishes to receive Holy Communion – modify according to needs.
6. A warm smile and friendly conversation are very welcoming.
7. Feel comfortable using words like see, walk, and listen with persons with disabilities.
8. Use people-first language such as “people with disabilities” NOT “the disabled.”
9. Offer large-print prayer books, bulletins, or assistive listening devices.
10. Use the accessibility logo. Include the words “All Are Welcome.”



**ALL ARE
WELCOME**

WELCOMING PARISHIONERS WITH BLINDNESS OR VISION LOSS

1. Identify yourself when you greet the person. Tell the person when you are about to leave.
2. Talk normally, using your customary voice and typical expressions like “See you later.”
3. Offer your arm when assisting; the same way an usher does at a wedding.
4. Give verbal cues such as “We are going through a doorway.” Explain the traffic pattern with clear, calm instructions such as “Go up the center aisle.”

“God reveals His love in vulnerability...”

Henri Nouwen
The Vulnerable Journey

GUIDELINES FOR USHERS AND LAY LEADERS (Continued)

WELCOMING PARISHIONERS WITH MOBILITY DIFFERENCES

1. Speak directly to the person.
2. Offer assistance, but accept a “No, thank you.”
3. Sit down so that you are at eye-level if the conversation will last more than a few minutes.
4. Shake hands or lightly touch a shoulder in the same way you would with others.
5. Keep a person’s wheelchair or walker near the person. A person who uses a chair may be able to walk but still needs the chair.

WELCOMING PARISHIONERS WITH DEAFNESS OR HEARING LOSS

1. Face the person. He/she will appreciate seeing your facial expression and may read your lips. Your face, gestures, and body movements help in understanding.
2. Move closer rather than shout.
3. Speak clearly and slowly. Writing may be necessary.

WELCOMING PARISHIONERS WITH SPEECH DIFFERENCES

1. Be patient. Let a person talk at his/her own pace.
2. Remember a person may have communication means other than speech, such as writing.
3. Ask questions that require short answers or a shake of the head. If you cannot understand, rephrase the question.
4. Repeat or paraphrase what was said in order to confirm that you understand.

WELCOMING PARISHIONERS WITH COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES

1. Greet the person and interact normally.
2. Keep things simple and uncomplicated.
3. Treat people equally regardless of their participation level. For example, if a Sunday bulletin is distributed, give to all.

Please duplicate and share with others.

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR PARISH ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING



Pew cutouts throughout the assembly at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, Charleston, IL, a 2014 Open Hearts Award winning congregation and ramp to the altar at 2013 Open Hearts Award winning Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, Wyoming, MI.

“The parish is the door to participation for persons with disabilities, and it is the responsibility of the pastor and lay leaders to make sure that this door is always open.”

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities #18

TEN WAYS TO WELCOME PARISHIONERS OF ALL ABILITIES IN THE AREA OF AFFIRMATION

1. Form a well-rounded inclusion committee under one of the commissions of your parish council to keep inclusion in the forefront of parish life.
2. Include children, youth and adults of all abilities in liturgical ministries as ushers, musicians, choir members, altar servers, gift bearers, lectors and ministers of communion by providing and publicizing accommodations.
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 workbook.
4. Train ushers and lay leaders as role models to include and welcome worshippers of all abilities and their families. See “Guidelines for Ushers and Lay Leaders” in this workbook.
5. Reinterpret disability narratives in the scriptures as symbolic “healing” stories for all, not “curing” stories.
6. Refer to saints and biblical leaders who had disabilities and their contributions in homilies, sermons and religious education classes.
7. Place an “inclusion box” in the worship space with paper and pencils for suggestions for better inclusion.
8. Include children of all abilities in religious education classes with appropriate supports. Publicize that all children are welcome.
9. Consult parishioners who use wheelchairs, walkers or crutches when planning renovations or additions.
10. List accessible features and supports available in a permanent “For your comfort and convenience...” section of the bulletin or worship aide.

TEN WAYS TO WELCOME PARISHIONERS OF ALL ABILITIES IN THE AREA OF COMMUNICATION

1. State the desire to be intentionally inclusive in the faith community's mission statement.
2. Use "people first" language in homilies, sermons, and bulletin articles.
3. Use access symbols in newspaper advertisements, event announcements and signage to publicize accessible features already in place.
4. Place the words, *"All are welcome! Please call (insert phone number) so that we can provide accommodations for your participation"* in all event announcements.
5. Personally invite congregants with disabilities to participate in ministries, clubs, religious education programs, and events and arrange any accommodations to make participation possible.
6. Make large print prayer books, missals, Bibles, bulletins and hymnals (such as this 14 point type) available.
7. Provide homilies on audiotape or in large-print and promote their availability in the bulletin.
8. Keep individuals with visual impairments informed by announcing information from the bulletin at the end of the worship service.
9. When new members join your congregation, ask, in a sensitive and dignified way, if any accommodations would enhance their participation in the faith community. Then provide the accommodations.
10. Invite congregants who cannot regularly attend services to participate through a "ministry of praise". Send the congregation's intentions to be prayed for to the "ministers of praise" on a regular basis. Express the congregation's gratitude for their prayer support.

TEN WAYS TO WELCOME PARISHIONERS OF ALL ABILITIES IN THE AREA OF ACCESSIBILITY

1. It is possible to get from a parked car to worship services without going up or down a step?
2. A bathroom with wheelchair-accessible facilities is available on the worship floor.
3. A button can open at least one heavy entrance door.
4. Marked, accessible parking spaces for cars and vans are close to accessible entrances.
5. Front pew kneeler has been removed for individuals using wheelchairs, canes, crutches, or walking frame and their families.
6. Sanctuary area is accessible. Podium and/or microphone are adjustable for person's height or a lapel microphone is available.
7. Architecture committee consults with persons who use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches or canes in every phase of evaluation and planning for modification or addition to all church buildings.
8. Sidewalks have curb cuts and entrances have ramps.
9. Doors are 36 inches wide and are level with the doorsill of each entrance.
10. A whole fundraising strategy is created to raise money for long-term architectural modifications. Fundraising can include bake sales, car washes and memorial contributions.

"...the Church is the house of all God's children, open and welcoming."

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1186

MAKING PARISH EVENTS ACCESSIBLE

Ensure that parishioners with disabilities can participate in parish events by following the suggestions below:

MEETING LOCATION

1. Is there a barrier-free pathway to the meeting space? A barrier-free pathway means that a person with a mobility impairment can make it from the street into the meeting room without encountering stairs, any sudden change in floor height over 1 inch, slippery or unstable ground, doorways less than 32" wide, or any objects obstructing walkways. Any elevators should be large enough to comfortably fit a wheelchair.
2. Are accessible restrooms nearby? An accessible restroom is one that has a stall with a doorway at 32" wide, grab bars installed by the toilet seat, and enough space for a wheelchair to maneuver (at least 36" x 69"). Also, at least one sink should have adequate space open beneath it so that a person using a wheelchair can sit with their legs underneath the basin as they wash their hands.
3. Are nearby accessible parking places available and clearly marked?
4. Is it easy to reach the meeting space from public transportation? Many people with disabilities rely on public transportation.
5. Someone standing by the main entrance to direct people to the meeting room and help those needing assistance is a courtesy that everyone will appreciate.



Parishioners of all abilities feel welcome to participate when parish meetings are publicized as being held in accessible spaces.

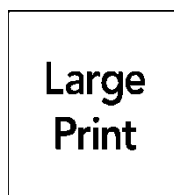
MAKING PARISH EVENTS ACCESSIBLE (CONT'D)

ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE MEETING ROOM

1. If you know there will be an individual with low vision attending your meeting ask if printed materials in 16-point font would be helpful. For people who are blind, ask if copies of written materials on disk in a generic word processing format would be helpful.
2. Make sure the meeting site is free of background noise for people who are hard of hearing or use hearing aids.
3. Make sure there is a good quality sound system and check audio equipment for loudness and clarity. Are assistive listening devices available?
4. Position presenters so everyone can easily see them, but not in front of windows. If presenters use wheelchairs, place all speakers at a table in front of the room, passing a table microphone from speaker to speaker.
5. State in your advertisements that "sign language interpreters are available upon request" and then provide, if requested. Ask participants who are deaf and the interpreter what locations in the room would be best to facilitate signing.

OTHER POINTS

1. When advertising meetings, use access symbols and give contact information to request accommodations.



2. A welcoming attitude is an important component of an accessible meeting. Remain open to requests for accommodations and remember that people with disabilities — like all people — should be treated with dignity and respect.
3. Thinking through and planning for accessibility ahead of time allows people with disabilities to participate more effectively in your meeting.

Source: <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/practices/17468>

OPEN HEARTS AND JUNIOR OPEN HEARTS AWARDS GRANTS

TEAM W would like to support worshipping communities seeking to become fully accessible. The national, interfaith [Open Hearts and Junior Open Hearts Awards](#) (submitted by children 5 to 18 years old) offer **cash grants of up to \$1,000** for specific, planned projects that promote access and inclusion in religious schools and houses of faith.

Annual deadline for applications is August 1st. Grants are announced in the fall in conjunction with parish Inclusion Awareness Days.

Nomination forms, guidelines, a winning essay with photos and a winning video are available at www.teambelong.org or call 1-800-955-2445 for more information.

We hope you will consider submitting an application for an Open Hearts Award or inviting children or youth from your parish to submit a Junior Open Hearts Award application. The story of your congregation's inclusion efforts and your expertise from completing your project could help others.



St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Chicago, IL, a 2014 Open Hearts Award winning parish, provides assistive listening devices for parishioners who have difficulty hearing during liturgies.

TEAMBELONG.ORG EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

PATHWAYS.ORG PUBLISHES THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS TO ASSIST CONGREGATIONS TO WELCOME WORSHIPPERS OF ALL ABILITIES:

- *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* video available for viewing at www.teambelong.org
- *The Vulnerable Journey* video by Father Henri Nouwen available for viewing at www.teambelong.org
- *Open Hearts, Open Minds* [Idea Guide](#) booklet available at www.teambelong.org
- *Opening Hearts, Minds, Doors: [Embodying the Inclusive and Vulnerable Love of God](#)* booklet available at www.teambelong.org
- [TEAM Belong handouts](#) in the areas of Affirmation, Communication and Accessibility available at www.teambelong.org

FREE MATERIALS TO DOWNLOAD AT www.teambelong.org

- *Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit* Lesson Plans for elementary, junior high and high school students
- *Open Doors* song and sheet music for the [assembly](#) and [choir](#)
- TEAM Belong Tips Sheets
- Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Roman Catholic parishes
- Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Eastern Orthodox parishes
- Inclusion Shabbat Workbook for Jewish congregations
- Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Episcopal parishes
- Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Protestant congregations
- Inclusion Awareness Day Letters from Religious Leaders
- Inclusion Awareness Day Prayer Card, Poster/Bulletin Cover
- Open Hearts Award applications