

AFFIRMATION

Some good ideas used by parishes and schools to welcome individuals of all abilities and their families in the area of affirmation:

- The parish and school recognizes the talents and gifts of individuals of all abilities. 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 plays the guitar and who uses a wheelchair performs with a music ministry.
- A survey is used to determine the individual needs of the community and to help prioritize improvements such as accessible parking, large-print materials, improved sound system and lighting. Wheelchair access, inclusive religious education classes and accessible washrooms are other features that may be needed. See the handout “Survey of Needs” at www.TEAMBelong.org.
- Adults and children with disabilities are given opportunities to serve others within the worship service and in the outreach programs of the faith community and the school.
- Individuals 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 welcomed in the school and in religious education classes with appropriate support.
- A religious or lay leader who has acquired a serious disability continues to serve the school and parish if he/she desires.
- A “Care Committee” has been created to connect the school and 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.