

SENSORY FRIENDLY MASS

All are welcome. All belong.



Creating a Welcoming Environment

Presented by: Noelle Collis-DeVito

Lord, let thy peace fill me up until I overflow;
that where people cannot speak, I may be their advocate;
that where anyone is rejected, I may extend my arms in welcome;
that where parents are heavy burdened, I may offer a word of comfort;
that where our children struggle, I may lift them up and cheer;
that where some see disability, I may reveal to them extraordinary gifts; that where others judge,
I may share with them my deep gladness; and that where any are overlooked,
I may help the lights of all to shine.

Oh giver of these gifts,
grant that I may not so much seek to be reassured as to reassure;
to be praised as to praise;
to be accepted as to accept;
for it is in all our uncertainty that we are inspired to hope;
it is in great challenges that we discover our greatest joys,
and it is in our community of wanderers that we find the way home.

Amen.



Inclusion vs. Belonging

What is the difference?

DIVERSITY is having a seat at the table,

INCLUSION is having a voice,

BELONGING is having that voice be heard.





Inclusion vs. Belonging

It is essential to make accessibility a priority rather than an afterthought.

Reactive Inclusion- Allowing persons with disabilities to participate in an already formatted activity without making accommodations in advance.





Inclusion vs. Belonging

Why is this important right now?

- 26% of adults in the United States have some form of disability.
- 1 in 40 children are diagnosed with autism.
- 15% of children are diagnosed with developmental disabilities.





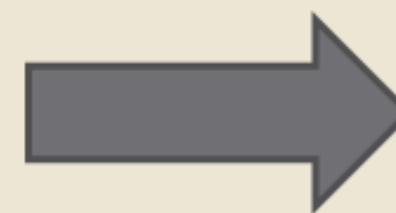
Inclusion vs. Belonging

Why is this important right now?

Absence
due to
Institutions



Acceptance
of Status Quo



Parent as
Advocate



A Welcoming Environment

3 Key Considerations

- Etiquette & Hospitality
- Accommodations
- Visual Aids & Fidgets

Keep in mind that not every parish will be able to make every accommodation. These are just suggestions to consider.





Etiquette & Hospitality

Physical/Mobility:

- Ask about preferred location for seating.
- Speak to the person in the wheelchair and not to the person that may be accompanying them.
- Be eye level with person in wheel chair when talking to them.
- Always ask before offering help. Don't be offended if the person says no.
- Shake hands and use other usual ways of greeting - never pet anyone on the head.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Physical/Mobility:

- Ask before assisting to push or touch a person's wheelchair.
- People with canes or crutches do not always prefer to use a ramp over stairs.
- Don't touch/grab the arms of those who use canes/crutches as it can cause them to lose balance.
- A person with respiratory or heart condition may have difficulty walking long distances. Offer a place to rest before ushering to seat.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Blindness/Low Vision:

- Prearrange tour of church with audio description.
- Identify yourself and your role (I am the greeter/usher).
- Ask person "Would you like assistance?" Offer your arm. Describe the scene.
- Walk on the opposite side of a guide dog.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Blindness/Low Vision:

- Don't touch person's cane or guide dog.
- Give verbal cues - "there is a step coming up..."
- Give verbal cues that are specific (e.g. Don't say "watch out", say "there is a trash can in front of you...")
- Guide an individual's hand to a banister or the back of a chair to help direct him to a stairway or seat.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Blindness/Low Vision:

- Inform person who is blind and attends church regularly of any physical changes.
- Offer large-print or brailled bulletins and large-print prayer books and hymnals.
- Establish before Mass if person would like accommodations for Communion (e.g. Eucharistic Minister to come to them, sighted guide).



Etiquette & Hospitality

Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing:

- Using someone who knows sign-language is not an adequate replacement for an interpreter.
- Does the individual prefer to use sign language, writing, gesturing, speaking or a combination of all to communicate.
- To get the attention of a person who is deaf/HOH you can tap them on their shoulder, wave you hand or flicker the lights.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing:

- Do not shout to a person who is wearing a hearing aid. Your shouting will be more distorted. Move closer to the individual.
- Face person directly when speaking and do not obscure your mouth when communicating.
- When using a sign-language interpreter, look directly at the person who is Deaf, and maintain eye contact. Talk directly to the person who is Deaf.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing:

- Background noises are a problem for people who are HOH. Finding a quiet place is helpful.
- Don't be afraid of interaction. There is nothing worse than being left out and ignored.
- Offer assisted listening devices if available; have a note pad and pen available.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Speech Disabilities:

- Ask person to repeat themselves if you can't understand.
- Wait for the person to finish then restate to be sure you understand.
- Suggest another way of facilitating communication.
- Don't nod to a person you can't understand.
- Don't interrupt or finish a person's sentence.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities:

- Greet person normally with age-appropriate language. Don't baby talk.
- Repeat information about yourself if necessary.
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the person doesn't understand.
- Treat people equally.
- Even if you suspect a person doesn't read, offer reading materials.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Behavioral Needs:

- Create a space for parishioners to go in order to de-escalate challenging behaviors.
- Don't force conversation.
- Don't argue. Wait for rational moments.
- Ask how you can help, find out if there is a support person who can be sent for.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Behavioral Needs:

- Ask what will make him/her most comfortable and respect his/her needs to the maximum extent possible.
- Remember that these behaviors are just as stressful for parents and family members. Engage family in conversations related to best strategies and natural supports at a time and manor that conveys empathy and understanding.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Mental Health:

- Be sure to greet.
- Give your name and ask theirs but respect boundaries.
- Offer to sit with or near but respect wishes to be alone.



Etiquette & Hospitality

Other Tips:

- Gestures often convey acceptance. Sit next to person with disability but respect boundaries.
- As an usher or greeter, please respect person's needs and request whenever possible.
- Don't make decisions for people with disabilities regarding what they can or can't do.
- A person who may appear drunk or sick may have a disability or medical emergency.



Accommodations

Thinking Ahead:

- Noise Cancelling Headphones
- Access to Outlets
- Large-Print Missals





Accommodations

Alternative Seating:

- Wiggle Seats
- Rocking Chairs
- Seat Cushions
- Wheelchair Accessibility





Accommodations

Sensory Room:

- Dark Space
- Small Christmas Lights/Lava Lamp
- Fidgets/Manipulatives
- Alternative Seating
- Mats or Rugs
- White Noise





Accommodations

Alternative Worship Space:

- Separate Room for Live Stream
- Meets the needs of individuals who are overstimulated by crowds
- May be more comfortable for caregivers of persons who have behavioral needs





Accommodations

Alternative Worship Space:

- Does not replace Sensory-Friendly Mass Accommodations
- Allows for volume control
- Communion is brought to the room





Visual Aids & Fidgets

Resource List



Questions & Answers

Q & A