



ENABLING ALL

Working to build church communities
with people of all abilities

Toolkits for Accessible Services

All these ideas were gathered whilst preparing an accessible service called Celebrating Neurodivergence that Enabling All led at St Martins Church, Walsall in October 2023. If you want to watch a video discussing the service <https://youtu.be/pzTJUbm5W70>

Thank you to all that participated in the planning and the delivery of the service and whose ideas are included in this document.

The toolkits are meant to be used as a guide, to help think through different adjustments that are possible in worship services. Baring in mind it's about individuals needs.

This is a document that is aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding, therefore it will be improved upon. If you have more ideas please let me know and I will update the document as these as a starting place for discussion.

Su Parker

Enabling All Coordinator

Version 1 Updated 23/10/24

Contents

In this document there are the following

1. Guiding principles
2. Venue Considerations
3. Publicising the service
4. Hybrid services
5. Useful Available Resources
6. Reasonable Adjustments
7. Welcoming
8. Service Content

Guiding Principles

- Be aware of our image of God

It is easy to assume that God is somehow like you and has your abilities. We can accidentally reflect our assumptions in the way we lead worship or preach. Make sure that you don't depict God as having typical or neurotypical traits or abilities.

- Include People with Personal insight

If you do nothing else when planning a service include people with a personal insight in planning and leading the service, also parents, teachers and care workers, who might be glad to offer their expertise.

- Work through the different barriers people may face
'People feel welcome if their presence is anticipated'. Revd. John Beauchamp London Diocesan Disability Ministry Enabler during a Bitesize Training. It's considering individuals reasonable adjustments and finding a balance between competing needs.

- Tell people what you have prepared.

We do what we can and tell people what we have done, so that they feel welcome and know that we thought through things.

Venue Considerations

For an accessible service it would be great if the building had

- Accessible toilets (even better are changing places)
- Step free access (access with no steps, or sills into the building) or ramps at appropriate gradient (max.1:12).
- A loop system
- A separate quiet space to the worship space
- Car parking with reserved spaces near the entrance.
- Public transport to the door.
- Flexibility in the space/seating for wheelchairs
- Good Wi-Fi for online access
- Extra screens for those with vision impairment
- Large print service sheets
- Clear signage to navigate the building, including toilets and back to the worship space

Service Promotion

Let people know what you are doing, including as much as you can about the access arrangements that you are doing, and what you aren't, in publicity and online, via social media and your A Church Near You site or a website. You can use the description of the service too, e.g. it's a lively service or it's a reflective service, communicates the level of sensory stimulation. Please include photographs, including a person to show the size of doorways and positioning next to the toilet to allow for wheelchair transfers. The details that are reassuring to include are

- How to get there
- Parking
- Public transport information
- Step free access
- Accessible toilets- a photo, showing where the space around the toilet is.
- Changing Places Toilet- we are aware that these are rare!
- A Social story for those who use them [Social-stories-SC228.pdf \(reachoutasc.com\)](https://reachoutasc.com/Social-stories-SC228.pdf) or a visual timetable.

Enabling All have made a Bitesize Training Video about how to do this ([Enabling All Bitesize Training Sharing Church Access information](#))

If it's a special service, please throw the net wider by including the Lichfield Diocese Facebook group, tell Enabling All and we can see if it can be in the bulletin.

Hybrid Services

Not everyone can make it in the building, so offering a hybrid service makes it more accessible. Services can be streamed through

- Facebook
- You tube
- An online meeting room, like zoom

There are advantages with each and disadvantages with each platform. For our service we chose Zoom. Obviously streaming a service, to whatever platform, needs a certain amount of technology and experience, which isn't always available.

If planning to stream, then make sure that people online feel included in the service. Consider them in the planning for every part of the service, especially the interactive elements. Give them warning if they need to gather objects before the service and chances to contribute to the service as much as those in the physical building. We also had a person solely in the group to be their host and welcome.

Also put up signs around the church that it is being filmed and where it is possible not to be on camera.

There is bitesize training on this topic ()

Useful Available Resources

There are useful things you might like to have available. They can be in the space or given to people as they enter, using either clipboards or bags

- Sensory toys/ fidget toys
- Colouring sheets
- Flags
- Percussion instruments
- Activity sheets, based on the theme
- Sensory room/ prayer
- Outside space
- Headphones
- Craft

Reasonable Adjustments

This is a list of possible adjustments to consider.

- Connect a screen, with the service display on, very close to the front row seating reserve for those with vision impairment.
- If you are expecting d/Deaf people you can book a trained BSL interpreter for the whole service at the front of the church with reserved seating near by. Revd Susan Myatt will be able to support you with this. If you are expecting Learning Disabled people consider having a Makaton signer or use online song that include Makaton signing.
- If doing a hybrid service on zoom make sure closed captions enabled by the host.
- Now and Next: At the bottom of each slide a row of symbols representing each part of the service can be added. The current part of the service was slightly bigger than the rest of the symbols, so that anyone could know where we were in the service. There are different symbols available, Makaton, widget or clip art. Here are the symbols we used from Makaton as we had a trained signer. We included the coffee and the goodbye.
- Any displayed visuals to be clear, and dyslexia friendly fonts and colour. ([Clear Print Guidelines - Diocese of Lichfield](#))
- Social story- available before and at the entrance of the church
- Visual Timetable can be available. For information on how to write a visual Timetable <https://www.leicester.anglican.org/info-for-parishes/disability-resources/>
- Reserved wheelchair spaces, where possible also have chairs nearby to be able to sit near friends as part of the congregation. We know that this is easier to do if the areas has chairs rather than pews.
- Signage – directing people around the space, especially to the toilets and back again.
- Printed version of the service on different coloured paper, and dyslexia friendly font, at least 12 point
- Large print versions at least 16 point.
- Make sure the loop system is working for the hard of hearing.
- Be aware of noise levels, as some people may become overloaded with high noise levels.
- Natural light is always better than electric light.

- If you want people to move or wave flags in worship, it would be best to have some people primed to start so that people feel free to express themselves.

Welcome

Designated Welcomers before the service

Equip welcomers to know about all the possibilities that are available. They also need to be comfortable with welcoming everyone. Have a briefing with all the welcomers before the service. They can wear the Hidden disabilities sunflowers 'Can I help you?' badge (available from Enabling All)

Formal Welcome

- Say all the things that are available in case people have missed it and give permission to use them or do what they need to during the service
- Explain what coming up in the service
- Movement- most services expect the congregation to move when requested, to stand and sit. In the welcome reflect the choice that has been taken and acknowledge it in the welcome. For instance, 'During the service we may at times suggest that you might sit or stand or kneel. However, please feel free to adopt whatever position is most comfortable for you. It is absolutely fine if you sit throughout the service, or if you stand or move around at any point. Please do whatever is best for you.'
- Warn if it is a hybrid service that people where people may be on camera and where not.

Service Content Considerations

As well as the guiding principles already mentioned, lots of services can focus on written language. These suggestions using the senses, thus decreasing the reliance on people being able to read and expanding the ways of communication for all. Creative expressions can be very useful too.

The elements that we considered are

- Music
- Bible Reading
- Talk
- Prayers
- Coffee Time

Music

Words in hymns and songs can become barriers. When choosing the music here are some specific considerations when thinking of appropriate music.

- Words can hurt. For instance, In “Amazing Grace”, Second, the line “I once was lost, but now am found / was blind, but now I see” equates human blindness with sin. IF you want to use this, it could be replaced with “Was bound but now I’m free.” Don’t change if copyrighted (less than 70 years old) so you will need to find an alternative.
- The language can assume God has the physical features of humans, He can see or hear.
- The language shouldn’t assume that something is ‘normal’ for all humans, eg Stand up!
- Use clear language. Be aware the complexity of the language so that everyone can comprehend what they are singing.
- Avoid metaphors that need to be interpreted as they cannot be understood by everyone.
- Avoid words that are childish, which is different to child like, for instance, if it is a service for adults, be aware of using songs that talk down to the congregation. There are songs that are childlike for instance ‘Allelu, allelu, allelu, alleluia!, Praise ye the Lord,’.
- When a song is being interpreted by signers, either BSL or Makaton, check it with the signers early in the planning, as the concepts in the songs might not translate easily into the different language (BSL- Revd Susan Myatt) Makaton (Count Everyone In)

Talk

It’s a chance to be different- different voices, different styles. We used interviews on the subject. Though the shortness of the talk and the complexity of the ideas need to be considered. We also used interactive elements, with an opportunity for everyone to contribute something. Simple and short is best!

Prayers

Developing prayers that aren’t just reliant on the spoken word can support inclusivity, like

- **8 finger prayers**, which each finger represents an area of prayer;
- **body prayers**, where you move your body into different positions

- **sensory prayers**, where each sense is included.

Revd. Charlotte Cheshire wrote her Senses Prayers [Prayers of the Seven Senses – Life In Holland](#)

The best way to find these is to use a search engine or your imagination.

Coffee Time

Another chance in to be inclusive and flexible.

- Be aware of food intolerances and preferences, like gluten free, vegan, decaf coffee and sugar free options available.
- Also think about the flexibility of the space, as coffee time can be overwhelming for some due to noise levels, and pressure to interact and be aware of places to sit or stand.
- Maybe there are more activities in the space, or things to look at? We had a feedback space and asked people to advertise the groups that they were involved in for this purpose.