



Tips to Celebrate

1. Form a TEAM

Enlist one or more friends to discuss and implement your ideas for your Community for ALL event. Meet up to discuss what you would like to do and make a plan to meet with the faith community administration to get approval as needed.

2. Celebrate what you already DO

Create a list of ways your congregation is already inclusive of individuals and families affected by disability. Do you have any technology that assists the hearing impaired? Large print or braille materials available? Supports for children set up for religious education?

Anything you do, big or small, could be shared at this event, as members of your congregation may not be aware of what you already provide.

3. Share a STORY

There is nothing more powerful than an individual's or family's story about their experience. Ideally, that person would be a part of your congregation. If you cannot find someone to speak, reach out to Faith Inclusion Network or other disability organizations.

The guest speaker could speak during worship time for a few minutes during announcements, as part of the sermon or homily or at a separate time outside of worship like an adult religious education class. They need not be experienced speakers, just encouraged to share some of their unique story and perhaps how their faith community could or has supported them.

4. Share INFORMATION

Through whatever means your congregation uses to share information, (newsletter, bulletin, website, social media) include some specifics about Autism, Down Syndrome or any other condition that may affect people who attend your congregation. Education always helps to elevate the fear of the unknown when it comes to understanding disability, especially when there are different behaviors involved. Of course, include the Community for ALL logo and see our sample bulletin announcements.

5. Use the great unifier: MUSIC

Music is a powerful way to share a message of inclusion and community. Find songs that communicate the importance of community or acceptance and work with your music coordinator to incorporate into your worship time. You could also take it a step further and provide ribbons, scarfs, or small instruments to give non-verbal members of the congregation a way to participate.

6. Make the message about INCLUSION and BELONGING

For most religious services, the message from the clergy is a very big part of the congregation's worship experience. If you are a congregational leader in charge of sharing a message, consider speaking about the importance of community, including everyone, the gifts of the different people or the importance of our uniqueness. Everyone will benefit from a message that reminds us that God loves everyone!

7. Enhance the WORSHIP SERVICE

Are there people in your congregation affected by disability that have never had the opportunity to be a part of the worship service or never been asked? Use the Community for ALL event to invite someone affected by disability to participate in a new way. (It is very important here, however, never to put people on "display". A good consideration would be to think of the event as an opportunity to introduce someone to a volunteer opportunity who would be able to then step into the role as a regular volunteer if they wish)

8. Provide SUPPORTS that are new to your congregation

There are several supports for people affected by disability that can be utilized in the worship context. From CART (Communication in Realtime Translation), to an ASL (American Sign Language) Interpreter, to a hearing loop and visual aids for those who are non-verbal, providing your congregation with some of these supports not only helps those affected by hearing loss and other disabilities, but raises the awareness of the entire congregation.

BE CREATIVE!

These are just a few ideas to get you started. Please share with us via our Community for ALL Facebook page, or FIN website what you come up with. We can add it to next year's ideas!

www.faithinclusionnetwork.org