

A church that is more accessible for people with learning disabilities is more accessible for everybody!



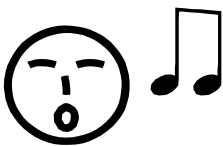
Welcome

Most of us like to feel welcomed when we come to church. Whoever is the first to welcome people arriving at your church should try to assess what special needs and what familiarity with church someone with learning disabilities might have. An easy way to do this is to engage them in conversation – try starting by telling them your name. Give them the most appropriate resources you have. It may be appropriate to have someone sit beside them and talk them through what will happen in the service. Be sensitive, though. Some people with learning disabilities prefer not to interact with people; conversation and a Christian hug may be the very last thing they want. Please respect their wishes.



Verbal reminders

Less than one third of people with learning disabilities read well enough to take in what it says on a written notice sheet or what it says projected on the screen. If there is a notice that is important enough for someone with learning disabilities to pay attention to, it's important enough to have someone speak it out. Similarly, having someone who says quietly the words of the next line of the hymn being sung may enable them to join in with more of that part of the worship.



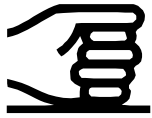
Accessible songs

Many of the songs we sing in church use language which is rich in meaning, but which is not used in everyday conversation. Why not choose one or two songs for the simpler language they use – or at least say a sentence or two about the concept of a song which uses less familiar language?



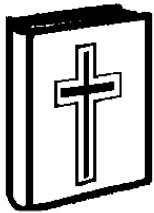
Sermon summary

Preachers who can keep the attention of people with learning disabilities every time they deliver a sermon are few and far between. At the end of the sermon, move on to the next stage of the service, **then** come back and give a 2-3 sentence summary of the main point of the sermon. It's not only people with learning disabilities who will be grateful.



Increasing involvement

1 Corinthians 12 makes clear that all Christians – including people with learning disabilities – have Spiritual Gifts which they have been given for the good of all. Find roles in your church in which their Spiritual Gifts can be used – as part of the welcome team perhaps or sharing in leading the prayers. Seeing someone with learning disabilities having a role in your church will itself make your church more accessible to others.



Support people in their spiritual growth

Have available resources which are appropriate to support people as they grow in faith. Prospects has a wide range of resources (e.g. Bible reading notes, worship CDs) designed to be used by and with people with learning disabilities.



Consider starting a small group

If you have a number of people with learning disabilities attending your church or living in your church's catchment area (and for most churches in every 1,000 people you are trying to reach out to, at least 20 will have learning disabilities), starting a small group may be the next step. Prospects can give you advice on how to start a small group for people with learning disabilities and has numerous resources to support you in running such a group.

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