

**OPEN HEARTS
OPEN MINDS
OPEN DOORS**

*CREATING ACCESS AND
INCLUSION IN WORSHIP*

**INCLUSION
AWARENESS DAY
WORKBOOK
FOR
PROTESTANT
CONGREGATIONS**

Pathways Awareness ~ 150 North Michigan Avenue ~ Suite 2100 ~ Chicago, Illinois 60601
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Dear Religious Leader:

Since we inaugurated the *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* inclusion movement in 1996, many congregations are providing accommodations so that worshippers of all abilities can participate.

An integral part of the Pathways Awareness Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors inclusion in worship movement is the annual celebration of Inclusion Awareness Day. On Inclusion Awareness Day we invite congregations of all denominations to reflect on how well they intentionally include people of all abilities in worship, ministry, fellowship and leadership roles.

Pathways Awareness has provided the Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks at www.inclusioninworship.org to assist with your participation. We invite congregations of all denominations to celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day in their houses of faith on the last weekend in September. If your congregation is unable to participate then, please set aside another weekend to reflect on your progress on this important issue.

Thank you for intentionally including worshippers of all abilities not only on Inclusion Awareness Day, but every day of the year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley W. Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shirley W. Ryan

Chairman

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COUNTDOWN TO INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Begin planning now for Inclusion Awareness Day! Use the checklist below to get started. Information about the underlined items is available for downloading at www.inclusioninworship.org.

- Select a date and mark your congregation's calendar for your celebration of Inclusion Awareness Day.**

- Recruit an inclusion committee to raise awareness to the need for access and inclusion. Introduce committee members to the congregation on Inclusion Awareness Day. Use [tips on starting an inclusion committee](http://www.inclusioninworship.org) at www.inclusioninworship.org.**

- Plan a series of bulletin articles and special events for Inclusion Awareness Day. Use this workbook and workbooks on www.inclusioninworship.org for suggestions.**

- Survey your congregation on Inclusion Awareness Day to find out the needs of your members. Use our [access survey](http://www.inclusioninworship.org) or [facilities survey](http://www.inclusioninworship.org) available at www.inclusioninworship.org.**

- Invite members of your congregation who happen to have disabilities to participate on Inclusion Awareness Day. Provide accommodations and continue their participation throughout the year.**

- Invite members of your congregation who happen to have disabilities to speak on Inclusion Awareness Day about what inclusion means to them.**

Pathways Awareness will announce the Open Hearts Awards on Inclusion Awareness Day to recognize outstanding congregational inclusion efforts with cash grants of up to \$1,000. Recipients have submitted completed nomination forms to Pathways Awareness to be eligible for an award. For more information visit www.inclusioninworship.org.

IDEAS FOR INTENTIONALLY INCLUDING WORSHIPPERS OF ALL ABILITIES EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

- **Ask your pastor if you can start an inclusion committee to meet the needs of congregants.**
- **Find out who uses a wheelchair in your congregation and make sure they can get into church, direct them to accessible seating and ask them if they would like the usher to bring them communion.**
- **Does your congregation include children with intellectual challenges in religious education programs and sacramental preparation with the necessary supports? Find out what you can do to help.**
- **Is your worship committee aware of the need for inclusion? Set up a time to show and discuss the *Pathways Awareness Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* DVD and Idea Guide with them. Call 1-800-955-2445 to order for \$20.**
- **Does your congregation give people with physical, intellectual or sensory challenges the opportunity to minister or volunteer? A personal invitation and providing accommodations can make participation a reality.**
- **Find out whether anyone in your congregation needs transportation to church. Then make arrangements for their transport. People who live in group homes or supported living arrangements and people with vision loss often do not have transportation on weekends.**
- **Does your congregation have greeters who make a special point to invite people with challenges to worship and then greet them when they come in? Why not volunteer to be a greeter?**
- **Is there a need for a sign language interpreter for those who communicate with sign language? Explore how you can make this happen. People in your congregation who use sign language would know where to find an interpreter.**

INTRODUCTION TO WORSHIP SERVICE

(To be announced prior to worship service)

Today we join other congregations in celebrating Inclusion Awareness Day. We actively and intentionally include people of all abilities in worship and ministries because we are all members of the Body of Christ. When we open our hearts and our community to the gifts each person brings we are all strengthened.

SUGGESTED HYMNS FOR INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Open Doors by Sandy Martin (Sheet music and recording available for downloading at www.inclusioninworship.org)

COMMUNION MEDITATION

Invite a member of your faith community with a visible disability to share what inclusion in your congregation means to them.

PRAYER FOR AN OPEN HEART

Gracious God, you have fashioned each one of us according to your image and embraced each of us with your generous love, may we in turn open our hearts wide and welcome each other. Because you value and accept each one of us, may we also come to accept and value all those you have created. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

RITUAL BLESSING

Ask the assembly to please be seated.

Loving God, in your wisdom you created your people to have a variety of talents and skills, needs and desires. Help us to receive both our skills and our limitations as part of your divine plan. And give us a heart that recognizes your likeness in everyone we meet.

Extend your hand over the people:

I call upon God to bless the unique blend of talents and skills and abilities that each of you brings to your family, your work, your neighborhood, your church community. May you always use these talents for the honor and glory of God. May they never separate you from God's ways, but help you to find true happiness in this life and joy in the life hereafter.

Continue extending your hand over the people:

I call upon God to bless your limitations and help you to find the lessons therein.

Heavenly Father, when your son, Jesus, walked this earth he empowered all those who believed. May we gain strength from his example and use both our talents and our limitations to help bring about your Reign. We ask this in confidence because we know you are at our side forever.

Response: Amen

USING YOUR BULLETIN TO INTENTIONALLY INCLUDE WORSHIPPERS OF ALL ABILITIES

Your bulletin or worship aide can be a tool to intentionally include worshippers of all abilities. Including hospitality information every week makes everyone feel welcome. The following example may give you ideas for a permanent hospitality section for your bulletin or worship aid. Adapt it with your congregation's access features.

Please make yourself at home. For your comfort and convenience, we would like you to know:

- **The rest rooms are located on the lower level of the church, at the foot of the north stairwell, in the foyer of the church hall, and at the west side of the hall. The hall may be reached via the north stairwell or the elevator in the north tower only. The balcony can be accessed by using either the north or south stairwell.**
- **In consideration for all, please put all cell phones and beepers on silent mode as we begin Mass.**

- **If you have difficulty approaching the altar for Holy Communion, please tell an usher, and Communion will be brought to you.**
- **If you need a large print worship aid or missalette, please ask an usher.**
- **If you need an assistive listening device, they are available. Please ask an usher.**
- **If there is any way we can be of better service, please let us know.**

BULLETIN ARTICLES

Meeting the Challenge

On Inclusion Awareness Day we are challenged. Assumptions about our faith community being a place where “all are welcome” are challenged. How will we get to the point where inclusion is the work of the entire congregation? How do we sustain this challenge throughout the year so we don’t wait until the next Inclusion Awareness Day to make changes? This is hard work. It is everybody’s work. We need to be challenged continually and be grateful to those who have the courage to speak the truth even when it makes us uncomfortable. First, we need to listen, with open minds and hearts. Second we need to act.

Already as a faith community, we are working to take steps toward being more inclusive. However, this is not something we as a staff can do alone. We need help. It is the responsibility of the entire congregation to make inclusion of all people a reality. While we all work through what it means to be an inclusive faith community and our attitudes begin to change, everyone must contribute to our mission of being a place where all are truly welcome.

Opening Hearts

Inclusion Awareness Day reminds us to open our hearts to others and to recognize the gifts of every person. When we affirm one another's gifts and talents we enrich our faith community. We can reach out to make worshipers of all abilities feel welcome to participate in worship, ministry and fellowship. Today we reflect on the contributions fellow members who happen to have disabilities make to our faith community. We also celebrate the progress we have made toward making full participation in our church possible, as we renew our commitment to becoming a fully accessible faith community.

BEATTITUDES OF ACCEPTANCE

Author Unknown

Blessed are you...

**who take time to listen to difficult speech,
for you help me to know that if I persevere I can be understood.**

Blessed are you...

**who never bid me to "hurry up" or take my tasks and do them for me,
for often I need time rather than help.**

Blessed are you...

**who stand beside me as I enter new and untried ventures, for my
failures will be outweighed by the times I surprise myself and you.**

Blessed are you...

**who ask for my help,
for my greatest need is to be needed.**

Blessed are you...

**who understand that, sometimes, it is difficult for me to put my
thoughts into words.**

Blessed are you...

who with a smile encourage me to try once more.

Blessed are you...

who never remind me that today I asked the same question twice.

Blessed are you...

**who RESPECT ME and LOVE ME "JUST AS I AM",
and not as you wish I were.**



The Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook is a publication of Pathways Awareness Foundation. Pathways Awareness Foundation is dedicated to raising awareness to the gifts received when faith communities include worshippers of all abilities. The “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” program provides information and educational materials about access and inclusion in worship to congregations of all denominations. The mission of Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors is to include persons of all abilities into worship, ministries and leadership positions in houses of faith. This mission is carried out by:

- Explaining how to be inclusive in the “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” DVD, Idea Guide, e-newsletter, and Inclusive Congregation Toolkit.
- Granting Open Hearts Awards to congregations to further inclusion efforts.
- Inviting congregations to celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day.
- Providing the “Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit” lesson plans to help children and youth understand inclusion.
- Featuring on-line inclusion in worship resources at www.inclusioninworship.org

INCLUSION RESOURCES FROM PATHWAYS AWARENESS FOUNDATION

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors DVD or video \$20

The Vulnerable Journey DVD by Father Henri Nouwen \$20

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors 10th Anniversary DVD set contains both of the above at a special price of \$20 while quantities last

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors Idea Guide \$4

Opening Hearts, Minds and Doors White Paper \$3

The Vulnerable Journey by Father Henri Nouwen audiotape/CD \$4

Celebrating Inclusion in Worship: Seth’s Bar Mitzvah Video \$8

To order Call 1-800-955-2445 or visit www.inclusioninworship.org

Available for downloading at www.inclusioninworship.org

Inclusive Congregation Toolkit

Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit Inclusive Religious Education Lesson Plans

2001-2008 Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks

Inclusion Day Workbook for Jewish Congregations

Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Episcopal Parishes

Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Protestant Congregations