

# Open Hearts

# Open Minds

## Inclusion in Worship Newsletter

### **Inclusion Awareness Days Start Oct. 11, 2009**

This fall, congregations in the Chicago area join Pathways Awareness in celebrating Inclusion Awareness Days. The goal is to raise awareness in houses of faith to the need for access so that all worshippers can choose to participate in ministry and leadership roles.

Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Lake Villa, IL, will celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day on October 11<sup>th</sup>. The day's activities were planned with materials from the Pathways Awareness website [www.inclusioninworship.org](http://www.inclusioninworship.org). The Inclusion Awareness Day Prayer Card will be printed and distributed by the Youth Group after all masses. Homily ideas, hymns and prayers from the Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook will be used at all liturgies. As on every Sunday of the year, volunteers will staff the assistive listening device table at all masses to distribute the devices to those in need. The pastor, Father Rich Yanos, is wonderfully supportive and provides Inclusion Representative Pat Spencer and the parish inclusion committee with the momentum to continue the parish's ongoing outreach to parishioners of all abilities.



*At Old St. Mary's Catholic Church in Chicago, accommodations are provided so that parishioners of all abilities can participate in liturgical ministries. The church has celebrated Inclusion Awareness Day since the event was inaugurated in 1996.*

Using the Open Hearts, Open Minds program as a model, St. John the Baptist in Des Plaines was the first Greek Orthodox Church in the Metropolis of Chicago to have a Sunday devoted to inclusion awareness. This fall the parish will host its third annual Inclusion Awareness Sunday on October 25<sup>th</sup>. The church is committed to finding new ways to welcome people of all abilities. One natural outcome of raising awareness to individuals with varying abilities is new attention to the church's relative inaccessibility. The community had been issuing special invitations to parishioners with disabilities, yet when they arrived at the door it was difficult for

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## **Inclusion Awareness Days**

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them to find a way in. Resolving this issue was imperative for the church. The community believes that if the parish is to model inclusion and access for other faith communities then its own accessibility must be a priority. Constructing an interior ramp between the church and the community center demonstrates – not just in word, but also in deed – that St. John the Baptist parish welcomes people of all abilities for worship and fellowship. Celebrating Inclusion Awareness Day each year keeps the parish commitment to people with disabilities evident and integral to who the parish is and what they believe.

Old St. Mary's Catholic Church, Chicago, IL, has observed Inclusion Awareness Day since its inauguration in 1996. This year the parish will celebrate on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Pathways Awareness Inclusion Representatives Kathryn Moery and Tekki Lomnicki assist the pastor to plan children's activities and liturgies with inclusion as the focus. But at Old St. Mary's, affirmation and accessibility are core values which drive parish life every day of the year. The parish provides free weekly and holiday bus service for

parishioners with mobility difficulties. Children of all abilities are included in the religious education program and day school. At Old St. Mary's everyone is valued and affirmed and allowed to enrich the community through their participation on Inclusion Awareness Day and every day of the year.

Congregations of all faith traditions are invited to plan Inclusion Awareness Days. Invitations to participate from Cardinal Francis George of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and Metropolitan Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago are available at [www.inclusioninworship.org](http://www.inclusioninworship.org).

*Contributors: Pat Spencer, Kathryn Moery and Abby Vlahos*

### **Inclusion Tip**

This fall, say "All are Welcome" with an Inclusion Awareness Day celebration at your house of faith. Use Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Episcopal, and Protestant editions of the Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks, available at [www.inclusioninworship.org](http://www.inclusioninworship.org), to plan your congregation's event. Download a workbook or copy, paste and customize items for your congregation. A bulletin cover and the Inclusion Awareness Day Prayer Card are also available.

### **ABOUT PATHWAYS AWARENESS**

Pathways Awareness is dedicated to early detection and early intervention for children with motor delays and inclusion in all aspects of life. The Open Hearts, Open Minds program provides information, educational materials and cash grants to promote access and inclusion in worship. For more information, please call 1-800-955-2445, write to 150 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60601 or visit [www.inclusioninworship.org](http://www.inclusioninworship.org), [www.pathwaysawareness.org](http://www.pathwaysawareness.org) and [www.pathwayscenter.org](http://www.pathwayscenter.org).