

2005

INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

WORKBOOK

*Creating Access and Inclusion
in Worship*



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A Letter from Pathways Awareness Foundation



Dear Religious Leader:

We are encouraged by the number of congregations who provide accommodations so that all may worship. Since we inaugurated *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* in 1996, more congregations than ever are joining our effort. An integral part of this inclusion movement is the annual celebration of Inclusion Awareness Day. We invite congregations of all denominations to observe **Inclusion Awareness Day on September 25, 2005** or to choose a date of their own.

Many congregations tell us that they use Inclusion Awareness Day to raise awareness to the need for access and inclusion. Others celebrate how their community is enriched and strengthened when they come together to accommodate the needs of their members.

Please join us on September 25 in celebrating the progress made on including worshipers of all abilities in worship, ministry and leadership 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

Inclusion Awareness Day Activities

Listed below are ideas for your Inclusion Awareness event in the areas of affirmation, communication and accessibility. Browse the workbook for materials to help or develop ideas of your own. Reproduce materials as they are or adapt to suit your needs.

Affirmation

Celebrate access and inclusion with a worship service that focuses on how your faith community welcomes worshipers of all abilities. Use Sunday, September 25, 2005, or choose a date convenient for your congregation.

Invite worshipers with disabilities from your congregation to serve in leadership positions and ministries every day of the year. Celebrate the contribution they make to your faith community on Inclusion Awareness Day.

Show the Pathways Awareness Foundation *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* video after worship services. Celebrate the accommodations you provide and discuss new ways your congregation can be intentionally inclusive.

Communication

Run a series of bulletin articles in preparation for Inclusion Awareness Day.

Educate staff, volunteers and ministry leaders about using “People First Language” in homilies, announcements and print materials at your House of Faith.

Send a family discussion guide home for parents and children to discuss ways to be more inclusive. A family guide is available in the *Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit* lesson plans available for downloading at www.pathwaysawareness.org.

Accessibility

Do a walk-through of your facilities before Inclusion Awareness Day. Note your accomplishments and any areas that need improvement. Plan a ceremony on Inclusion Awareness Day to celebrate the accommodations you provide and to announce plans for future efforts.

Bulletin Items

Meeting the Challenge

On Inclusion Awareness Day we are challenged. Assumptions that our faith community is a place where “all are welcome”, are challenged. Our past efforts to be inclusive are challenged. The realities have been laid out. Where, then, do we go from here? How will we get to the point where an Inclusion Awareness Day Mass and an Inclusion Committee become unnecessary because 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. We are moving several meetings to accessible places, re-arranging schedules and trying to see things from a different perspective. 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. Committee chairs and planners need to explore all options when planning meetings, rather than just finding the easiest, most convenient meeting spaces and times. Creative careful planning will be necessary if all meeting spaces are not accessible. We need to make serious efforts to remedy barriers to participation. That may take time and patience. 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.

Contributed by Rev. Robert Oldershaw, Pastor, St. Nicholas parish, Evanston, IL.

Note: Father Oldershaw wrote this message to his congregation in September of 2002. Events were moved to accessible meeting spaces and fund raising began for an elevator to the social hall. Plans for the elevator are now complete and construction is expected to begin in September of this year.

Beatitudes 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.

Contributed by Andrew, Joy and Jay Zainey, St. Joseph parish, New Orleans, LA

"People with disabilities are not looking for pity. They seek to serve the community and to enjoy their full baptismal rights as members of the church...There can be no separate Church for people with disabilities. We are one flock that serves a single shepherd."

*Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities
(par. 33)*

Introduction to Worship Service

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.

Contributed by Sacred Heart parish, Winnetka, IL

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.

Contributed by Sacred Heart parish, Winnetka, IL

Prayer for Inclusion

Creator God, we are your people. We look to the future with optimism and with faith in you, as we pursue our call to provide justice and fullness of life for all people. We pray that every man, woman, and child may develop their potential and meet you in themselves and in one another. May we enjoy a total welcoming community, with You as our center, joined hand in hand with all of our sisters and brothers. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities "Opening Doors, to People with Disabilities" Volume II

We Are One Flock

God Bless those who open doors:
with faith, with love,
with knowledge
assuring that all your people
may worship here.

God bless those who
welcome all your people
to the celebrations
and obligations of
membership within your church.

And God bless those who feel excluded.
Give them faith.
Give them love.
Give them the knowledge
of your welcome.

Open our hearts
to move swiftly within your grace;
to hear your message in silent words;
to glimpse your glory beyond our sight;
to find your wisdom in simple truths;
to accept our weakness in your strength.

Let us join Christ
in breaking down those walls
which separate us,
one from another.
Amen.

*National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities
"Opening Doors, to People with Disabilities" Volume II*

Suggestions for Inclusion Awareness Day Hymns

The song "Opening Doors" is available for downloading at www.pathwaysawareness.org. Download a CD and/or the sheet music from our website.

See previous Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks for suggested songs.

Select hymns of your own. Avoid selections that evoke a sense of pity or single out and label persons with disabilities e.g. "the blind and the lame".

Clip Art

*Pathways Awareness Foundation
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors*

**Inclusion Awareness Day
September 25, 2005**

Today we celebrate the many ways we reach out to include people of all abilities in worship, ministry, fellowship and learning. Inclusion is offering the same respect and opportunity to participate to all people regardless of physical and mental abilities. Our faith community is working hard to create an inclusive congregation where people of all abilities can participate. Please join us today in celebrating access and inclusion in worship.

People First Language

Words, whether spoken or signed, are the basic means by which people communicate. Words are powerful tools that can affirm and empower. At the same time, the misuse of words can belittle and demean. Language used to describe people with disabilities often focuses on lack of ability rather than on competency. Don't reinforce common myths about people with disabilities.

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, words should be chosen with care in order to promote dignity and a positive image. The following suggestions, adapted from guidelines developed by Paraquad, Inc., and The Research and Training Center on Independent Living, may assist in this process:

Make reference to the person first, then the disability. Say "a person with a disability" rather than "a disabled person."

If the disability isn't germane to the story or conversation, don't mention it.

A person is not a condition; therefore, avoid describing a person in such a manner. Don't present someone as an "epileptic." Rather say "a person with epilepsy."

Do not portray successful people with disabilities as superhuman, as this raises expectations that all people with disabilities should reach this level.

Do not sensationalize a disability by use of such terms as "afflicted with," "victim of," "suffers from."

Do not use generic labels for disability groups such as "the disabled."

Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Use "walks with crutches" rather than "crippled".

Do not use condescending euphemisms. Terms like "handy-capable" and "physically inconvenienced" are considered condescending.

Do not imply disease. People with disabilities should never be referred to as patients.

Speak of people with disabilities as active participants in society. They are!

Adapted from National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities, "Opening Doors," Volume 1

Preparing the Word

Prepare for Inclusion Awareness Day with reading summaries, a process of self-examination for the preacher, an exegetical essay connecting today's themes with the themes of Inclusion Awareness Day, and a starter story you can adapt to fit your needs.

Roman Catholic Reading Summaries

Reading 1 Ezekiel 18:25-28

Summary: We say God is not fair, but who is the one who shows mercy?

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Summary: The humble can be taught the ways of God.

Reading 2 Philippians 2:1-11

Summary: Christ's perfection was found in emptying himself, even through suffering and death.

Gospel Reading Matthew 21:28-32

Summary: We like to judge ourselves by our intentions, but true faithfulness is revealed by our actions.

The Inner Word: *What's in your heart?*

Inclusion Awareness Day is an opportunity to examine how well our community welcomes and includes people of all abilities in our worship and in the ways we live out our faith.

-- Regarding those in my community, are there people on the margins who I fail to see, fail to connect with, or fail to invite into participation in church life? What barriers might there be that I unwittingly collude with: physical barriers, language barriers, lowered expectations?

--In what ways do I need to have a change of mind and heart like the reluctant brother in today's Gospel, so that I might personally take concrete action to reach out to those who feel excluded from our community? How might I better lead the community in such a change of mind and heart?

--Do I see the value of Jesus' example of emptying himself as a way of revealing God's glory? Can I recognize Jesus in the example of others who are living with grace in the midst of their disabilities and limits? How about in my own disabilities and limits?

Who's Listening? Who's in your audience?

One in five Americans has a disability—physical, mental, or sensory. Disabilities increase with age. So the odds are that more than every fifth person you greet at church this weekend will have a disability of some sort. Meanwhile we live in a culture that glorifies its own brand of physical perfection and emotional wellness, both of which are based in a false notion of reality. The challenge today is to increase your own and your congregation's awareness that a healthy community welcomes and tends to all aspects of all its members, especially those who feel excluded.

Exploring the Word: *Exegetical Essay*

Over iPods and airwaves and on television commercials, Sheryl Crow can often be heard singing out her plaintive message, "Change will do you good." A change of heart did a lot of good for the reluctant son in today's Gospel who at first tells his father he can't be bothered to work in the old man's vineyard, but later changes his mind and shows up. This contrasts with the goodie-two-shoes brother who tells his father, "Of course I'll go," but who never shows. For Matthew, showing up to work in the vineyard is everything. Last week we heard that even those who show up at the vineyard extremely late and put in only an hour or two of work qualify for full pay and all the benefits. In Matthew's gospel, showing up is the key.

Today, we are offered the opportunity to become more aware of how easy or hard we make it for our brothers and sisters in faith to show up here: in this church, at this Mass, with this community, to be transformed into the body of Christ. And we are offered the opportunity to examine not just our good intentions—like the brother who said he would work but didn't. But to examine our actions—like the brother who revealed his true identity by what he did rather than by just mouthing the right words.

It's often hard to know who's missing. It's like my old seminary professor who once took attendance by saying, "Will those who aren't here please raise your hand?" More to the point, it's like the pastoral council member who said, "We don't have any people with disabilities in our parish." He said this in a building that had steep flights of stairs and no elevator and the

meetings didn't offer any accommodations for those who had difficulty hearing, seeing, walking, or climbing stairs.

In fairness to him this man was willing to learn and change his mind. He discovered he was wrong about who was and wasn't in that parish and has since been an advocate for removing barriers and adding accommodations so that everyone can find their way to the pastoral council meeting—as well as the altar on Sunday.

Sometimes in order to be able to see fully, we need to **not** be so full of ourselves. We need to let go of our own perspective and take the point of view of another. Jesus knew that. In the letter to the Philippians Paul recalls how Jesus “emptied himself” and became human. As a human, he knew intimately what it was like to live and breathe, stretch and grow, suffer physical, as well as emotional pain, and even die. In doing so he revealed that God's nature is not to be distant and aloof, but to be up close and compassionate. God longs to be one with us.

Today's First reading raises the question of God's fairness. Some might look at the fact that certain people have disabilities and limits that others do not as a sign of God's unfairness. But God responds that his mercy is offered to everyone. In God's eyes, no one is excluded from living a full life in faith. God longs for inclusion—that all may be one. He turns the question around and asks “are not your ways unfair?”

And so today we can ask ourselves that question. As a parish we can humbly examine whether we are making room at the table of God for everyone who belongs here. Are there physical barriers we need to overcome? Are there social and emotional and attitudinal barriers that require a conversion of heart to be removed? If so, we know from Jesus' parable today that God welcomes a change of mind and a change of heart.

Developed by: Prepare the Word: Homilies from the heart that hit home, True Quest Communications Chicago, IL www.preparetheword.com

Starter Story

It's good when, like the reluctant son in today's gospel, we change our mind from failing to do God's will and throw ourselves into it. Sometimes we everyday mortals need a nudge in the right direction.

That happened to a New York City subway conductor when the train he was on was declared "out of service." It was stopped at a station that had no elevators or ramps—only stairs. Most of the commuters trudged off the train and up the stairs leaving a few moms with kids in strollers, and television news commentator John Hockenberry in his wheelchair.

"When the conductor offered me no help," said Hockenberry, "my only option was to hop out of my wheelchair and lug myself up the filthy stairs on my kiester." But something happened to help the conductor change his mind. One of the women with a child in a stroller asked the conductor pointedly, "What's your plan for this man? Is he supposed to just stay down here forever? We are not stupid people. There is a law that says you have to have a plan. Everybody knows that."

Hockenberry reports that the conductor had a change of mind that led to a change of heart. He invited Hockenberry and the women with children in strollers back aboard and took them to the next station that had an elevator. One courageous woman who could see the plight of another person in need made all the difference. She asked the right question at the right time and a conductor's eyes were opened and his imagination engaged.

Today we are invited to celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day. And like that lady who asked the right question, Inclusion Awareness Day asks us to have a change of mind and a change of heart so that we might honestly examine any barriers—whether physical, emotional, social, or attitudinal—that are blocking others from joining us fully in our worship and in our life as a people of faith.

From: *Yes, You Can* by John Hockenberry, award-winning television commentator, radio host, and foreign correspondent in the July 24, 2005 *Parade* Magazine.

Developed by: Prepare the Word: Homilies from the heart that hit home, True Quest Communications Chicago, IL www.preparetheword.com

Prayer for Awareness

God, Creator of all, help us to recognize that each of us has many abilities and each of us is limited in many ways. And yet we all have a part to play in bringing about your Kingdom. What's more, you love each of us profoundly. So in the spirit of gratitude and solidarity, we ask you to increase our awareness of both the gifts and the needs of those around us and help us to become a truly welcoming community where everyone can find their way to your table. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. --Amen.

Developed by: Prepare the Word: Homilies from the heart that hit home, True Quest Communications Chicago, IL www.preparetheword.com

Intercessions

--For world leaders, that they might be inspired by a vision of the world where every human being deserves respect and is welcome to fully participate in and contribute to society...we pray to the Lord.

--For Church leaders, that they might fully embrace Jesus' example of emptying himself and therefore expect to find God's revelation in many surprising places in the church and in the world...we pray to the Lord.

--For our own parish community, that we might have the eyes to truly see both the gifts and the needs of our fellow parishioners and to remove all barriers that keep others from joining us at the table of the Lord...we pray to the Lord.

--For those in our community who suffer the pain of exclusion based on disabilities or limits, that we might welcome them to full participation and we might become even more so the body of Christ...we pray to the Lord.

Developed by: Prepare the Word: Homilies from the heart that hit home, True Quest Communications Chicago, IL www.preparetheword.com

Ritual Blessing

Blessing for the end of the ceremony

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

Developed by: Prepare the Word: Homilies from the heart that hit home, True Quest Communications Chicago, IL www.preparetheword.com

Access Checklist

Although churches are exempt from the ADA, this checklist will assist with identifying access needs in your house of faith so that all may participate. For additional surveys and access checklists see previous Inclusion Awareness Day Workbooks and the Inclusive Congregation Toolkit at www.pathwaysawareness.org.

Yes	No	Accessible Feature
		People with disabilities should be able to arrive at your House of Faith, approach the building and enter as freely as everyone else. Is there at least one route of travel that is accessible for everyone?
		Does the entry configuration provide adequate maneuvering space for a person using a wheelchair?
		Do doorways have at least a 32-inch clear opening?
		Do all ramps longer than 6 feet have railings on both sides, and is the width between the railings at least 36 inches?
		Are slopes of ramps at least one foot of ramp length for each inch of height?
		Are there spaces for wheelchair seating distributed throughout the worship space?
		Is carpeting low-pile, tightly woven, and securely attached along the edges?
		Are all aisles and pathways at least 36 inches wide with a 5-foot circle for turning a wheelchair completely?
		Are objects protruding into the circulation paths within twenty-seven inches of the ground so as to be detected by a person with a visual disability using a cane?
		Is there one telephone equipped with a text telephone (TT or TTD) for members who have hearing loss?

Adapted from the Checklist for Existing Facilities Version 2.1, Adaptive Environment Center, Inc. available at www.adaptiveenvironments.org click on Resources then AE publications.

Inclusion Resources

Pathways Awareness Foundation
150 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60601
1-800-955-2445
Email: friends@pathwaysawareness.org
Website: www.pathwaysawareness.org

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors Video
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors Idea Guide
Opening Hearts, Minds and Doors: Embodying the Inclusive and Vulnerable Love of God White Paper
The Vulnerable Journey Audio Tape by Father Henri Nouwen
Celebrating Inclusion in Worship: Seth's Bar Mitzvah Video

Available for downloading at www.pathwaysawareness.org
Inclusive Congregation Toolkit
Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit Lesson Plans on Inclusion
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors Quarterly Newsletter
2001-2005 Inclusion Awareness Workbooks

Sources

[Opening Doors to People with Disabilities, Volume II The Resource File](#)
National Catholic Partnership on Disability
www.ncpd.org

[Checklist for Existing Facilities, Version 2.1](#)
Adaptive Environments Center, Inc.
www.adaptiveenvironments.org

Prepare the Word: True Quest Communications, Chicago, IL
www.preparetheword.com

Many thanks to the congregations who contributed to this workbook.
Please submit your ideas, prayers, bulletin articles etc. to
friends@pathwaysawareness.org.