

# 10 PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BECOMING A DISABILITY FRIENDLY CHURCH



This summary was compiled from information supplied by <http://www.joniandfriends.org/>

## 1. Provide a warm, friendly welcoming environment:

Greet people with disabilities as you would anybody else. Communicate that people affected by disability are loved, belong and are included in your church.

## 2. Provide basic disability awareness training for youth, church staff and volunteers:

Review basic disability etiquette tips. Invite a disability expert to your church. Obtain disability ministry resources. Ask people with disabilities themselves what they need.

## 3. Improve accessibility. Make modifications where necessary:

ASK people with disabilities, e.g. people with hearing, visual or mobility impairments what difficulties they have in the church building and make the necessary changes. If necessary, modify access to the main entrance, the sanctuary, restrooms and classrooms.

## 4. Provide opportunities for service for people with disabilities:

Include people with disabilities in the leadership of the church. Utilize people with disabilities to serve as ushers and greeters, or serving communion. Invite people with disabilities to read the scriptures, or to share their testimony. Include people with disabilities on the worship and prayer teams.

## 5. Provide disability friendly materials:

Have large print Bibles available.  
Print song sheets for the visually impaired.  
Consider providing assistive listening devices for hearing impaired people.

## 6. Provide space for wheelchair users throughout the sanctuary:

Shorten a few pews or take chairs away from some of the rows so wheelchair users can sit with their families and friends.

## 7. Provide a sign interpreter for people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

Place a sign interpreter in a well-lit area, which can be seen throughout the entire sanctuary.

## 8. General communication and interaction tips:

Treat people with disabilities with the same respect as you would anyone else. Speak directly to the person with the disability, not through their family or caregivers. Be relaxed around people with disabilities, not awkward. Don't get caught up with fancy euphemisms, such as 'physically challenged' or 'differently - abled'. Put the person first, not their disability.

## 9. Provide assistance in the accessible parking area:

Have an attendant available to help people with disabilities from their vehicles. Offer to push their wheelchair if needed. Have a wheelchair available to assist those with difficulty in mobility.

## 10. Provide a 'buddy' or mentor for those who might need assistance:

Utilise assistants to help people with disabilities participate in worship services. Have a 'buddy' system for children with disabilities in Sunday school classrooms.