



## CommunityForAll

Interfaith Disability Inclusion Weekend

### **8 Tips to Celebrate Community for ALL 2020** **Saturday, February 29-Sunday, March 1, 2020**

#### **1. Form a C4A TEAM**

Enlist one or more friends to discuss and implement your ideas for your **Community for ALL** weekend. Discuss what you would like to do and meet with your congregation's administration to get approval, as needed.

#### **2. Celebrate what you already DO**

List ways your congregation is already inclusive of individuals and families affected by disability. Do you have technology that assists people with hearing impairments? Do you have large print or braille materials available? Can people use iPads in worship services? What supports are available for children in your religious education?

**Anything you do, big or small, can be shared. Some members of your congregation may not be aware of what you already provide.**

#### **3. Share STORIES**

Individual and/or stories about their experiences are powerful. Individual speakers and panels will raise awareness and help congregants understand. Is there someone in your congregation who may be comfortable sharing their story? If you can't find someone, contact Faith Inclusion Network or other disability organizations. The guest speaker can speak during worship as part of the sermon or homily, during announcements, a lunch and learn, or at an adult religious education class. They need not be experienced speakers, just encouraged to share some of their unique story and perhaps how their faith community has or could have supported them.

#### **4. Share INFORMATION**

Through whatever means your congregation uses to share information, (newsletter, emails, bulletin, service handouts, website, social media) include some specifics about autism, Down syndrome, mental health, or any other condition that may affect people. See our sample

bulletin announcements. Education can raise awareness to help people understand their own attitudes and beliefs about disability. Use biblical texts to help increase understanding. Use the **Community for ALL** logo and use the great unifier: Music...

## **5. MUSIC**

Music is a powerful way to share the message of inclusion and community. Find songs and hymns that highlight the importance of community or acceptance. Work with your music coordinator or Cantor. Take it a step further and provide ribbons, scarves, or small instruments to give non-speaking members of the congregation a way to participate.

## **6. Make your message about INCLUSION and BELONGING**

For most religious services, the message from the clergy is a very big part of the congregation's worship experience. Speak about the importance of belonging to a faith community, including everyone in all aspects of congregational life, and recognizing that the gifts and uniqueness of every person positively contributes to the whole community. Everyone will benefit from a message that reminds us that God loves everyone and we are all created in the image of God. The **Community for ALL** weekend falls on the first weekend of Lent on the Christian calendar. The opening of the Lenten time of reflection can blend well with the importance of social awareness, community and inclusion of all people.

## **7. Enhance the WORSHIP SERVICE**

Use the **Community for ALL** weekend to invite someone in your congregation who is affected by disability to be a part of the worship service. Think about people who have never been asked. Be mindful to not (l)put people on "display." Think of this weekend as an opportunity to introduce someone to a volunteer opportunity. Perhaps this person like to then step into the role as a regular volunteer if they wish.

## **8. Provide SUPPORTS and ACCOMMODATIONS that are new to your congregation**

There are several supports for people affected by disability that can be used in a worship context. From Communication in Real Time Translation (CART), to an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter, to a hearing loop and visual aids such as using iPads or displaying prayers, page numbers and colorful art and photographs on a screen using PowerPoint slides. By providing your congregation with some of these supports not only helps people with disabilities--it raises the awareness of the entire congregation.

### **BE CREATIVE!**

These are just a few ideas to get you started. Please share with us via our **Community for ALL** Facebook page, <https://business.facebook.com/FINCommunityforALL/> or by email [faithinclusionnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:faithinclusionnetwork@gmail.com) your ideas. We can add it to next year's suggestions!