

TOOLKIT · VERSION 1

Faith Community Inclusion Guide

Belonging as a spiritual practice — not an accommodation request.

How to use this toolkit

Skim once, then choose one practice to try this week. Toolkits are living documents — mark them up, share them with your team, and revisit as your needs evolve.

Overview

Faith communities have a unique calling to belonging. This guide offers practical ways to make worship, formation, and fellowship genuinely welcoming for neurodivergent members of every age.

Why it matters

Neurodivergent people and their families consistently report leaving faith communities not because of doctrine, but because of sensory overload, social rigidity, or unwelcoming policies. Small shifts can rebuild trust.

Research summary

Disability and inclusion research in congregational studies shows that welcoming practices increase attendance, volunteerism, and spiritual flourishing across the whole community (Carter, 2007; Erik Carter et al., 2017).

Practical strategies

Sensory-friendly worship

- Quiet rooms with livestream, fidgets, and soft lighting.
- Predictable order of service; visual schedules for kids.
- Volume monitored for music; warning before loud moments.

Ministry across the lifespan

- Children's ministry: visual supports, choice, safe-exit plans.
- Adult ministry: small groups with predictable structure.
- Hospitality: greeters trained in welcoming difference.

Preaching & teaching

- Plain language alongside theological vocabulary.

- Slides, handouts, and recordings available.
- Stories that include disabled and neurodivergent saints.

Ready-to-use scripts & worksheets

Welcoming a new family

“We want your family here as you are. Tell us what helps your child feel safe — and what we can change.”

Recommended lessons & next steps

- Faith Toolkit — /faith
- Book Kimberly to speak — /book-kimberly

Selected references & further reading

- Carter EW. *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities*. Brookes, 2007.
- Carter EW, et al. *Congregational participation of adults with disabilities*. *Am J Intellect Dev Disabil*. 2017.
- Vanier J. *Becoming Human*. Paulist Press, 1998.

Ask the AI Companion

Visit understandingneurodiversity.org/companion to ask follow-up questions about **Faith Community Inclusion Guide**. The Companion will recommend lessons, conditions, and research tailored to your role.