

Neurodiversity-Friendly Worship Quick Checklist

Creating Worship Where Different Minds and Bodies Belong

Use this checklist with pastors, worship leaders, musicians, ushers, greeters, AV teams, and other worship volunteers.

Before Worship

- ☐ Provide a clear order of worship or visual schedule.
- ☐ Let people know approximately how long worship will last.
- ☐ Give advance notice of loud music, bells, flashing lights, incense, or other significant sensory experiences.
- ☐ Identify a quiet or low-sensory space where people may go and return freely.
- ☐ Make sensory supports available, such as fidgets and noise-reducing headphones.
- ☐ Provide seating choices, including space near exits.
- ☐ Make accessibility information easy to find before someone arrives.

During Worship

- ☐ Give clear instructions about what will happen next.
- ☐ Allow people to sit, stand, move, rock, pace, or change positions as needed.
- ☐ Welcome the use of headphones, fidgets, sunglasses, communication devices, and other supports.
- ☐ Do not require eye contact, handshakes, hugs, or other physical interaction.
- ☐ Avoid unnecessary sudden changes in sound, lighting, or activity.
- ☐ Allow people to leave and return without drawing attention to them.

- ☐ Remember that movement, vocalization, or lack of eye contact does not necessarily mean someone is distracted or disrespectful.

Communication

- ☐ Use clear and concrete language.
- ☐ Explain unfamiliar church or theological terms.
- ☐ Provide important information visually as well as verbally when possible.
- ☐ Give people adequate time to process questions and instructions.
- ☐ Do not assume that speech is the only meaningful form of communication.

Music, Prayer, and Preaching

- ☐ Keep amplification at a reasonable and consistent level.
- ☐ Provide lyrics and Scripture references visually or in print.
- ☐ Allow people to pray in whatever posture works for them.
- ☐ Tell people approximately how long periods of silence will last.
- ☐ Organize sermons around clear main ideas and concrete examples.
- ☐ Provide sermon outlines, summaries, or manuscripts when possible.

Communion and Other Worship Practices

- ☐ Explain what will happen before Communion, offering, baptism, or other unfamiliar practices.
- ☐ Clearly describe where people should go and what they are invited to do.
- ☐ Provide alternatives for people who cannot or prefer not to come forward.
- ☐ Offer choices during the Passing of the Peace: handshake, wave, sign, smile, or no interaction.
- ☐ Never require physical touch as part of participation.

Children and Families

- ☐ Welcome children who move, stim, vocalize, or participate differently.
- ☐ Do not expect families to leave worship because a child behaves differently.
- ☐ Offer sensory or quiet spaces as **options, not places of exclusion**.
- ☐ Make sensory supports available to children, youth, and adults—not only children.

Belonging and Leadership

- ☐ Train clergy, staff, greeters, ushers, and volunteers in neurodiversity and disability inclusion.
- ☐ Ask neurodivergent people what helps or creates barriers rather than making assumptions.
- ☐ Include neurodivergent people in planning and evaluating worship.
- ☐ Invite neurodivergent people into worship and congregational leadership.
- ☐ Respect each person's preferred language for describing their disability or neurodivergence.
- ☐ Focus on gifts, participation, and belonging—not simply accommodation.

Before Sunday, Ask:

Will people know what to expect?

Are there sensory barriers we can reduce?

Are our instructions clear?

Are people given meaningful choices about how they participate?

Can someone move, communicate, or regulate differently without being judged?

Have neurodivergent people helped shape our practices?

Are we asking people to fit our worship—or making worship accessible to the whole Body of Christ?

“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.”
— 1 Corinthians 12:14

Remember

There is no single “right” way to be present in worship.

Accessible worship makes room for different ways of listening, communicating, moving, learning, praying, and responding to God's grace.

The goal is not simply accommodation. The goal is belonging.