Welcoming Neurodivergent Adults

A practical team workbook for small churches

Help your church notice barriers, listen to people's preferences, and make specific improvements to worship, conversation and participation. Start with the person and the setting; do not assume that everyone needs the same support.

How to use this workbook

A pastor or volunteer coordinator can use the walk-through and team meeting plan with a few volunteers. Invite neurodivergent adults to help shape the process if they wish, pay for expertise when appropriate, and respect a decision not to participate.

This is a ministry planning tool, not diagnosis, treatment, emergency, safeguarding or legal advice. Follow your church's policies and seek qualified guidance for questions about the building, safety or legal duties.

1 | Start with dignity and belonging

Read together: 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Romans 12:9–16. Paul describes one body with many members and calls believers to sincere love and mutual care. People with disabilities are not a project or an illustration; they are people made in God's image who can belong, contribute and serve.

The first conversation

Ask a person what name and language they prefer, how they prefer to communicate, and whether a change would make participation easier. Do not demand a diagnosis or assume a person speaks for all neurodivergent people. Some people prefer identity-first language; others prefer person-first language.

A useful starting question

"Is there anything about the room, schedule, communication or activity that would help you participate more comfortably?" Ask privately, give time to answer, and accept "no." Do not promise a change before the people responsible can confirm it.

Who will coordinate the work?	
Whose perspectives are missing?	
What is one change we can investigate?	

2 | Walk through a church gathering

Walk the route before, during and after a typical service. Invite people with different sensory and mobility experiences to join if they wish. Ask what they notice, then verify potential changes with the people responsible for the building and safety.

Before arrival: Is the schedule, location and contact clear?	
Entry: Is the route visible and the accessible entrance open?	
Sound and light: Where is it loud, crowded or visually intense?	
Seating: Are there choices near an exit or away from a speaker?	
Break: Is there a quieter place with a clear route back?	
Afterward: Are conversations or changes in schedule predictable?	

Do not record names, diagnoses or private requests on a shared walk-through sheet.