

Ideas and Notes for Expanding Accessibility Awareness at Saint Mark's

Compiled by Emily Meeks - June 2024

These are notes compiled by conversations with Genevieve Witherbee and Michael Garrett in addition to online resources. This is no way is comprehensive but intended to provide some actions that may be considered in the coming months.

Actions that can be addressed now

- Use this template to complete accessibility audit at Saint Mark's (free) - <https://www.faithward.org/everybody-belongs-serving-together/church-accessibility-audit/>
- On Accessibility section of SMC Directions page, add information on hearing assist devices and accessible parking: <https://saintmarks.org/im-new/contact-directions/>
- Adding question to Event Registration forms to ask, "What ways can Saint Mark's support you during this event?"
- Adding "Accessibility" question to Newcomers forms to ask, "What ways can Saint Mark's better support you?"
- Leaflet – large print option is needed. Michael G. mentioned the importance of this and potential to scope in phases.
 - The last page is especially with all of the staff names and contacts (extremely small page). For the newsletter section, for someone with vision loss, the images are hard – plain text is better. Michael also suggested braille as an option but that is more expensive. Some people use text to audio machines.
- Add large print BCPs and Hymnals (if these are already there, make it more clear how to access).
- When posting Zoom presentations online, also consider posting the transcript (not just the recording).
- When giving presentations, describe the slide content, especially images (not assuming the audience can see).
- When moving any furniture or items people are familiar with, consider a way to share that with people with vision loss who may rely on things being in the same place and familiar paths.
- Keep a supply of snack and juice items on hand, especially for people with diabetes.
- Continue making sermon manuscripts available before the service for people to follow along who is hard of hearing.
- Become a scent-free zone to help people with asthma, emphysema, or others who have chemical sensitivities. Asking people to avoid wearing aftershave, cologne, or perfume to church is a good first step.
- Ask people to label food at potlucks that is specifically prepared to avoid allergens as a way to assist other members in identifying friendly dishes.

Short-to-Mid Term Actions

- Engage web audit to see where Saint Mark's is today, including the strengths and opportunities. Ex: Taking a look at our website – there is something called (Web Accessibility Content Guidelines) for apps and websites for people with disabilities - <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>
- Add ramp to sidewalk going down to the Hoerster Annex.
- Look into cost of adding pedestrian signal at the Exit drive onto 10th Avenue.
- Create a place for people who are neurodiverse to have a quiet space and experience worship. (Ex: a room that people could still listen to the service similar to how Thomsen has the speaker).

Long Term

- Install a hearing loop system.
- Arrange for sign-language interpretation (when requested in advance).

NOTES

When thinking about accessibility at Saint Mark's, consider three spaces: virtual meetings / physical space (worship, meetings) and website.

Language

- Use of inclusive, people first language – adopting language that relates to people with disabilities (Ex: people with diabetes as opposed to diabetics).
- When describing disabilities use language of “Apparent” and “Non-Apparent” instead of “Visible” and “Invisible.”
- Use “Accessible” when possible. Ex: use “Accessible parking” instead of “Handicap Parking”

Digital Accessibility

Goals: content being perceivable (alternatives for non-text content and high contrast color), operable (simple navigation), understandable (content operations and appearances), and robust (able to work with accessibility tools like screen readers).

- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2 from the Web Accessibility Initiative](#)
- [WCAG Checklist](#)
- [Tips for writing Alt Text image descriptions](#)
- [Color Contrast Checker for Visual Perception](#)
- [A guide for Free Video Transcription and Closed Captioning](#)

Forums

- Use closed captioning for online attendees.
- Ensure that speakers always identify themselves by their name, role and pronouns. Speakers can also show inclusivity by describing content on the slides instead of assuming it can be seen or read. For example, “On this slide, we have a picture of...”

Virtual Meetings

- [Zoom closed captioning](#)
- Utilize transcripts.

Facility Accessibility

- For facility reservations, include a way for people to communicate accommodation needs. The Diocese of Olympia does it this way:
<https://ecww.org/event-promotion-form/>

Education / Training / Resources

Consider programming opportunities:

- Start with reviewing key terms and concepts such as disability, accessibility, impairment, etc. and include the types of disabilities, such as sensory, cognitive, mobility, etc.
- Review the types of accommodations for various types of disabilities.

- Myths of disabilities - <https://www.faithward.org/everybody-belongs-serving-together/fact-checking-common-disability-myths/>

Potential partners

- [IDEA Project](#) - includes training programs that provide an overview of understanding disabilities, inclusive communication, legal and ethical considerations, and practical strategies.

Additional Resources:

- [JAN Network – A to Z](#) – geared for employers but gives overview of all disabilities with specific supports
- [Inclusion Handbook: Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves: Inclusive Ministry Guide](#)
- [Everybody Longs, Serving Together](#)