

Enhancing Accessibility at Saint Mark's Cathedral

*Understanding the Challenges,
Identifying the Opportunities*

December 2024



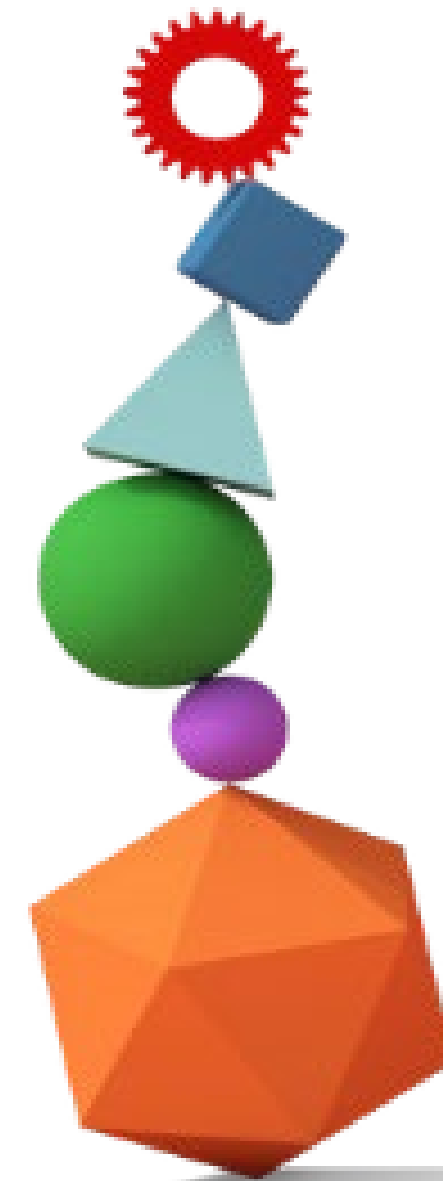
Learning Objectives

- Describe key terms and concepts related to disability and accessibility
- Summarize the approach to an accessibility audit at Saint Mark's





DESCRIBE KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS RELATED TO DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY



Definitions of Disability

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	World Health Organization (WHO)	United Nations (UN)
The ADA defines a person with a disability as someone who: • Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or • Has a history or <i>record</i> of an impairment (such as cancer that is in remission), or • Is <i>regarded as</i> having such an impairment by others even if the individual does not actually have a disability (such as a person who has scars from a severe burn that does not limit any major life activity). NOTE: This is a legal definition, not a medical or social justice-related definition	Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support. A person's environment has a huge effect on the experience and extent of disability. Inaccessible environments create barriers that often hinder the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others. Progress on improving social participation can be made by addressing these barriers and facilitating persons with disabilities in their day to day lives.	Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Article 1: Purpose, UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, December 2006)

Physical or Mental Impairment

The ADA defines a physical or mental impairment this way:

- Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more body systems, such as: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, immune, circulatory, hemic, lymphatic, skin, and endocrine; or
- Any mental or psychological disorder such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disability

Major Life Activity

Under the ADA, the definition of a disability requires that impairments substantially limit the ability to perform major life activities. **Major life activities are basic activities that most people can perform with little or no difficulty, such as:**

- Actions like eating, sleeping, speaking, and breathing.
- Movements like walking, standing, lifting, and bending.
- Cognitive functions like thinking and concentrating.
- Sensory functions like seeing and hearing.
- Tasks like working, reading, learning, and communicating.
- The operation of major bodily functions like circulation and reproduction.
- The function of individual organs like the heart, lungs, or pancreas.

Apparent and Non-Apparent Disabilities

Many disabilities, such as mental illnesses, learning and attention issues, some physical illnesses, neurodiversity, and many other disabilities are not apparent. Below is some suggested guidance in speaking about such disabilities:

- **“Non-apparent disability”**: It implies the disability is just that – non-apparent and does not imply any negative connotation. Disability is a strength and it does not matter what type of disability someone has.



People First vs. Identity First

- People-first language emphasizes the person before the disability, e.g., person who is blind
- Identity-first language puts the disability first in the description, e.g., autistic
- Person-first language or identity-first language is equally appropriate depending on personal preference; and when in doubt, as the person which they prefer

People First Language	Identity First Language
Uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair user
Person with a hearing impairment	Deaf person
Person with diabetes	Diabetic
Person with asthma	Asthmatic

Environmental and Social Barriers

A disability results, in part, from various barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society. These barriers include:

- **Physical barriers**, such as curbs without cutouts and non-accessible restrooms
- **Communication barriers**, such as lack of availability of large-print materials or of closed captioning of videos
- **Attitudinal barriers**, such as stereotypes of people with disabilities resulting in, for example, and employment rate of only about 40% for people who are blind or visually impaired

Other Definitions

Equity	Inclusion	Belonging
Critically examining systems to identify biases that prevent equal access and opportunity to individuals.	Inclusion is the process of enabling the full participation and contribution of all human resources in support of the mission of the organization by eliminating implicit and explicit barriers.	The feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group; an individual can bring their authentic self to a space.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/deia/index.html>

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/>

Accessibility

- Accessibility ensures that all people, regardless of disability, can interact with information or services
- Accessible means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.
- The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability.
- Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.
- NOTE: **Digital accessibility** ensures everyone can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with information on the internet and digital apps, regardless of ability. Accessible on-line content provides an equal experience for those with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities or impairments

<https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/ensuring-equal-access>

<https://case.edu/accessibility/what-accessibility#:~:text=Accessible%20means%20a%20person%20with,substantially%20equivalent%20ease%20of%20use.>

Accommodations

- A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to the environment, or to the way things are usually done
- These modifications enable an individual with a disability to have equal opportunities for participation
- Reasonable accommodations are sometimes referred to a “productivity enhancers”
- Reasonable accommodations should not be viewed as “special treatment” and they often benefit everyone, such as ramps initially constructed for people with mobility impairments may also help parents who have infants in strollers to access a facility



Examples of Accommodations

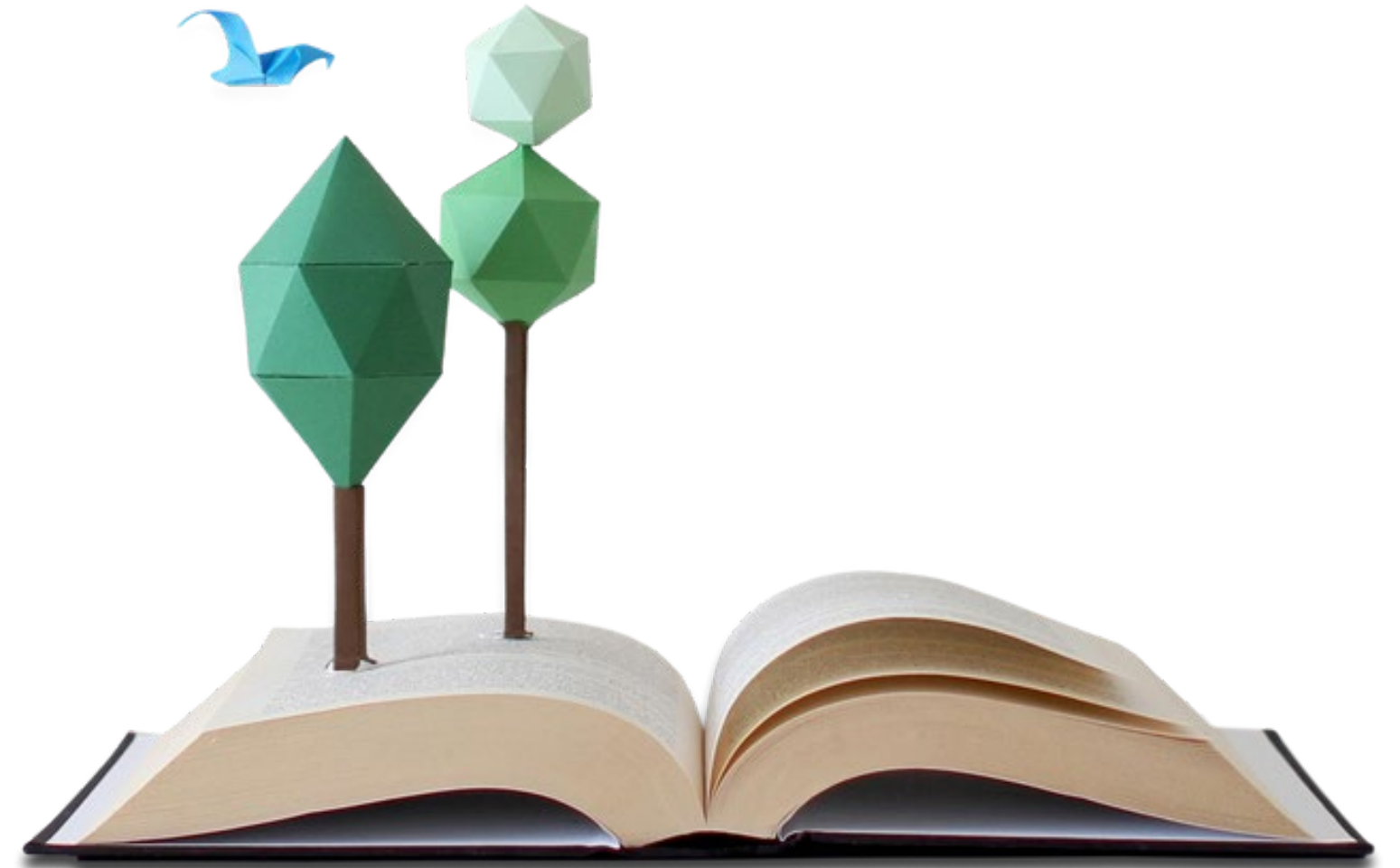
Type of Impairment	Examples of Accommodations
Visual	• Offer large print and/or Braille editions for bulletins and other church publications • Have simple, non-busy backgrounds on such items as print materials, websites, and song sheets • Maintain consistent placement of furniture and other items
Hearing	• Arrange for sign-language interpreters at services • Consider adding captions to all virtual events • Ensure the sound system is working properly
Allergies and Chemical Sensitivities	• Consider adopting a scent-free zone in church spaces, including avoiding wearing cologne, perfume, aftershave, or similar scents • Offer grape juice as well as gluten-free, dairy-free, and nut-free bread for communion • Request that parishioners clearly label foods brought for potlucks indicating the presence of items such as gluten, eggs, nuts, dairy, etc.
Physical	• Providing accessible entrances and restrooms • Consider making other spaces accessible, such as the pulpit education rooms, drinking fountains, and fellowship areas • Provide accessible parking and entrances clear of snow and debris

<https://www.crcna.org/disability/everybody-belongs-serving-together>

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/employers/accommodations>

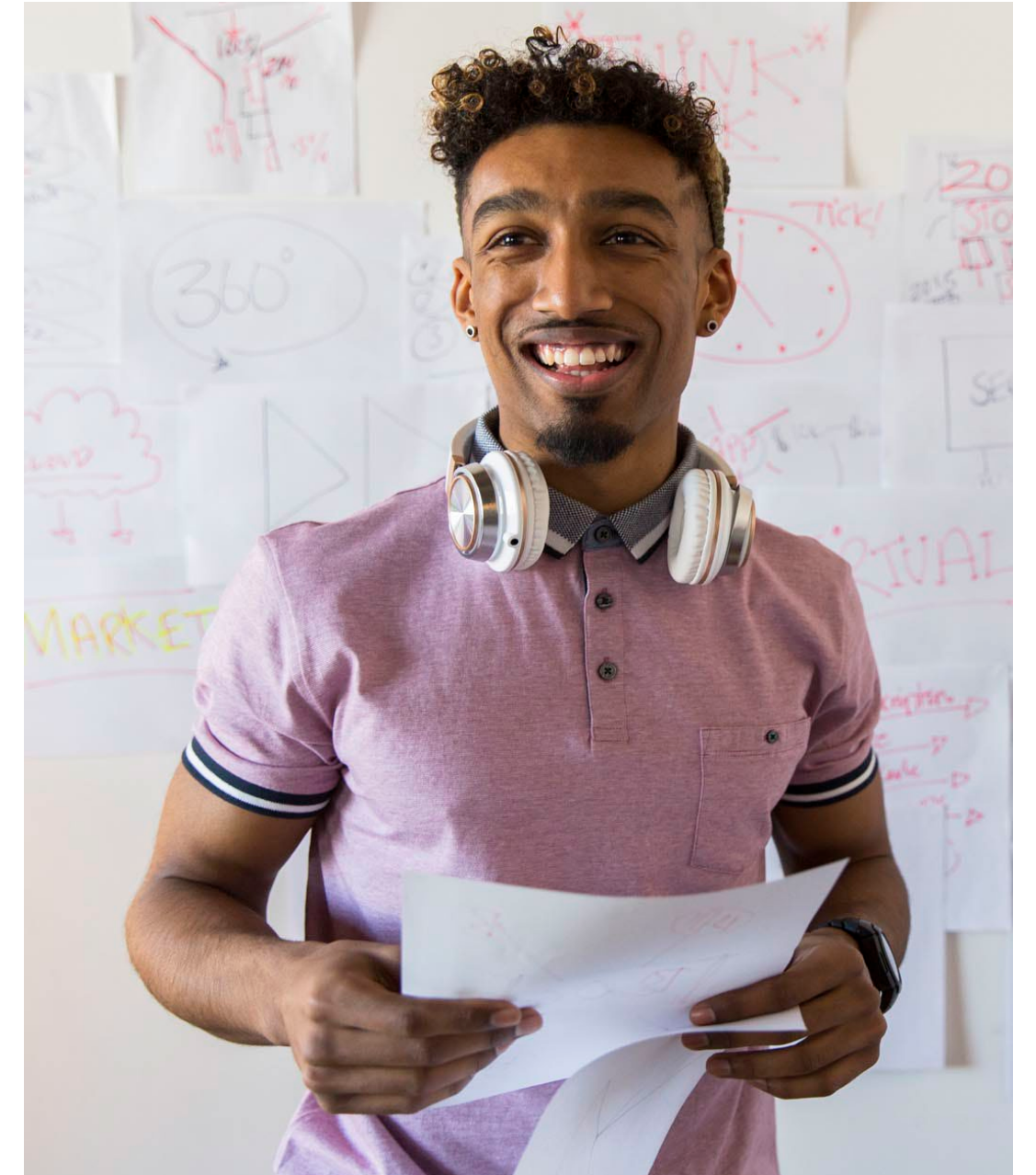


SUMMARIZE THE APPROACH TO AN ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT AT SAINT MARK'S



Proposed Purpose of the Accessibility Audit

The purpose of the accessibility audit is to engage in a collaborative discovery of the current strengths and opportunities for improvement in meeting the needs of people with disabilities. This is not intended to be a "blame and shame" exercise. This is not intended to get anyone in trouble or to finger point. This is a discovery process where we are exploring some best practices in how the Cathedral community can optimize the accessibility for all people, with a focus on people with disabilities. The audit is intended to evaluate accessibility from the perspectives of the range of disabilities. It should be acknowledged that the members of the Accessibility Committee, clergy, staff, and vestry are learning about best practices in meeting the needs of people with disabilities. We will want feedback from members of the Cathedral community with disabilities to better understand how to meet their needs.



Proposed Process for the Audit

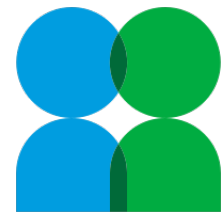
- The process will use existing tools and resources for making all church ministries inclusive for people with disabilities. This has included resources, for example, such as "Everybody Belongs, Serving Together" from the Reformed Church Press, Disability:IN, Job Accommodation Network (JAN), and the National Organization on Disability. We may augment the tools and resources to meet the needs of our Cathedral community and all people with disabilities. The process for the audit will include interviews with the appropriate clergy and staff responsible for the particular category of the audit, and this may involve documents or materials that need to be reviewed. People can be in one or more the categories depending on availability, interest, and expertise.



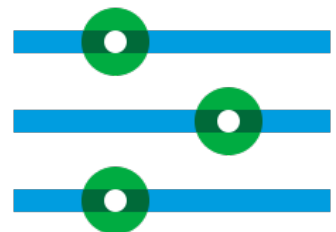
Proposed Categories of the Accessibility Audit



Attitude and Culture: Looking at overall enterprise-wide ways the Cathedral supports people with disabilities



Communications: Including print communications and digital communications (e.g., website and apps)



Events and Services: Including in-person, hybrid, and virtual only events and services



Physical Facilities: Including the Cathedral building and adjacent structures (e.g., parking)

Proposed Process for Sharing the Results of the Accessibility Audit

- After the interviews and documents/materials are completed, the draft audit results will be shared first with the appropriate persons involved in the category of the audit. The audit findings will include strengths and opportunities for improvement (OFIs). They will have the opportunity to review the draft audit results and provide any additional information or feedback.
- The Accessibility Committee members will then present the findings to the Vestry
- The Vestry will determine the priorities and logistics of implementing improvements
- The Vestry will also decide on how to communicate to the Cathedral community, Bishop, and others regarding the findings and actions for the improvements



Proposed Timeline for Accessibility Audit

- January 2025: Conduct the Physical Facilities Category of the Audit
- February 2025: Conduct the Attitude/Culture Category of the Audit
- March 2025: Conduct the Communications Category of the Audit
- April 2025: Conduct the Events and Services Category of the Audit
- May 2025: Prepare and distribute the draft report from the Audit with adjustments based on feedback
- June 2025: Present the final Audit results to the Vestry



Proposed Format for Presenting the Results from the Accessibility Audit

High Cost; High Value

“Requires strategic planning, budgeting, and team collaboration”

These adjustments, additions, and modifications may need to be on a schedule. So, although there is high value, there would need to be budgeted resources to develop and implement them.

High Cost; Low Value

“Low value, so get rid of them”

There is likely no need to develop or implement these adjustments, additions, and modifications due to the significant resources needed that would not much result in much value.

Low Cost; High Value

“Quick win, low hanging fruit”

These are the adjustments, additions, and modifications that should be prioritized first due to the perception of high value although no significant resources are necessary.

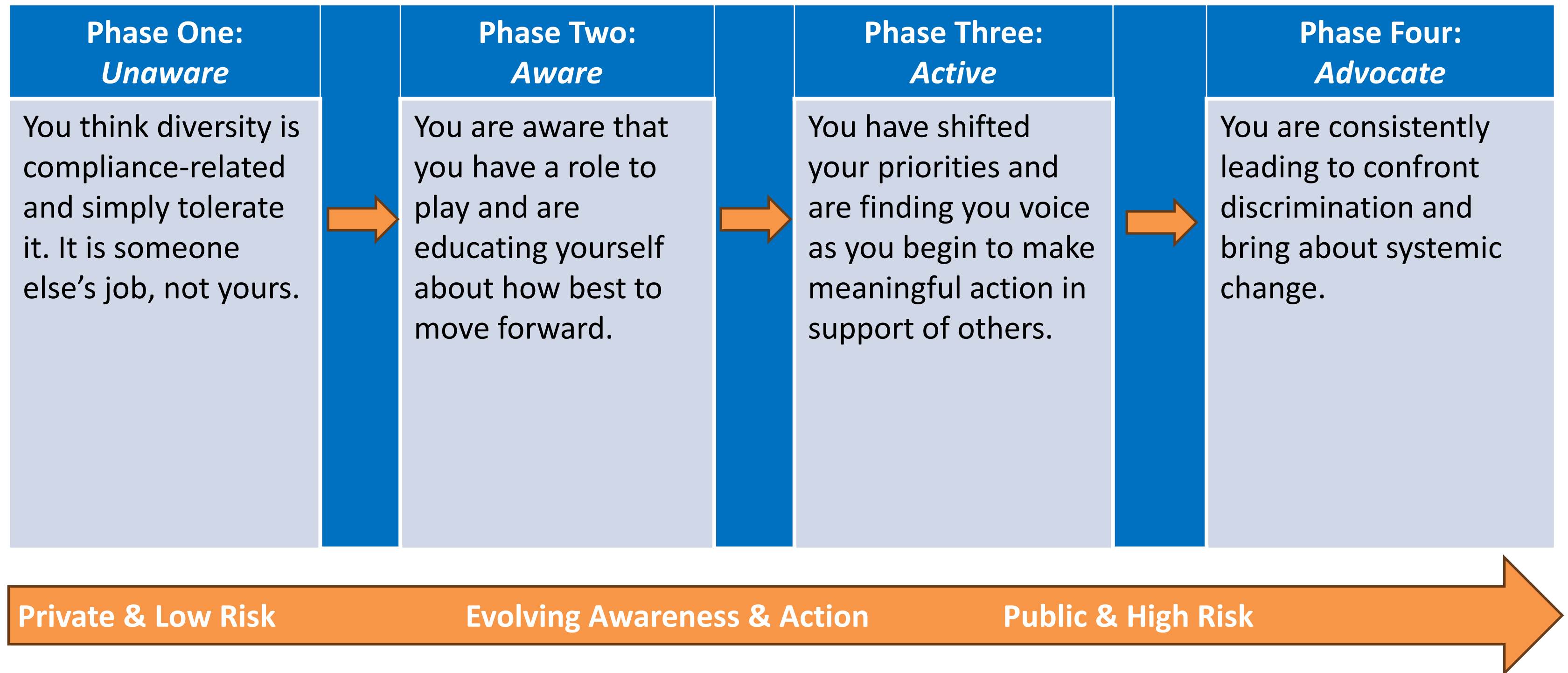
Low Cost; Low Value

“Defer until value increases”

Although these are low cost, the perception is that there is not much value. These adjustments, additions, and modifications can be implemented at a later date, especially after the low cost; high value items.

Four Stages of the Inclusive Leadership Continuum

It's a Journey; Not a Destination



Summary of What we Covered

- Described key terms and concepts related to disability and accessibility
- Summarized the approach to an accessibility audit at Saint Mark's



Appendix: Resources

Everybody Belongs, Service Together (Christian Reformed Church)

<https://www.crcna.org/disability/everybody-belongs-serving-together>

ADA National Network: Information, Guidance, and Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act

<https://adata.org/>

Disability:IN

<https://disabilityin.org/>

National Organization on Disability (NOD)

<https://nod.org/>

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN)

<https://askearn.org/>

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<https://askjan.org/>

The background features a person's arm holding a rainbow flag. A large, dark blue, wavy shape covers the bottom half of the image. Halftone dot patterns are visible in the top right and bottom left corners.

THANK YOU!
Questions?