

Invite.
Embrace.
Include.
Empower.



FAITH4ALL

Inclusive Times

Latest Edition:
We'll consider the importance of assessment for keeping your institution welcoming and inclusive.

Issue No. 19

January 2025

The Importance of Assessment

For the first quarter of this new year, we're going to look at the importance of regular assessment of ensuring the welcoming and inclusive nature of your organization. While some of the important efforts to make your community of faith one that maximizes the attendance and enhances the values of members and others interested, many essential efforts are benefitted by regular "check ups". Such efforts include: educating everyone in the congregation; checking on the progress of extended efforts; training ushers; and, lastly, ensuring that your organization is well connected to external institutions.

One helpful way to execute this "check up" is by ensuring that several people associated with your organization complete an Accessibility Test. A helpful and very extensive [Accessibility Checklist](#) has been produced by the [ADA National Network](#). (I've attached a PDF extraction of this checklist to the email that contained this issue of the *IT*).

Every congregation is encouraged to complete the entire checklist upon first assessment of the welcome-ability and inclusivity of your organization. Additionally, it is important to re-evaluate your organization's accessibility every couple of years to ensure that you've completed and have maintained your facility to ensure a wide welcome and inclusion of all people.

Perhaps the most important quality of a welcoming religious organization that's keen on including all, is the impression people with a disability have when visiting or serving at a religious organization. Many people -- particularly those of your local community with evidently presented disabilities -- have likely experienced some degree of insensitive treatment when attempting to worship or join into a local religious community.

The primary reason why some local religious institutions include only trivial participation of the members of the disabled community is *not* due to a lack of faith of those who live with

disabilities, but is related to the fractured relationship a religious organization can display toward those people living with a disability. Two important steps to repair this relationship include:

1. Religious communities need to become **aware** of their failure to truly include those in their congregation living with a disability;
2. Religious communities need to feel that *it is a religious obligation* that they include all people, independent of their ability status.

Both of these points can be easily addressed by the community's leadership in a sermon, homily, *d'var torah*, or *khutbah*, and, assisting this transformation is the entire point of [Faith4All](#) organization! Please contact myself at kevin@Faith4All.org if you need guidance with this transformation.

Additional helpful websites for congregational inclusion include:

- The [Activities & Resources](#) page of the [Religion and Spirituality Interest Network](#) of the [American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities](#);
- The section of [Disability Resources](#) webpage concerning [universal design](#);
- Notes from the presentation titled "[The Call and Opportunity for Faith Communities to Transform the Lives of People with Disabilities and their Communities](#)" produced with help from the [Putting Faith to Work Project](#);
- The website [That Every Ability May Belong](#) has a helpful "getting started" page.

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**We hope you are enjoying the winter weather
and staying safe this holiday season!**



*Any questions or comments regarding this e-journal or this organization can be directed to kevin@Faith4All.org.