

Tips for Accessible Worship



Creating Accessible Visuals for Worship

As you consider individuals who have visual impairment, it is helpful to create worship visuals by using a consistent color, layout, background, text size and style for all slides.

Background

- Use a medium-hue background like a royal blue.
- Avoid the use of shading or gradation of color.

Font Size and Color

- Utilize a light, single color for the text like yellow or white.
- Use a font size of 36 pt. or larger.
- Avoid the use of Serif fonts and use Sans Serif fonts like Arial, Verdana or Tahoma, and any effects that would blur the text like shadowing or embossing.

Text

- Use no more than 15 to 20 words per slide.

Use of Pictures

- Adding pictures to one side of a divided slide can be an effective way to include visuals. Place the visual on one side with the text on the other.
- Do not place visuals on top of or behind words.

For individuals who use screen readers (text-to-voice software programs), consider implementing the following suggestions.

- Make visuals available ahead of time. If you do this, remember that screen readers can read text only, not photos or other non-text images.
- If you are using PowerPoint presentations, it is possible to embed an alternative text description (“alt text”) that will not be visible on the slide but can be read by a screen reader (adobe.com/accessibility). Another option would be to convert your PowerPoint into a Word document.
- Consider having a “visual” interpreter, someone who verbally describes the worship space to individuals with visual impairment. They could describe various components of the environment like stage set-up, décor, and the movements and motions of the worship service.
- Consider transcribing songs and responsive readings that are frequently used in your worship services into braille. These braille sheets can be kept in a binder available at your hospitality center.
- Offer to email the bulletin, songs, and order of worship to individuals with visually impairment in a format that works for them prior to the service.

Making Worship Accessible for the Hard of Hearing and Deaf

Churches can help individuals who are hard of hearing or Deaf more fully engage in worship in a variety of ways.

- Provide Certified American Sign Language Interpreters during worship the worship service. You might consider researching local interpreting agencies or Hearing Society chapters to hire certified interpreters. If you pursue this option, include the symbol on the right in your bulletin and on your website.
- Provide captions for video and other media so that individuals who are hard of hearing or Deaf can understand what is being communicated.
- Consider Installing Hearing Assisted Listening Devices (ALD) or Hearing Loops
 - For hard of hearing individuals, it may be difficult to process sound or speech because of reverberation, distance to sound source, or ambient noise present in the worship space.
 - Using portable receivers, ALD can increase the intensity of the spoken word in proportion to the background noise.
 - Hearing loops are an effective tool for those who have T-coil in their hearing aid.
 - The symbol on the right informs people that a church is looped. Many churches include this symbol in their bulletin and on their website. For more information see: hearingloop.org.
- With advances in technology it is now possible for churches to use audio streaming that connects hearing assistive systems to individual smart phones or tablets.
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is a verbatim text of spoken presentations provided for live events such as a worship service or conferences. It is the process of converting audio content into text and displaying the text visually so that individuals who are hard of hearing are not excluded in a group setting. A court reporter with added specialized training can provide CART for one person, a group, or for an entire audience.
 - Proponents of CART assert that even with hearing aids or cochlear implants, many with hearing loss do not always hear nor understand much of what is being said by others. English, rather than sign language, is the primary mode of communication for some.
 - For more information about CART and churches who utilize this system check out: ccacaptioning.org



Sign Language Interpretation



Additional Resources

Free online dictionaries for ASL:

- Signingsavvy.com
- Handspeak.com/word
- asluniversity.com

ASL Translator app: For [iOS](#), for [Android](#)

Video resources: deafvideo.com