The Catholic Disability Fellowship
in partnership with the Diocese
of Harrisburg Pennsylvania USA

present a

'Parish Guide to Disability'

The people of God: "A living community, one that supports, accompanies, integrates and enriches. Never separated, but united, where everyone learns to be a sign and blessing of God for others."

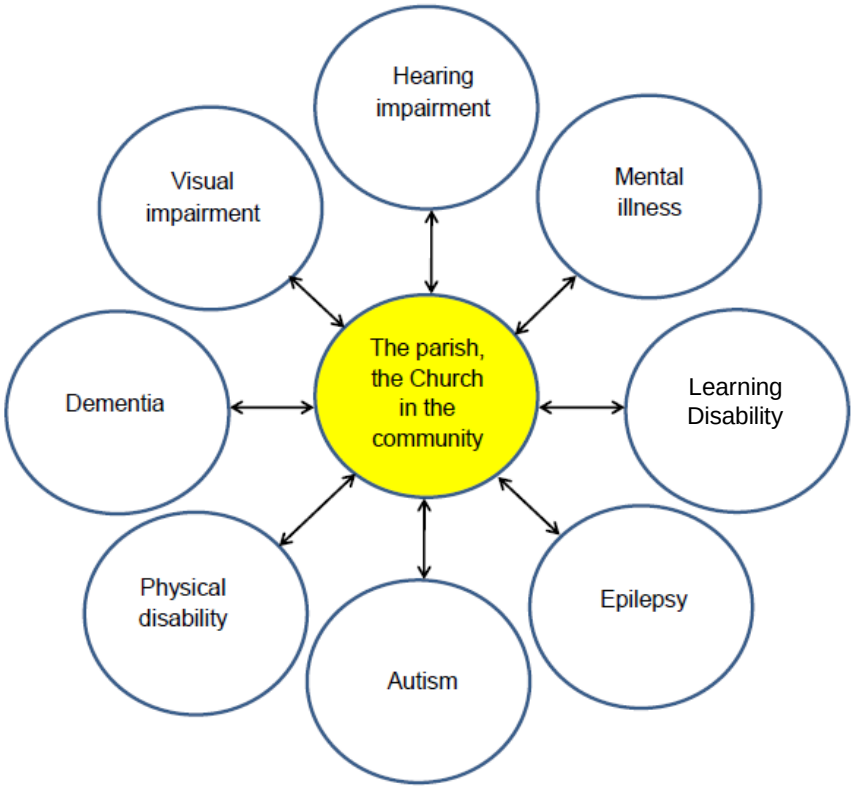
Pope Francis (Bulgaria - May 6, 2019)

Welcome to the Guide

This guide is brought to you by the 'Catholic Disability Fellowship', a member of the Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), the official agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for domestic social action.

We are indebted to the 'Office of Ministry with People with Disabilities', Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania USA, for allowing us to adapt and extend for use in our parishes their excellent booklet: *'Welcoming People With Disabilities So All May Encounter Christ – A Guide for Parishes' (2011)*.

A diagram to show the eight categories included in this 'Parish Guide to Disability'



Foreword

Although members of the 'People of God', any of the above conditions can make it difficult, and in some cases almost impossible, for individuals to take a full part in the life of their parish community.

This means they will not feel like they belong, they will not have a chance to get to know other parishioners, to make friends, or to become a full member of the parish family.

It also means that they are not able to make their own contribution, to feel valued.

The **'Parish Guide to Disability'** aims to help us all to make sure these things don't happen.

Dr. Edward Whelan, for the 'Catholic Disability Fellowship', 17th August 2020.

Spiritual considerations

The first priority of any parish in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities is spirituality. While physical accommodations are necessary, the parish community must see to it that every individual meets Christ: in the celebration of the Sacraments, in proclaiming the Word, in prayer and in the compassion and love of the community.

Just as with any parishioners, people with disabilities and their families can come to the parish doors with great spiritual need. There may be feelings of pain, loss, rejection and suffering. Spiritual questions often arise. Lives may be fraught with uncertainty and questions about medical issues, schooling, employment, relationships, etc.

Grace is looked for to live with challenges and look for meaning in a life that is somehow altered, a life some people might tend to marginalise. There is a search for understanding this deep mystery with faith, hope and trust in God. Parishes must be ready to respond to the spiritual needs of persons with disabilities, despite differences in communication, mobility, behaviour or thinking.

Priority should be given to the initiative of God in the sacraments and not only the readiness of the recipient or the recipient's response.

Preparation must be attempted, but in case of doubt, decisions should be in favour of reception of the sacrament and grace of the Holy Spirit within the person. Our faith also teaches that it is the right and need of everyone to receive religious instruction and formation appropriate to his/her age and development. This includes learning how to pray and know the God who calls us to life and sustains us.

It is the encounter with Christ, mediated through a Church community that is welcoming and accessible, that has its deepest and most important effect on every soul. This encounter must be at the core of a parish's outreach to persons with disabilities and their families.

Parishes cannot impede the mission of its members with and without disabilities to serve His Church. This ultimately is the whole reason for a parish to exist: to be a true community where all persons can come to know and love Christ as He personally encounters each human heart.

On Oct. 21.2017, Pope Francis told differently abled individuals, their families and pastoral workers and professionals who work with them:

> "*The church cannot be 'mute' or 'tone deaf' when it comes to the defence and promotion of people with disabilities.*
>
> *Words and gestures of outreach and welcoming must never be missing from any church community, so that everyone, particularly those whose journey in life is not easy, can encounter the risen Lord and find in that community "a source of hope and courage,*"

Pope Francis greets a French nun with Down's Syndrome during an audience with catechists and people with disabilities at the Vatican Oct. 21.2017 (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano)

Welcoming People of All Abilities in the Church

General Tips for Welcome and Inclusion

It is helpful if YOU…..

- show a welcoming manner, a smile, welcoming words such as “good to see you”
- speak directly to the person with disability, not only to their companion or interpreter
- focus on the person, not the disability
- treat adults with disabilities as adults
- use a normal voice and volume, unless instructed to do otherwise
- offer to shake hands when introduced
- ask for instructions before providing assistance; don’t assume you know the need
- recognize that the person may have multiple disabilities and, therefore, multiple needs
- relax; we are all people with gifts and challenges

It is helpful if THE PARISH…

- has prominently displayed WELCOME signs outside the church and parish centre;
- provides reserved parking spaces for parishioners with physical disability;
- ensures that the church and parish centre are easily accessible to wheelchair users;
- has a team of trained welcomers, on a rota, at all weekend Masses and main parish events;
- ensures that the church and parish centre are warm, well lit, clean and attractive;
- has an easily accessible toilet, which includes adaptations helpful to people with disability;
- has a good ‘loop system’ in place for the use of those with hearing impairment;
- displays appropriate and clear signs in all parish facilities;
- provides respite facilities and opportunities for families and children with disabilities (this would need to be guided by a person-centred approach and the volunteer recruited safely via safer recruitment);
- asks what other accommodations and facilities parishioners need;
- recognizes that people with disabilities have talents and skills that are useful to parish communities and asks them how they would like to help out in parish life.
- includes parishioners with disabilities in liturgy, ministries, etc.
- asks persons with disabilities to evaluate facilities, such as toilets and respite areas;
- forms a ‘Disability Support Group’ and trains volunteers (adults and youth);
- has a ‘disability contact person’, named on notice board and newsletter, to be informed if any persons with disability, or their carers, experience problems (e.g. with a hearing loop);
- includes (in the parish library) copies of this Guide, with resource information, signposting to specialist resources, with contact details for relevant services/societies in the neighbourhood;
- makes provision for house-bound parishioners, by arranging for social visits, Eucharistic ministers to call, arranges availability of transport suitable for wheelchairs to convey some to church and parish events, where possible;
- where necessary, provides facilities for ‘streamed’ services, allowing house-bound parishioners to follow the Mass on their TV, computer, or tablet;
- invites all house-bound parishioners to become members of the ‘Apostleship of Prayer’.

Encountering a Person with Visual Impairment

Definition: The loss of a person's sight is termed as low vision (with some useful sight) or blindness (no useful vision). Terms used also depend on how severe the loss, how long vision has been impaired and how accepting the person is of the vision loss.

Terms You Might Hear:

- Blind
- Can't see
- Legally blind
- Low Vision
- Visually Impaired
- Macular Degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Cataracts

What You Might See:

- Person with white cane
- Guide dog
- Assistant
- Person using no reading materials
- Person using Braille – feeling with their finger-tips

What You Can Do:

- Lightly tap parishioner on the arm and introduce yourself
- Ask if the parishioner needs assistance
- Speak in a normal voice directly to the person
- Use names often to identify who is speaking/in proximity
- If asked to guide, hold out your elbow to lead rather than taking the person's arm
- Offer a tour of parish facilities with common traffic flow and any permanent fixtures to use as locators
- Don't interact with guide dogs

What a Parish Can Do:

- Supply written materials in audio format prior to the event
- Provide large print in 18 font or larger in Times New Roman font, using black ink on white paper
- Provide materials in Braille, such as hymn books (if parishioner is a Braille user)
- Announce any changes to "traffic patterns" during liturgy (such as changes in reception of Communion)
- Have good lighting (>60 Watts)
- Use caution with open flames in parish facilities

Encountering a Person with Hearing Impairment

Definition: The loss of some or all of a person's hearing in one or both ears, which may limit the ability to acquire or use spoken language.

Terms You Might Hear:

- Deaf
- Hard of Hearing
- Hearing Impaired

What You Might See:

- Person with a hearing aid or cochlear implant
- Someone who speaks differently or uses sign language
- Someone who does not understand spoken language
- Someone who points to their ear/shakes head when spoken to

What You Can Do:

- Speak at a normal volume, without exaggerated lip movements;
- Offer to write the message
- Do not assume lip-reading ability or that a person with a hearing aid hears normally
- Face the person and speak at eye level
- Do not cover your mouth when speaking
- Be aware that glare behind the speaker interferes with communication
- If an interpreter is present, speak to the deaf person, not the interpreter
- Be aware that background noise may interfere with communication

What a Parish Can Do:

- Allow for seating with an unobstructed view near the speaker and/or interpreter
- Provide a sign language interpreter (if the parishioner uses sign language)
- Provide appropriate lighting on the speaker and/or interpreter
- Provide assistive listening devices
- If an interpreter is used for liturgy, allow the interpreter to stand in a direct sight line between the speaker and the deaf parishioners
- Provide printed summary of homily and announcements
- Post information about Masses interpreted in sign language and where assistive listening devices can be found
- Familiarize office staff with receiving and making phone calls using relay systems – but note that email and text are now the preferred options by deaf people – don't just telephone them.

Encountering a Person with Learning Disability

Definition: A significant limitation in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive skills, which includes many everyday social and practical skills.

Terms You Might Hear:

- Special Educational Needs
- Learning Disability
- Cognitively Impaired
- Downs Syndrome

What You Might See:

- Someone who is trusting and vulnerable, less aware of danger or of being manipulated
- Speech that may be difficult to understand
- Little or no spoken language
- Understanding that is limited
- Responses that are slow
- Poor social skills (these are usually learned 'incidentally', in the course of everyday experience)
- A lower than average level of curiosity and exploratory behaviour;
- Less 'active learning', for example difficulties in *concentrating* and in *anticipating* what should come next in a sequential task, such as making a pot of tea;

What You Can Do:

- Speak slowly to the person
- Use simple language
- Use gestures or pictures to help understanding
- Encourage curiosity and exploration (e.g. saying, "what do you think is in this box?" - rattle it)
- Wait for a response and reward correct behaviour with a smile and a word of encouragement
- Repeat questions or directions
- Praise initiatives, especially those involving curiosity, anticipation, or asking questions
- Ask the person if they would like to do a role in the parish, e.g. collecting in the hymn books, watering garden flowers

What a Parish Can Do:

- Provide opportunities for socialization and for giving respite to the person's family (this would need to be guided by a person-centred approach and the volunteer recruited safely via safer recruitment)
- Allow suitably screened individuals to volunteer in supporting the person
- Create an adapted/assisted religious education program, teaching that Jesus loves us
- Provide opportunities for the person to help with church services and ask which roles they would like to do, e.g. altar server, and to contribute to activities held in the parish centre.

Encountering a Person with Mental Illness

Definition: Mental Illness is often caused by chemical imbalance in the brain. It disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning.

Terms You Might Hear:

- Emotional disturbance
- Obsessive Compulsive (OCD)
- Depression Disorder
- Psychiatric illness
- Panic disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress (PTSD)
- Schizophrenia Disorder
- Eating Disorder
- Mania or manic
- Phobia/Phobic
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

What You Might See:

- Person who looks sad, distraught, confused
- Someone who is withdrawn
- Unresponsiveness to conversation
- High energy
- Unkempt appearance
- Unusual facial and physical movements
- Talking to oneself

What You Can Do:

- Speak directly using a soft, calm voice and ask if you can be of help
- Be sensitive to the fact that some "church" routines (music, misinterpreted words) may create stress which in turn affects function.
- Refrain from immediate physical contact (e.g. handshaking) until response to touch is known
- Offer quiet space to rest
- Stand beside person in supportive, non- instructional manner

What a Parish Can Do:

- Learn about the role of faith in recovery
- Offer information regarding local resources for support in recovery
- Create a 'buddy' system within the parish
- Set up a mental health prayer group or ministry

Encountering a Person with Physical Disability

Definition: A total or partial loss of voluntary movement or an unusual stature that limits a person's ability to move about, reach, grasp and/or breathe, and is often accompanied by fatigue and weakness that may be seen or unseen.

Terms You Might Hear

- Amputee
- Arthritic
- Cerebral Palsy (CP)
- Muscular Dystrophy (MD)
- Paralyzed
- Paraplegic or quadriplegic
- Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
- Parkinson's

What You Might See:

- Wheelchairs (manual or powered), scooters
- Walkers, crutches, canes, braces, casts
- Prosthesis (artificial limb)
- Portable Oxygen
- Balance problems or shaking
- Slow or uneven steps, limping
- Unusually small or large stature
- Laboured breathing

What You Can Do:

- Maintain eye level contact and talk directly with the parishioner, not only through companions
- Always ask first if the person needs assistance.
- Do not assume that assistance is always needed
- Do not touch or move assistive equipment without permission

What a Parish Can Do:

- Provide accessible parking spaces and routes with curb cuts and ramps
- Create wide entrances with automatic or easily-opened doors, near accessible parking spaces
- Install lifts and elevators where necessary
- Have accessible toilets in all parish facilities
- Ensure an accessible sanctuary and spaces for worship with access to the sacraments
- Use adjustable height/tilt ambo, podium, altars and tables
- Place hymnals and printed materials within easy reach
- Exercise caution with the use of open flames in parish facilities
- Assist where needed with transport – possibly providing a parish minibus, with wheelchair access, to help those who might otherwise not be able to travel to Mass or parish events
- Ensure enough room for wheelchairs, it may be necessary to remove some pews in church
- Enable those who wish, and are able, to play an active part in the liturgy, e.g. as a reader, musician, or Eucharistic minister

Encountering a Person with Autism

Definition: The result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain and impacts development in the areas of social interaction and communication.

Terms You Might Hear:

- Autistic
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Asperger's Syndrome

What You Might See:

People with Autism MAY

- Give limited eye contact
- Use a loud voice
- Touch things
- Have difficulty following directions
- Have sensitivity to sounds, lights, smells and textures
- Have limited conversation
- Experience episodes of hand flapping, rocking or repeated movements

People with Asperger's Syndrome MAY

- Give limited eye contact
- Use Highly developed language & vocabulary
- Use repetitive conversation
- Go off topic easily
- Be perceived as being unable to see other's point of view
- Be perceived as being 'curt or rude'
- Be perceived as having 'awkward mannerisms'

What You Can Do:

- Encourage eye-contact, but do not insist
- Speak in short phrases with a calm, quiet voice
- Repeat directions
- Encourage participation
- Do not try to redirect a tantrum, but instead, keep the person and others safe

What a Parish Can Do:

- Provide a "Quiet Mass" with little or no music, short sermon, low lighting
- Ensure appropriate signage and a 'clutter-free' environment
- Provide respite facilities for the person and family where needed (this would need to be guided by a person-centred approach and the volunteer recruited safely via safer recruitment);
- Provide opportunities for socialization
- Provide opportunities for adapted/assisted religious education

Encountering a Person with Dementia

Definition: Dementia is a syndrome (a group of related symptoms) associated with an ongoing decline of brain functioning. This may include problems with:

memory loss; thinking speed; mental sharpness and quickness; language; understanding; judgement; mood; movement; difficulties carrying out daily activities; possibly with a change in personality; weight loss resulting from poor appetite and a reduced interest in food

Remember, a person is still themselves even though they have dementia so it is important to recognise the persons dignity and their positives features too.

Terms You Might Hear:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Dementia
- Vascular dementia

What You Might See:

- A person looking lost, or frightened,
- A puzzled expression, a lack of recognition of persons or places previously well known,
- Behaviour that is odd, or inappropriate to the situation,
- Signs of neglect of personal care, such as disheveled appearance, poor hygiene, incontinence,
- Distractibility and poor concentration,
- Difficulty in understanding, in answering questions, even when written down

What You Can Do:

- Put the person at ease – be friendly and smile. Don't stand too close or over them when talking
- Make eye contact and speak clearly and calmly, at a slightly slower pace
- Use short, simple sentences
- Listen carefully to what they are saying, and give them plenty of encouragement
- Allow them to take their time.
- Try to understand how they might be feeling and respond to the emotions they are expressing.
- If they are experiencing difficulty or appear distressed, ask direct questions such as whether there is someone they would like you to call, rather than 'What would you like me to do?'

What The Parish Can Do

- Provide a quiet area, comfortable and well lit, warm and non-clinical in its décor;
- Prevent or reduce agitation by avoiding its triggers, such as sudden loud noise or glaring lights;
- Create opportunities to be more inclusive, e.g. provide a chance to sing older, traditional hymns
- Use pictures as well as words on important signs to help with understanding;
- Ensure there are opportunities for the person to socialize and to feel welcome

Encountering a Person with Epilepsy

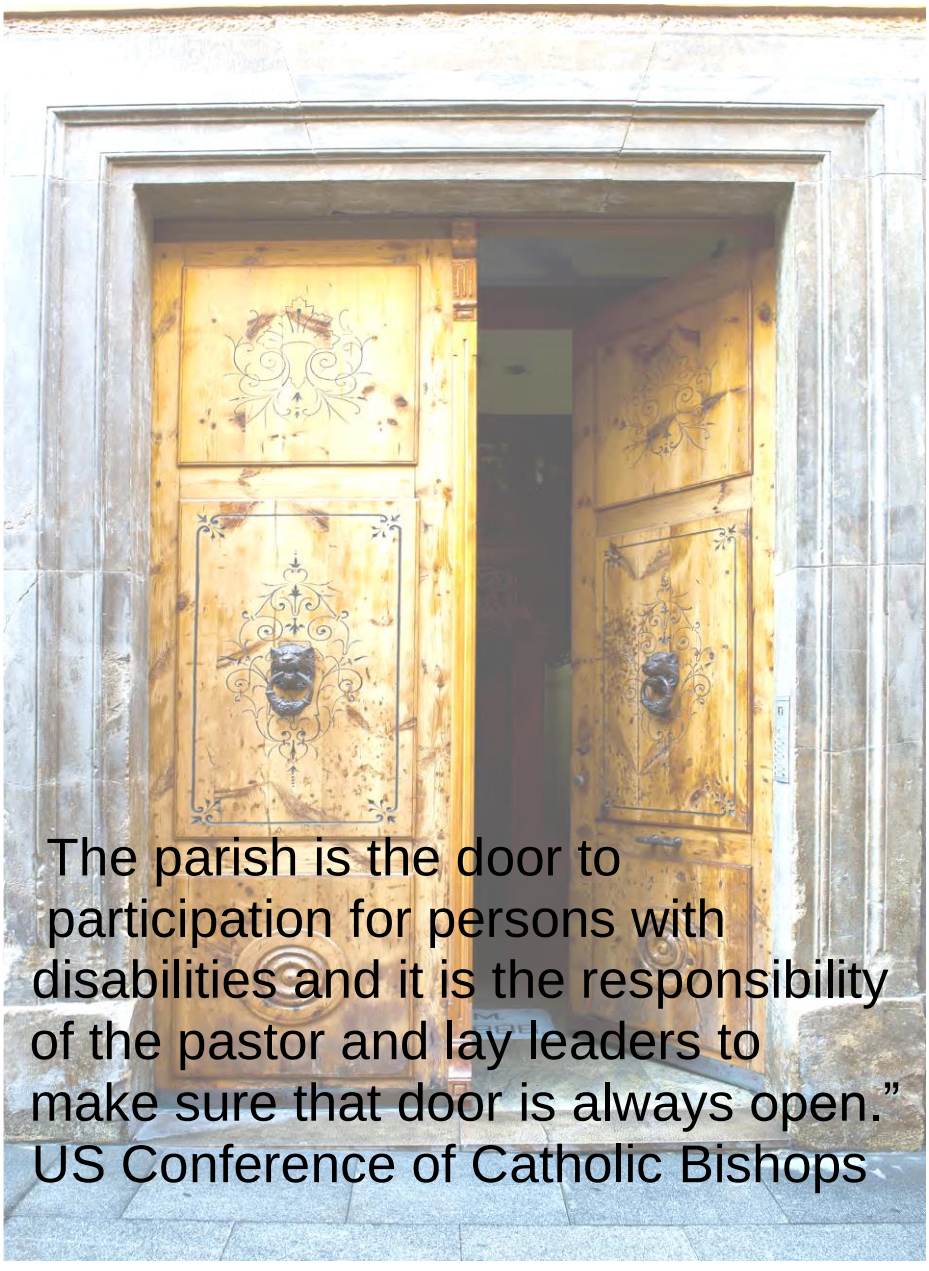
Definition: Epilepsy is a neurological condition in which abnormal electrical activity occurs in the brain, causing seizures, often known as 'fits'. What the person experiences during a seizure depends on where in the brain this electrical activity takes place.

Terms You Might Hear:
'**Fit**', though the **term** '**seizure**' or '**epileptic seizure**' is preferred by many people. However, some people with **epilepsy** still choose to **use** the word 'fit'. ... **Grand Mal** or **Petit Mal** are terms previously **used to describe seizure** types, and have now been replaced in medical **terminology**

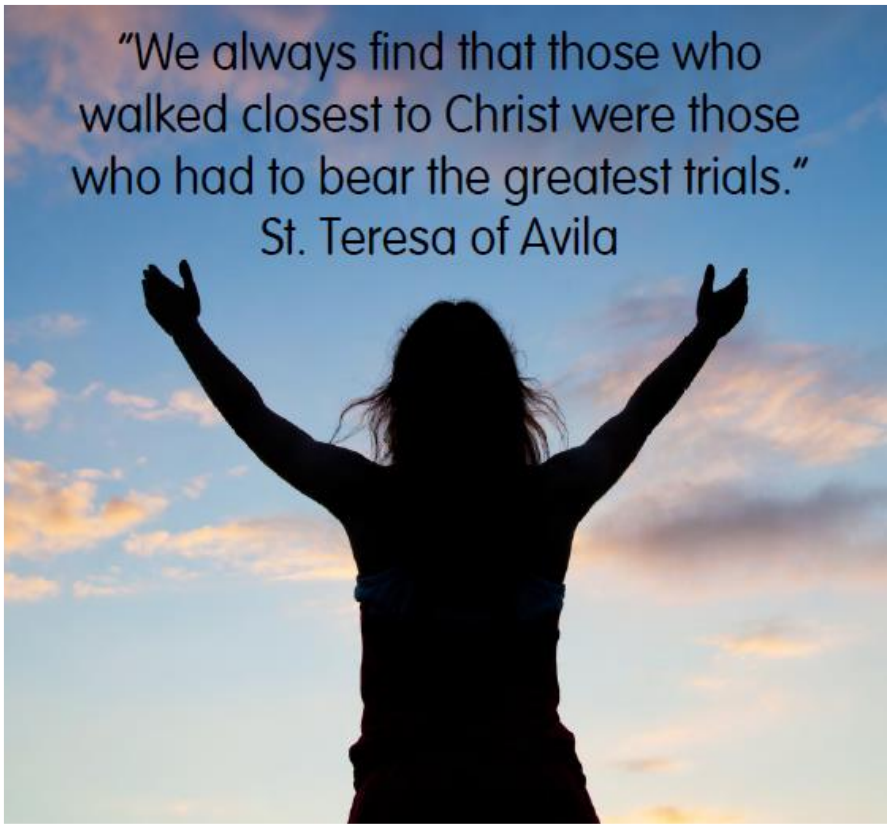
What You Might See the Person Do:
- Smacking their lips or making random noises;
- Rubbing their hands or moving their arms around;
- Picking at clothes or fiddling with objects;
- Chewing or swallowing;
- Uncontrollably jerking and shaking;
- Losing awareness, staring blankly into space;
- Becoming stiff;
- Collapsing.

What You Can Do:
- If you are with a person having a seizure, move them away from danger, cushion their head if they are on the ground, and loosen any tight clothing around their neck to aid breathing;
- Don't put anything in their mouth – they shouldn't have food or drink until fully recovered;
- Stay with them and talk to them calmly until they recover - note how long the seizure has lasted and whether the person had any prior warning, including what happened during the seizure;
- When the convulsion stops, turn them onto their side, into the 'recovery position';
- Call for an ambulance if it's the person's first seizure, or lasts more than 5 minutes;

What The Parish Can Do:
- Provide a safe quiet place where someone can lie down if having a fit, or feeling ill;
- Develop a Rota of trained 'first aiders', taking turn in being present at Parish Mass or events;
- Have a 'defibrillator' available, fully charged, with clear instructions for its use;
- Form a 'Disability Support Group', with resources including this Guide in the Parish Library;



The parish is the door to participation for persons with disabilities and it is the responsibility of the pastor and lay leaders to make sure that door is always open.”
US Conference of Catholic Bishops



"Persons with disabilities are not looking for pity. They seek to serve the community and to enjoy their full baptismal rights as members of the Church. Our interaction should be an affirmation of our faith. There can be no separate Church for persons with disabilities. We are one flock that follows a single shepherd."
US Conference of Catholic Bishops

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APPENDIX 1. ‘Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons’

Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 3447 (XXX) of 9 December 1975

The General Assembly,

Mindful of the pledge made by Member States, under the Charter of the United Nations to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization to promote higher standards of living, full employment and conditions of economic and social progress and development,

Reaffirming its faith in human rights and fundamental freedoms and in the principles of peace, of the dignity and worth of the human person and of social justice proclaimed in the Charter,

Recalling the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, as well as the standards already set for social progress in the constitutions, conventions, recommendations and resolutions of the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and other organizations concerned,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 1921 (LVIII) of 6 May 1975 on the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of disabled persons,

Emphasizing that the Declaration on Social Progress and Development has proclaimed the necessity of protecting the rights and assuring the welfare and rehabilitation of the physically and mentally disadvantaged,

Bearing in mind the necessity of preventing physical and mental disabilities and of assisting disabled persons to develop their abilities in the most varied fields of activities and of promoting their integration as far as possible in normal life,

Aware that certain countries, at their present stage of development, can devote only limited efforts to this end,

Proclaims this Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and calls for national and international action to ensure that it will be used as a common basis and frame of reference for the protection of these rights:

1. The term "disabled person" means any person unable to ensure by himself or herself, wholly or partly, the necessities of a normal individual and/or social life, as a result of deficiency, either congenital or not, in his or her physical or mental capabilities.

2. Disabled persons shall enjoy all the rights set forth in this Declaration. These rights shall be granted to all disabled persons without any exception whatsoever and without distinction or discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, state of wealth, birth or any other situation applying either to the disabled person himself or herself or to his or her family.

3. Disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. Disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible.

4. Disabled persons have the same civil and political rights as other human beings; paragraph 7 of the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons applies to any possible limitation or suppression of those rights for mentally disabled persons.

5. Disabled persons are entitled to the measures designed to enable them to become as self-reliant as possible.

6. Disabled persons have the right to medical, psychological and functional treatment, including prosthetic and orthotic appliances, to medical and social rehabilitation, education, vocational training and rehabilitation, aid, counselling, placement services and other services which will enable them to develop their capabilities and skills to the maximum and will hasten the processes of their social integration or reintegration.

7. Disabled persons have the right to economic and social security and to a decent level of living. They have the right, according to their capabilities, to secure and retain employment or to engage in a useful, productive and remunerative occupation and to join trade unions.

8. Disabled persons are entitled to have their special needs taken into consideration at all stages of economic and social planning.

9. Disabled persons have the right to live with their families or with foster parents and to participate in all social, creative or recreational activities. No disabled person shall be subjected, as far as his or her residence is concerned, to differential treatment other than that required by his or her condition or by the improvement which he or she may derive therefrom. If the stay of a disabled person in a specialized establishment is indispensable, the environment and living conditions therein shall be as close as possible to those of the normal life of a person of his or her age.

10. Disabled persons shall be protected against all exploitation, all regulations and all treatment of a discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature.

11. Disabled persons shall be able to avail themselves of qualified legal aid when such aid proves indispensable for the protection of their persons and property. If judicial proceedings are instituted against them, the legal procedure applied shall take their physical and mental condition fully into account.

12. Organizations of disabled persons may be usefully consulted in all matters regarding the rights of disabled persons.

13. Disabled persons, their families and communities shall be fully informed, by all appropriate means, of the rights contained in this Declaration.

The **Equality Act 2010**

It is an Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom with the primary purpose of consolidating, updating and supplementing the numerous prior Acts and Regulations, that formed the basis of anti-discrimination law in Great Britain.

The Equality Act 210 replaced a number of previous Acts, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and three major statutory instruments protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

The act has broadly the same goals as the four major EU Equal Treatment Directives, whose provisions it mirrors and implements. However, the act also offers protection beyond the EU directives, protecting against discrimination based on a person's nationality and citizenship and also extending individuals' rights in areas of life beyond the workplace in religion or belief, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

The Act protects people against discrimination, harassment or victimisation in employment, and as users of private and public services based on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Act includes provisions for single-sex services where the restrictions are "a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim". In the case of disability, employers and service providers are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their workplaces to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people.

APPENDIX 2. Setting up a '***Parish Disability Awareness and Support Group'.***

The need for such a group

According to the latest Government figures, there **are** now 13.3 million people with disability in the **UK**. There has been an increase of 3% during the last 10 years and people with disability now make up 21% of the **UK population,** that is more than one in five (1). This figure is similar to the level of incidence found in the United States and elsewhere.

It is safe to conclude that at least 1 in 5 of the people within our parishes have some form of disability and that we need to be aware of them and to ensure that they are not overlooked, but that they are provided with full access, made to feel welcome, and helped and encouraged to participate in all aspects of parish life and worship, to the best of their ability.

A study published by 'Scope' in 2018 found that nearly half the population didn't know anyone with disability (2). Clearly, there is a great need to increase the level of awareness

The first goal of the 'Parish Disability Group', therefore, must be to raise awareness among the general parishioners of the existence of many parishioners with disability (many of whom will not be regular participants at church and parish functions, due to problems of access, transport, or ill health). We must all become more aware of their needs and rights, and of their potential contribution as valued members of the Christian family of the parish.

A glance at the list of Rights adopted in 1975 by the United Nations (see Appendix 1) shows that people with disability have the same needs and aspirations as all of us have. Wherever there is a failure to accept or support such Rights, there is a need for our response and for positive action to remedy this.

Note also that the **Equality Act 2010** forms the basis of anti-discrimination law in Great Britain

Membership of the Group

It follows from the above, that it is very important that those in the parish who have disability must be involved in the design and development of the services and facilities they need.

They and their carers should be invited to talk about their experiences. We must listen to their advice about how to improve our welcome to them and about how they can become more involved in the life and mission of the Church and parish community.

For this reason, the Group should invite and recruit people with disability, and their carers, to become active members, supported by the Parish Priest and other parish members who have relevant skills and experience and a commitment to the values and principles outlined above.

Preparing the group for effective action

Once the initial members of the team have been recruited, it will be necessary to consider what roles and responsibilities may be shared between them. It is suggested that a chairperson, and vice-chairperson, should be elected from among them, and also a minute's secretary. If the team are to be allocated a budget for their work, then a treasurer should also be appointed. People should be able to serve for a minimum or maximum term and terms of office need to be rotated so that there is never a situation where the whole team is replaced at once.

Once the core team has been recruited and appointed, there should always be the possibility of co-opting others according to the activities taken on or particular skills identified.

The team should be rooted together in prayer, and where possible, should spend some time together on a short pilgrimage or retreat, for example. They should all be made familiar with the wish of Pope Francis, for "a poor Church, for the poor", and be encouraged to read Pope Paul's encyclical 'Evangelii Nuntiandi' (which Pope Francis said is the most important encyclical ever promulgated by any Pope!).

The Group's tasks and activities

As with all parish groups, it is important that people who come together are clear about their aims, spend time getting to know one another, enjoy the challenges and opportunities that arise, feel that their time is well spent, see useful and positive results, want to learn more and become more skilled at planning and carrying out the tasks and activities jointly agreed to be of value.

It is suggested that the first task of the Group should be to explore what the parish is currently doing to help people with disability to become full participants in the life and work.

In order to help with this, a sample Parish Review Form is provided (See Appendix **4)**. This should help the Group to discover existing strengths and also areas where improvements can be made. These may take time, so a 'limited objective' approach would be sensible – selecting one or more goals to work on over the coming weeks, months and years…

Some examples of the other valuable things the Group may initiate include: social events, social outings, talks by invited speakers, film or video evenings, a crafts and hobbies club, a luncheon club, prayer and scripture readings, retreats, fundraising for specific purposes that will benefit people with disability and hopefully others too.

Facilities and support needed by the group

For its regular meetings, the Group will need and a warm, brightly lit room, with wheelchair access, ideally fitted with a loop system, and close to a toilet with adaptations for disability. A bookcase and storage cupboard for audio-visual aids, writing and art materials, records, DVDs, CDs, etc. The room should be large enough to accommodate 10 to 15 people, including wheelchair users. It should have comfortable seating and should, ideally, provide tea/coffee making facilities.

The Group should be able to book the parish hall, as needed, for larger meetings, including social events, talks by invited or local speakers, especially concerning aspects of disability, increasing awareness, fundraising activities, and celebrating the achievements of individuals.

It would be helpful for the Group to be provided by the parish with a budget allocation for items of equipment, activities, outings, etc. of benefit to parish members with disability and their family/carers.

Links with other groups within the parish

There are usually a number of other groups in the parish with experience to offer to a newly formed disability support group. These might include a Caritas group, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Legion of Mary, Mothers' Union, Knights of St Columba, and so on. It is important that they should be informed of the new Group and be given an opportunity to explore possible ways of working together.

In addition to helping recruit parish members who could run the new Group, some who undertake home visits, such as SVP and special Eucharistic ministers, might know of individuals who are housebound with disability who might be able to benefit from Group activities. Of special relevance here is the possibility of acquiring suitable transport, drivers, and support staff to enable more people with physical disability to come along to Mass and other parish events.

References (1) Department for Work and Pensions: Page 7 - 'Family Resources Survey' (2017/2018),
(2) www.huffingtonpost.co.uk › April 6, 2018

APPENDIX 3. Links with useful organisations and sources of expertise *It is important that the Group makes, and updates, a list of the many specialist sources of help, advice*:

Action for M.E., (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis)
42 Temple Street, Keynsham BS31 1EH.
Tel: 0117 927 9551 website: www.actionforme.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society
Scott Lodge, Scott Road, Plymouth, PL2 3DU
Tel: 0330 333 0804 website: www.alzheimers.org.uk

British Deaf Association
Head Office - 3rd Floor 356 Holloway Road London N7 6PA
Tel: 020 7697 4140 Text: 07795 410 724 website: www.bda.org.uk

British Epilepsy Association
New Anstey House, Gate Way Drive, Yeadon, Leeds, LS19 7XY
Tel: 01132108800 website: www.epilepsy.org.uk/ Email: epilepsy@epilepsy.org.uk

Caritas Social Action Network
Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB, UK.
Tel: 020 7870 2210 website: www.csan.org.uk/ Email:admin@csan.org.uk

Caritas Diocese of Leeds – Disabilities Forum
St Monica House, Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds, LS6 2BX
Tel: 0113 261 8036 website: www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk/caritas/disabilities-forum

Catholic Disability Fellowship – National Council
Secretary: John Mair, 15 Woodlands Park Drive, Blaydon, Tyne and Wear NE21 5PQ
Tel: 0191 414 3221 email: johnmair64@yahoo.co.uk

Catholic Disability Fellowship – Portsmouth Diocese
Secretary: secretary@catholicdisabilityfellowship.org.uk
website: http://catholicdisabilityfellowship.org.uk/

Cerebral Palsy – Scope
Scope, Landmark, 26 Whitehall Road, LS12 1BE.
Tel: 0808 800 3333 website: https://www.scope.org.uk/

Dementia UK
7th Floor, One Aldgate, London EC3N 1RE
Tel: 020 8036 5400 website: https: www.dementiauk.org/ E-mail: info@dementiauk.org

Disabled Living Foundation
Unit 1, 34 Chatfield Road, Wandsworth, London, SW11 3SE
Tel: 0300 123 3084 website: www.dlf.org.uk Email: enquiries@dlf.org.uk

Disability Rights UK
Plexal, 14 East Bay Lane, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London, E20 3BS
Tel: 0330 995 0400 website: www.disabilityrightsuk.org/ enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

HCPT
Oakfield Park, Bilton Road, Rugby, CV22 7HQ
Tel: 01788 564646 website https://www.hcpt.org.uk/

Local Authority Disability Services
https://www.gov.uk/browse/housing-local-services/local-councils
Browse this site for help: e.g. with benefits; equipment in the home; Day Centre places

Mencap
Royal Mencap Society, 123 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0RT
Tel: 020 7454 0454 website: https://www.mencap.org.uk/

MIND
5-19 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 4BQ
Tel: 020 8519 2122 website: www.mind.org.uk/

Motor Neurone Disease
Francis Crick House, 6 Summerhouse Road, Moulton Park, Northampton, NN3 6BJ
Tel: 01604 250505 website: https://www.mndassociation.org/

Muscular Dystrophy UK
61A Great Suffolk Street, London, SE1 0BU
Tel: 020 7803 4800 website: https://www.musculardystrophyuk.org/

National Autistic Society
393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG, United Kingdom
Tel: 020 7833 2299 website: www.autism.org.uk

National Deaf Children's Society
Ground Floor South, Castle House, 37– 45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS
Tel: 020 7490 8656 website: https://www.ndcs.org.uk/ Email: ndcs@ndcs.org.uk

Parkinson's UK
215, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 1EJ
Tel: 020 7931 8080 website: https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/

Royal Association for Deaf People
Block F, Parkside Office Village, Nesfield Road, Colchester CO4 3ZL
Tel: 0300 688 2525 website: https://www.royaldeaf.org.uk/ info@royaldeaf.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Blind People
105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE
Tel: 0303 123 9999 website: https://www.rnib.org.uk/ radio: www.rnibconnectradio.org.uk

Shaw Trust
Black Country House, Rounds Green Road, Oldbury, England, B69 2DG.
Tel: 0300 30 33 111 website: https://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/ support@shaw-trust.org.uk

SPRED – special religious development
20 Robroyston Road, Glasgow, G33 1EQ
Tel: 0141 770 5055 website: http://www.spred.org.uk/ email: glasgow.spred@btconnect.com

The Disabilities Trust
32 Market Place, Burgess Hill, West Sussex, RH15 9NP
Tel: 01444 239123 website: https://www.thedtgroup.org/ Email: info@thedtgroup.org

Further useful organisations and sources of expertise, maybe local ones (e.g. L’Arche):

APPENDIX 4. Review of our parish provision for people with disability **Date:-**

This form lists the key things that should be provided in our parish to enable people with disability to participate more fully in the life, liturgy, activities, and mission of the parish. The form has been completed following meetings with people with disability and their families to discover their views and experiences.

Our church and parish centre:-	This is well done now	We need to develop this further	We would like help with this
1. Have prominent signs outside stating that all are welcome	⬭	⬭	⬭
2. Have reserved parking spaces for parishioners with physical disability	⬭	⬭	⬭
3. Have entrances that are easily accessible to wheelchair users	⬭	⬭	⬭
4. Are warm, well lit, clean, well ventilated, and attractive	⬭	⬭	⬭
5. Have easily accessible toilet facilities, including adaptations for disability	⬭	⬭	⬭
6. Have a good 'loop system' for use by those with hearing impairment	⬭	⬭	⬭
7. Have signs and direction symbols that are clear, large and easy to read	⬭	⬭	⬭
8. Provide a respite and quiet space, if needed by those with disability	⬭	⬭	⬭
9. Ask people with disabilities & their carers what other facilities are needed	⬭	⬭	⬭
10. Recognise that people with disability have skills and talents	⬭	⬭	⬭
11. Include those with disability in the liturgy and ministry of the parish	⬭	⬭	⬭
12. Include those with disability in parish societies and social events	⬭	⬭	⬭
13. Include those with disability in parish pilgrimages and outings	⬭	⬭	⬭
14. Place particular emphasis on safeguarding those with disability	⬭	⬭	⬭
15. Include disability provision in annual review of parish facilities & activities	⬭	⬭	⬭
16. Have a 'disability support group' and train volunteers to operate this	⬭	⬭	⬭
17. Include resource and guidance information on disability in a parish library	⬭	⬭	⬭
18. Provide housebound parishioners with Eucharistic and social visits	⬭	⬭	⬭
19. Provide transport to help wheelchair users attend Mass & social events	⬭	⬭	⬭
20. Provide 'streamed' services for housebound to view Mass on TV or laptop	⬭	⬭	⬭
21. Invite all housebound parishioners to be part of the 'Apostleship of Prayer'	⬭	⬭	⬭
22. Provide catechesis & sacramental preparation suited to all with disability	⬭	⬭	⬭
23. Enable those with disability to participate in ecumenical/interfaith events	⬭	⬭	⬭
24. Ensure the participation of people with disability in 'outreach' activities	⬭	⬭	⬭
25. Include people with disability in parish efforts to protect our environment	⬭	⬭	⬭

Notes