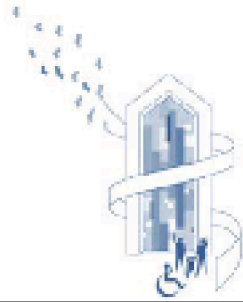


Invite.  
Embrace.  
Include.  
Empower.



# FAITH4ALL

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## Inclusive Times

**Latest Edition:**  
We describe how to  
best include young  
ones with a disability  
in faith communities.

Issue No. 16

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## Steps Towards Full Inclusion Of Young Ones With Disabilities

This month's **Inclusive Times** article will consider the main steps needed to insure the full inclusion of young people with disabilities in their development of active lives of faith in your congregation. Because this article will be rather general, its recommendations will apply to all disabilities, be they physical, mental, emotional or developmental limitations. The two main points of this article include:

1. Parents (or primary caregivers) know best when it comes to how to include children with special needs in a congregational setting.
2. The inclusion of all who are interested in participating in congregational gatherings is important because it demonstrates the ethics the congregation values.

The first point should be obvious since guardians provide almost all of the care of and responsibility for their child or children. This means that the guidance and care given to children and youth at any house of faith should always try to follow the guidance of the primary caregivers.

To help accomplish this, parents/caregivers should meet with the leaders of faithful care groups to communicate their child's needs and challenges. In addition, the administrators need to share the expectations and efforts of the program with the parents of every child so everyone has had an opportunity to voice their concerns and knowledge.

While the inclusion of all people hasn't always been understood as an important quality of congregational programs, studies of the educational, social, and emotional development of children in group settings show the importance and benefit to **every child** when they are acknowledged as being an attendee of the gathering and, simultaneously, being invited to serve as an equal partaker in the activities of the group. It's especially true that exposure to and interaction with others usually leads to greater stimulation, compassion, sensitivity and enjoyment!

It is helpful to recall that the best practices guiding the care, education, and socialization of children with any sort of disabilities are the same as the best practices for **any** group of children or youth:

- welcoming acceptance,
- concern for community building,
- the inclusion of all.

It is very important to ensure that every young person in a faithful community is encouraged and supported as they develop a cohort of friends with whom they might worship, interact, and learn through their personal journey of growing sensitivity to and engagement with sacred scripture. Remember: the primary concern of faithful education should be learning how to love others!

You may have noticed already that these qualities or aspects of a good congregational setting for children and youth are exactly the same for any age group of people. The importance of acceptance, community, and the

inclusion of all are values and universal needs shared by all humans. It's of great importance that we recognize these needs we all share and reach out a loving hand as we all work together to navigate this world in a fruitful way.

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Note: Kelly Tobin, a former Executive Assistant for [Faith4All](#), recently notified me of this interesting article found in the [Practical Theology Hub](#) titled "[Growing closer to God through stained-glass windows: A dyslexic autistic perspective](#)".

Check it out! I'm sure that you'll learn something from reading this article.



"Salvator Mundi" by William Wilson

**We hope you are enjoying our Spring weather and praying for more rain!**

#### Future Inclusive Times Topics:

- **Steps Towards Full Inclusion: Welcoming People with Mental Health issues**
- **The Importance of Assessment**



\*Any questions or comments regarding this e-journal or this organization can be directed to [kevin@Faith4All.org](mailto:kevin@Faith4All.org).