

# More room at the Inn



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Diocese of London

# An Accessible Christmas

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Christmas brings many visitors into our Churches

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22% of UK population are disabled in some way

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Think ahead and talk to people

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Anticipate and plan

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Create opportunities

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Offer a good welcome

# Make your services representative

- Include people who represent the diversity of your congregation as readers, leaders etc
  - Remember that this includes disabled people
  - Support people to contribute in their own way
  - Include plenty of traditional Christmas Carols and Bible readings
  - This will help people with dementia and other memory issues to participate
- Things that can help
    - Fidget toys
    - Dark glasses
    - Over the counter reading glasses
    - Noise cancelling headphones
    - Adult and children's colouring and crayons

# Communications

- Create an accessibility area on your website
  - Include descriptions and pictures
    - The path and entrance
    - Step free access
    - Accessible toilet
    - Hearing loop
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- **Be honest** about shortcomings
  - Describe what will happen in your services
    - Carols, choir, candlelight, prayers etc
    - How long will it be?
  - What will happen afterwards?

# Outside

- Check your external lighting
- Replace blown and faulty bulbs
- Clear away trip hazards
- Sweep steps, paths and ramps
- Have 2 people on duty outside to welcome and assist

# Accessible toilet

- **Indicate where it is** with clear signage
- **Check it is clear** of stored and unnecessary items
- **Check the lighting** is adequate for easy use
- **Check the catch** is easy to operate – locking and unlocking
- Check **the bin(s) are not obstructing access** to the toilet
- Check baby changing facilities **are not an obstruction** or hazard
- Check **taps deliver warm water** that is not too hot
- Fill up soap and provide hand towels as well as a hand-dryer
- Check the emergency alarm is working and the chord reaches to just above the floor
- Have a protocol in place for what to do if the alarm is activated
- Who knows how to open the door?
- Where are any tools etc needed for this kept?
- Is there a first aider who can offer assistance?

# Other toilets

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- Clear out clutter and unnecessary items
- Check they are well lit
- Check taps and hand dryers are working
- Check door catches are easy to operate – locking and unlocking

# Lighting and visibility

## **If your service is by candlelight**

- Have some wind-up torches for those who need more light
- Be aware that candlelight can be dazzling and disorientating for some people
- Keep the lights on until the start of the service
- Put the lights on at the end of the service

## **Decorations**

- If you have lit Christmas trees and decorations
- Make sure these are not in sight lines between congregation and leaders/preachers
- Or just behind leaders/preachers
- Do not have flashing lights

## **Visibility during the service**

- Make sure leaders and preachers are lit
- Have good lighting on faces to facilitate lip reading
- Leaders and preacher should keep still as well
- Do not preach from a pulpit as this makes lip reading impossible



# Hearing

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- Test your loop if you have one
- Ask a hearing aid user to test it
- Or buy a loop listener device
- Work out if there are places where your loop works better than others
- Using a lectern mic or over-ear mic gives best hearing loop results
- Don't use a clip-on mic
- Tell people you have a hearing loop and where it works best

# Sitting, standing and kneeling

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- Announce at the beginning that it is okay to do what is most comfortable during the service
- Make inclusive announcements
- *‘As we sing this carol, you are invited to stand if you would like to or remain seated if this is best for you’*

# Service sheets and hymn books

- Publish the order of service, liturgy and hymn/song words online at least 48 hours before the service.
  - Those who need to can make their own accessible copy – Braille, audio etc
  - Others can download and display on a phone or tablet
  - BSL interpreters can prepare their translation
  - People who need or prefer to know what is going to happen can familiarise themselves with the service
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- Provide large print copies of the service - 18 or 20 point font on cream paper
  - If you use a screen, make sure the text is big enough and the contrast good
  - Provide large print hardcopies for those who cannot see the screen
  - Make your service sheet Dyslexia friendly
    - Use a Sans Serif font
    - Use 1.15-1.5 line spacing
    - Keep the layout simple and uncluttered

# Sign Language

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- There are 85,000 British Sign Language users in the UK
- There will be Deaf families and a Deaf community near you
- Include BSL interpretation in at least one of your services
- Or make sure a few services have interpretation in your deanery
- Make sure you advertise this well
- Use at least one Makaton signed carol during the service
- Makaton is used by many children with additional needs

# Chairs and pews

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- If you put out extra chairs, make sure aisles are still wide enough for wheelchairs
- Check you are not forcing wheelchairs or those using walking aids into areas where the floor is uneven or there are steps
- Provide some extra cushions for your pews so those who need it can have a cushion to sit on and/or behind them
- If you use chairs, make sure some of these have arms
- Clear some space for wheelchair users but be flexible, give people the choice to sit where they would like to
- Be prepared to welcome guide dogs and other assistance dogs
  - Rugs, bowls, room

# Emergencies

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- Make sure you have an evacuation plan that includes disabled people
- Brief your fire wardens
- Have water and sand available for emergencies
- If people hold their candles, make an announcement about being careful of people in front and safety for children

# Quiet space

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- Create a quiet space at the back or adjacent to the Church
- Offer adult colouring, fidget toys etc
- Make an announcement that gives people permission to leave the service for a while if they would like to

# Live stream

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LIVE STREAM AT LEAST  
ONE OF YOUR SERVICES



INCLUDE THIS IN YOUR  
PUBLICITY