



Hosting
an accessible
carol service

A useful
guide to
organising
your event



What
Is It
All
About?

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December the 22nd this year will see the second annual accessible carol service hosted by Disability and Jesus at Newcastle's St Nicholas Cathedral.

Although this is only the second one we have done in the name of Disability and Jesus we have a long history of more than 10yrs of hosting accessible carol services here in the north east.

We'd like to encourage you to take up the mantle and host similar events in your own regions. To that end we'd like to share with you some of what we have learned as we have grown and developed the idea over the years.

Most of all we expect that you will find that you will be welcoming in to church a large number of people who are unfamiliar with church, it is therefore important to make them feel welcome and at ease, not to have a service that is too intimidating. To this end we would encourage you to keep the language simple (no complex liturgies or King James readings). Remember we are welcoming people who may have many issues and we want, above all, to make them feel welcome.

To this end we now produce our orders of service on clear print and Makaton as well as a number of braille copies. You can convert an MS Word document in to Makaton at this site

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uECb7AwmlAM>

You can get info on clear print from our website at

<http://disabilityandjesus.org.uk/downloads/>

For advice on braille we would recommend you talk to

<http://www.torchtrust.org>

It is also important to be able to provide a BSL signer if at all possible.

As soon as possible begin contacting local disability charities to let them know of your event as well as all the other churches of all denominations in your region.

It is of vital importance to find the most accessible building you can, not just in terms of the actual building and it's services but also think about it's accessibility with regard to links to public transport and disabled parking.

Are you able to provide a meeting service to meet people when they alight public transport and escort them to the venue, can you provide sighted guides?

Within the building it is good to have stewards on hand to offer assistance.

It is good to make it clear in your publicity that service dogs are welcome, to that end you need to have water bowls dotted around the building and to let people know where your dedicated spending area is, there may be people who need assistance with spending their dogs.

Clear directions should be given to disabled toilets etc. It is no good pointing or saying things such as "over there", we need to be clear.

Try and set out a dedicated quiet space away from the main service as many disabled people need to be able to break away for some quiet.

Make sure to seat people where they want to be not just where is convenient for you.

Always offer help, never just assume.

Welcome and hospitality are the key to a successful event. It may not be possible to cover all the bases on the actual access but if disabled people receive a good welcome they will forgive much on the accessibility front.

We know that the average reading age in the UK is only 8yrs so it is important to remember this when pitching the tone of your service.

You want people to go home feeling they have had fun and looking forward to coming again. Remember that many may not get out that often and we are trying to create a highlight for them.

We have had many stories over the years from people who don't normally get out and what a difference the service has made for them.

Keep the whole thing informal. To that end we have a band rather than an organ, several of our band have disabilities themselves. Try and use carols that will be familiar too people so that it is easier for them to join in. .

Decorate the building as well as you can afford, use stage lighting if possible, project the order of service on to a large screen if possible and leave a space in the bottom right corner to project the bSL signer.

I'm sure there is much more we could say and there will be much I have forgotten here but we are happy to help in any way we can so please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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