OUTLINE FOR DEVELOPMENT
OF A
MINISTRY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES & CAREGIVERS

"It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together. To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community. Accessibility involves far more than physical alterations to parish buildings. Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations such as the sacraments of reconciliation, confirmation, and anointing of the sick."

While this statement does not address every conceivable situation that may arise, the guidelines provide access to the sacraments for persons with disabilities. Your parish is encouraged to accept these guidelines in their continuing effort to bring Christ's healing message and call to justice to the world.

This quote applies to all Catholic churches in the country, including yours. To make this statement a reality, the following is a list of suggested steps to take in creating your Ministry for Persons with Disabilities and Caregivers:

1. Set up a time and place for your initial meeting of those who are interested in starting a disabilities ministry. Meeting keeping in mind it should be a room accessible for persons with disabilities.

2. Develop a questionnaire (Exhibit 1) to address the needs of your audience. Also some churches have a mandatory rule to develop a Mission Statement (Exhibit 2) for each of their ministries. Check with you church to find out what is required.

3. Plan on having a Disabilities Sunday whereby a founding member could explain to the congregation the purpose of the ministry. Invite all interested to fill out the questionnaire with attached envelope addressed to you ministry (for privacy purposes) that has been place in the pews prior to the beginning of each Mass. (They can either be placed in the collection basket when passed around, or left in the pew to be picked up after each Mass.

4. Call and invite all who have responded to the questionnaires to you next scheduled meeting. State the meeting will be one in which their needs with regard to church life and activities will be the main focus. Listen carefully to individual needs and concerns. **REMEMBER:** No request is impossible when all work together to accomplish an end result! Build a
roster containing names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses to keep in touch with all members.

5. From this initial meeting, list all items mentioned. The next meetings will then be a stepping stone for accomplishing those needs. Board members should be elected and committee members should be appointed. Determine the length of each office and when elections will take place. From this process, develop an organization chart. (Exhibit 3).

6. Have regular meetings to develop ways in which the needs of all can be met during Mass and other church activities. Decide how funding for these projects can be accomplished.

7. *If the church cannot afford the funding for the items needed, finds ways to raise money to accomplish these needs.

8. Once established, hold workshops and/or a mini-conference inviting guest speakers to address the spiritual side of those with disabilities and caregivers.

9. The goal of the ministry should be to have an all inclusive family within the church and make all feel welcomed.

10. Once a year host a gathering for all members and their families to thank them for their contributions during the past year. (All Saints usually has a Christmas luncheon during Advent).

The Diocesan Disabilities & Caregivers Ministry hold three events each year inclusive to those with Disabilities & Caregivers for all Dallas area parishes who wish to attend. These activities are free of charge and include:

A. Bishop's Mass for those with Disabilities & Caregivers
B. Workshops for those with Disabilities & Caregivers
C. Advent dinner for those with Disabilities & Caregivers

Other activities to help those with disabilities:

D. Sacramental Training for the Deaf at St. Thomas Aquinas
E. Sacramental Training for those with Autism at St. Bernard
F. RCIA training at St. Monica

*All Saints Disabilities & Caregivers has a sno-cone booth each year at the annual Fall Festival. Also be aware of organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, etc. who may be willing to help meets some of the needs of the ministry.
All Saints Ministry for Persons with Disabilities and Caregivers

Mission Statement

All Saints Parish has many individuals with disabilities and special needs. We want to be able to recognize all these parishioners so they can participate more fully in mass and church functions on a regular basis. We want each special needs person to feel welcomed in all parish activities whether it is liturgy and worship, religious education or social activities. We are all children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Through this ministry we hope to offer support and advocacy to persons with disabilities and to their families. The goal of our ministry is to assist the parish in identifying and making adaptations when needed for those with disabilities. And we also recognize that care giving, although a labor of love, can be isolating and exhausting. We want to provide assistance that will enable caregivers to take better care of their loved ones and themselves. All Saints currently has a respite care Ministry. The Eucharistic minister will bring communion to parishioners in their homes or the hospital upon request.

For several years, the Diocese of Dallas has extended an invitation to people with disabilities and special needs by sponsoring disability awareness masses. The masses have been well received, appreciated and attended. The Diocese of Dallas also sponsors a retreat once a year for persons with disabilities and/or their care givers. Two other programs sponsored by the Diocese of Dallas are:

1) Religious education for those with disabilities and special needs

2) Medical equipment program for those who need equipment on a loan basis. This program also will take medical equipment that is in good working condition to loan to others.

We welcome your input. This is a ministry where you can make a real difference. Your help might be as small and mighty as a prayer or a phone call to a disabled friend at home. You might consider becoming a respite provider who could stay with a caregiver’s loved one to give her/him a break. The possibilities for creative ministry are endless. Consider joining us to learn how your talents can assist us in providing for the special needs of others. God bless you.

Contact: Barbara A. Rusk, Chairperson – Tel: 972-814-8227 – Email: barusk1@att.net

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ALL SAINTS DISABILITY AWARENESS WEEKEND

This ministry seeks to offer advocacy and support to persons with disabilities and to their families. We need your help in updating and adding information on persons with disabilities in the parish. This will sublimate/greatly enhance our ability to address the needs of our parish.

Please check all boxes that apply to you:

- You have a disability Your disability is
- You are a Caregiver You are interested in joining the Ministry and/or volunteering

HOW MIGHT WE HELP?

- Need help to participate in liturgical, educational, or spiritual opportunities
- Need help to participate in social activities
- Need Respite Care or other help
- Know of parishioner who has disabilities or could use assistance

NAME: ____________________________ AGE: ____________________________

ADDRESS: ____________________________ CITY: ____________________________ ZIP: ____________________________

PHONE: ____________________________ EMAIL: ____________________________

When complete, please place in attached envelope.

This information will remain confidential within the Ministry and be used to provide advocacy and support only.

Suggestions are welcomed and can be written below. Thank you!