
A WORSHIP RESOURCE

A Liturgy for Every Body and Every Mind

A general-use worship service for mainline
Protestant congregations

**Every body and every mind
belongs in the Body of Christ.**

The Rev. Travis Wilson

ELCA Lutheran pastor | traviswilson.us

OCTOBER 2026 / WORKSHOP EDITION



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INTRODUCTION

About This Liturgy & Its Origins

This liturgy was written for communities that want to worship with absolute honesty — honestly about our bodies, our minds, our needs, and the gap between the world as it is and the world God intends. It is designed for those who are spiritually curious, those who are rebuilding belief after exclusion, and anyone who wants to discover what it means to belong to one another without condition.

The initial drafting, communal praying, and refinement of these words took place during a pastoral sabbatical at Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia. Founded in 1942 as an intentional, integrated Christian community, Koinonia has spent decades witnessing to the radical truth that every human life is equal under God. They endured immense hostility, violence, and economic boycotts during the Civil Rights movement simply to defend the sacred dignity of every body.

Writing a liturgy centered on disability justice in a place built on collective liberation felt entirely right. Just as Koinonia historically challenged the brutal barriers of race and class, this service seeks to dismantle the physical and cognitive barriers that still prevent full theological belonging. The words and movements here were shaped by the physical landscape of the farm, tried out in real-time community with the community members there, and sharpened by their initial feedback. I am deeply grateful to Koinonia for providing a spacious, hopeful ecosystem where these words could form.

This is not a temporary disability-awareness service or a special-occasion liturgy. It is a general-use worship resource built for the future of the church, designed to be used any Sunday of the year, in any season. Accessibility is not an accommodation we add on top of

a standard service; it is a foundational theological commitment woven directly into the structure, the language, and the grace of every section.

The Theological Foundation

This liturgy rests on one foundational claim: every body and every mind belongs in the Body of Christ. That claim is not a program or a special emphasis. It is a description of what the church already is, whether or not our worship practices have reflected it.

From that foundation, several commitments follow throughout the service:

Disability is not a failure, a punishment, a lack of faith, or a condition that must be fixed before a person is whole.

Dependence is not weakness. All human beings depend on one another. Worship should reflect that reality, not conceal it.

Healing means many things: justice, access, rest, companionship, relief, reconciliation, care. It does not always mean cure. This liturgy does not promise cure. It promises presence.

Lament is a form of faith. Anger at suffering is not the opposite of trust in God. This liturgy makes room for both joy and grief.

In this liturgy, we do not gather to help “them.” We gather as people who all carry needs, all depend on one another, and all belong to the same Body.

Universal Design for Worship

This liturgy uses the principle of universal design: it is built from the ground up to work for the full range of human bodies and minds, without singling out any individual or group as an exception. Access features are not accommodations. They are simply how worship is done here.

Congregational responses are always short. Silence is always offered with an alternative. Communion is always brought to those who need it. These are not adjustments made for some people. They are the design of the liturgy itself.

A Note on Language

Every word in this liturgy was chosen with care. Metaphors that equate blindness with ignorance, deafness with disobedience, or lameness with sin have been avoided throughout. Healing language is expansive rather than cure-focused. The word “broken” is never applied to people. “We” language is used consistently — disabled, chronically ill, neurodivergent, and mentally ill people are not the objects of these prayers. They are among the ones praying them.

A Note on Posture

Throughout this liturgy, posture invitations are open-ended rather than assumed. “Rise in body or spirit” replaces “please stand.” “Find a comfortable position” replaces “please be seated.” “You are invited to come forward, or communion will be brought to you” replaces “come forward.”

This is not an accommodation added for some worshipers. It is simply how this community speaks. No one is asked to stand, kneel, bow, or move in a particular way in order to participate fully. Posture is an offering, not a requirement.

A Note on Structure

This liturgy follows the standard Protestant ordo with one significant variation: Confession and Forgiveness is placed after the Hymn of the Day rather than at the opening of the service. This is theologically defensible in Lutheran practice of which I am a pastor and pastorally wise in this context. Placing confession after the Word means the community confesses as a response to grace already proclaimed — not as a transaction required before they are worthy to hear God speak. It also avoids framing the opening of a service built around wholeness and belonging with an immediate focus on failure.

How to Use This Liturgy

Rubrics — stage directions for worship leaders — appear throughout in italic text. They are not spoken aloud. Bold text indicates congregational responses, marked with “C:” The presider or worship leader’s text is marked with “P:” unless otherwise noted.

This liturgy is designed to be adapted. Seasonal language can be inserted at marked points. Scripture readings follow the lectionary of the worshiping community. The prayers of intercession include space for local needs. Each section can be adjusted for the specific congregation, occasion, or access needs of a given Sunday.

When adapting this liturgy, please preserve the theological center described above: full belonging, expansive language, and participation without a prescribed body or mind. These commitments are why this resource exists.

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Editorial request: Please honor the theological commitments described in the introduction when adapting this liturgy. The purpose is to make worship more accessible, not merely to exchange a few phrases.

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ORDER OF SERVICE

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Gathering Song

Greeting

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WORD

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GATHERING

Welcome

The worship leader speaks from a place visible to the congregation. If online participants are present, the camera is on. The leader speaks in an unhurried tone.

Welcome.

Whoever you are, and however you arrived here today —
whether you walked in, rolled in, logged in, or barely made it —
you are not a visitor in this space.
You belong here.

We gather as people who carry a lot.
Tired bodies. Restless minds. Full hearts. Heavy weeks.
Joy we haven't had time to name.
Grief we haven't had words for yet.

All of it is welcome here.
All of you is welcome here.

This community believes that there is no right way to have a body.

There is no correct level of energy, ability, or alertness
required to receive grace.
You do not need to perform wellness to worship.
You do not need to hold yourself together to belong.

The leader names access features in plain, matter-of-fact language. The following lines are examples: name only what is actually available, and replace bracketed details before worship.

A few things to know about this space:
Large-print materials are available at [location, if offered].
Assistive listening is available [equipment and instructions, if offered].
A quieter room is available at [location, if offered] for anyone who needs it.
Communion will be brought to you wherever you are seated.
If you are joining us online, you are fully present with us.
Children are welcome to move, draw, or rest as they need.

You are invited to participate in whatever way works for your body and mind today.
There is no wrong way to worship here.

Optional: Body Acknowledgment

This section is optional. The Welcome above already names full belonging without singling out any group, and works well as a complete, general-use opening on its own. Consider adding the Body Acknowledgment below on occasions when naming the church's specific history of exclusion explicitly would serve the moment — a disability-justice or accessibility-focused Sunday, the anniversary of the ADA, a service tied to a congregation's ongoing access or reconciliation work, or any time the community is ready to name this history out loud together. If used, it follows immediately after the Welcome and before the Gathering Song. It may be read by the same leader or by a different voice.

We also want to name something honestly.

For most of its history, the church has not been a safe or welcoming place for people with disabilities, chronic illness, mental illness, neurodivergence, and bodies that do not fit what the world calls normal.

Theology has been used to say that disability is punishment.
Architecture has said that some bodies do not belong.
Silence has said that certain experiences do not matter.

We are part of that history.
And we are also working to shape a different one.

This community is not finished.
We have not arrived.

But we are committed to building a space
where every body is seen,
every mind is valued,
and no one is expected to perform wellness
in order to receive grace.

We are not whole because we are all alike.
We are whole because all of us are here together with our differences, not despite them.
We welcome your whole self here.
Not in spite of who you are.
Because of who you are.

Either in body or spirit, please rise for our Gathering Song.

A brief pause. The service continues with the Gathering Song.

Gathering Song

A gathering hymn is sung. The presider and worship leaders may process during the hymn.

Greeting

The presider faces the congregation.

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Kyrie

This liturgy occasionally addresses God using sensory language ('hear,' 'see') as an expression of relationship and plea, not as a metaphor for spiritual capacity. Such language is intentionally paired with explicitly inclusive naming — 'every body, every mind, every kind of suffering and joy' — so that no single sense becomes the assumed register for being known by God.

The presider or a cantor leads each petition, and the congregation responds. The response may be spoken or sung to a setting for which the community has permission. The cue before each response is always the same.

In a world where many are in pain — where bodies ache and minds grow weary, where rest is hard to find and help is slow to come —

P: We pray to you, O God.

C: Lord, have mercy.

In a world where barriers remain — where some cannot enter, cannot be heard, cannot be seen as fully human —

P: We pray to you, O God.

C: Christ, have mercy.

In a world that is learning, slowly, what it means to care for one another — in this community, still growing into the grace we proclaim —

P: We pray to you, O God.

C: Lord, have mercy.

A brief silence is held. Then the presider continues:

P: Hear our cry, O God. You know every body. You know every mind. You are present in every kind of suffering and in every kind of joy. Receive our prayer.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise

The Hymn of Praise (Gloria in Excelsis or another hymn of praise) may be sung here. It is normally omitted during Advent and Lent. Your context may also omit it entirely.

WORD

Prayer of the Day

Rise in body or spirit for the Prayer of the Day.

P: Let us pray. God of every body and every mind, you meet us here — tired or rested, certain or searching, carrying more than we expected this week.

Draw us close to your Word today. Let your Word find its way into us — not only into our thoughts, but into our bones, our breath, our hands.

Ground us in your grace, and send us from this place a little more whole than when we came.

We ask this through Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

C: Amen.

The assembly finds a comfortable position.

Prayer of the Day – Shorter Version

P: Let us pray. God who knows us completely, meet us here in this hour – in our bodies, our minds, our questions, in our need. Speak to us. We are listening. Through Christ we pray.

C: Amen.

Prayer of the Day – Seasonal Variations

For a season of Lament:

P: Let us pray. God of the long night and slow morning, we come without pretending. Some of us are weary in ways we cannot name. Some of us have been waiting a long time for relief. We do not ask you to explain yourself. We only ask that you be present – in the Word we are about to receive, in the people gathered with us, and in the quiet places where hope is still trying to grow. Through Christ our Lord who knows what it is to suffer and rise.

C: Amen.

For a season of Joy:

P: Let us pray. God of abundance and delight, we arrive here grateful for the bodies that have carried us this far, for minds that can wonder, for community that holds us even when we cannot hold ourselves. Receive our worship. Receive our joy. And in the readings ahead, speak to us of the life you are still making possible through Christ in whom all things are held together.

C: Amen.

Liturgical Season Variations (Added to the beginning of the prayer):

Advent: God who comes to us in darkness...

Christmas: God in the flesh who comes to us...

Epiphany: Light of the world who shines upon all...

Lent: God of the long wilderness and the slow journey home...

Easter: God of new life and promise...

Pentecost: God of the rushing wind and many tongues...

Time After: God of the long and ordinary season, in whom all growing things find their source...

First Reading

The reader announces the reading by name and location. After the reading:

P: Word of God, word of life.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm or Sung Response

A psalm is sung or spoken, or a sung response is offered.

Second Reading

Announced and concluded in the same manner as the First Reading.

Gospel Acclamation

The assembly rises in body or spirit. The Gospel Acclamation is sung.

Gospel Reading

The presider or deacon announces the Gospel.

P: The holy gospel according to _____.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

After the reading:

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly finds a comfortable position.

Sermon

Silence for reflection may follow the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

The assembly rises in body or spirit. A hymn is sung in response to the Word.

Affirmation of Faith

P: Let us affirm the faith we share.

C: We believe in a God who made every body and called it good.

We believe in a Christ who took on flesh — who knew hunger, weariness, pain, and joy.

We believe in a Spirit who moves through and among us, binding us to one another across every difference.

We believe that none of us is outside the reach of grace. And we believe that together, we are the Body of Christ — incomplete without every member. Amen.

Response to the Word

Confession and Forgiveness

The presider invites the community.

P: Joined together as one body in Christ, we are bold to confess what can tear us apart.

Silence is offered. The presider may say: “In this silence, simply breathe, or hold in mind what you want to bring honestly before God. We will hold about thirty seconds of silence.”

After the silence, the presider begins and the congregation joins:

P: Compassionate God,

C: we confess that we have not always offered to others the grace we ourselves have received. We have looked away from suffering we could have addressed. We have left barriers in place — in our community and in our hearts. Forgive us for the times we chose silence over witness, and for the times we have confused limitation with failure, or dependence with weakness — in ourselves and in each other. Accompany us on the path of reconciliation with you, with one another, and with all of creation, that we may be one together. Amen.

The presider declares:

P: God knows every body and every mind. God meets you here, exactly as you are.

And this God — who made you, who claims you, who has never let you go — declares to you the full and entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

A worship leader — preferably a lay person — leads the intercessions. The congregational response is the same throughout. It may be printed in the bulletin and projected on screen.

The congregational response throughout is ‘Receive our prayer’ rather than the traditional ‘Lord, hear our prayer.’ This liturgy uses ‘receive’ because it images God as actively present and accepting what is offered, rather than asking God to listen as though attention were in question. It is also short enough for any worshiper to stay with throughout the prayer.

A: Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Each petition ends with the same cue and response:

A: We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THE CHURCH For the church in every place — gathered in grand cathedrals and small living rooms, worshiping in silence and in noise, in bodies that are rested and bodies that are worn. For those who lead and those who question, those who have stayed and those who have walked away and are finding their way back. May the church be, more and more, a place where every person knows they belong. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THE WORLD For the world you love — for leaders and lawmakers, for those with power to remove barriers and those still waiting for those barriers to come down. For communities where access is denied, where dignity is contested, where the most vulnerable carry the heaviest weight. May justice move — slowly if it must, but surely. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THE EARTH For the earth — the soil and the water, the air and the atmosphere, the creatures who share this life with us and have no voice in the decisions that shape their survival. For communities already living with the consequences of a changing climate — those for whom rising heat, rising water, and failing harvests are not future threats but present realities. Those whose bodies are most vulnerable to the world we are making. May we be faithful stewards of what we have been given to tend. May we act with urgency and with humility — knowing the earth does not belong to us, and that how we treat it is inseparable from how we treat one another. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING We hold before you all who are in pain today — in body, in mind, in spirit. Those navigating illness, disability, or injury. Those in hospitals, in care facilities, at home, in places where getting through the day is its own kind of courage. We do not ask you to explain their suffering. We ask you to be present in it — and to make us present in it too. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THOSE WHO PROVIDE CARE For those who give care — family members, friends, nurses, aides, therapists, chaplains, social workers, and neighbors who show up without being asked. For those whose caregiving is invisible, unpaid, or taken for granted. For those who are tired of giving and do not know where to find replenishment. Sustain them. See them. Give them rest. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THIS COMMUNITY For this congregation/community — for what we are building together, for the barriers we are still learning to see, for the welcome we are still learning to offer. For those who worship with us here and those who worship from wherever they are. May no one among us feel like their belonging here is conditional, or that this space belongs to some of us more than others. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR LOCAL NEEDS

The leader pauses and invites the congregation:

We now hold space for the particular needs of this community.

You are welcome to speak a name or a need aloud.

You are equally welcome to offer it silently,

or simply to hold it in your heart.

All of it reaches God.

A generous pause is held — at least 30 to 45 seconds. After the silence:

For all that has been named, spoken, and held in silence — We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

FOR THE DYING AND THE DEAD For those who are dying — who are moving through the last passage of this life. May they know they are not alone. For those who grieve — who are carrying the weight of loss that does not lift on anyone else's schedule. And for all who have died — we give thanks for their lives and trust them to your keeping. We pray to you, O God.

C: Receive our prayer.

The presider gathers the prayers:

P: God of every body and every mind, you have heard what we have offered — spoken and silent, confident and uncertain. Receive it all. Act where we cannot. Be present where we are not enough. And keep us faithful to one another until all things are made whole. Through Christ, who intercedes for us always.

C: Amen.

Peace

The presider faces the congregation.

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

We offer one another a sign of that peace —

in whatever way works for your body and your comfort today.

A handshake, a wave, a nod, a hand placed on your own heart. Eye contact across the room.

A word spoken to someone nearby. Or simply receiving the peace of this moment from right where you are.

To those joining us online — the peace of Christ is with you too, wherever you are right now.

Music may be played softly during the Peace. A gentle musical cue or spoken word brings the Peace to a close after no more than two minutes.

MEAL

Offering

The offering is received. The Table is prepared. An offertory song or instrumental music accompanies this.

Offertory Prayer

The assembly rises in body or spirit. The presider or assisting minister prays.

A: Let us pray. Generous God, source of every gift — you gather us together into one body with many gifts to share in the world you love. We offer today what we have, knowing it is never quite enough, but trusting that in your hands it becomes more than we can fathom. Use these gifts to feed, shelter, and support, and to open doors that have been closed too long — open the door wide enough for all of us to gather around your table for the feast that has no end. Make us ready for the meal that makes us one. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The presider faces the congregation.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PROPER PREFACE

P: Accompanying God, we give you thanks and praise in every time and place. You have made yourself known in Jesus Christ, who took on flesh and blood so that in him we would all be one body.

You entered into a body that also took on hunger, weariness, exhaustion, and the need for the comfort of touch. We gather today in our own bodies, however they are, knowing that as we eat and drink we receive what we cannot give ourselves — your love, your presence, and the strength to care for one another and for the world you refuse to give up on.

And so, with all the hosts of heaven, with every generation that has sung this song before us, and with every body that will come after us, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

The Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) is sung or spoken using a text and setting authorized for the congregation.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P: Holy are you, O God — beyond our understanding, and yet you chose to be known.

Known in love and in friendship. Known in bread broken at borrowed tables and in the quiet holiness of a meal shared among strangers. Known in the ordinary, the embodied, the human — for this is how you have always worked.

Throughout history you have been a God who feeds — manna in the desert, fish on the shore, bread broken among strangers who became friends. And then, in Jesus, you showed up among us — welcoming every body just as they were — including all the people other tables turn away.

INSTITUTION NARRATIVE: At this point, use the Words of Institution from a source authorized for your worshiping tradition. Supply the wording from your own licensed or public-domain source; it is intentionally not reprinted in this resource.

Optional memorial acclamation: use a text and musical setting authorized for your congregation, or omit it.

And so, remembering his life, death, resurrection, and promise to come again, we gather at this table. In this bread and cup we proclaim that death does not have the last word — and we stake our lives on that declaration.

We come as people who need what it offers — as people who belong here, every one of us, without question. Show up for us — those gathered here, those joining us online, those worshiping from wherever they are today. Show up for every body, however they are.

Send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine. Send that same Spirit upon us — upon every body present, however they are. Feed us with what we cannot give ourselves — presence, courage, the grace to keep going, and the hope that in your hands we become more than we can imagine. Make us, by this meal, into people who set longer tables and open wider doors — for the world you refuse to give up on.

We eat this meal as people who are not yet home but who know the way. Even when the journey is longer than we expected, nourish us for this journey — the long and sometimes hard journey toward the world you are still making whole.

Until the world you love becomes the world you intend, feed us with this foretaste — this bread and cup, the beginning of a meal that will not end until everyone has feasted.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty and faithful God, now and as we journey toward the day when all will be in your presence, forever and ever.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

The assembly prays the Lord's Prayer using a version authorized for its tradition and permissions. If more than one version is offered, make both easy to navigate in print and digital formats; ask worshipers what actually helps.

The presider introduces the prayer.

P: Gathered at this Table as God's own, we boldly pray together as Jesus taught us:

[The assembly prays the Lord's Prayer in its authorized form. Insert text here from your congregation's approved source when preparing a local worship bulletin.]

Communion

Adapt this section to your community's sacramental practice, especially any language addressing people who worship online. Provide clear directions for communion access without requiring anyone to explain an accommodation.

The presider faces the congregation. The Table is prepared.

This is the Table of Christ — and every body is welcome here.

You are invited to come forward to receive bread and cup. Gluten-free bread is available, as is wine and grape juice. Simply receive what you need — no explanation is necessary.

For those remaining in the congregation, communion servers will walk through the sanctuary. Please feel free to signal a server if you would like the elements brought to you, or simply let them pass if you prefer to use this time for quiet reflection.

To those worshipping from home — when we eat and drink here, eat and drink with us. You are at this Table too.

Come — not because you are ready, but because you are hungry. That is enough.

Communion is distributed. Music, silence, or both are appropriate during distribution. Communion is brought to all who remain seated.

Post-Communion Prayer

After all have received, the assembly rises in body or spirit and the presider or assisting minister prays.

A: Let us pray. Generous God, we thank you that you have fed the hungry in this meal. It has nourished us and connected us to you and to all who shared this table. Now send us out — into the ordinary, the embodied, the human — to proclaim justice, to care for others, and to accompany all people in love. The world is not yet what you intend, but it is also the world you refuse to give up on. And so we go — held in your love and led by the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

SENDING

Benediction

The presider faces the congregation. No posture is required.

P: Go from this place — into the ordinary days and the extraordinary ones, into a world where our liberation is bound up in one another, needing your fierce advocacy and your gentle rest

May the God who made every body and called it good keep you and know you by name through everything this week will ask of you.

May the accompanying Christ journey with you in your weariness and your hope, filling you with love for those you meet and for those you will never meet but whose lives your care will touch.

And may the Holy Spirit, who blows freely where she will, empower you to care for others — and also to receive the care you need.

The blessing of almighty and faithful God — Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of every body and every life — be with you now and always.

C: Amen.

Sending Song

A sending hymn is sung.

Dismissal

The assisting minister or presider dismisses the assembly.

A or P: Go in peace — you are Christ's body in the world.

C: Thanks be to God.

This liturgy is a living document.

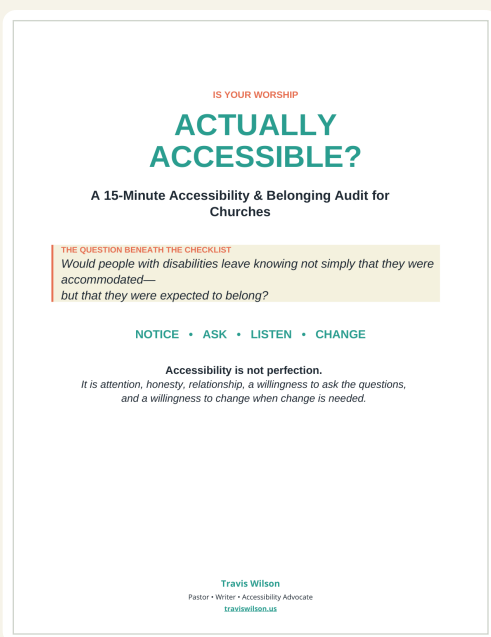
Adapt it as your community grows and as you learn more.

Written by the Rev. Travis Wilson • October 2026 Workshop Edition • Congregational worship permission terms inside

Take the questions home.

A liturgy can show us what belonging sounds like. The next step is to listen carefully to the people who worship with us—and to notice what our spaces and practices assume.

A COMPANION RESOURCE



Is Your Worship Actually Accessible?

A 15-minute Accessibility & Belonging Audit for churches.

Use the guide with leaders and people with lived experience to notice barriers and choose where to begin.



traviswilson.us

Explore accessibility and belonging resources.

NOTICE • ASK • LISTEN • CHANGE

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