

## OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

Great Idea!



A word from one of our partner grants and churches...

Michelle Junkin, Project Director of Big Faith Resources and one of our partner church members at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City has uploaded many helpful resources on the [Big Faith Resources Website](#) on the topic of Neurodiversity.

They also have a fantastic video that shows how a child with a sensory sensitivity might experience worship in their congregation. We are using this video to open our events this fall, but it is now available to all on the Big Faith Resources Website in this [location](#).

Hopefully this will spark conversations within your faith community.



### Fall Regional Gatherings

The Houston gathering was a big success! We had 22 participants discussing the topic of Neurodiversity and Worship. A big thank you to Michelle Junkin and Jenna Campbell for their part in leadership and the materials from Big Faith Resources! As you can see there was a DIY portion of our day together. Thanks also to St. Philip Presbyterian Church for hosting us!

The Montreat gathering is coming up on October 28-30 with the same topic. We are completely full and looking forward to welcoming our 19 participants to this beautiful fall gathering in North Carolina.

### Godly Play Fall Training Registration Open Now!

Registration is now open for our Fall Godly Play Training at Columbia Theological Seminary. The event occurs from November 17-19 and we still have 7 spaces remaining.

This 3-day core training provided by a licensed Godly Play trainer is fully funded by WoW except for travel. You can find the [link here](#) for registration or use the QR code.



### Book Recommendation



If you are unable to join our regional gatherings this fall, but have a deep interest in how to address neurodiversity in your congregation, we highly recommend, "Blessed Minds" by UCC pastor, Sarah Griffith Lund. This is a very accessible book and designed for church use. All of our regional gathering participants receive a copy of this book in their packets.

# Anti-Ableism Language Guide

The following language guide is a rich resource for the faith community seeking to embrace and serve people with disabilities.

## When Talking about Disability

### 1 Use person-first language, identity-first language, or a mix of both.\*

**Person-first language** is “person with \_\_\_\_” such as “person with a visual impairment” or “people with disabilities.” This language is used to assert that individuals are people first, and that their disability does not define their personhood.

**Identity-first language** is “\_\_\_\_ person,” such as “autistic person” or “disabled people.” This language is used to emphasize that for many disabled people, their disability identity cannot be separated from their personhood; their disability is part of who they are, not something that they “have.”

\* Many scholars, activists, and disability communities prefer identity-first language, but many also still prefer person-first language. When talking about groups of disabled people in general, both forms are acceptable.

### 2 Avoid euphemisms and “special.”

**Euphemisms.** Examples to avoid include: “differently abled,” “people of all abilities,” “disAbility,” “handicapable,” and “people of determination.” These terms imply that disability is a bad word, rather than simply a part of how someone moves through the world.

**Special** should **not** be used to describe people with disabilities, including in expressions such as “special needs” or “special assistance.”

All people have needs, and calling some “special” and others “normal” further marginalizes disabled people.

### 3 Not Sure? Ask!

When referring to a specific person and their disability, use the language they use for themselves, or the language they have asked you to use. **If you’re not sure, ask.** People get to describe themselves however they want, even if their language contradicts these guidelines.

## Terms to Get Started

**Nondisabled:** People whose bodies, minds, and emotional processing generally or mostly match society’s expectations for them and what they are able to do; people who do not have a disability.

**Neurotypical:** People whose brains largely function as society expects, especially in terms of learning styles, focus and attention, sensory processing, or socialization.

**Disability:** There are many different ways to define disability, but a good starting point is this: a physical, mental, or emotional difference that is viewed as “outside the norm” for a body or mind, and is devalued by society.

**Neurodivergent:** An identity descriptor used by some people whose brains function differently than society expects them to. For example: different styles of learning, different modes of focus and attention, sensory sensitivities, or different needs for social interaction. People who are autistic, or have ADHD, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities might identify as neurodivergent. Usually used to emphasize the variety of different ways brains work, and the value of this diversity.

**Mad:** Reclaimed language used by some people with psychiatric diagnoses. Though “mad” has been used with negative connotations toward people with diagnoses, some people claim it as a term of pride, asserting that their experiences of different emotional and mental states are a valuable expression of diversity.



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