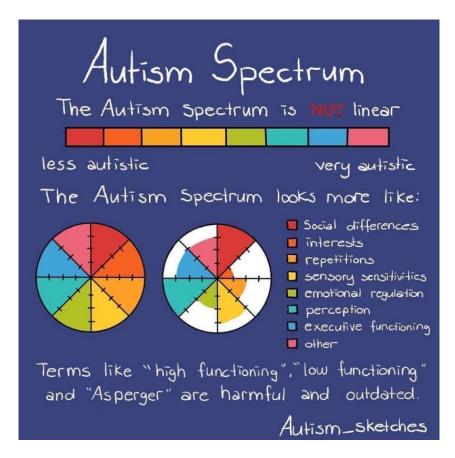
#### **Autism Resources**

In light of ECMN's desire to create spaces that better embody the kind of welcome we claim to aspire to, we gathered a group of neurodiverse\* clergy and lay people to discuss what we can offer congregations seeking to better welcome and include neurodivergent adults and children. These resources represent the fruit of our efforts and, we commend them to you as a starting point.

A starting point but not an end point! For, as you seek to widen the welcome, you will build relationships with actual people--people, who will have unique neurotypes, accessibility needs, and many gifts to share. It is in the relationships of mutuality and trust that you will truly move a congregation from tolerance to acceptance to appreciation to full inclusion!

First, the most important quote you should remember is "If you have met one autistic person, you have met one autistic person." Each autistic person is unique. While there are characteristics that are common among each autistic person, each individual will have different experiences. The autism spectrum is not linear. The autism spectrum is a diversity of experiences.

\*if some of the terms used in this introduction are unfamiliar to you, you can find working definitions <u>here</u>.



#### **Recommended Resources:**

# **Autism Society in Minnesota**

While there are so many helpful resources from this organization, consider starting with a 2-hour, free, virtual class on understanding autism:

https://ausm.org/education/classes/understanding-autism/

<u>Today's Autistic Moment</u> is Br. Anselm Philip's podcast for autistic adults, produced and hosted by an autistic adult. The website includes over 60 episodes that have been published since 2021, resources, links, dos and don'ts, blogs and other helpful information.

# **Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)**

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement with regard to autism. ASAN believes that the goal of autism advocacy should be a world in which autistic people enjoy equal access, rights, and opportunities. We work to empower autistic people across the world to take control of our own lives and the future of our common community, and seek to organize the autistic community to ensure our voices are heard in the national conversation about us. Nothing About Us Without Us!

Here are a few curated suggestions from ASAN:

- Holding Inclusive Events, a Guide to Accessible Event Planning (universal design)
- Specific accommodation ideas for accessibility for autistic access needs
- For parents of newly diagnosed kids (also helpful as an overview for understanding)

# **Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN)**

The Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network works to provide supports for disabled and autistic people in their fight for disability, gender and racial justice. AWN works in solidarity with disabled and autistic BIPoC & LGBTQIAP+ people. They supply assistance for meals, groceries, rent, moving expenses, bereavement & loss, healthcare and assistance for many unexpected life events.

# The Articulate Autistic - Jaime A. Heidel

Jaime A. Heidel is autistic and a prolific writer about the experiences of autistic people. Jaime writes her blog about her own life experience of trying to communicate to others the challenges autistic people live with.

### **Recommended books:**

- NeuroTribes by Steve Silberman
- We're Not Broken by Eric Garcia
- Neuroqueer Heresies by Nick Walker
- A Different Kind of Normal by Abigail Balfe

### **Books recommended by an autistic child:**

 The Awesome Autistic Go To Guide: A Practical Handbook for Autistic Teens and Tweens

## And a few more blogs:

https://buildfaith.org/neurodiversity-in-the-classroom/

# https://adiaryofamom.com

Grounded in the assumption of competence and adamant about honoring dignity—Jess writes about her experience of growth as a parent and person who happens to have an autistic child (who is now a young adult). This blog centers the voices of autistic adults whenever possible and all posts about members of Jess' family are posted WITH the participation and consent of the individuals written about (with pseudonyms).

# **Helpful Liturgical suggestions:**

Here are just a few examples of things to consider that will greatly enhance worship for and with those who are autistic. And being as we never know just who might show up, these things can help create a welcoming atmosphere for whoever comes through the doors

- noise canceling headphones available for worship (and a plan to sanitize after use)
- fidgets (and a plan to sanitize after use)
- Spaces for sensory breaks, video/sound available in a non-crowded space
- Sensory sensitive worship opportunities for major feast days (and, in general)—
  quieter music, social stories for the service, less "big" liturgical movement, scent
  sensitive (no incense)

Contact the Rev. Joy Caires, Rector of St. Clement's, St. Paul for information on how to create safe, welcoming worship spaces: <a href="mailto:joy@stcstp.org">joy@stcstp.org</a>

# Committee who worked on these resources:

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