**St James’s Piccadilly**

**Accessibility and Disability Survey**

**Summary Report and Recommendations**

Monday 24 July 2023

**Summary:**

St James’s conducted an accessibility and disability survey for the congregation in May and June 2023, both online and in hard copy. Questions were devised by a group including people with disabilities and St James’s, with advice from Revd John Beauchamp (Diocese of London disability advisor) and Fiona MacMillan (Vice-Chair of Inclusive Church, head of planning group for annual Disability and Church conference at St Martin-in-the-Fields).

The survey was shared for 4 weeks in the newsletter, notices, and by word of mouth. Participation was low – 17 responses – but those who did respond have provided invaluable feedback and a call to action across a diverse range of activities and approaches at St James’s, including liturgy, the building, and the Wren Project.

Numerous respondents were glad that the conversation about accessibility and disability is ongoing and that change is possible. People appreciate audio recordings of readers who can’t be in the building for services. The online presence is excellent and can be improved. Benches and spaces that have signs indicating that they are reserved for disabled people – at Soul @ St James for example – make people feel welcome. ‘Creative, brave and truthful speaking’ about disabilities is evident and we can do more.

Respondents gave St James’s an average 3.5/5 rating for accessibility overall.

8 people who took the survey have expressed interest in joining a group to explore accessibility and disability at St James’s.

The vast majority of respondents were white British women.

Approximately half engage with St James’s online as well as in the building for services and events. The importance of the online community is vital for many.

Among the respondents, the range of accessibility and disability aids at St James’s include:
frame, crutches, cane, wheelchair, need for carer/companion, hearing aid, neurodiversity (unspecified)

**Recommendations – Short-Term:**

* All documents, presentations, orders of service provided in large print (at least 16pt font) on cream paper to make reading easier
* Move tea and coffee away from the narthex as it’s too busy with too many people
* More conversations about disability and accessibility – workshops, events, panels/talks
* More hybrid events and focus on creating a community online
* Update website to support accessibility
* Train welcomers to handle potentially disruptive visitors and tourists to maximise hearing and calm atmosphere in the building
* Minimise leads and trailing items on the ground during set-up for events – they are trip hazards
* Place photos and notices low enough on boards that they are easily seen by children and people in wheelchairs
* Zoom and YouTube lessons especially for how to use the chat function
* Maximising online presence
* ensuring good captions are provided
* more creative use of camera angles
* Mindfulness regarding accessibility in all aspects of social and cultural life (garden is not accessible, for example)
* Improve website so that it’s easier to use and so that all aspects are accessible, especially text and navigation on mobile phones
* BSL interpreter present for some of the services
* Name labels to support people with face blindness and memory loss
* Inclusive language in liturgies, sermons, music, and activities across the board (some like ‘stand if you are able’ some dislike it because it ‘creates an able-disabled divide’). Better option could be ‘Stand if you would like to or remain seated if this is easier or more comfortable’.
* Invite people to stand and walk around during the service if this is needed/more comfortable for them
* Provision of a comfortable quiet space for those who need to leave the service for a while for any reason

**Recommendations – Long-Term and Wren Project:**

* Better sound system for hearing loss
* Quieter indoor spaces to ‘hang out’
* Better lighting for hearing and sight needs
* Accessible toilets (ideally with room for a hoist)
* Need for chairs rather than/as well as pews
* Wheelchair access across the site
* Handrail for steps from Piccadilly to courtyard

**Additional feedback from participants:**

*‘Accessibility can be creative and is for everyone – not just a special add-on or functional issue’*

*‘It’s not only disabled people who have needs, and bodies/minds change all the time’*

*‘As individuals we’re all responsible for listening to each other properly – there is a Japanese phrase, ‘reading the air’ – take time to listen to people’s needs’*

*‘Accessiblity needs can change over time – clear planning and communication of dates/times/expectations can help a lot with this’*

*‘YouTube services can feel robotic and soulless, lacking a sense of human presence’*

*‘I have invisible disabilities and this is an area where I am not really ‘out’ yet’*

*‘When listening to updates on the Wren Project it’s hard to feel involved if you can’t read the documents diagrams you’re given’*

*‘embed procedures so they don’t need to be thought about’*

*‘it’s tricky to stand up and move around in services without feeling conspicuous’*

*‘one day most of us will need extra help as a result of impaired sight/hearing/mobility’*

*‘I often feel access for disabled people is an afterthought at SJP’*

*‘on the website the focus seems to be on concerts and it isn’t always easy to access the services’*

*‘the little things like having to struggle to get over a cable on the floor are exhausting’*

*‘I would love to see disabled servers up at the front one day’*