



# Making Easter Accessible

Resurrection Sunday services produce joy and excitement for many families. But for families affected by special needs and disabilities, extra worship services, a change in service times, and fun family activities may disrupt important routines that provide security for their children. New clothing and shoes, while a necessity for growing bodies, may be stiff, itchy, and tight on little bodies that are sensitive to the sensation of touch. Special programming that transfers children to an unfamiliar place or has them experiencing the lesson in a different way can produce enough anxiety to make a family want to escape the whole Easter experience.

Consider some ways you can make the changes in routine easier for these families this Easter:

- If your congregation is offering extra opportunities for worship this Easter, call ahead and speak with the family about their needs. Ask which service they are planning to attend. Let them know what you are offering for their child's age level during each worship opportunity.
- If you expect increased attendance on Easter Sunday, consider reserving parking spaces close to your building's entrance for families with special needs.
- If your congregation has a special meal to celebrate together, ask the parents what dietary restrictions you need to address so their family can participate fully. Consider what reserved seating you need for this family so the mealtime will be enjoyable. Plan for another family to join them so they aren't enjoying your hospitality alone.
- If you are adding volunteers and personnel with whom a child may not be familiar, consider introducing them to the child ahead of time. Or take pictures of the volunteers and e-mail them to the family so parents can show their child whom he can expect to see on Easter.
- As much as possible, keep children with special needs in a familiar space. If special programming necessitates a change of venue, visit the room (or take pictures of the room and show them to the child) prior to Easter Sunday.
- Provide a picture schedule (even for older children who may not routinely need this support) to show all the ways you are going to be learning about Jesus' resurrection.
- Think ahead about any multisensory items that will be added to the day's experience. (Examples: candles, food or snack items, special lighting, etc.) Let the child know ahead of time what will happen differently.
- Ask parents and caregivers to suggest ways they think their child might best experience God's love on Easter Sunday. It may mean that you keep one small valuable part of the routine—or even start something new you hadn't thought of.