28 November 2025

(including amendments requested by the PCC at its 10 November meeting)

Disability Access Statement

1. Policy

It is the church's policy to positively welcome the participation of members with disabilities in our worship services and to meet the needs of all disabled members and visitors. Assistance dogs are welcome.

We have a number of church members with disabilities of various types, and seek to address their needs on an individual basis.

We recognise that the layout of the building may pose practical limitations on what is possible, and will take the needs of disabled people into account when planning improvements.

We also recognise that church members at any one time may not have all desirable skills, but we will endeavour to identify and train volunteers where an ongoing need is identified. For example, we currently do not have any members requiring sign-language interpretation, but have provided this service in the past and would endeavour to do so again if requested.

2. Finding St James Church

There are directions and location maps on the church website, including information for disabled visitors.

3. Car parking

Should parking be required for an independent wheelchair user, there is a suitable space between the office and the hall with plenty of room on each side. Other spaces can also be reserved as required using cones.

There is also further parking across the road at Coal Orchard car park, a local council car park. There are currently no charges at the Coal Orchard car park after 6pm Monday to Saturday and all-day Sunday. (NB, as of November 2025, Somerset Council is considering extending Sunday car parking charges across the county.)

4. Drop-off point

People with mobility difficulties can be dropped off right outside the church door, in the church car park.
The car lift service has been available for church members, including those with limited mobility, but note, this is currently in abeyance.

5. Entering the building – The main entrance is from the church car park

The approach to the church is through the car park, which is level tarmac
The main entrance is suitable for wheelchair users
There are no steps or ramps. The doormat is in a well which brings it level with the surrounding floor.

The main door has an ordinary domestic door handle. The inner glass doors do not have latches, and can be pushed open. Two open inwards, and two open outwards.

Independent access to wheelchair users through the main church doors can be difficult due to the layout and the weight of the doors; however, when the church is open for worship, stewards will always be around the entrance to welcome and assist if required.

6. Moving around inside the church

There is level access throughout the site for wheelchairs.

Wheelchair users may sit wherever they wish, and chairs will be moved out of the way accordingly. Stewards are alert to the need to attend to the requirements of wheelchair users, and will usher them to a suitable place. The front rows are normally used for wheelchairs, and church members are aware that they may need to move from the front row on occasions.

Ramps are available for any wheelchair user to access the chancel area. These are not left in place because they would create a health and safety trip hazard, and there is no easy way to provide a permanent ramp. Regular access to the chancel is not required for most users of the church.

There are two steps up into the chancel. The lower step is marked by a change in colour of the carpet. The upper step is marked by a light-coloured wooden strip which contrasts with the carpet.

7. Moving around inside the church 2: receiving Communion

Communion is served in the nave, at the same level as the main seating.
Communion is regularly taken to any people who have difficulty walking.

8. Seating

With regards to seating for people with chronic pain, there is no specific provision. The standard wooden chairs are generally comfortable for most people. There is another type of chair with wooden arm rests, which could be provided if it were to be more suitable, and a third type of chair which could be brought from the church hall.
Note: None of these have full back support and hence may be unsuitable for people with chronic back pain / or spine impairment due to osteoporosis.

9. Hearing loop

There is an induction loop in the main church building for the hard of hearing. This is tested by the sound team each week.
All people leading worship use microphones.
There are induction loop receivers for anyone who does not have a hearing aid with the T setting enabled.

There is a one-to-one short-range hearing loop device in the Lounge.

Other rooms currently do not have induction loops.
Note: Equipment has been obtained to fit a loop in the Large Hall, and the job is included in the premises work list.

10. Printed material and on-screen displays

Printed materials comply with clear print guidelines as far as possible. In some instances, material supplied by third parties may have to be copied in its original format.

We produce A4 and large-print versions of the Song sheets for those who cannot easily read the overhead screen, and can print the weekly bulletin in large print on request, to have available by the end of the service.

There are several display screens:

- The main projection screen carries all the information for services and can be read at the back of the church by most people.
- The same images are also displayed on smaller subsidiary screens in the church. These screens are not designed for reading at a distance. It is intended in due course to add further screens to cover other areas behind pillars.
- An individual screen is provided for one church member with very poor eyesight. Consideration will be given to similarly assisting other people if required.
- The viewing distance for the screen in the Large Hall generally allows most people to view most material.

See **Appendix** for guidelines for preparing slides for the main screen.

11. Lighting

The main church lighting is provided by LED lamps, at roof level and on the side walls.
There have been no adverse comments about light levels

12. Toilets

There is a fully-equipped wheelchair accessible WC. The layout and fittings in the WC were upgraded in 2013 in line with the latest advice (as issued by the RNIB). The toilet is kept clear of obstructions.

13. Children with disabilities are also included in "Childrens Church".

Our Children's church seeks to positively welcome children and visitors with a range of disabilities into our Sunday morning sessions.

From the church, there is level access down the corridor, through double doors and into the hall where we meet as a community (usually after the first song). Parents/ carers are welcome to join us and many do, alongside our designated team leaders, who are recognisable in their bright pink and blue t-shirts. A photo display of our team is in progress to help children check names and see who they can seek for help.

Our hall is large with plenty of circulation space. We also love to access the outside space (access from the corridor) as a team and will ensure a ramp is provided for churchyard access for all. A fully equipped, wheelchair-accessible toilet is also available from the corridor and is kept clear of obstructions.

Over the years, we have welcomed children with disabilities of various types to Children's church. We seek to address needs on an individual basis whether these be mobility, sensory (hearing/ visual impairment), learning, neurodiversity or anything which could be a potential barrier to access. Our children's team are always happy to discuss how best we can include any child in our sessions and we can take note and share any relevant support strategies with the team as a whole. We believe everyone can actively participate in God's church.

Signing (Makaton, based on BSL signs) is often used during our sessions and we encourage our team leaders to make use of visual aids, pictures, maps, film clips, music, lighting, storytelling, wall displays and movement to help bring learning, worship and prayer to life for all, but especially those who may struggle without this support and enrichment.

14. Fire evacuation

In the event of a fire where evacuation of the church is required there are 2 possible exits.
For those on the left side of the church (as you face the front) exit is through the main doors.
For people on the right side (as you face the front) there is an exit next to the side chapel.
The warden and deputy wardens have been briefed on the most effective exit routes.
Both of these exits are wheelchair accessible.

15. Participating in St James when you are unable to come to the building

We appreciate that disability sometimes means that physically attending the church building is challenging, and we have certain ways in which people unable to come to our building can still participate in the life of the church. We livestream all of our Sunday morning services through the St James Church Taunton YouTube page, and shortly after these are put onto the church YouTube channel to be watched at a time that suits you. We are also able to put the recording of the service onto a DVD for those who are less comfortable with using the internet. We are able to make some visits to people at home, including a visit from the Vicar for pastoral purposes or for home communion.

16. Further information

The Equality Act 2010 (formerly the Disability Discrimination Act) does not require retrospective modifications to be carried out regardless of cost.

The diocesan *Disability Inclusion Policy* (2016) is available on the Bath & Wells website. The diocese's Disability Audit template has been used in the preparation of this policy.

The following advice is on a legal website (www.eversheds.com):

> There is no statutory requirement under the *Equality Act* 2010 to make provision for a certain number of disabled parking spaces either in a building in its construction or during the course of its subsequent use.
>
> The BSI British Standards, "*Code of Practice for the design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people*", recommends that commercial premises with designated off-street parking have one space for every employee who is a disabled motorist, plus 5% of the total capacity for visiting motorists and a further 4% should be enlarged standard spaces.

In our case this would be 0.6 of a space in the section in front of the church or 0.9 of a space for the whole of the church section of the car park. NB, we would need to use two ordinary spaces to create one disabled space.

Guidance on various topics is available:

Outdoor Accessibility Guidance from Paths for All is being used in the development of our churchyard: https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resources/resource/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-download

H M Government Building Regulations 2010 (updated 2020), Section 5, includes diagrams of toilet layouts: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80437640f0b623026927b2/BR_PDF_AD_A_2013.pdf

The Centre for Accessible Environments *Managing Accessible Toilets Factsheet***:** https://cae.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CAE-Managing-Accessible-Toilets-Factsheet-Jan-2017.pdf

Access for all: Opening Doors is aimed at sports clubs but is useful guidance on improving physical access for disabled people: https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/000/045/Access_for_all_November_2015_original.pdf

Appendix: Guidelines for slides on the main projection screen in the church

These notes are for anyone who produces slides for the large central projection screen in church. Most points apply to any projection screen, but these notes take account of the long distance from the rear of the church and the way that the back projection tends to reduce contrast.

File and slide format

Slides should be 16:9 aspect ratio and saved in PowerPoint PPTX format. Users of Keynote on Apple devices need to export the presentation as PPTX before sending it, as the Keynote format is not readable on the Church Windows laptop. Slides already in 4:3 ratio don't need to be changed.

Fonts

The font to be used for plain text is "Segoe UI". Microsoft says: *Segoe UI … is designed specifically for use on screen. Segoe UI is a clear, readable sans serif typeface with an open, neutral look; it works well both in headlines and in short passages of text.*

There should be a good reason for using a different font to Segoe UI, such as a set of slides already in another font. When choosing a font for anything other than decorative text, sans serif is preferable. Handwriting scripts are to be avoided as most are difficult to read. Don't use Comic Sans or other novelty fonts – they are difficult to read and detract from the message being displayed. Don't use more than two dissimilar fonts in a presentation, as that hinders reading.

The point sizes quoted for other fonts may not be directly equivalent to Segoe – so judge by eye if the one to be used is similarly readable to Segoe.

Limit font choices to those available on Microsoft products, because this set is what is installed on the church laptop. If other fonts are used, PowerPoint will select a default font that may have different sizes and spacing, with the result that text can be unreadable for various reasons. If a specific non-Microsoft font is needed, it must be embedded in the slide presentation.

Font sizes

A clear differentiation must be made between congregational responses and text spoken only by the service leader. It is helpful to set the responses in a larger point size, use bold, and a different colour. A dark red works well. The style should be maintained throughout the slides for a service.

32 pt. Segoe UI bold is used for congregational responses.

24 pt. Segoe UI (not bold) should be the minimum size for text spoken by the service leader. This is also preferred for information slides with less crucial information. If you are tempted to go smaller than 24pt, it means you have too many words on the screen and your audience will be overloaded.

40 pt. Arial is currently used for song words, with white text on a blue background.

Backgrounds and contrast

There must always be a strong contrast between the text and the background.

Backgrounds should be plain. Do not superimpose text on anything but the finest pattern or texture, and avoid photographs. This is because the contrast will vary across the image and the text will be unreadable in places, even by people with good eyesight. Avoid fancy themes with random lines that may cross behind the text, as this can make text difficult to read.

The back projection washes out all colours: paler backgrounds can disappear completely, and unusual colour combinations can render text unreadable. Do not use different shades of the same colour for text and background. Any subtle colours must be tested in church before use.

Do not use a plain white background because this affects the colour balance of the livestream camera: if the camera is zoomed into the screen, it will dim the image and may leave the speaker in the dark in the livestream. Use a mid grey or buff instead of white.

A black background is acceptable, but only when lines of text are not close together.

Blocks of Text

Break up large blocks of text into smaller paragraphs with spaces between them to make them easier to read. Where a large block is needed, try putting each sentence on a new line and indenting either the first line or all the following lines of a sentence. Bullet points work well.