

Hospitality practices for interacting with people with significant visual impairment

At Good Soil, we desire to be a welcoming faith community that “invites all people with grace, compassion, and affirmation” – one of our newly updated guiding principles. In partnership with this guiding principle and Good Soil’s welcome statement, here are some helpful, concrete practices to extend that welcome and hospitality to our members and guests who live with significant visual impairment.

For some background, these practices have been shared by new members Laura and Shawn O’Neil who have given permission and blessing to share them. Both of them live with significant vision impairment (as does fellow Good Soil member, Allan Wylie). Laura and Shawn have had painful experiences at other congregations in the past, so these are some of the ways we as a community can work together to help make their experience better and live into being a more intentionally welcoming congregation for all people:

1. **When you greet them, please say your name** as you begin talking to them because they cannot recognize faces.

Ex: “Hi Laura and Shawn, it’s Michelle, nice to see you today!” etc.

2. **When you are talking with them, please let them know you are going to walk away** before leaving the conversation so they don’t get “ghosted”

Ex: “Nice talking with you, I’m going to head down the hall now.”

3. **They would gladly accept rides, but feel awkward having to ask for them.** They cannot drive, but would like to attend church (and related church events) every week if possible. Paratransit is an option, but often the timing is unpredictable and sometimes it falls through completely due to staff shortages. They would love to receive help with rides, but feel like they are a burden when they have to ask for them. They live in Westlake: 2021 King James Parkway.*

Ex: “Just ask when you need a ride and I’d be happy to drive you”

(Unhelpful: puts the burden on them to ask)

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“May I give you a ride to church next week or the following week?”

(Helpful: gives them the option to say yes or no)

**We are also currently exploring the possibility of a church ride rotation for the O’Neils. If you are willing to serve in that rotation, please let Pastor Marissa know.*