

Welcoming every worshiper



Shine means children and adults with disabilities worship **with** us — same room, same songs, same family. This page is for everyone sitting in the pews: what you might see and hear, what to do, and how to help every person belong.

What you might see or hear: joyful sounds or vocalizations during songs and prayer • words or phrases repeated (echoing) • rocking, hand-flapping, or bouncing • someone standing, pacing, or stepping out and back in • headphones, fidgets, or a tablet used to communicate. **These are communication and self-regulation — very often joy.** They are not disruption, disrespect, or "bad parenting." They are what worship sounds like when every ability is in the room.

✓ In the moment, DO

- **Smile and keep worshipping.** Your calm tells everyone around you it's okay.
- **Make room** — an aisle seat, space to stand or sway, a friendly nod.
- **Learn names.** Greet Shine participants and their families every week, by name.
- **Speak directly to the person** — adult voice for adults — not only to their caregiver.
- **Offer help by asking:** a quiet "Would anything be helpful?" to the family, then respect the answer.
- **Wait out the moment.** Most sounds pass in seconds — far faster when nobody reacts.

⊘ Please DON'T

- **Don't stare, turn around, or shush.** A turned head says "you don't belong" louder than words.
- **Don't ask the family to leave or move** — that decision is theirs, and they're welcome exactly where they are.
- **Don't talk about a person as if they aren't there.** They hear you, and they understand more than you may assume.
- **Don't grab, restrain, or take away** fidgets or devices — those are tools, not toys.
- **Don't take it personally** if a greeting isn't returned — connection can look different, and it still counts.

How to include Shine participants in the service

- **Sit with them.** Share a bulletin or hymnal; a seatmate is the simplest inclusion there is.
- **Invite them to serve.** Greeting, ushering, handing out bulletins, helping with offering — belonging means contributing, and Shine participants make wonderful welcomers.
- **Celebrate participation out loud.** When a Shine participant sings, prays, serves, or simply stays for the whole service, treat it like what it is: worship.
- **Support the caregivers too.** A "we're glad you're ALL here" goes a long way for parents who've been asked to leave other churches.
- **Follow the leader's cue.** Our Shine group leader has over 30 years of experience with people with a wide range of abilities — if support is ever needed, they'll handle it. Your job is simply to be a neighbor.

"Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." — 1 Corinthians 12:22

Many Shine families have been shushed, stared at, or asked to leave a church before they ever reached ours. When they worship a whole service without fear of being judged, that isn't an accommodation — **that's the gospel in action.** The sounds of Shine are the sound of the whole body of Christ, finally in the room together.