

## Interfaith Connections Includes

- ❖ Council of Churches of Greater Springfield
- ❖ Roman Catholic Diocese of Greater Springfield
- ❖ Western Area Office of United Church of Christ
- ❖ Concerned Clergy, Self-Advocates and Individuals
- ❖ Multicultural Community Services
- ❖ Central/West Region Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services

## Serving the Communities of Western Massachusetts

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# INTERFAITH CONNECTIONS

*. . . Facilitating relationships  
and connections between  
individuals and faith communities in  
Western Massachusetts*



*“ . . . Full acceptance of persons with disabilities within the life, witness and service of {faith communities} is a requirement for the wholeness of the family of God.”*

- GACC, 1979



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## INTRODUCTION

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Interfaith Connections is a group of concerned clergy, self-advocates, and individuals who are committed to the integration of persons with developmental disabilities into local faith communities.

There are many people living in Western Massachusetts who now enjoy being a part of various congregations. However, because of difficult life circumstances, some individuals have few meaningful relationships and may not experience fellowship with others in their community.

Like all of us, these individuals share a common need for acceptance, belonging and faith sharing, and would love to have the opportunity to join a congregation. Belonging to a faith community is an excellent way to establish connections and friendships.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

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How does one get introduced and connected with a place of worship when one is not familiar with anyone in the congregation?

How does one overcome the awkwardness we all have when jumping into new situations?

Interfaith Connections has made a commitment to assist any individual who is interested in attending a faith community of his or her choice.

We are also committed to providing support to any local religious group who would like to reach out and invite a person with developmental disabilities into their community.

## WHAT CAN WE OFFER ONE ANOTHER

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### Interfaith Connections

- ◇ *Can assist by facilitating key introductions between individuals and faith communities*
- ◇ *Is a support to religious congregations; and*
- ◇ *Is a resource to human service providers.*

### Faith Communities

- ◇ *Offer a place in which to worship;*
- ◇ *Sponsor a person's early welcome into the congregation;*
- ◇ *Help develop meaningful relationships by inviting and involving new members to participate in the various aspects of congregational life (social functions, volunteer efforts, etc.); and*
- ◇ *Enrich the spiritual lives of individuals*

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## OUTREACH

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Interfaith Connections can support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in connecting to the faith community of their choice.

Interfaith Connections' members are available to meet with congregations for a formal presentation or just to discuss various ways faith communities can facilitate connections with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Interfaith Connections can assist human service agencies with particular issues around making connections with faith communities. This can include a general discussion of how staff can support individuals who would like to join a congregation; some staff "how to's;" and technical support around specific individuals who are looking for or could benefit from membership in a faith community.

