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Through the Roof – Sensory Processing, Top Tips following questions

- Most sensory strategies can be used across the whole church, we'd always recommend making changes for everyone rather than one person. Strategies such as having a basket of pipecleaners and ear defenders/ ear plugs at the door can be done within main church and children and youth groups. Using multisensory learning (such as having images to show people, objects to hold, or even something to smell or taste) could be done with the whole church family.
- It should be possible to create accessible ministries which are both age and stage appropriate and mean that individuals with additional needs can still learn alongside their peers. For example, a discussion in a youth group could use pictures to aid the discussion so that a young person who is non-verbal could discuss alongside others by choosing their picture to make their choice.
- Movement activities are the best sensory strategy to help everyone feel calm and engaged. Try things like asking an adult who often finds it hard to engage to help stack chairs or set up before church, have everyone stand up and sit back down or give themselves a big hug to think about how much God loves them within the service, try action songs, try crunchy snacks which help us move our mouths (e.g. raw carrot and apple). Or in kids and youth groups games which enable movement e.g. crab football, pushing the wall, a gym work out or danceathon, sitting on a gym ball.
- Everyone is individual Don't forget that everyone is an individual – it's really important to note individual's own sensory preferences when you try out different ideas. Always ask someone what might help and respect their choices. Don't be discouraged if an idea doesn't work straight away – it might be that you need to try it more than once or to tweak it slightly. It would be helpful to use 'about me' forms across all ministries so that individuals have a chance to tell you what they need and what would help. Growing Hope have a form which they can share.
- Equipment There are lots of different pieces of equipment that you can use to support accessibility. Some of it is available cheaply such as pipe

cleaners, ear plugs and ear defenders (from building merchants). You can also buy more specialist equipment which is also helpful such as gym balls, wobble cushions or even a mini trampoline. A sensory tent or Gazebo space can give a space for individuals to retreat who may need some quieter time in the service. There are lots of sensory stories and toys available which can be helpful for individuals.

- Sensory processing and trauma There is a strong link between trauma and sensory processing difficulties and the strategies we talked through, in particular co-regulation where you do a movement activity together with someone else are helpful.
- How do fidgets work? We'd recommend having fidgets available for children when they're having to sit and listen. Pipecleaners mean that everyone can have one if they'd like to. The best way to use fidgets is to give the rule that this is to help you concentrate, if you throw it I will take it away. Note that children may look at their fidget and not you but they may still be listening!
- Quick wins – Some quick wins for helping accessibility are things like having a basket of pipe cleaners and ear defenders at the door of your church. Having a slide on the screen which tells everyone what is happening in the service (and paper print outs of these for those who need it). Having a quieter area (where perhaps the speaker is off) and there's a sofa/ a bit more space to sit. Using a break in the service to give people the chance for a movement break (e.g. grab a tea/coffee/ use the toilet/ chat to someone you don't know)