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Leah Stepien Lectures on Accessibility at Edgewater Church for Pathways.org’s TEAM Belong

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On a recent Sunday in Chicago’s Edgewater neighborhood, Evangelia (Leah) Stepien, occupational therapist, Flex Staff, delivered an address to the congregation at St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church.

Her presentation was part of St. Andrew’s collaboration with That Every Ability May Belong (TEAM Belong), a Pathways.org initiative that promotes both access and full participation of individuals with impairments and their families in religious settings and schools.

“As an OT, my primary goal is to help patients find ways to do what they need and want to do on a daily basis,” Leah said. “From things as basic as getting dressed or brushing their teeth, to going to the grocery store, cooking or reintegrating into their communities.”



For many patients, reintegration includes returning to their churches, synagogues, mosques or other places of worship and reflection. Therefore, Leah said, it is vital for religious institutions to provide not only physically accessible environments (with accommodations like ramps, large-print worship aides and hearing loops) so that individuals of all abilities can participate, but also to consider how “the human component is just as critical in creating a sense of belonging.”

“We must all continue to be advocates alongside people with disabilities,” she said. “The world can continue to be a beautiful place where every ability may belong. I encourage all of us to think about what makes us feel like we belong somewhere, and how we feel when we are participating in whatever brings us meaning and joy.”

Additional TEAM Belong Resources

- [Click here to watch a full video of Leah’s presentation.](#)
- Visit the TEAM Belong website for additional resources, training videos, award applications and more!