

Accessibility Audit Report

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church



Presented To
Sara Dorow
Vice President,
Holy Spirit Lutheran
Church Council

Presented by
Zachary Weeks
Ari Moretz

Table of Contents

3	Who We Are	5	Introduction
6	Executive Summary	7	Public Entrances and Exterior Access
9	Washrooms	12	Sanctuary and Worship
	Environmental		
16	Accessibility and Sensory-Friendly Practices	19	Wayfinding and Signage
21	Interior Circulation and Seating	23	Kitchen and Shared Spaces
25	Outdoor Spaces and Community Garden	28	Areas of Refuge
30	Door Handles	31	Accessibility Improvement Priorities
32	Conclusion	33	Contact
35	Additional Guidance		



Who we are

We believe that every space should be welcoming to all, regardless of physical or cognitive challenges. We are Zachary Weeks and Ari Moretz, a dynamic team with a shared passion for creating environments that are truly inclusive. We are thrilled to present this Accessibility Audit for the Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, a project that aligns perfectly with our dedication and commitment to accessibility.



Zachary Weeks

ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT

Zachary Weeks

Zachary Weeks, has not only dedicated his career to this cause but has also lived with cerebral palsy since birth. This personal experience has given him a unique perspective and an unwavering commitment to making public spaces more accessible. Over the years, he has successfully collaborated with a range of businesses and institutions, helping them create welcoming environments for all individuals. He has consulted on a variety of building developments, including the Glenrose's Bill Black Auditorium, the Walterdale Theatre and Rogers Place. Zachary was a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal in 2023, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 and is an alumnus of the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference. Zachary is currently completing his certification as a Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Professional. Accessibility is not just a job for him; it's a personal mission.

**Ari Moretz**

ACCESSIBILITY CONSULTANT

Ari Moretz

Ari Moretz has dedicated herself to the cause of fragrance-free policy because she has been kept locked away by society's unaccommodating attitude toward fragrance. Her personal experience inspired her to start Canary Air, a company that advocates for fragrance-free policies and works with public spaces to create accessible environments. Through Canary Air, Ari has prompted changes in several establishments, making public areas safer and more inclusive for those with fragrance intolerance. Ari is working to finish her Bachelor's in Psychology in hopes of bolstering Canary Air's impact by showing how a fragrance-free policy can bring change and hope to people who suffer from fragrance intolerance. She believes the negative physical and emotional impact of fragrances can be reduced by establishments following a fragrance-free policy. It is Ari's personal goal to make a positive, long-lasting change in the community and the world through her business, Canary Air. Accessibility is a way of life and bringing hope to those who may not have the ability or energy to speak up.

Introduction

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Edmonton, Alberta, serves as a vibrant community hub that extends beyond weekly worship services. The facility supports congregational gatherings, daycare programming, seniors' activities, community events, food support initiatives, ESL programming, and other multi-use functions that welcome individuals and families of diverse ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

The purpose of this accessibility audit is to assess the Church's current level of physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility and identify practical opportunities for improvement. This review considers how people with mobility disabilities, low vision, hearing disabilities, sensory sensitivities, cognitive disabilities, neurodivergence, age-related needs, and environmental sensitivities experience the space.

This report begins with a summary of audit findings and proceeds through a review of the Church's publicly accessible areas, including parking, entrances, washrooms, worship areas, meeting rooms, kitchen spaces, outdoor areas, and interior circulation routes. Each section outlines existing accessibility features, barriers that may impact participation, and recommendations for future improvements.

The audit also builds upon accessibility work already initiated by Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, including an internal accessibility review completed in 2024 and subsequent discussions about parking, seating, hearing access, neurodivergent supports, washroom access, and exterior pathways.

Several positive accessibility features are already in place, including accessible parking, visual fire alarms, planned hearing accessibility improvements, all-gender washrooms, automatic door operators, flexible seating arrangements, and raised garden beds. These strengths provide a strong foundation for continued accessibility planning and demonstrate the Church's commitment to creating a welcoming environment.

At the same time, opportunities exist to strengthen wayfinding, signage, lighting consistency, washroom maneuverability, winter access, exterior pathways, sensory supports, emergency planning, seating layouts, fragrance awareness, and independent navigation. Some improvements may be simple operational changes, while others may require phased capital planning.

This report is intended to serve as a practical accessibility roadmap. Collectively, these recommendations aim to support Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in continuing to build a more inclusive, welcoming, and dignified environment where all individuals can participate fully, safely, and with confidence.

Executive summary

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church has demonstrated a strong commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community participation across its worship, daycare, seniors, and shared-use spaces. This commitment is reflected not only in the findings from this audit, but also in the Church's own internal accessibility review completed in 2024 and its approved federal grant funding for barrier-free parking and pathway improvements, stand-assist devices, and future hearing access improvements.

This report identifies several practical and achievable opportunities to further strengthen accessibility for individuals with mobility disabilities, low vision, hearing disabilities, sensory sensitivities, cognitive disabilities, neurodivergence, and immunocompromised conditions.

This report recommends three priority areas for improvement:

- 1. Wayfinding and signage improvements:** Enhance navigation throughout the facility through the addition of high-contrast, tactile, braille, and clearly visible signage to better support individuals with low vision, cognitive disabilities, seniors, and first-time visitors.
- 2. Exterior access and winter safety:** Improve accessible parking markings, maintain clear access aisles, address icy conditions near entrances, and enhance exterior pathways to better support wheelchair users, seniors, families, and individuals using mobility aids.
- 3. Environmental accessibility and sensory-friendly practices:** Review cleaning products, fragrance exposure, ventilation, chalk dust, and shared-space environmental conditions to better support individuals with environmental sensitivities, respiratory disabilities, autoimmune conditions, and immunocompromised systems. Additional opportunities include creating low-sensory spaces and adopting lower-fragrance operational practices where possible.

Bonus recommendation – Accessible washroom improvements: Continue improving washroom accessibility through enhanced maneuvering space, improved signage, lever hardware, accessible dispenser placement, additional grab bars, lighting improvements, and future planning for upgraded accessible washroom layouts as funding permits.

Several positive accessibility features were identified throughout the audit, including accessible parking, visual fire alarms, planned hearing accessibility improvements, all-gender washrooms, flexible seating arrangements, and a demonstrated willingness from Church leadership to continue improving accessibility and inclusion.

In summary, this audit outlines a series of practical recommendations ranging from low-cost operational changes to longer-term accessibility improvements. Collectively, these recommendations aim to support Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in continuing to build a more inclusive, welcoming, safe, and dignified environment where all individuals can participate fully and confidently in community life.

1. Public Entrances and Exterior Access

Current condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church provides both front and rear entrances for congregation members, daycare users, community groups, and visitors. The rear entrance functions as the primary accessible entrance and includes accessible parking, a curb cut, and a power door operator activated during worship services and events.

The front entrance is also used by visitors arriving from the street and may function as a drop-off area during services, funerals, concerts, and community events. The Church has already identified exterior access as an area for improvement and has secured federal funding for barrier-free parking and pathway enhancements.

These planned improvements align with the findings of this audit and provide a strong foundation for improving safe, independent access into the building.



Accessibility Challenges

- **Accessible Parking Layout:** While accessible parking spaces are provided near the rear entrance, the adjacent access aisle is not clearly designated or protected from vehicle encroachment. This does not appear to meet current accessibility best practices for accessible parking design.
- **Winter Accessibility:** Ice accumulation and slippery conditions near the rear entrance, curb cut, and ramp areas may create barriers for wheelchair users, seniors, and individuals using walkers or other mobility aids.
- **Exterior Pathways:** Some exterior circulation routes require individuals using mobility devices to travel through parking areas due to the absence of additional curb cuts or clearly defined accessible pathways.
- **Rear Entrance Ramp Slope:** The existing rear entrance ramp was identified during the walkthrough as too steep for some wheelchair users and individuals with mobility limitations. Exact slope measurements were not taken during the audit and should be confirmed before determining whether modifications are required to meet current Alberta Building Code and CSA/ASC B651:23 expectations.

1. Public Entrances and Exterior Access Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

- **Door Operator Awareness:** Ensure automatic door operator controls are easy to identify, active when the accessible entrance is in use, and kept clear of snow, ice, sand, salt bins, and door-swing conflicts.
- **Wayfinding and Entrance Identification:** Limited signage and inconsistent visual wayfinding may create challenges for first-time visitors, individuals with low vision, and those with cognitive disabilities.
- **Exterior Obstacles:** Items such as sand or salt bins near accessible door controls may reduce maneuverability and interfere with independent access.

Recommendations

- **Accessible Parking Improvements:** Clearly identify and protect accessible parking access aisles through updated pavement markings, signage, and painted buffer areas to reduce vehicle encroachment and improve maneuverability. Current Alberta accessibility requirements identify an accessible parking stall as **2.4 metres wide adjacent to a 2.4 metre wide access aisle**. The access aisle should be clearly marked as a No Parking Zone and remain free of obstructions at all times. Accessible parking areas should also include a firm, slip-resistant surface, vertical accessible parking signage, and the International Symbol of Access painted on the pavement.
- **Barrier-Free Pathway Enhancements:** Continue planned pathway upgrades to create a safer and more clearly defined accessible route from parking areas to the building entrances. Future improvements should consider pathway width, surface stability, slope, cross-slope, curb cut placement, and overall ease of travel for wheelchair users, seniors, and individuals using mobility aids.
- **Rear Entrance Ramp Review:** Review rear-entrance ramp slope, landings, handrails, edge protection, and winter maintenance against current Alberta Building Code and CSA/ASC B651:23 expectations. If a portable ramp is used as an interim measure, confirm slope, stability, edge protection, supervision, and safe storage. Prefer a permanent curb cut or built accessible route where feasible.
- **Accessible Drop-Off/Loading Area:** Establish a consistent accessible drop-off/loading area at the front entrance or most practical public arrival point. Use clear signage, no-parking/no-idling controls, and a firm, level, slip-resistant connection. A painted and posted zone would help keep curb cuts and wheelchair/stroller routes clear.
- **Vehicle Encroachment Prevention:** Use painted stop lines, no-parking zones, or wheel stops near curb cuts/access routes so vehicles do not block pedestrian/wheelchair access or the barrier-free path to entrances.

2. Washrooms

Current condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church completed renovations to the washroom areas in 2020. The former men's and women's washrooms were modified to create larger all-gender washrooms. These renovations have improved accessibility and privacy for persons with disabilities, families, caregivers, and other users.

The washrooms include automatic faucets, motion-sensor lighting, visual fire alarms, grab bars, baby changing stations, and touchless fixtures. These are positive accessibility features.

Although the washrooms have been improved, they may not fully accommodate all persons with disabilities, especially individuals who use larger power wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, or who require additional maneuvering space.



Accessibility Challenges

- **Maneuvering Space:** Some washroom areas may not provide adequate maneuvering space for persons who use larger wheelchairs or scooters.
- **Door Hardware:** Some washroom doors are equipped with round doorknobs. Lever-style hardware would provide better access for persons with limited hand strength or dexterity.
- **Sink Access:** Protective coverings below some sinks may limit knee clearance for persons who use wheelchairs.
- **Grab Bars:** Existing grab bars should be reviewed to confirm that they meet current Alberta Building Code and CSA/ASC B651:23 requirements.

2. Washrooms Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

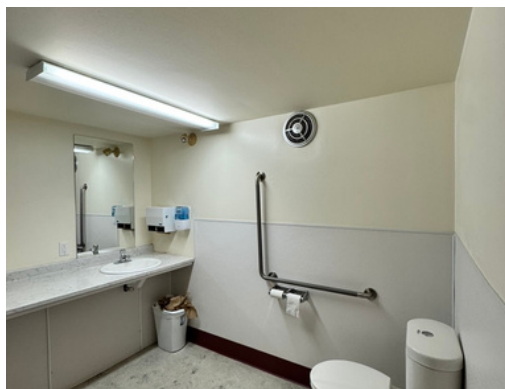
- **Stall Size and Maneuverability:** Current stalls do not provide adequate space for some mobility devices, including larger scooters, and fail to accommodate the turning radius required by forthcoming code changes.
- **Countertop Design:** Washrooms with cabinetry impede faucet access for wheelchair users.
- **Visibility of Signage:** Signage that blends into the background presents visibility issues for individuals with low vision.
- **Absence of Automatic Features:** A lack of automatic door buttons impedes independent access. Power door operators are estimated to cost around \$7,000.00 each.
- **Dispenser Placement:** The positioning of soap and paper towel dispensers is inconvenient and potentially unsanitary for seated users.
- **Reflective Surfaces:** Shiny floors and walls create shadows and reflections that can be disorienting for those with low vision.
- **Accessible Urinals:** Ensure at least one urinal has a lower rim height and is equipped with grab bars.



2. Washrooms Cont'd

Recommendations

- **Stall Reconfiguration:** Modify stalls to comply with future code requirements for turning radius, potentially necessitating the removal of additional stalls.
- **Countertop Adjustments:** Rework countertop designs for under-sink access and ease of faucet use for wheelchair users. These should be modified to align with barrier-free design guidelines. Mirrors should be mounted or tilted to accommodate wheelchair users.
- **Signage Upgrade:** Implement high-contrast, tactile signage for easy washroom identification.
- **Installation of Door Openers:** Add power-assisted door openers where needed to comply with current and forthcoming accessibility standards.
- **Dispenser Relocation:** Move soap and paper towel dispensers to be within easy reach from a seated position, and consider touchless options. Create a one-step area at sinks to allow wheelchair users to wash, rinse, and dry hands without the need to move between different points
- **Environmental Accessibility:** Review cleaning products, ventilation practices, and fragrance exposure to better accommodate persons with environmental sensitivities and immunocompromised systems



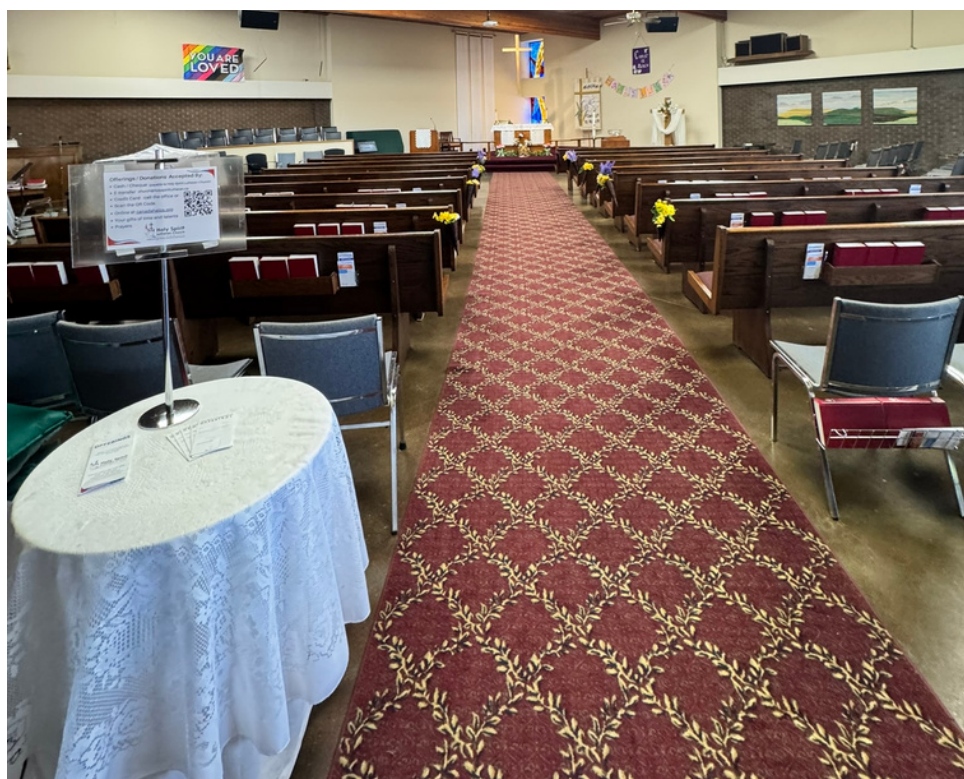
3. Sanctuary and Worship

Current Condition

The sanctuary serves as the primary worship space within Holy Spirit Lutheran Church and is used for weekly services, special events, celebrations, and community gatherings. The space includes flexible seating arrangements, designated wheelchair seating locations, projection screens, multiple microphone options, and a variety of worship participation opportunities for congregation members.

Several positive accessibility features were observed during the walkthrough. No permanent hearing loop or assistive listening system is currently installed. The Church is exploring induction loop and newer Bluetooth/Auracast-compatible options. Flexible seating arrangements allow wheelchair users and individuals with mobility devices to participate alongside family members, friends, and caregivers rather than being isolated in designated seating areas.

The sanctuary provides multiple seating options and generally offers good sightlines to the altar, worship leaders, and presentation screens. Church leadership has also demonstrated a strong commitment to improving accessibility and inclusion within worship services and congregation life. Approved grant funding has also been secured for future hearing access improvements and stand-assist devices, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to removing barriers and improving participation for individuals with disabilities and aging congregation members.



3. Sanctuary and Worship Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

Accessible Seating Locations: While wheelchair seating is accommodated within the sanctuary, opportunities exist to further enhance seating flexibility and ensure consistent companion seating options throughout the worship area.

- **Platform and Altar Access:** The raised chancel/altar area is not currently accessible. A possible side-wall ramp near the Christmas tree area should be reviewed for space, sightlines, furnishings, seating, the cross, and egress.
- **Stand-Assist Devices:** Some congregation members may experience difficulty transitioning between sitting and standing during worship services.
- **Hearing Accessibility:** No permanent hearing loop or assistive listening system is currently installed. This may create barriers for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, use hearing aids, or have difficulty hearing speech, music, or announcements.
- **Visual Accessibility:** Individuals with low vision may experience challenges reading projected materials, worship bulletins, hymn lyrics, or presentation screens depending on seating location, lighting conditions, and font size.
- **Floor Surface and Slip Resistance:** The sanctuary floor surface is highly polished and reflective. While visually appealing, the finish may create glare for individuals with low vision and may become slippery under certain conditions for seniors, wheelchair users, and individuals using mobility aids.



3. Sanctuary and Worship Cont'd

Recommendations

- **Pew Modification and Integrated Wheelchair Seating:** Shorten or remove selected pew sections to add integrated wheelchair spaces where users can sit with family, friends, and caregivers while preserving clear paths of travel.
- **Companion Seating Improvements:** Ensure wheelchair seating locations include adjacent companion seating and adequate space for multiple wheelchair users when attending together.
- **Platform and Chancel Access:** Review chancel/altar access options, including a side-wall ramp near the seasonal Christmas tree area, a portable/modular ramp, a platform lift, modified side access, or floor-level leadership alternatives. See Additional Guidance for detailed code and planning considerations.
- **Stand-Assist Device Installation:** Proceed with stand-assist options, such as motorized lift recliners/lift chairs for seniors, to support people who have difficulty rising. Place them so they do not block accessible routes.
- **Adjustable Microphone Installation:** Continue using adjustable, portable, and lapel microphones so people can lead from seated, standing, walker, or wheelchair positions.
- **Communion Accessibility Review:** Review communion procedures and layouts so people using wheelchairs, walkers, or mobility devices can participate safely and with dignity.
- **Assistive Listening System Review:** Compare induction loop, FM, infrared, and Bluetooth/Auracast-compatible options for sanctuary and gathering areas. Select a system based on sound compatibility, ease of use, hearing-aid compatibility, cost, volunteer operation, signage, and maintenance.
- **Floor Surface Review:** Review floor maintenance and future finishes to maintain slip resistance, reduce glare, and improve traction.
- **Accessible Routes:** Maintain clear, unobstructed routes through the sanctuary and adjacent areas for safe movement and emergency egress.
- **Future Worship Accessibility Planning:** Continue improving worship participation, independence, and inclusion for people with disabilities.

3. Sanctuary and Worship Cont'd

Current Condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church does not currently have a permanent hearing loop or assistive listening system installed. Because the sanctuary is used for worship, music, announcements, and community gatherings, hearing access should be reviewed as part of future accessibility planning.

Accessibility Challenges

Without an assistive listening system, people may miss portions of spoken worship, music, announcements, and community events, particularly when distance, background noise, or reverberation affects speech clarity.

Recommendations: Review induction loop, infrared, FM radio-frequency, and Bluetooth/Auracast-compatible systems for the sanctuary and high-use gathering areas. Prioritize an option that works with the existing sound system, is simple for volunteers to support, and can be clearly explained to visitors. Induction loop systems may support telecoil-equipped hearing aids and reduce the need for separate receivers; a qualified installer should confirm coverage, electrical conditions, installation constraints, signage, maintenance, and compatibility. Previous accessibility audits have used planning allowances of approximately \$40,000 for a large-room loop, \$7,500 for a smaller-room loop, and \$500 per counter-loop unit. Treat these as order-of-magnitude comparators only. If funding is limited, prioritize the sanctuary first, then smaller spaces and service points, with signage and volunteer training once a system is selected.

4. Environmental Accessibility and Sensory-Friendly Practices

Environmental accessibility findings and recommendations contained within this section were informed by the lived experience and environmental accessibility review conducted by Accessibility Consultant Ari Moretz of Canary Air.

Current Condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church serves a diverse congregation and community that includes seniors, families, daycare users, community groups, and individuals with a wide range of accessibility needs. During the walkthrough, discussions took place regarding environmental sensitivities, fragrance exposure, ventilation, cleaning products, air quality, and sensory experiences throughout the building. Several positive environmental accessibility features were identified, including ventilation systems and washroom ventilation fans throughout the facility. The existing washroom ventilation systems represent a positive step toward supporting indoor air quality and reducing environmental barriers for building users. Church leadership also demonstrated a willingness to explore practical solutions that improve comfort, safety, and participation for individuals impacted by environmental sensitivities, respiratory conditions, or other invisible disabilities. The audit included a review of cleaning products and environmental conditions, with particular attention paid to fragrance exposure, air circulation, product selection, and indoor air quality. These factors may affect individuals with asthma, COPD, migraines, environmental sensitivities, autoimmune conditions, immunocompromised systems, and other health conditions that can be aggravated by poor indoor air quality.



4. Environmental Accessibility and Sensory-Friendly Practices Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

- Fragranced Products:** Several cleaning and maintenance products reviewed during the audit contained fragrance or parfum ingredients. These products may create barriers for individuals with environmental sensitivities, fragrance intolerance, asthma, migraines, respiratory conditions, autoimmune conditions, and other health conditions.
- Indoor Air Quality:** Indoor air quality may be impacted by cleaning products, fragrances, occupancy levels, and ventilation limitations within certain areas of the building. Poor indoor air quality may affect comfort, concentration, participation, and overall well-being for some building users.
- Small Room Ventilation:** Some smaller meeting and program spaces may have limited air circulation, particularly when doors and windows remain closed for extended periods. This may contribute to reduced air quality and occupant comfort.
- Chalk Dust Exposure:** A chalkboard was observed within one of the smaller rooms. Chalk dust may contribute to respiratory irritation and reduced indoor air quality, particularly for individuals with asthma, allergies, environmental sensitivities, and other respiratory conditions.
- Aerosol Products:** Aerosol-based products may contribute to indoor air pollution and introduce unnecessary fragrances or airborne irritants into shared spaces.



4. Environmental Accessibility and Sensory-Friendly Practices Cont'd

Recommendations

- **Fragrance-Free Product Transition:** Gradually replace existing fragranced cleaning products, soaps, aerosol products, and related supplies with fragrance-free alternatives as current inventories are depleted. Future purchasing decisions should prioritize fragrance-free products whenever practical to reduce unnecessary exposure for individuals with environmental sensitivities, respiratory disabilities, autoimmune conditions, and immunocompromised systems.
- **Accessible Purchasing Practices:** Develop purchasing guidelines that prioritize fragrance-free and low-emission products when replacing cleaning supplies, soaps, air fresheners, and related products. Incorporating accessibility considerations into purchasing decisions will help ensure future products support individuals with environmental sensitivities, respiratory conditions, autoimmune conditions, and immunocompromised systems.
- **Air Quality and Ventilation Improvements:** Continue reviewing ventilation systems and air circulation practices throughout the building. Consider CO₂ monitors in smaller rooms to help identify when additional ventilation may be needed, and consider portable air purification units in areas where ventilation may be limited or where groups gather for extended periods.
- **Chalkboard Replacement:** Replace existing chalkboards with whiteboards or other low-dust alternatives to reduce airborne particles and improve indoor air quality, particularly in smaller enclosed rooms.
- **Environmental Accessibility Education:** Provide information to staff, volunteers, congregation members, and building users regarding environmental sensitivities, fragrance-aware practices, and the importance of maintaining good indoor air quality. This education should help users understand that scent and air quality can create real accessibility barriers.
- **Fragrance-Aware Floral Practices:** Consider offering fragrance-aware alternatives to heavily scented flowers and plants, particularly during seasonal celebrations, funerals, weddings, and special services. This would help preserve the aesthetics and traditions of the worship space while reducing barriers for individuals with allergies, asthma, fragrance intolerance, and environmental sensitivities.
- **Low-Sensory Space:** Consider identifying or creating a low-sensory space where individuals experiencing sensory overload, migraines, environmental sensitivities, anxiety, or other accessibility needs can temporarily retreat during services or events. This space should be quiet, low-fragrance, and easy to access.

5. Wayfinding and Signage

Current Condition

The current wayfinding and signage at the Church do not fully address the diverse needs of guests with disabilities.

Accessibility Challenges

Wayfinding and signage at the Church are inconsistent. Some rooms and functions are clearly identified while others, including washrooms, meeting rooms, storage areas, emergency features, and exterior arrival points, may be difficult for first-time visitors or people with low vision, cognitive disabilities, or language barriers to identify. During the walkthrough, the team discussed room-name confusion, legally blind attendees, fire alarm/light-switch confusion, dark flooring blending with pews, and the need for clearer interior and exterior cues.



5. Wayfinding and Signage Cont'd



Recommendations

- **Wayfinding and Signage Specialist:** Consider retaining a wayfinding/signage professional to create a phased, church-scaled system for entrances, washrooms, sanctuary access, meeting rooms, emergency features, daycare routes, accessible parking, drop-off/loading, and the garden/play area.
- **Church-Scaled Wayfinding Plan:** The consultant's plan should include signage with high-contrast visuals, large and legible fonts, Braille, clear symbols, and tactile lettering. Prioritize high-use destinations and use high-contrast, glare-free, large readable text, consistent placement, pictograms, and tactile lettering/Braille where practical.
- **Exterior and Arrival Signage:** Improve exterior signs for accessible parking, front drop-off/loading, curb cuts, and the route to the garden/play area. Clarify public routes without making the Church feel institutional.
- **Maps and Interior Cues:** Add simple visual maps or QR-linked maps at main entrances, and use colour/floor/wall contrast sparingly to support orientation and reduce congestion after services.
- **Phased Implementation:** Phase improvements as funding allows, starting with high-use, arrival, and safety-critical signs.

6. Interior Circulation and Seating

Current Condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church contains a variety of shared spaces including meeting rooms, classrooms, the library, fellowship areas, storage spaces, hallways, and the sanctuary. These spaces are used by congregation members, daycare users, community groups, seniors' programs, ESL classes, and various special events throughout the year.

The building generally provides adequate circulation space throughout most common areas, allowing individuals using mobility devices to navigate independently. Seating options throughout the facility include chairs with and without armrests, couches, meeting tables, and flexible seating arrangements that support a variety of user needs. Church leadership has demonstrated a willingness to adapt room layouts and seating arrangements to accommodate individuals with disabilities when requested.

Several positive accessibility features were observed, including wide circulation routes within the sanctuary, flexible seating arrangements, multiple seating styles, and accessible gathering spaces that support participation by individuals with varying mobility needs.

Accessibility Challenges

While most circulation routes are functional, some meeting rooms become congested when tables and chairs are fully deployed for programs and events. This may limit maneuverability for wheelchair users, walkers, and other mobility devices.

Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of designated accessible seating locations within certain meeting spaces, resulting in furniture being rearranged on an ad hoc basis when accessibility needs arise.

Coat racks located throughout the building may be difficult to reach for some wheelchair users and individuals of shorter stature. In addition, several interior and support spaces continue to utilize traditional round doorknobs, which may present challenges for individuals with limited hand strength, dexterity limitations, arthritis, or other mobility impairments.

The library and some smaller meeting spaces have limited maneuvering room due to furniture placement and storage requirements. While these spaces remain usable, accessibility may be improved through future space planning and furniture adjustments.

6. Interior Circulation and Seating Cont'd



Recommendations

- **Accessible Seating Locations:** Identify and maintain designated accessible seating locations within meeting rooms, classrooms, and gathering spaces to ensure individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility devices can participate without requiring furniture to be rearranged at the time of an event. Accessible seating locations should be integrated throughout gathering spaces wherever possible to allow individuals using mobility devices to sit alongside family members, friends, and support persons.
- **Furniture Layout Review:** Review furniture placement within meeting rooms and common areas to maintain clear and consistent circulation routes in accordance with CSA/ASC B651:23 best practices.
- **Seating Variety:** Continue providing a variety of seating options, including chairs with armrests, chairs without armrests, couches, and flexible seating arrangements to accommodate a broad range of physical and sensory needs.
- **Coat Rack Accessibility:** Consider providing lower-height coat hooks or designated accessible coat storage areas to improve usability for wheelchair users and individuals with limited reach.
- **Door Hardware Upgrades:** As part of future maintenance and renovation projects, consider replacing traditional round doorknobs with lever-style hardware. Lever handles are generally easier to operate and represent current best practices in accessible design.
- **Library and Meeting Space Improvements:** Review furniture placement within the library and smaller meeting rooms to maximize maneuvering space and improve accessibility for individuals using mobility devices.
- **Future Accessibility Planning:** Continue considering accessibility when purchasing furniture, replacing fixtures, and planning room layouts to ensure shared spaces remain welcoming and usable for all members of the community.

7. Kitchen and Shared Spaces

Current Condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church includes a kitchen and shared-use spaces that support worship services, daycare activities, meetings, community programs, social gatherings, and special events. These areas are generally functional for many users, but accessibility improvements would further support people with mobility, sensory, and communication needs.



Accessibility Challenges

While the kitchen is functional for many users, some work surfaces, storage locations, and equipment may be difficult to access for individuals using wheelchairs or those with limited reach. Upper cabinets and some storage areas may not be accessible to all users without assistance.

The audit identified opportunities to improve accessibility at the kitchen sink and serving areas. Limited knee clearance beneath work surfaces and sinks may restrict independent use by some wheelchair users. Similarly, serving counters and food preparation areas may not be equally accessible to all users depending on their mobility needs.

The audit also identified opportunities to improve the identification and organization of storage areas through clearer labelling and wayfinding. Improved visual identification may assist volunteers, staff, and community groups who are unfamiliar with the space.

7. Kitchen and Shared Spaces Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

As with other areas of the building, circulation routes within the kitchen and adjacent gathering spaces may become more constrained during larger events, particularly when tables, serving stations, or temporary equipment are in use.

Environmental accessibility considerations also apply within food preparation and serving areas, including product selection, cleaning practices, and air quality considerations that may affect individuals with environmental sensitivities.

Recommendations

- **Accessible Storage Practices:** Store frequently used items within accessible reach ranges whenever practical and consider accessibility when replacing cabinetry or storage systems in the future.
- **Kitchen Sink Accessibility:** When future renovations or upgrades are undertaken, consider providing knee clearance beneath sinks and work surfaces to improve usability for wheelchair users and individuals who require seated access.
- **Serving Counter Improvements:** Review serving counters and food preparation areas to identify opportunities for improved accessibility and independent use by individuals with disabilities.
- **Clear Labelling:** Improve identification of cupboards, storage areas, and equipment through consistent and easy-to-read labels that support volunteers, staff, and community users.
- **Maintain Clear Circulation Routes:** Ensure pathways within the kitchen and gathering spaces remain clear and provide sufficient maneuvering space for individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, and other mobility devices.
- **Inclusive Event Planning:** Continue considering accessibility when arranging serving stations, food preparation areas, tables, and seating during events and community gatherings.
- **Environmental Accessibility Considerations:** Continue implementing fragrance-free purchasing practices and environmental accessibility measures within kitchen and food service operations.
- **Future Accessibility Planning:** Incorporate accessibility considerations into future kitchen renovations, equipment replacement, and space planning initiatives in accordance with universal design principles, Alberta Building Code requirements, and CSA/ASC B651:23 best practices.

8. Outdoor Spaces and Community Garden

Current Condition

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church includes outdoor spaces that support community participation, recreation, gardening, and daycare programming. These spaces include raised garden beds, pedestrian pathways, outdoor gathering areas, and a children's play area.

A significant strength of the outdoor area is the community garden, which includes raised garden beds designed to improve accessibility for individuals who may have difficulty gardening at ground level. The outdoor spaces provide opportunities for social interaction, recreation, and community engagement for congregation members, volunteers, daycare participants, and visitors.



8. Outdoor Spaces and Community Garden Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

While the raised garden beds improve accessibility for many users, some beds do not provide sufficient knee clearance for individuals using wheelchairs to comfortably access planting areas. As a result, participation may still be limited for some gardeners with mobility disabilities.

The pathway connecting the parking area, garden spaces, and children's play area presents accessibility challenges. Existing surfaces may be difficult for wheelchair users, walkers, strollers, and individuals with balance or mobility limitations, particularly during winter conditions.

The audit also identified opportunities to improve curb cut access within the parking lot and outdoor circulation routes. Individuals using mobility devices may be required to travel through vehicle circulation areas to reach certain destinations due to the current configuration of pedestrian routes.

While outdoor seating opportunities exist, additional rest areas may benefit seniors and individuals who require periodic breaks when travelling between parking areas, entrances, gardens, and activity spaces.

Snow storage locations may also impact accessibility during winter months if pathways, curb cuts, or accessible routes become obstructed by accumulated snow.



8. Outdoor Spaces and Community Garden Cont'd

Recommendations

- **Accessible Pathway Improvements:** Develop an accessible pathway connecting the parking lot, garden area, and children's play space. The route should be firm, stable, slip-resistant, well-drained, winter-maintainable, and usable for wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, and daycare wagons. Avoid loose mulch, decorative stone, or uncompacted gravel as the primary accessible route.
- **Garden Accessibility Enhancements:** Keep the waist-height beds and add side-approach and knee-clearance options so wheelchair users can garden from seated positions. Maintain clear turning space and nearby rest seating.
- **Additional Curb Cut Review:** Review curb cut or pedestrian connections near the garden/play area so people do not need to travel through the parking lot. Keep snow storage off curb cuts and proposed accessible routes. Align future work with Alberta accessibility best practices and CSA/ASC B651:23.
- **Outdoor Seating and Rest Areas:** Consider installing additional benches or rest areas along primary pedestrian routes to support seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- **Snow Management Planning:** Ensure snow storage locations do not obstruct accessible parking spaces, curb cuts, pedestrian routes, or outdoor gathering spaces during winter operations.
- **Play Area Accessibility:** Ensure the accessible route extends into the play area, not only to its edge, with at least one firm, stable entry point and route widths that support wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, and daycare wagons.
- **Surface Planning:** Use the Additional Guidance section to compare lower-cost, phased, and higher-investment route and surfacing options. Obtain local quotes confirming winter performance, drainage, warranty, maintenance, and accessibility/playground-safety documentation.

9. Areas of Refuge

Current Conditions

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church has implemented several positive emergency preparedness measures throughout the facility. Visual fire alarms were observed in multiple areas of the building, supporting notification for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or may not hear an audible alarm. Church representatives indicated that fire alarm systems are regularly inspected and maintained. The building has established emergency muster locations and participates in broader community emergency planning. The daycare program maintains a designated muster point, and the Church also serves as an emergency gathering location for a nearby school during emergency situations. Emergency exits are distributed throughout the building, and multiple exit routes are available from key areas including the sanctuary, gymnasium, and common spaces.

Accessibility Challenges

While emergency systems are generally well maintained, emergency evacuation procedures may not fully address the needs of all individuals with disabilities. During emergencies, individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, or other mobility devices may require additional support to safely exit the building.

Individuals who are blind, have low vision, are Deaf or hard of hearing, or have cognitive disabilities may benefit from additional accessible emergency information and clearly identified evacuation procedures.

Winter conditions may also impact emergency egress routes. Snow accumulation, ice, and reduced visibility can create additional barriers for individuals attempting to access muster points or navigate exterior routes during an emergency.

The parking lot and outdoor circulation routes present accessibility challenges that could affect evacuation efficiency, particularly for individuals using mobility devices who rely on curb cuts, accessible parking areas, and unobstructed pedestrian pathways.



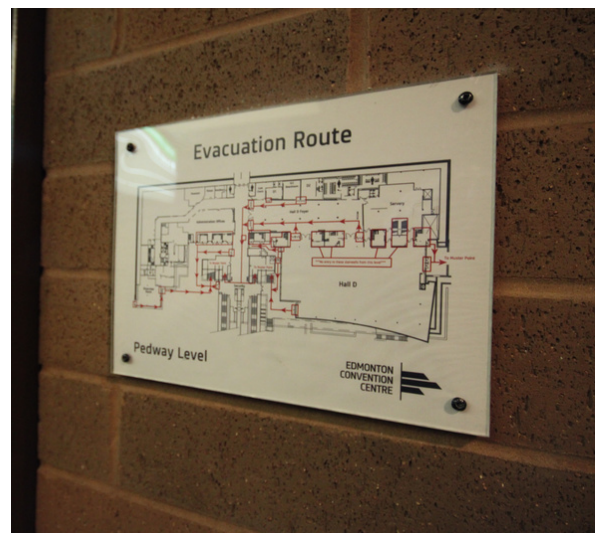
9. Areas of Refuge Cont'd

Accessibility Challenges

While the building's current emergency evacuation infrastructure addresses general safety, it may not fully cater to the specific needs of persons with disabilities. The establishment of dedicated Areas of Refuge is imperative for enhanced safety in emergencies.

Recommendations

- **Accessible Emergency Planning:** Review existing emergency response procedures to ensure the needs of individuals with disabilities are fully considered. Planning should include mobility disabilities, sensory disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and age-related accessibility needs.
- **Emergency Assistance Procedures:** Develop procedures to identify and support individuals who may require assistance during an evacuation while respecting privacy, dignity, and independence.
- **Accessible Evacuation Information:** Provide emergency information in clear, easy-to-understand formats that support individuals with diverse communication and learning needs.
- **Emergency Route Review:** Regularly review emergency exit routes, ensuring pathways remain clear, well-lit, and free from obstructions. Particular attention should be given to winter maintenance and snow removal practices.
- **Establishment of Safe Spaces:**
Designate Areas of Refuge on each floor above ground level, approximately 10'-0" x 10'-0" in size, with a one-hour fire rating for protection against fire and smoke.
- **Structural Enhancements:** Upgrade these spaces with additional fire-rated gypsum board, fire-rated doors, and frames to achieve the necessary fire safety standards.
- **Accessibility and Capacity:** Ensure that the Areas of Refuge are accessible and spacious enough to accommodate at least two wheelchair users, while still allowing passage for other individuals.
- **Signage and Communication Systems:** Install clear signage to easily identify the Areas of Refuge and equip them with communication systems for emergency contact.



10. Door Handles

Current Condition

The Holy Spirit Lutheran Church is encouraged to evaluate and reconsider the use of traditional doorknobs to enhance accessibility. Leveraging more accessible door hardware options is crucial in accommodating individuals with limited hand mobility. Lever-style handles and motion-sensored door openers are universally beneficial. From my experiences and the stories I've heard, these features greatly assist not just users in wheelchairs but also those with dexterity challenges, making the Church more accessible to a wider audience.

Recommendations

- **Encouragement Against Doorknobs:** The Church should prioritize replacing any existing doorknobs with more accessible alternatives to ensure ease of use for all guests.
- **Lever-Style Door Handles:** Lever-style handles are recommended as they are operable with minimal effort and do not require a tight grip, making them accessible to guests with various mobility challenges.
- **Motion-Sensor Door Openers:** The installation of motion-sensor door openers, particularly in high-traffic and critical areas, will further improve accessibility. These systems allow doors to be opened without physical touch, providing an additional level of convenience for guests with severe mobility impairments.



Accessibility Improvement Priorities

Short-Term Priorities

The following recommendations are considered achievable within existing maintenance budgets or through modest capital investments.

- Improve accessible parking markings and access aisle identification.
- Improve wayfinding, room identification, and assistive-listening planning.
- Implement fragrance-free purchasing practices and transition to fragrance-free products as existing inventory is depleted.
- Replace the existing chalkboard with a whiteboard or other low-dust alternative.
- Establish designated accessible seating locations within meeting rooms and the sanctuary.
- Create a low-sensory space for individuals experiencing sensory overload, migraines, environmental sensitivities, or other accessibility needs.
- Improve winter maintenance practices around entrances, curb cuts, and accessible routes.
- Improve coat rack accessibility through lower-height hooks or designated accessible storage areas.
- Continue accessibility awareness and inclusion initiatives for staff, volunteers, and congregation members.

Medium-Term Priorities

The following recommendations may require additional planning, fundraising, or future capital investment.

- Improve all-season accessible routes connecting parking, garden, rest areas, and the children's play area.
- Review opportunities for additional curb cuts and accessible pedestrian routes throughout the site.
- Improve room identification through tactile and braille signage where practical.
- Review sanctuary seating configurations to create more integrated seating opportunities for wheelchair users and their families.
- Expand accessible gardening opportunities through the introduction of garden beds with knee clearance.
- Introduce portable air purification units and CO₂ monitoring equipment in smaller meeting spaces.

Long-Term Priorities

The following recommendations may be considered as part of future renovations, major maintenance projects, or facility upgrades.

- Replace round doorknobs with lever-style hardware throughout the facility.
- Evaluate opportunities for future entrance upgrades and additional automatic door operators where appropriate.
- Review chancel/altar access options, including a side-wall ramp, portable/modular ramp, platform lift, and floor-level alternatives.
- Continue incorporating accessibility and universal design principles into all future facility renovations and capital projects.

Conclusion

Holy Spirit Lutheran Church has demonstrated a strong commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community participation. Throughout the audit process, Church leadership, staff, volunteers, and community members displayed a genuine interest in identifying barriers and exploring opportunities to create a more welcoming environment for individuals of all ages and abilities.

Many positive accessibility features already exist throughout the facility, including accessible parking, automatic door operators, accessible washrooms, planned hearing accessibility improvements, visual fire alarms, flexible seating arrangements, raised garden beds, and a willingness to adapt spaces and programs to meet individual needs. These features provide a strong foundation upon which future accessibility improvements can be built.

The recommendations outlined within this report are intended to support Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in continuing its accessibility journey. While not all recommendations will be implemented immediately, each represents an opportunity to further enhance independence, dignity, safety, and participation for congregation members, visitors, daycare users, volunteers, and community groups.

The recommendations contained within this report should be viewed as a roadmap for continuous improvement and may be implemented over time as funding, resources, and operational priorities permit.

Accessibility is an ongoing process rather than a final destination. By continuing to incorporate accessibility considerations into future planning, purchasing decisions, facility improvements, and community programs, Holy Spirit Lutheran Church can continue to strengthen its role as a welcoming and inclusive community hub for all.

Sanctuary Access Options

The sanctuary review should preserve the Church's flexible worship culture while giving leaders clear options for the raised chancel/altar area. The side-wall area where the Christmas tree is typically placed should be reviewed as a possible ramp location because it may allow access without cutting through the centre of the worship space. A designer or code consultant should confirm slope, clear width, landings, handrails, edge protection, turning space, sightlines, furnishings, emergency egress, and impacts on the cross and seasonal setup. As of 2026, this review should align with the National Building Code - 2023 Alberta Edition and CSA/ASC B651:23.

If a permanent ramp is not immediately feasible, the Church may consider a well-managed modular or portable ramp as an interim measure. This should not be treated as a casual loose ramp; it should be stable, slip-resistant, appropriately sloped, supervised, stored safely, and reviewed for safe use by wheelchair users, walker users, and people with limited balance. A platform lift may also be considered where space is limited, subject to CSA B355 and local authority review.

Hearing access should be framed as a planned improvement rather than an existing feature. Since no permanent hearing loop or assistive listening system is currently installed, compare induction loop, FM, infrared, and Bluetooth/Auracast-compatible options with the existing sound system, volunteer capacity, signage, loaner receiver needs, and hearing-aid compatibility.

Stand-assist support can be practical and familiar. Motorized lift recliners or lift chairs for seniors may provide a dignified option where they do not block accessible routes. For signage, consider retaining a wayfinding/signage expert to create a church-scaled system that is consistent, high contrast, readable, tactile where practical, and warm rather than institutional.

Outdoor Route Surface Options

Outdoor route improvements should be planned as continuous all-season access, not only as a path to the garden edge. Connect accessible parking, entrances, raised beds, rest seating, daycare routes, and the play area. The route should be firm, stable, slip-resistant, well drained, winter-maintainable, and clear of snow storage, with careful attention to slopes, cross-slopes, curb transitions, and drainage.

Lower-cost starting point: define the route, improve grading and drainage, add edges, and use stable access mats or compacted/stabilized aggregate where appropriate. Engineered wood fibre may be considered inside play zones only if installed and maintained to accessibility and playground-safety standards. Planning allowance: CAD \$8-\$20 per sq ft, plus excavation, edging, drainage, and maintenance.

Phased upgrade: install rubber access mats or tiles, accessible turf over a prepared base, or a hybrid route combining a firm path with selected rubberized play areas. This reduces loose-surface barriers while allowing fundraising in stages. Planning allowance: CAD \$25-\$55 per sq ft.

Higher-investment built route: use concrete or asphalt for the primary all-season route, with poured-in-place rubber or other unitary rubberized surfacing where fall protection and play access are needed. Planning allowance for rubberized play surfacing on small projects is often CAD \$45-\$90+ per sq ft.

Before selecting a surface, obtain local quotes confirming base preparation, drainage, winter maintenance, warranty, repair/replacement expectations, and accessibility/playground-safety documentation. Avoid loose mulch, decorative stone, or uncompacted gravel as the primary accessible route.

For inquiries, contact us.



www.zacharyweeks.ca
zachary.weeks@gmail.com
780-718-3188

