



## DEDICATION

We, the Open Doors Committee, dedicate this page of our website to *Brielle and Tobi Stewart*.

Tobi attended our meeting in May of 2018 with her daughter, Brielle. Tobi shared a mother's journey with a child who has autism asking if we could provide a Christmas Mass where her daughter would feel welcomed. Brielle has nonverbal autism and through her RPM (Rapid Prompting Method) of communication has commissioned us to "bring my silent friends to Jesus". A few months later, our first Inclusive Christmas Mass was held and attended by 100 people. Brielle's faith and her mother's advocacy have inspired our ministry to become more inclusive and set new goals. Brielle has composed songs, including a symphony, that have been featured at our Inclusive Masses. To hear the gift of her voice through song and music is a true gift of the Holy Spirit. Tobi, in offering support to parents established a monthly parent Zoom meeting which will be advancing to a National level as they relocate to Florida. We thank Tobi and Brielle for the beautiful gifts they received from God and have been shared with us.

## Faith Based Resources for Families Affected by Autism

### **Saint Bernadette Parish Resources**

#### **Sensory Room**

Our Sensory Room accommodates people needing a smaller, more confined environment. The room is in the front entrance of the church and includes rocking chairs and manipulative objects on the walls to assist in engaging hands while focusing on listening. The speaker volume can be adjusted. The room was designed by Drew Newberry, a young parishioner with autism as an Eagle Scout project.

#### **9am Saturday Mass**

This Mass is attended by members of the God's Family Program. The atmosphere is especially welcoming to those with special needs. This Mass is shorter, has less people in attendance and no music. This does meet your Sunday obligation if this best meets the needs of your family member.

#### **God's Family: Faith Formation Program**

God's Family is an intergenerational program for people of all ages with disabilities and their families. Gatherings are held monthly on the second Saturday from 9 am to 11 am beginning with attendance at Mass. Contact Sharon at 648-1720 ext. 3 or [sharonu@saintbopny.org](mailto:sharonu@saintbopny.org).

#### **Inclusive Christmas and Easter Mass**

These Masses are shorter, less crowded, have dimmer lighting and softer music. All communications are a gift from God, so expressions of glory are welcome in sounds, gestures and movement. Masses are interpreted in sign language. Check the Parish calendar for scheduling.

### **National Faith-Based Resources**

#### **Sensory Friendly Mass Directory** <https://frmatthewlc.com/2022/02/sensory-friendly-mass-directory/>

Fr Matthew P. Schneider, LC, a Catholic priest with autism created a directory of sensory- friendly Masses in the United States and Canada. He has recently added Saint Bernadette Parish of Orchard Park, NY to this directory.

#### **Autism Faith Network.** [www.Autismfaithnetwork.com](http://www.Autismfaithnetwork.com)

Autism is one of the fastest growing developmental disorders in the United States. Studies have found that many special needs families have reduced or stopped their participation in religious activities due to a lack of support. Partnering with the Autism Faith Network can help congregations become more welcoming to persons with autism and their families.

#### **Autism Consecrated** <https://autismconsecrated.com/>

Autism Consecrated is the Mission of Saint Thorlak, an initiative begun in 2017 exploring how autism is experienced in the context of our Christian vocation. We are an online resource based in the United States, operated by volunteers, connecting people worldwide. Our vision is to realize autism's belonging in the Body of Christ. This site offers a number of prayers including a child's prayer and an autistic meditation of the Stations of the Cross.

#### **Autism Spectrum Disorder**- National Catholic Partnership on Disability <https://ncpd.org/disability-ministry/autism-spectrum-disorder>

This site includes resources such as information about Saint Christina the Astonishing, links to online special education training, a list of sensory friendly Masses and our own parish sensory room.

## Local Community Resources

### **Autism Society Western New York** [www.autismwny.org](http://www.autismwny.org)

This website provides information about Autism Spectrum Disorders and resources in the WNY area. Local educational options, recreational options, support groups, upcoming events, workshops and research are listed.

### **Hope Rapid Prompting Method** <http://www.hoperpm.com>, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLNLUekUs\\_8&t=32s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLNLUekUs_8&t=32s)

Lisa Reyes established HOPE RPM to help individuals with autism and related disabilities learn, communicate, and live fulfilling lives. HOPE RPM gives non-speakers and unreliable speakers the tools to communicate and join in the conversation around them. Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) teaches Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Communication begins with pointing to choices and progresses to spelling on a letterboard, typing, the use of voice-output devices, and sometimes even purposeful speech. HOPE RPM provides academic tutoring, educational consultations, social skills, and social groups.

RPM has successfully enhanced communication across a wide spectrum of disabilities. Thousands of individuals around the world demonstrate their true potential by giving them a voice to express their inner thoughts.

## National Resources

### **Association for Science in Autism Treatment** <https://asatonline.org/>

This site provides information about autism, treatment, conferences and media resources.

### **Autism Society of America** <https://autismsociety.org/>

This site offers links to causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatments and research. Information about living with Autism, getting involved, research and news for individuals on the spectrum, family members, professionals and advocates is included. Download free publications and find resources for local chapters and events here.

### **Autism Speaks** <http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

This website increases awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders and funding for research into the causes, prevention and treatments of Autism.

### **Interactive Autism Network (IAN)** <http://www.iancommunity.org/>

This online environment acts as a meeting place to learn more about Autism and research including therapies, treatments and behavior.

### **National Autism Center** <http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/>

Provides comprehensive information and resource materials about Autism Spectrum Disorder including an online library and advocates for evidence-based treatment approaches.

### **National Institutes of Health Autism Research Network** <http://www.health.nih.gov/topic/Autism>

This site covers a wide array of information regarding causes, symptoms, signs and tests, as well as treatment.