UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING
AT CHURCH

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework of principles that helps teachers plan environments and lessons that meet the diverse learning needs of all students, before individual adaptations are needed. Instead of creating a plan for a "typically developing student" and making adaptations later for those with learning differences, UDL starts by recognizing that students learn in many different ways. They then design the content of their lesson plan to reflect that from the beginning.

3 PRINCIPLES OF UDL

1. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (The Why of Learning)
Motivate and involve every student by:
- Offering choices (songs, activities, ways to respond)
- Celebrate effort, not just completion
- Create safe, supportive environments
- Nuture discovery and play

2. Multiple Means of Representation (The What of Learning)
Present Bible stories and concepts in different ways to reach all learners.
- Use visuals, props, videos, and multi-sensory experiences
- Use simplified language alongside Scripture or activities
- Revisit key ideas with repetition and hands-on engagement
- Connect to prior knowledge

3. Multiple Means of Action & Expression (The How of Learning)

Allow students to respond and show understanding in different ways.

- Provide options to draw, write, build, move, or speak
- Use assistive tools (picture cards, AAC devices, etc.)
- Provide opportunities for learners to participate in roles that match their strengths
- Anticipate and prepare for challenges

WHAT UDL IS NOT:

1. UDL is not a checklist of rigid rules

It's a mindset—a flexible approach to planning lessons with all learners in mind from the very beginning.

2. UDL is not about doing more work

It's about designing lessons and spaces in a way that works for more students the first time.

3. UDL is not just for learners with disabilities

All people benefit from options, support, and flexibility—UDL principles are beneficial to everyone.

4. UDL is not one-size-fits-all

It's about providing multiple options so every student can access, engage with, and respond to what we are teaching.

When we design our church spaces and lessons with flexibility and variety, we reflect the heart and love of Jesus as we create a place where every learner can belong and believe.

AWE & WONDER

UDL Principle	Example of how to incorporate in ministry
Multiple Means of Engagement (How we spark interest and support participation)	– Offer multiple activity choices – Use a feelings chart to help learners express emotions – Create a calm-down corner with sensory tools to promote self-regulation – Use countdown timers and visual cues to support transitions – Involve students in setting up or leading (e.g., passing out materials, leading motions)
Multiple Means of Representation (How we present Bible truths so everyone understands)	– Tell the Bible story using pictures, objects, or dramatization – Add storyboards, puppets, or videos to visual storytelling – Provide simplified versions of Bible verses/stories with picture supports alongside full text for non-readers – Use gestures, repetition, or songs to reinforce key ideas – Provide visual schedules for the day's plan
Multiple Means of Action & Expression (How students show what they've learned or how they engage with content)	– Allow responses through drawing, building with blocks, or acting it out – Use visual choice boards or AAC devices to answer questions – Give options for how to participate (e.g., singing, signing, clapping) – Use "yes/no" cards or pictures for non-verbal responses – Offer adaptive tools like larger crayons, adaptive scissors, or fidget-friendly options

LEARN MORE:
CAST: Universal Design for Learning Guidelines
https://udlguidelines.cast.org

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www.specialneedsministryresources.com