An Accessible Faith:
Eliminating Barriers in the Church for People with Disabilities

Resource Packet for Ministry with People with Disabilities

Center for Lay Leadership Excellence
Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church

2013
A Theology of Disability

Ancient Beliefs: Disability as -
- Punishment
- Test of faith
- Sins of the parents visited upon the children
- Act or will of God
- Loss of wholeness
- Defect that necessitates charity in this life and vindication in the next

Cultural Differences
- Visible vs. unseen disabilities
- Ability to work and be “productive”
- Educational opportunities
- Understanding of basis of disability
What We United Methodists Believe

- Affirm the humanity of all persons with disabilities as full members of the family of God
- Affirm their rightful place in both church and society
- Urge the Church and society to recognize gifts and work toward full participation

Our Social Principles on...

Persons with Disabilities

We recognize and affirm the full humanity and personhood of all individuals with mental, physical, developmental, neurological, and psychological conditions or disabilities as full members of the family of God.

We also affirm their rightful place in both the church and society.

We call on the Church and society to protect the civil rights of persons with all types and kinds of disabilities.

—United Methodist 2008 Book of Discipline
III. The Social Community ¶162
1) "Rights of Persons with Disabilities"

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church®

General Board of Church & Society • www.umc-gbc.org • (202) 488-5600
"The foundation of the House of God is weakened for ALL if barriers of attitude, communication or architecture prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in the worship, study, service and social activities of their congregation."

Making God More Accessible  
by Mark I. Pinsky

The television commercials were disturbing: Traditional-looking churches barring or physically ejecting racial and ethnic minorities, gay couples—and people with disabilities. One tag line was "Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we." The national campaign, which aired several years ago, was sponsored by the liberal United Church of Christ. "We included people with physical disabilities in these commercials—in a wheelchair or with a walker—as an extension of the call and hope that churches would be intentionally inclusive of ‘all the people,’” said the Rev. Gregg Brekke, a spokesman for the denomination.

Instead, the imagery provoked grumbling from some denominations because of its implied critique of other church traditions. But at least when it came to the physically handicapped, the criticism had more than a grain of truth. Churches, synagogues,
mosques, and temples are places where people with disabilities might not expect to feel excluded, isolated or patronized. Yet that has often been the norm. For years congregations have effectively excluded the disabled from worship—by steps, narrow doorways, and straitened attitudes—or segregated them in "special" services. Houses of worship (except those with more than 15 employees) were excluded from the 1992 Americans with Disabilities Act, which, among other things, bars discrimination against people with physical or intellectual disabilities—including access and architectural barriers—in public accommodations and transportation.

Most faiths’ scriptures mandate corrective steps, and pragmatism may soon require them. The U.S. Census in 2000 counted 54 million disabled individuals—one in six Americans—and that number is probably growing. Wounded Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans are swelling this population. Thanks to neonatal care and technology advances, at-risk infants with severe disabilities now survive into adulthood. Most significantly, the boomer generation is aging and getting ill. Many of them may develop disabilities but still want to pray at houses of worship.

There are challenges to accessibility and inclusion, even for people with the best intentions. The elderly and people with disabilities provide uncomfortable reminders of life's fragility and of death. Those with mental disabilities can distract during solemn moments. Religious people generally want to be sincere, welcoming, and open, but, like everyone else, they often lack the experience to respond the right way.

And, to be sure, money is an issue, especially for smaller, cash-strapped congregations. "When it comes to spending for architectural accessibility, there is sometimes reluctance on the part of finance committees," said Rabbi Lynne F. Landsberg, senior adviser on disability issues at the Washington-based Religious Action Center, the social-justice organization of Reform Judaism. In addition to shouldering the burdens of poverty if they are no longer able to work—and the high cost of medication, treatment, and rehabilitation—would-be worshippers "may feel socially stigmatized by their inability to provide financial support for their congregations," according to the rabbi, who suffered traumatic brain injury in a car crash. As a result of their shame, they may not come to services even when they are accessible.

But there are also some potential benefits for congregations that are willing to make the investment in architecture and attitude in order to become more welcoming. Mainline congregations with declining memberships, for example, would have much to gain. More families with a disabled member would attend religious services, experts say, if congregations would make efforts to open their buildings and programs. Older people tend to attend services in greater numbers than the young.

The good news is that some churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples are already getting ready for the coming influx of the disabled, tapping technology and simple thoughtfulness to reach out in creative ways to this faith-hungry community:
• At Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Norfolk, Va., priest Joe Metzger instructs an 11-year-old autistic girl in an empty sanctuary, while wearing vestments, so she'll feel at ease making her First Communion.
• At Bet Shalom Congregation in Minnetonka, Minn., no sanctuary steps lead to the pulpit; congregants approach it using a long ramp, symbolizing that all people come to the Torah equally.
• At St. John's Episcopal Church, in Charlotte, N.C., and St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Exton, Pa., adult members with Down Syndrome serve as altar servers, "greeters" and Sunday morning ushers.

As these examples suggest, it takes more than just automatic door openers, large-print Bibles and improved signage to make a congregation disability-friendly. In recent years—sometimes under pressure—numerous Christian and Jewish denominations have also established national outreach networks to make their congregations accessible. Through groups like Joni Eareckson's Joni and Friends Disability Center, evangelical megachurches have become increasingly involved in this effort.

"Of all the barriers to full participation and inclusion, the barrier of unexamined attitudes is the most difficult to address," said Ginny Thornburgh, director of the American Association of People with Disabilities' Interfaith Initiative. Its goal, she says, is "to bring the powerful and prophetic voice of the faith community to the 21st-century disability agenda," and to involve all religious communities. "There are no barriers to God's love," Ms. Thornburgh says. "There should be no barriers in God's house."

Mr. Pinsky, a longtime religion writer, is at work on a book about congregations that welcome people with disabilities, to be published in 2010 by the Alban Institute.

“A ramp is not enough.”
- Rev. Harold Wilke

“Worship with friends and family is peaceful and gives me the strength to get through the week.”

Are we true to our public description?

ReThink Church Friendliness Audit
Handout 3
Friendliness Audit

Sometimes we aren’t even aware of how we view people, either positively or negatively. As a personal assessment of how welcoming you and your church already are, put an O by the descriptions that best convey the people you would like to attend your church, and put an X by the people you don’t think would receive a warm welcome at your church.

___ Female who is not fashionably dressed ___ An overweight female
___ Hispanic ___ Single male under 30
___ Articulate, well-educated person ___ An interracial couple
___ Person mentally handicapped ___ Person who sings in a monotone voice
___ Male with earring in one ear ___ Retired persons
___ Someone especially talkative ___ An overweight male
___ Lower-income male ___ Lower-income female
___ Older female ___ Middle Eastern
___ A smoker ___ Musician
___ Bible reader ___ Teacher
___ Person with cancer ___ Native American
___ Single male over 30 ___ New Ager
___ Single female over 30 ___ Agnostic
___ Asian ___ Political liberal
___ Family on public assistance ___ Teenager
___ Unemployed male ___ Immigrant
___ Person very quiet and meek ___ Banker
___ Family with crying baby at worship service ___ Person with bad breath
___ African-American ___ Older single male
___ Unmarried pregnant teenager ___ Homosexual or lesbian couple
___ Divorced female ___ Non-English speaking person
___ Former felon ___ Person with unkempt hair
___ Handicapped person in wheelchair ___ Political conservative
___ Persons with hygiene problems ___ Blended family
___ Couple living together, not married ___ Charismatic
___ A recovering alcoholic ___ Woman who dresses provocatively
___ Person testing HIV-positive ___ Person who sings operatically

Adapted from Making Your Church More Inviting: A Step-by-Step Guide for In-Church Training by Ray M. Oswald.
Americans with disabilities are the largest, poorest, least employed, and least educated minority in America.

Estimated that 17% of a congregation has one or more disabilities under the definition of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Roughly half have onset after age 40
- Nearly 1/3 of American families include at least one member with a disability

United Nations Estimate

500 million people with disabilities worldwide
14.9 million Americans (6.2%) with sensory disabilities involving sight, hearing, speech

30.6 million (12.6%) have limitations with ambulatory activities of lower body

15.2 million (6.3%) experience difficulty with cognitive, mental, or emotional functioning
People with hidden disabilities make up the largest number of people with disabilities.

MORE THAN FIFTY WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PARISH ACCESSIBLE WITH LITTLE OR NO COST
Revised edition March 2009

By the Rev. Barbara Ramnaraine, Deacon, Episcopal Disability Network
And Charlotte Hawkins Shepard, Ph.D., UMC Consultant, Disability Concerns

1. Use your copier to produce large-print copies of the prayer book or other materials used in worship. (Large print is 18 point and should be produced on paper which is white or off-white and produces good contrast with the type.) Use Arial, Tahoma, or other sans serif.

2. Consider replacing fixed pews with moveable pews or chairs so that people with disabilities may be seated with the community and participate fully.

3. Create “pew cuts” by cutting the ends of several pews so that users of wheelchairs can sit within the main body of the congregation, not in a designated section, and not in the aisles.
Pew cuts also are helpful for people who are deaf-blind because they need to touch their sign language interpreter’s hands. Pew cuts enable persons who are deaf-blind to sit in chairs facing the rear of the church, while the tactile interpreter sits in the pew facing the worship leader.

4. If there are steps into your chancel or sanctuary, consider having a communion station on the floor of the nave. This will permit young children, those who are frail or elderly, and persons with disabilities to receive the Sacrament in the same way the rest of the congregation receives.

5. Involve people with disabilities in the planning of all architectural modifications.

6. Think about converting two side by side bathrooms into one accessible unisex bathroom. Allow room enough for wheelchairs to turn around. Leave transfer space on both sides of the toilet. Make sure the toilet paper dispenser is close enough for easy reach by the person using the toilet.

7. Make sure that sinks can be easily accessed by a wheelchair user, and do not forget to lower towel and soap dispensers so that they can be easily reached.

8. Provide a paper cup dispenser near your water fountain. This will transform an inaccessible fountain into one easily accessible to wheelchair users.

9. If any wheelchair users volunteer in your office, consider raising the height of desks and tables to 34 inches so that their wheelchair can fit under these surfaces.

10. Suggest that your parishioners who are hard of hearing sit toward the front of the nave so that they can easily see the preacher and lectors. Ask the preacher and lectors to speak clearly and slowly, looking frequently at the congregation. Make copies of the sermon available before the service as well as copies of the lessons to be read. People who are hard of hearing will find these materials especially helpful.

11. Install long-handled door hardware which is easier for everyone to use, especially those who have limited hand function.

12. Survey your sound system to ensure that it meets the needs of those who will depend on it. Let people who are hard of hearing test it for you and tell what adjustments are needed.

13. Apply brightly colored, textured strips at the top of all stairs. These strips alert people with limited vision that they are approaching stairs. People who are carrying things which block their vision will also appreciate this notice.

14. After every service, take the altar flowers and service leaflets to those who are shut-in or hospitalized.

15. Provide transportation to church for those who are elderly or without transportation.
16. Maintain regular communication with those who are unable to attend services or other parish events. This allows these people to continue to feel a part of the community, and it allows the community to monitor those persons’ “wellbeing.”

17. Include the children of the parish in visits to nursing homes. Most elders enjoy short visits from youngsters.

18. Discover sources of large print or taped books, magazines and Bibles. Share this information with older parishioners whose vision is failing and who may not yet be acquainted with these resources.

19. Offer a Christian Education day in which participants explore what life as a person with a disability is like. Ask your parishioners who have disabilities to share their experiences. Explore ways in which life as a person with a disability can be improved and how your parishioners with disabilities can feel more included in the life of the congregation.

20. Invite outside speakers to the church to talk about issues and needs of persons with disabilities.

21. Show one or more of the excellent video recordings which are available about disability concerns. Prepare questions for discussion following the viewing. If interest is expressed, make plans to address the issues which still separate people with disabilities from the larger community of the church and society.

22. Plan an adult education segment to discuss the non-architectural barriers to inclusion, such as lighting, attitudinal and communication barriers.

23. In places where winter weather brings snow and ice, remove the snow and ice promptly from all sidewalks and parking-lots. During the fall months, make sure that slippery leaves are also removed.

24. Survey present church lighting to ensure that the wattage is high enough and that the placement of light fixtures ensures maximum visibility.

25. Make yourselves knowledgeable about the needs of persons with less readily apparent disabilities, such as diabetes, epilepsy, high blood pressure, mental illness, etc. In an adult education session, share this knowledge about these disabilities. In an aging church, more joint replacements are causing more people to need accessible parking, ease of entry, etc.

26. Develop support groups for persons with disabilities such as stroke, diabetes, epilepsy, mental illness, etc., and for parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and caretakers of persons with Alzheimer’s.

27. Hold all community activities in areas accessible to everyone. Don’t forget about accessible signage.
28. Encourage one to one relationships between persons who are elderly and youth and young couples.

29. Enlist the expertise of your parishioners who are carpenters, plumbers, contractors, teachers, social workers, nurses, etc. to accomplish simple accessibility and disability awareness tasks. For example, if you are creating an accessible bathroom, raising the height of the toilet, moving the toilet paper roll closer to the toilet, etc. are easily accomplished by parishioners who are handy.

30. In your parish library, set aside a shelf or two with disability resources related to accessibility, disability awareness, inclusion, etc. Label these shelves with an easy-to-read sign saying “Mini-Library on Inclusion.”

31. Look for educational opportunities about disability concerns in your community. Gather several interested parishioners and parish leaders to attend programs. Publicize these events in your bulletins and newsletters.

32. Encourage parishioners to designate memorial gifts for accessibility projects.

33. Set aside accessible parking spaces in your parking lot or in front of your church for people with disabilities. Mark these spaces with an appropriate sign.

34. Visit accessible churches in your area, noting especially the non-architectural ways these churches demonstrate their accessibility and inclusion.

35. Consult local group homes and nursing homes to ascertain whether your congregation might invite their residents to become members of your congregation.

36. Share your facilities with organizations which serve people with disabilities.

37. Consider getting involved in congregate dining, meals on wheels, or your own feeding program for those who are in need. Join other churches in the area in this effort.

38. Set aside a separate bulletin board to display material concerning your own accessibility projects. Be sure the height of the bulletin board is friendly to persons who use wheelchairs. Also ensure that the background is not too distracting for those with low vision.

39. Explore ways of including people with disabilities in the education and ministry as well as the worship of your congregation.

40. Explore ways of working with other congregations and faith communities on projects related to disability access and ministry.
41. Suggest that your parishioners volunteer their time at a day care center, rehabilitation facility or hospital as a way of coming to know persons with disabilities better.

42. If you have persons in your congregation who are blind or have low vision, install signage in Braille or raised letters. Familiarize yourself with the ADA requirements of size and placement.

43. If you have persons in your congregation who are deaf or have profound hearing loss, install a fire alarm which is light cued. Before installing this kind of alarm, however, make sure that there are no persons with epilepsy in the congregation since this light alarm may trigger seizures for them.

44. In an educational program or in a sermon, explore the differences between “healing” (wholeness) and “cure”. All people can receive God’s healing grace. Not all of us will be cured.

45. Because two-thirds of working-age people with disabilities are unemployed (even though they are able to work and want to do so), and because many members of your congregation are employers, make sure they are knowledgeable about the issues around employment of people with disabilities both from the point of view of the employer and the point of view of those who have disabilities.

46. Convene a team of parishioners who are willing to call your legislators on behalf of legislation about transportation and housing. Join with other churches in your community on this project.

47. Survey your neighborhood to ascertain whether there are unmet needs among those who are elderly, home-bound or have a disability.

48. Many activities such as skiing, roller skating and camping can be enjoyed by people with disabilities, especially when they are partnered with someone who is temporarily able-bodied. Encourage your parishioners to look for the fun and fulfillment in these activities.

49. Educate your congregation about chemical sensitivities, also known as environmental illnesses. Survey your cleaning supplies being mindful of those with environmental sensitivities. Encourage everyone to curtail the wearing of perfumes and aftershave as well. For some, the use of incense will be a problem. At the very least, when incense is to be used, notify the congregation beforehand.

50. Designate your church campus as a non-smoking area.

51. Let other people of faith know about your belief that people with disabilities must be welcomed into the ministry of the church.

52. Offer some form of religious education opportunity to students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. With supports, most students can succeed in inclusion
programs with non-disabled peers. When inclusion isn’t possible, find age appropriate material suitable to the child’s abilities, or make use of one of the excellent interfaith special religious education curricula available.

53. Encourage families with children who have a disability to bring their children to church. Encourage the members of the congregation to be welcoming, even if a child is not always quiet during the service. Welcome children with disabilities to participate in the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

54. Accept the God-given gifts that people with disabilities bring to the community.

55. Partner with neighboring churches to provide disability programming for the community.

56. Establish a peer mentoring program between your able-bodied young people and young people who have a disability.

57. Understand, accept and celebrate your own limitations. All of us are who we are because of, rather than in spite of, our limitations. Encourage people with disabilities to teach us the lessons of imperfection and limitation.

Changing Our Questions
By Liz Moen

Often, when we find ourselves teaching a child who moves, learns, or behaves differently from his or her peers, our question becomes, “What are we going to do about Johnny?” My challenge for you is to change that question to, “What can we do for Sam?” “What gifts does Susie have that she might share with us and how can we accommodate that sharing?” and “How are we being blessed through Cara?” When we begin to understand persons with disabilities as persons who have value to contribute to our class and to our lives rather than a problem to solve, we begin to see them from Jesus’ point of view.

What can we do for Sam? This article is far too short to tell you how to accommodate for the needs of all children with learning, physical, or behavioral disabilities. Almost always, accommodations such as schedules, clear directions, and a quiet space benefit all the children in the class. A few quick pointers that may be helpful are

• rearranging the room for improved accessibility;
• developing a picture schedule to show what will happen next in the classroom;
• providing a quiet or get away space in the classroom or in another room;
• having an adult or youth buddy to accompany the child in class.

The best sources for how to meet the needs of children with disabilities are their parents who live with and care for them 24/7. Communication is important. Don’t be afraid to ask questions about what works to help their child function well in a group setting. Avoid
asking them to stay with their child. This is a ministry you can offer parents (as well as their children) by giving them an opportunity to pursue their own spiritual nourishment while their child is with you.

**What gifts might Susie have to offer our class or church, and how can we accommodate that sharing?** Each person has something to offer to God. It might be something as simple as a smile when the teacher greets each student by name or as helpful as passing out materials. Everyone wants to feel valued and valuable regardless of ability or disability. As we look for ways each child can contribute to the class, we can begin to teach that everyone has gifts to offer to God and that as Christians we are called share those gifts.

**How are we being blessed through Cara?** Not all lessons learned are lessons taught through the curriculum of the day. Unconditional love, perseverance, hope, joy, and enthusiastic worship are just a few of the lessons that have been learned by all involved when children with disabilities are included in all aspects of church life. To be sure, there will be difficulties and some trial and error as you work your way into ministry with persons with disabilities. Looking for the blessings -- how everyone's lives are enriched through the participation of persons with disabilities in our church -- reminds us why we persevere until we get it right.

Over and over again in Scripture, we see the Holy Spirit moving and working in unexpected ways. The same is true when churches open their hearts, minds, and doors to persons with disabilities.

For additional information about including persons with disabilities in Sunday school and all church activities you may find these websites helpful:

- [www.umdisabilityministries.org](http://www.umdisabilityministries.org)
- [http://ntcumc.org/specialneedsresourceguide](http://ntcumc.org/specialneedsresourceguide)
- [www.keyministry.org/](http://www.keyministry.org/)
- [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)

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*Rev. Liz Moen is an elder and leader in disability ministries in the North Texas Conference. Her first career as an elementary special education teacher helped prepare her for many aspects of ministry including ministry with persons with disabilities.*

GBOD iTeach September 2010: (c) 2010 by the General Board of Discipleship. Permission is granted to copy or reprint this article for use in an educational setting in the local church. For any other use, contact ChristianEd@gbod.org.
Religious communities and the entities they control are exempt from some sections of the ADA, however.

As institutions of faith, we have always been governed by the *moral mandate of justice*.

55% of persons with disabilities and their families are "UNCHURCHED."
Only about 10% of the churches in America have any significant outreach.

People seeking pastoral care are more likely to have a disability.

Yet, very few seminaries provide training for future clergy and church workers.
“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.”

Matthew 5:8 (The Message)

- Become knowledgeable through education and awareness
- Disability Awareness Sunday
- Radical Hospitality
- Become greater advocates
Communications Barriers

“And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.”

Acts 2:6 (NSRV)

• Are printed materials available in large print
• Is the meeting site free of background noise?
• Is the speaker well positioned?
• Are services and messages presented verbally and visually? Are printed sermons available? Other sensory needs
• Is an amplified sound system, audio loop, and/or other assistive listening devices (ALDS) featured?

Architectural/Physical Barriers

“Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.”

Isaiah 40:4 (NSRV)
2006 Survey Tracking Accessibility of Texas Religious Congregations

- Marked accessible parking – 93%
- Accessible bathroom – 91%
- Ramps to entrances – 84%
- Scattered pew cuts – 56%
- Assistive listening devices – 32%
- Policy for service animals – 21%
- Accessible dais – 5%

Schedule and hold all events in accessible settings that adequately accommodate persons with disabilities

Conduct an annual accessibility audit to discover and identify any barriers

“While 100% accessibility is a worthy goal, rare is the older building that can be made globally accessible.”
- Accessible Faith
CHURCH ACCESSIBILITY CHECK LIST

Provided by the Commission on Disabilities of the Virginia Conference of The UMC

Grounds:
Parking Lot
- Do you have a designated accessible (handicapped) parking space?
- Is there a paved area for accessible parking?
- Is the accessible parking space at least 8 feet wide?
- Do you have a curb cut/36” wide ramp to sidewalk (slope no more than 1:20)?
- Is there an adjacent access aisle for loading and unloading persons (5 feet wide for cars, 8 feet for vans)?
- Is there room for a loading zone?
- Do you have adequate lighting for night time?

Walkway
- Is the walkway paved/cement?
- Is the walkway 5 foot wide?
- Is the slope finished with a non-slip texture?
- Is there a level platform area at entrance?
- Is the walk the shortest route to the accessible entrance?

Entrance:
- If there is a ramp, is the ramp 36” wide - slope 1:12?
- Is the entry door a minimum of 36” wide?
- Is there a 5 x 5 foot level platform at the entrance?
- Is the porch level raised even with threshold?
- Are the open edges of ramp protected by a curb of at least 2 inches?

Doors
- Are the doors 36 “ wide (minimum 32” wide)?
- Is the hardware large and shaped for easy grip (U handles, lever handles, door pulls)?
- Are all thresholds no more than ¾”?
- Do all doors open a full 90 degree angle?
- Do doors close easily – delayed action/ power assist door?
- Are all entryway mats or rugs less than ½ inch in thickness with flat edges?

Interior Halls
- Are halls 36” wide with a 5 feet circulation path?
- Are there handrails on any inclines?
- For steps, are there hand rails on both sides?
- Are the halls well lighted?
- Is there access to multi levels in the building?

Elevators
- Does elevator/lift connect all floor levels with accessible entrance?
- If you have an elevator, is the door a minimum 36" wide with 90 degree door opening?
- Are elevator call buttons and controls mounted no less than 40" and no more than 42" above the floor?
- Is elevator equipped with an emergency telephone?
- Are visible, tactile and Braille floor designation provided to left of control buttons?

**Worship Area**
- Is worship area wheelchair accessible?
- Is there a designated wheelchair accessible viewing space?
- Is there an area for those with mobility, hearing or visual challenges?
- Are hearing assistive devices available?
- Is there at least 1 large print Bible?
- Is there at least 1 large print hymnal?
- Are there large printed materials (i.e. welcoming pamphlet, newsletter, devotion book such as Upper Room)?
- Do you have any Braille materials available or know how to access them for worship and education classes?
- Is there a clearly audible sound system for those with hearing deficits?

**Fellowship Hall**
- Is there a wheelchair accessible entrance?
- Do you have a 27" clearance table height for wheelchair access?
- Can hearing assistance device be used at functions in the hall?

**Restrooms**
- Is there at least one accessible restroom?
- Is the outside door 36" wide?
- Is the toilet seat 18" high and the accessible urinal no higher than 17" above the floor?
- Is the single stall a minimum 36" or more wide?
- Does the stall door open outward allowing closure when occupied by wheelchair?
- Is stall door a minimum 32"?
- Does the stall door have spring hinge or pull bar for closure?
- Are the grab bars side and back of commode 33” – 36” high?
- Is the sink on a pedestal so wheelchairs can get up to it, mounted 30” off floor?
- Is the towel bar, soap dispensers - maximum 40” off floor?
- Is there a 5 foot diameter minimum turning radius for wheelchair?
- Is one restroom free of perfumed or chemical air fresheners/deodorizers and scented soaps?

**Signage**
- What type of signs are used? Verbal, tactile (uses sense of touch), or pictorial
- Are there directional signs (restrooms, sanctuary, office, fellowship hall, accessible entrance)?
- Are all signs mounted 54” – 66” above the floor?
• GBGM Accessibility Audit for Churches
  • www.vaumc.org/page.aspx?pid=38
• UMC Committee on Ministries with Deaf...
  • www.signsofsolidarity.org
• NCC Equal Access Guide
  • www.snccusa.org/elm/disabilitiesmanual.html

NEW CERTIFICATION

How will you implement what you have learned today?

What difference will today make in your ministry?
God's words shall come from our mouths.
For we are all God's essence, a sign of God's love.
All is finished in beauty.
---A Navajo prayer
from Voices: Native American Hymns and Worship Resources

Ministries with Persons with Disabilities
Selected Newer Books and Resources

A Place Called Acceptance: Ministry with Families of Children with Disabilities

Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability, and Inclusion
By Mark I. Pinsky, Alban Institute, 2011. Available through the Alban Institute at www.alban.org or by calling: (800) 486-1318

Accessible Faith: A Technical Guide for Accessibility in Houses of Worship

Autism and Faith: A Journey into Community
Autism and Your Church: Nurturing the Spiritual Growth of People with Autism Spectrum Disorders  

Blindsided by Grace: Entering the World of Disability  

Deaf Ministry: Make a Joyful Silence  

Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God's Family  

Dimensions of Faith and Congregational Ministries with Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families  

Feed All My Sheep: A Guide and Curriculum for Adults with Developmental Disabilities  

Friendship Program Guide: A Resource for Leaders  

Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities  
By Barbara Newman. CRC Publishers, 2001. Available from Cokesbury (www.cokesbury.com) or at major retail and online bookstores

Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, & Congregations  

Interpreting at Church: A Paradigm for Sign Language Interpreters  

Learning Disabilities and the Church: Including All God’s Kids in Your Education and Worship  
Let All the Children Come to Me: A Practical Guide to Including Children with Disabilities in Your Church Ministries
By Malesa Breeding, Dana Hood, and Jerry Whitworth. 2006. Available from Cokesbury (www.cokesbury.com) or at major retail and online bookstores

Mental Health Mission Moments
DVD Resource by Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder, 2004, California-Pacific Conference of The UMC. Available from Mental Health Ministries, c/o Rev. Susan Gregg-Schroeder, Coordinator, 6707 Monte Verde Dr., San Diego, CA 92119 or at www.mentalhealthministries.net

Money and Ideas: Creative Approaches to Congregational Access

My Disability God’s Ability: 7 Principles of Triumphant Living
By Dr. Young Woo Kang, Abingdon Press, 2004. Available from Cokesbury or www.cokesbury.com

Pocket Guide to Special Needs: Quick Tips to Reach Every Child
By Group Publishing. Available from www.group.com or at major retail and online bookstores.

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth

Same Lake, Different Boat: Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability

Signs of Solidarity: Ministries with People Who are Deaf, Late-Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind

Speaking Out: The Gifts of Ministering Undeterred by Disabilities

That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities

By Amy Rapada. CGR Publishing, 2007. Available at major retail and online bookstores.
Selected Web Resources

http://www.vaumc.org
Select “Ministries,” then “Disabilities”

http://www.aaiddreligion.org
Religion and Spirituality Division of the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

http://www.friendship.org
An international, inter-denominational ministry, to share God’s love with people who have cognitive impairments and to enable them to become an active part of God’s family

http://www.gag.org/resources/das.php
Downloadable access symbols

http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/work/health/disc/
Disability concerns section of the website for the General Board of Global Ministries

http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/work/health/disc/developmental-disabilities
The United Methodist Committee on Disability Ministries

http://www.joniandfriends.org
Joni and Friends International Disability Center

http://www.mentalhealthministries.net
Mental Health Ministries

http://www.nod.org
National Organization on Disability

http://rwjms2.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/
The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities

http://www.umcsignsofsolidarity.org
Website of the United Methodist Committee on Ministries with Deaf, Late-Deafened, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind People

http://www.rrf.org/accessibleFaithPublications.htm
Accessible Faith: A Technical Guide for Accessibility in Houses of Worship by The Retirement Research Foundation

http://www.ncccusa.org/elmc/disabilitiesmanual.html
National Council of the Churches Equal Access Guide for Meetings, Conferences, Large Assemblies, and Worship

Disability Resource Manual by Ashley Peterson for the Evangelical Covenant Church, Chicago, IL
The Commission on Disabilities has set aside funding to assist local churches in working their way toward total accessibility (accessibility grants) and to assist any church and/or organization wanting to establish new programs (program grants) to reach and serve individuals with disabilities. These funds are limited and will not cover the entire cost of most projects. However, through the awarding of a grant, the Commission is offering its support to efforts toward full inclusion of all persons in worship and Christian education experiences and to advocacy for the needs of persons with challenging conditions. Funds are made available through the contributions of the United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, local churches, individual donors, and other church-related groups. Only one grant per calendar year will be considered for a church.

**Accessibility Grants:** The *Book of Discipline* calls upon the board of trustees of each local church, in cooperation with the health and welfare ministries representative, to conduct an annual accessibility audit of their building, grounds, and facilities to discover and identify any physical, architectural, and communication barriers that impede the full participation of people with disabilities and to make plans and determine priorities for the elimination of all such barriers. Once an audit has been completed and priorities established, a church may apply for an accessibility grant. A visit by members of the Grants Committee of the Commission may be required. Technical support from the Commission is available upon request. Grant maximum: $700.

**Program Grants:** The *Social Principles* of The United Methodist Church clearly address the rights of persons with disabilities. The Church and society are called on to protect the civil rights of persons with disabilities and to be sensitive to, and advocate for, the full inclusion of ALL PEOPLE in the community of faith and in the larger world community. To this end, the Commission on Disabilities of the Virginia Conference is charged with providing advocacy, education, and direct services on behalf of persons with challenging conditions, affirming that ALL PEOPLE are ONE in the Body of Christ. Churches and/or organizations may submit proposals for new programs and services to the Commission for assistance with startup costs. Grant maximum: $500.

For hearing assistance systems or other ministries with individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing, you may also want to explore grant opportunities through the United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries (UCDHM). The grant application can be found at www.umesignsofsolidarity.org.

To be considered for grant funds, complete the attached form with the required signatures and submit it to the Commission on Disabilities. A copy of the mini-audit/accessibility survey must accompany a request for accessibility grant funds. Each grant request will be reviewed by the Grants Committee and presented to the full Commission on Disabilities for approval. If you have questions or need more information, please contact the Commission on Disabilities.

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