

Westminster Accessibility Audit

January 11, 2010

Overview

Purpose: The Accessibility Task Force was formed at the request of the AIM Committee and Session to complete the *Presbyterian Congregational Audit for Accessibility* (shown in Appendix A). The Audit is intended to assist a congregation in taking seriously the call for the church to be the full embodiment of the household of God and a “house of prayer” for all peoples (in this instance persons who have a disability).

Members of the Task Force met several times since June 2009. Members of the Task Force are: Cathy Bailes (AIM), Heather Chastain (at-large), Marianne Clemmens (CE), Jean Hansen (Worship), Diana Hemme (at-large), Rich Kriege (ME&O), Don Tarnasky (at-large), Wilma White (deacons) and Jan Zabish (at-large). Renee Schuner agreed to be the staff liaison. We gathered information by touring the church facility, meeting with members and staff, and using available reference documents.

We learned that at least 70 adult members of our church family have known disabilities. Many members may have chronic conditions not identified in the areas of mobility or visual impairment. For example, our census report of people with disabilities indicated six people with visual impairment or blindness when the actual number may be greater. In addition, with the advancing age of the "Baby Boomers", it is anticipated that the number of older people with vision loss or decreased mobility will greatly increase in the coming years and they will have significant difficulty accessing print, traveling inside and outside of facilities safely and independently.

• Limited mobility	36
• Visual impairment	6
• Hearing impairment	10
• Speech impairment	0
• Cognitive disability	12
• Learning disability	1
• Environmental disability	2
• Known/hidden disability	4

We learned that several children have ADHD. We are aware of children with hearing impairments and autism. Parents sometimes do not share information concerning children’s disabilities with the church so the numbers are based on staff observances. Additional children of non-members with autism and ADHD attended vacation bible school.

We learned that Westminster has taken action toward becoming fully inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. A high percentage of this work was done by or at the request of the AIM Committee:

- Sanctuary
 - Four pew cuts for wheelchairs and walkers
 - Assistive listening devices
 - Temporary ramp to the chancel for as-needed use
 - For communion services, location of the communion table on the bottom step so that servers do not need to climb the steps to the chancel

- Other Building Improvements
 - Elevator
 - ADA compliant ramp on N Street side of building
 - Signage with Braille
 - Ramp at back door of building
 - Accessible unisex bathroom on first floor
 - Electronic double doors into the narthex from the patio area

- Worship Enhancements
 - Large print bulletins
 - Large print hymnals
 - Large print song words for the Praise Service

- Communication of our intent
 - Statement of inclusiveness in the Sunday bulletin
 - Statement in bulletin regarding standing says “Those who wish. . . .” rather than “if you are able.”

- Wheelchair logo and commentary on home page of website
 - Training
 - Disability awareness training for ushers and greeters
 - Disability awareness workshop for youth

This report follows the Presbyterian Congregational Audit for Accessibility format under various areas: Leadership, Worship, Ministry, Fellowship, Communication and Facility. Under each heading areas the church is accessible are listed as *Strengths*. Where the group felt improvements were needed, *Recommendations* are provided. Some recommendations would be costly to implement but many could be implemented at little or no cost.

Top Five Committee Recommendations

- Access to the building – permanent accessible parking near entrance
- Access within the church building – threshold/doorways in the patio room
- Signage throughout the church building
- Accessible restroom on the second floor
- Hire a consultant to do a compliance study with current code. Note: Upgrade to current codes is required during remodel or lease for public use. Our church facility met building codes at the time it was constructed. Religious facilities have different requirements than public buildings but we felt strongly that our church should continue its efforts toward accessibility for all.

Congregational Audit of Disability Accessibility & Inclusion

Leadership

Strengths:

Our church's leadership has made commitment to be intentional in our welcome and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

We have developed a Disability Task Force (AIM Committee) to keep issues related to the welcome and inclusion of persons with disabilities on our congregations' radar and to strategize with various ministry areas as appropriate.

We invite persons with disabilities to help us assess our building and ministries for barriers to participation. We take seriously such perspectives and engage these persons in setting the plans and priorities for removing barriers. Members within our congregation have provided their perspective with recommendations.

We are committed to ministry with persons with disabilities, rather than ministry to persons with disabilities.

We encourage persons with disabilities to share their gifts and skills through the various ministries of our church and support their involvement in these ministries. Persons with disabilities service as readers, musicians, presenters, committee members, church officers, pastoral positions.

Recommendations:

Our congregation receives periodic disability awareness training during adult education. Our staff would benefit from training in disability awareness.

A brochure showing the church building layout showing accessible access may be helpful.

Improve signage.

Improve accessibility in the kitchen area. It would be difficult for a person using wheelchair to gain access to the kitchen and help with food preparation.

Update elevator.

Make drinking fountain near the office accessible.

Sanctuary areas that need improvement for access: choir loft and pulpit/reader

Worship

Strengths:

Our greeters/ushers are instructed regarding appropriate ways in which to interact with and anticipate the needs of individuals with a variety of disabilities. Training was provided by the AIM Committee last year

Our preaching and teaching is positive in the portrayal of persons with disabilities and of their contributions, not just their needs; scripture related to miraculous healings is taught and preached with sensitivity to those who are living with disabilities and their family members.

At least once a year our congregation observes a Disability Inclusion Sunday (Access Sunday) focused on lifting up disability-related issues and our intention to be a church where persons with disabilities and their families find true inclusion and participation.

Our pastoral staff is sensitive to adapting the administration of the sacraments to persons with various disabilities. Individuals are consulted as to what will be best for their situation rather than assumptions made on their behalf.

We use unscented candles and have gluten-free bread and juice available for the Lord's Supper.

Our pastoral staff is committed to assisting persons with disabilities (including those with cognitive disabilities) in becoming church members.

Recommendations:

It would be good to offer this greeters/ushers training at least twice a year.

Scripture passages may have descriptive words, which are offensive and demeaning to people with disabilities. It would be good to use language, which is sensitive. Examples of offensive language are "crippled, dumb for mute, lame for difficulty with walking."

Commitment to ensure Access is scheduled annually and developed with the pastors and AIM.

We need to periodically remind our congregation about allergies and encourage them to refrain from wearing perfume, after-shave lotions and scented deodorants or have designated a "scent-free" area for the 15% of the population who have some type of chemical sensitivity. We could remind people in the bulletin and newsletter. We don't have a scent-free area.

Ministry

Strengths:

When planning congregational activities, we make every effort to consider how to make the activity inclusive of our friends with disabilities and extend “reasonable accommodations.”

We station greeters at main entrances to assist persons in-and-out of cars or para-transportation and in-and-out of buildings back to their transportation. Deacons are assigned “desk duty” prior, during, and after the service to help those needing assistance.

If a member of our congregation becomes disabled, we stand ready to be of assistance in locating needed government and community resources.

Specialized ministries are designed only when all attempts at mainstreaming have been exhausted and when deemed essential to meeting the needs of the specific individual with a disability. In these cases particular care is also taken to finding other inclusive ways to involve these individuals in the life of our congregation.

We recognize that parents and siblings of persons with disabilities may carry a heavy load and our congregation seeks to provide practical support and respite care as needed. While we have no formal program to address respite, the committee felt that the congregation provides support on an as-needed basis. The deacons’ “compassionate care” program further provides much needed support to family members of those with disabilities.

We attempt to discover where persons with disabilities live in our community and extend an invitation to them to attend our church.

Insights from staff:

Concerning accommodations during Sunday school: “The teachers in Sunday school will shadow a child (follow them closely) and modify the activity so that the child can participate in their own way.”

Concerning accommodations during Vacation Bible School: “During VBS we had a little boy who had mild autism and seemed to really enjoy time alone. So we set up one of the tents with pillows and some small plastic balls where he could sit and play when the noise and room got too busy. He regulated his own “alone” time in a safe environment. We also had a little girl who had a gluten food allergy. I went to the gluten-free food store on J Street, bought pretzels, bread, muffins, etc. so that she could have the same identical snacks as the rest of the children. I was also able to share this resource with the grandparents who went out that very same day to visit the store.”

Children with special needs are “children” first and foremost and that the “condition” is secondary. We must be respectful and be willing to allow the parents (who are the real professionals) to educate us about their children’s needs. And lastly, modify, modify,

modify. We must continually search for new and improved ways of connecting children to each other and God by observing them and having them lead us.”

“Flexibility is the key!” When discussing how to create a successful environment for children with disabilities, a teacher gave the example of a child with high functioning autism who is sometimes capable in participating in the “45 Club” and other times is not. She and other teachers follow the child’s cues as to what he is capable of doing that day and adjust accordingly.

Insight from a parent:

“All parents can relate to the analogy that when you have a child, you feel as though your heart walks around outside of your body. When you have a child with special needs, this analogy is painfully true. Before your child enters any new environment you hope and pray that those they encounter will be caring, patient, and accepting of their uniqueness. I feel that WPC does a beautiful job teaching my son with autism. He is respected and cared for and I feel comfortable leaving him in the care of these professionals.”

“As a parent, I want my son with autism to be able to do all the things other children do but, at the same time, I feel very protective of him. For example, I long for the day when he can fully participate in “children’s time” but right now I often feel uncomfortable bringing my son up to the front of the church for fear that his behavior may be inappropriate in front of the congregation and that they won’t understand. Please be patient with us. With time, I know we will get there.”

Recommendations:

Many times, we do expect family members to take the lead in ministering to their family member with a disability unless they volunteer. Perhaps, we could be more proactive in this area.

Our church school teachers would benefit from education and training to assist them with issues they encounter in teaching children with disabilities. One area of recommended training was for high functioning autism and educational accommodations that can be used in their classrooms.

We need to train members to serve as church companions/peer tutors to assist individuals with disabilities who need one-on-one assistance. Some churches having “Steven” ministry training in which adults train as companions for other adults in the congregation. The committee feels action is needed to consider how we might promote awareness of resources available within WPC such as the Health Ministry, Deacons’ programs and members of the congregation who work within the field of helping those with disabilities, such as occupational therapists.

Our website might be improved by including our “mission statement” with intent to include all regardless of “enabling or disabling conditions” as well as directions for accessible parking and entrances into the church.

Our church's emergency procedures need to be reviewed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Also, we should include practical service in case of a personal or community-wide disaster. There is an evacuation plan with the use of a wagon for quick evacuation of infant/toddler room.

Fellowship

Strengths:

We communicate our willingness to assist persons with disabilities with transportation needs to churches services and activities, and facilitate those arrangements if appropriate.

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We understand that guide/helper/service dogs must be allowed to accompany their owner everywhere they go (including eating areas).

We maintain regular contact with our "members at home" to keep them connected with our community of faith and to minister to their spiritual needs.

Recommendations:

Some felt we endeavor to get to know each person with a disability and to involve them in the social network of our congregation while others felt more work was needed in this area with children's program.

While we do not have a formal program to communicate our willingness to assist persons with disabilities with transportation needs to church services and activities, and facilitate those arrangements as appropriate. The feeling by many was that deacons provide this on an as-needed basis very well. One member had an excellent suggestion of having bus passes in the office that could be mailed to disabled people who request transportation.

Provide a large screen in worship.

Communication

Strengths:

Our church provides or will provide on request, the following alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio taped, electronic materials, etc.) for Worship Bulletins and Sermons. We are willing to provide and have provided sign-language interpretations for worship and other ministry events when needed or requested. We provide assisted listening devices for worship, Christian education classes and small group meetings.

Recommendations:

Bible & scripture readings – Need for large print bibles. Westminster has 6 people who have low visual acuity. We should have as many bibles.

Hymn songs & sheets - Both these areas have been addressed in the past by the AIM Committee, however, performance is not always consistent at the early Contemporary Worship hour; for visual impairments 18pt is required.

Adequate lighting - There is adequate lighting for mobility, however, not for reading lips.

Sound system - Overall the sound system is good, however, although the hearing devices are in working condition and checked on a regular basis. Users complain of poor reception. Please note - This issue was brought to the attention of the former Staff Liaison of the Worship Committee, however, no action was recommended.

Architectural Accessibility

This audit of Westminster Church was made to check the facilities for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is recognized that Westminster is a historical, landmark building and that because of this some of the items noted may be difficult to accomplish but there should be a good faith effort made to meet compliance. This report is primarily intended to note deficiencies and not to recommend corrections and further review is required to determine upgrades and resolution to meet ADA requirements.

General Accessibility Items

Most door hardware is not compliant. Lever handles are typically required.

Graphics: Room signage appears to meet ADA requirements. Full ADA requirement requires addition of Braille signs for exiting building and for restrooms. ADA compliant graphics for noting exits and entrances are required.

The elevator requires ADA upgrades including jamb markers, button locations, etc.

Nearly all closers on doors require adjustment for compliant opening force. Most light switches appear compliant. Pull-chains that turn on lights do not comply.

Entrances

Front Entrance

- There are two existing reserved parking stalls for disabled on the street.
- Exterior access ramp leads to automatic acting doors to Narthex. Railings on ramp do not comply. Railings need extensions at the top and bottom.
- Front and side steps to entrances have railings that do not comply. Railings need extensions at the top and bottom. Depth of landings do not meet compliance.
- Pairs of entry doors. Single leaf is narrow and door is heavy. Doors are not in compliance but historic aspect would probably govern.

Rear Entrance

- Parking lot needs complying parking spaces and path of travel to the rear entrance for the disabled.
- There is an automatic acting entry door to a ramp up to the first floor level. The railings on the ramp appear to comply.

Sanctuary

- Pairs of doors from narthex do not comply because an open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access. One pair should be made to meet compliance.
- Sanctuary does have four stations in pews for wheelchairs.
- East and West exits at front of sanctuary do not comply as a single open leaf does not allow passage of wheelchair.
- Exit signs need horn and strobe to meet current codes.
- Steps up to chancel area do not comply. Upgrades may include handrails, a ramp, or a mechanical lift up to the chancel area.
- The choir loft is not accessible.

Chapel

- Pair of doors to chapel does not comply because an open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access.
- Door threshold exceeds height for wheelchair access.
- No wheelchair station in pews.
- Steps up to chancel area do not comply. Upgrades may include handrails, a ramp, or a mechanical lift up to the chancel area.

Patio Area

- Patio floor meets accessibility requirements and slope for ADA compliance.
- Pairs of doors to patio from rear halls do not comply as an open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access.
- Door thresholds exceed heights for wheelchair access.

Patio Room

Note: There are current architectural drawings for the remodel of the patio room, restroom and kitchen that comply with ADA requirements. The following items reflect existing conditions.

- Pairs of doors from patio into room do not comply as an open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access. At least one entry should meet compliance.

- Restroom door too narrow to comply. Restroom layout and fixtures are not compliant.
- Kitchen does not allow for use by disabled persons.
- Brides room is not compliant with ADA requirements.

Hallways

- Need directional signs to accessible entry doors and restrooms.
- The drinking fountains do not comply with ADA requirements.
- Storage of chairs, tables, etc in hallways blocks good access for disabled.

Classrooms and Meeting rooms. (First floor)

- See General Accessibility Items for door hardware, etc.
- Door to Brad's office does not comply because it is too narrow.
- Children's restroom between classrooms does not comply. Entry hall to restroom is too narrow for maneuvering wheelchair and restroom layout does not comply.

First Floor Accessible Restrooms

- The two uni-sex restrooms off the west hallway are not in full compliance. Clearance between fixtures and maneuvering space is inadequate. They do seem to be reasonably adequate to meet accessibility needs.

Items on Second Floor

Stairs

- Handrails on stair from first to second floor do not comply with required extensions at top and bottom.
- Handrails from second floor to balconies do not comply with required extensions at top and bottom.

Social Hall

- Pairs of doors to social hall do not comply as open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access. At least one entry should comply.
- Stage is out of compliance as it does not allow access for disabled. Steps also are too narrow and have no handrails.
- Storage rooms used as classrooms are not ADA accessible.

Club Room

- Pair of doors to club room do not comply as open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access.

Kitchen (second floor)

- Layout is not ADA compliant for use by the disabled.
- Serving counter is not compliant. One counter should be accessible.

Restrooms (second floor)

- Men's restroom off club room.
 - Pair of doors from Club Room to restroom does not comply because open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access.
 - Pathway to restroom does not comply. Chair storage in hall restricts access.
 - Door to restroom does not comply.
 - Restroom layout does not comply.
- Women's restroom off back hall to Jackson room.
 - Door to restroom does not comply for access by disabled.
 - Restroom layout and fixtures do not comply.

Outdoor Hallway (second floor behind Social Hall)

- Pairs of doors at each end of balcony overlooking patio do not comply as open single leaf does not allow wheelchair access.
- Door to pastor's study does not comply for wheelchair access.

Recommendations:

- Public access into building including complying stalls in the parking lot and path of travel. The first ADA requirement addresses public access to buildings.
- Accessible directional signs.
- Accessibility to Sanctuary and patio area including access to Patio Room.
- Complying restrooms on second floor.
- Elevator accessibility upgrades.
- Door hardware to classrooms and offices.
- Replace existing drinking fountains with accessible drinking fountains.

CONGREGATIONAL AUDIT



of
***Disability Accessibility
& Inclusion***



www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc



Introduction

Congregational Audit of Disability Accessibility & Inclusion

This Congregational Audit of Disability Accessibility & Inclusion was prepared by the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) leadership team, in consultation with the Presbyterian Church (USA) Disability Consultants. Learn more about PDC and the Disability Consultants at www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc.

The Audit is intended to assist a congregation in taking seriously the call for the church to be the full embodiment of the household of God and a “house of prayer” for all peoples (in this instance persons who have a disability). As approximately 19% of any given population has some type of disabling condition, the issues represented by this Audit affect more congregational members than we would typically think. Some persons have disabilities, but because their disability is not visible to the eye (i.e. hearing impairment, MS, chronic fatigue syndrome, etc.), they may be under our radar. Sometimes persons with disabilities are regular worshippers, yet have not been invited into the social network and active involvement in the life of the congregation. Some persons may be hesitant to request special accommodations because of the desire to not appear needy or because of embarrassment. Families, with a member having a disability, are also affected in major ways by the church’s welcome or inattention to the family member with a disability. Parents may not bring their child with a disability to church because they may be uncertain as to the receptivity of the congregation or the logistics that require them to be with their child rather than participating in worship or other ministries of the church. Physical and attitudinal barriers may prevent children and/or

adults and their families from experiencing a full life of faith. Unless intentional efforts are made to ensure that congregations are fully welcoming and inclusive of persons with disabilities (or any other vulnerable or marginalized peoples), we may remain unaware of the ways that our buildings and approaches to ministry exclude persons.

Secondly, this Audit is intended to help congregations pinpoint specific areas for present and future concentration of effort. Each faith community is different and the steps to increased accessibility and inclusion will be different based on the disabilities represented in your congregation, your ministry endeavors and your particular house of worship. An Audit can help assess where your congregation is currently and where you can most effectively take steps to become more inclusive. The Audit is designed with suggested resources (endnotes) to help in implementation plans. Many of these resources are available from the PC(USA).

We suggest that this Audit be a tool for conversation and ministry review by a variety of persons within your congregation. Good accessibility and intentional efforts for inclusion benefit everyone. The ramp, initially designed for wheelchair users, can also be used by parents pushing a stroller and by persons making heavy deliveries. Remember that architectural accessibility is only a first step.

Don’t try to make all the changes at once. Some ideas can be implemented easily and some become longer-range goals. Select the most important issues to tackle, those that will bring the biggest benefit. Complete the audit every year, chart your progress and celebrate your progress toward full inclusion.

If you have questions about the Audit or implementing the actions you would like to take, please contact the PHEWA Office at 1-888-728-7228 x5800. Our Disability Concerns Consultants are also available to help:

Rev. Raymond Meester
Consultant for hearing
(402) 477-3401
Raymond@HeritagePres.org

Rev. Sue Montgomery
Consultant for mobility/accessibility
(814) 797-1226
suemontgomery@windstream.net

Rev. Rick Roderick
Consultant for visual disabilities
(502)423-8195
richard@iglou.com

Elder Milton Tyree
Consultant for developmental disabilities
(502) 429-6244
miltontyree@bellsouth.net

May the words “welcoming to all” ring true in the PC(USA)!

Introduction *(continued)*



Recommendations for Completing this Audit:

- 1. Appoint a Task Force.** This task force should be comprised of several persons with disabilities who are part of your congregation (or outside your congregation if necessary), as well as a staff person, an elder, someone involved on the property committee, and another individual or two who has interest and enthusiasm for this endeavor (possibly a family member of a person with a disability or a professional in some disability-related field).
- 2. Study the policy,** “Living Into the Body of Christ: Towards Full Inclusion of People with Disabilities,” using the study guide that follows the policy. The Task Force is encouraged to invite other people to participate in this aspect of their work. While studying the document is optional, by doing so, the Task Force will become acquainted with the recommendations for the wider church and the PC(USA)’s commitment.
- 3. Review the Audit and note the different persons/ministries who might give input** on the various issues. While it would be easy for several people to complete the Audit quickly, it will be more effective for the Task Force to use this as an opportunity to see the work as ministry. It will also increase congregational commitment when it becomes time to implement plans.

For example, the clerk of session and church staff may have the best information of who in your congregation has a disability, the type of disability, and what ministries persons are involved in. The director of children’s ministry will be able to provide the names and number of children with special needs and how the children are integrated into worship, church school classes and activities.
- 4. Have conversations with persons with disabilities in your congregation** to hear their experiences and to get their perspective on what actions would have the greatest impact for them and others with disabilities. Don’t assume what would be best for others. Ask, listen and engage them in this process. There is a saying in the disability community, “Nothing about us without us!” Involving persons with disabilities in this Audit is an act of inclusion.
- 5. Have conversations with family members of persons with disabilities** to hear their experiences within your congregation and to hear their perspectives and ideas for increasing inclusion.
- 6. Complete the audit.**
- 7. Celebrate the ways that you are already welcoming and inclusive congregation.** You might like to write up some stories for your church newsletter or website highlighting these things. PHEWA is always on the lookout for congregational stories. They become models of ministry for the wider church.
- 8. Review the resources provided in the End Notes following the Audit,** and contact persons in your congregation with particular expertise in disability issues (persons with disabilities, family members, caregivers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, special education teachers, disability specialists, etc.) for further resourcing. You will also want to research organizations in your community that could help you to address the issues you have identified.
- 9. Determine the three most crucial accessibility and inclusion areas** that you will address first. You might also want to identify several areas to be addressed in future years. Prioritize a list of action steps and make recommendations to the session. Note: don’t try to do it all at once but build a solid foundation for sustainable ministry with persons with disabilities.
- 10. Consider asking that the Task Force become an ongoing ministry** of the church to keep abreast on issues related to disability and assisting other ministry areas in implementing plans within their program area.

Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) would love to hear about your church's experience with this Audit and your progress in attaining your goals.

In deep appreciation for your faithful service,
PDC Leadership Team





A Congregational Audit of Disability

Accessibility & Inclusion

This audit was produced by Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA).

Visit PDC and PHEWA online at www.pcusa.org/phewa.

Contact: PHEWA, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396

Our Commitment to the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Leadership

Our church's leadership has made a commitment to be intentional in our welcome and inclusion of persons with disabilities.¹

Yes No Action Needed

We have developed a Disability Task Force to keep issues related to the welcome and inclusion of persons with disabilities on our congregation's radar and to strategize with various ministry areas as appropriate.²

Our congregation receives periodic disability awareness training. Our pastor(s), staff and congregational leaders are urged to attend and to use the awareness gained in carrying out their respective ministries.³

A group within our congregation is studying the 2006 GA policy statement, "Living into the Body of Christ," and the accompanying study guide and will inform the congregation of insights gleaned and actions taken by our congregation in this regard.⁴

We invite persons with disabilities to help us assess our building and ministries for barriers to participation. We take seriously such perspectives and engage these persons in setting the plans and priorities for removing barriers.⁵

We are committed to a ministry with persons with disabilities, rather than ministry to persons with disabilities.

We encourage persons with disabilities to share their gifts and skills through the various ministries of our church and support their involvement in these ministries.⁶ Persons with disabilities serve as...

- Greeters and ushers?
- Liturgists or lay readers?
- Choir members, soloists, musicians?
- Teachers or presenters?
- Members of congregational committees?
- Members of outreach opportunities?
- Church officers?
- Staff and pastoral positions?
- Other: _____

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Our personnel policies include employment and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.⁷

Yes

No

Action Needed

Worship

Our greeters/ushers are instructed regarding appropriate ways in which to interact with and anticipate the needs of individuals with a variety of disabilities.⁸

Our preaching and teaching is positive in the portrayal of persons with disabilities and of their contributions, not just their needs; scripture related to miraculous healings is taught and preached with sensitivity to those who are living with disabilities and their family members.⁹

At least once a year our congregation observes a Disability Inclusion Sunday (Access Sunday) focused on lifting up disability-related issues and our intention to be a church where persons with disabilities and their families find true inclusion and participation.¹⁰

Our pastoral staff is sensitive to adapting the administration of the sacraments to persons with various disabilities. Individuals are consulted as to what will be best for their situation rather than assumptions made on their behalf.¹¹

We use unscented candles and have gluten-free bread and juice available for the Lord's Supper.¹²

We periodically remind our congregation about allergies and encourage them to refrain from wearing perfume, after-shave lotions and scented deodorants or have designated a "scent-free" area for the 15% of the population who has some type of chemical sensitivity.

Our pastoral staff is committed to assisting persons with disabilities (including those with cognitive disabilities) in becoming church members.¹³

Ministry Programs

When planning congregational activities, we make every effort to consider how to make the activity inclusive of our friends with disabilities and extend "reasonable accommodations."

We station greeters at main entrances to assist persons in-and-out of cars or para-transportation and in-and-out of buildings back to their transportation.

If a member of our congregation becomes disabled, we stand ready to be of assistance in locating needed government and community resources.¹⁴



	Yes	No	Action Needed
We don't expect family members to take the lead in ministering to their family member with a disability unless they volunteer. ¹⁵	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialized ministries are designed only when all attempts at mainstreaming have been exhausted and when deemed essential to meeting the needs of the specific individual with a disability. In these cases particular care is also taken to finding other inclusive ways to involve these individuals in the life of our congregation. ¹⁶	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We offer training/consultation to our church school teachers to assist them with issues they encounter in teaching children with disabilities. ¹⁷	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We train members to serve as church companions/peer tutors to assist individuals with disabilities who need one-on-one assistance. ¹⁸	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We recognize that parents and siblings of persons with disabilities may carry a heavy load and our congregation seeks to provide practical support and respite care as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have educational resources in our library about disability awareness and various disabling conditions. ¹⁹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We use our website to share our commitment to inclusion of persons with disabilities and to provide visitors with information about accessibility that might enhance or diminish their participation. ²⁰	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have reviewed our church's emergency procedures and worked out various scenarios to meet the needs of persons with disabilities which an emergency situation might require. We also stand ready to help members of our congregation with practical service in case of a personal or community-wide disaster. ²¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We attempt to discover where persons with disabilities live in our community and extend an invitation to them to attend our church. ²²	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fellowship			
We endeavor to get to know each person with a disability and to involve them in the social network of our congregation. ²³	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We communicate our willingness to assist persons with disabilities with transportation needs to church services and activities, and facilitate those arrangements if appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At church meals, we ask our friends with disabilities if they would like assistance and how they would like to be assisted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	Yes	No	Action Needed
We understand that guide/helper/service dogs must be allowed to accompany their owner everywhere they go (including eating areas). ²⁴	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We maintain regular contact with our “members at home” to keep them connected with our community of faith and to minister to their spiritual needs. ²⁵	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Our Commitment to Accessible Communication

Our church provides, or will provide on request, the following in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio-taped, electronic materials, etc.):²⁶

- Bibles or scripture readings
- Worship bulletins (including announcements)
- Hymnals/song sheets
- Sermons
- Educational materials/handouts

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We provide/are willing to provide sign-language interpretation for worship and other ministry events when needed/requested.²⁷

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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We provide adequate lighting, directed to the face of the speaker, for persons who read lips, and adequate general lighting, throughout the building.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

We have a good quality sound system.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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We provide assisted listening devices for worship, Christian education classes and small group meetings.²⁸

Our Commitment to Architectural Accessibility

Contact the **Dept. of Justice ADA Technical Assistance Program** at **(800)514-0301 VM** or **(800)514-0383 TTY** for state specific information and technical assistance.

Parking

We have assessed our church’s membership to identify who would benefit from accessible parking and have added additional spaces for visitors.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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We have accessible parking spaces (9 feet wide plus 6 feet wide access aisles) for cars and at least one space for a lift-equipped van (9 feet wide plus 8 feet wide access aisles and 98 inches of vertical clearance).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Yes	No	Action Needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The paths of travel are at least 38 inches wide for a wheelchair, with a slope of no more than 5% (paved surfaces preferable).

Curb cuts are available on church property sidewalks.

Ramps

Ramps, longer than 6 feet, have sturdy railings on both sides. The handrails are smooth, undecorated and installed 34-38 inches above the ramp surface.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The ramps have a non-skid slope no greater than 1 foot rise in 12 feet and a width of no less than 36 inches.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Stairs

Stairs have a non-slip surface and slightly raised abrasive strip on the top step to warn people where stairs begin.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Stairs have rails on at least one side (both sides preferable), with extensions beyond the top and bottom stairs.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Entrances/Doors/Doorways

Clear signage directs members and visitors to accessible entrances/restrooms.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A "drop off" zone has been established near building entrances.

We have electronically operated external doors or provide greeters at accessible building entrance(s).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Door handles are no higher than 48 inches and operable with a closed fist (lever handles or push bars preferred) and can be opened by exerting no more than 5 lbs pressure (interior doors).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Door openings are at least 36 inches wide and at least 32 inches clear.

Clear passageways are at least 38 inches wide.

Sanctuary, Fellowship & Classrooms

"Pew cuts" for persons with wheelchairs, service dogs, and/or walkers are scattered throughout the sanctuary/classroom areas so that persons with disabilities can sit with their family/friends. (Pew cuts can be easily made by shortening several pews by 36 inches).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------



There is room at the back of the sanctuary/classroom for those individuals who **prefer** to sit in the back or who need to move around. Folding chairs are available for family and friends to join them in this location.

Yes	No	Action Needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Seating space is available, with extra legroom, for people who have casts, use walkers, etc.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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There is wheelchair access to the communion table and chancel area.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The choir area allows wheelchair users to participate.

The pulpit is accessible.

The carpeting is low-pile and tightly woven so wheelchairs and walkers can be easily used.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Our meeting rooms have good acoustics.

Elevators

There is an elevator to insure access to the sanctuary and all major program areas, if the building requires it.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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There are both visible and verbal/audible door opening/closing and floor indicators.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The call buttons/controls are no higher than 42 inches from the floor, with Braille lettering.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Restrooms

Pictograms or symbols identify gendered restrooms and accessibility symbols identify accessible restrooms (using Braille or raised characters recommended).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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There is at least one accessible bathroom on each floor (these may be unisex and labeled as family restrooms for multiple use).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The accessible stall is at least 36 inches wide, with 48 inches clear depth from door closing to front of commode, and has a 32 inch door that swings outward. The stall door is operable with a closed fist, inside and out.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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There are grab bars, one adjacent to the commode and one behind the commode, to facilitate transfer from a wheelchair.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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There is a sink with 29 inches of clearance from floor to bottom of the sink that is operable with lever-type handles.

Yes

No

Action Needed

Towel dispensers are no higher than 40 inches from the floor.

Telephones

There is at least one phone with push button and volume controls, which is no higher than 48 inches from the floor.

The following disabilities are represented in our congregation (if a person has multi-disabilities, list them in each category applicable):

NUMBER:	Children	Youth	Adults	Elders	Deacons	Pastors/Staff
Limited mobility						
Visual impairment						
Hearing impairment						
Speech impairment						
Cognitive disability						
Learning disability						
Environmental impairment						
Known hidden disability						

ENDNOTES

- 1 The National Organization on Disability has developed three principles of commitment for churches to either use or adapt regarding being intentional in their welcome and inclusion of persons with disabilities. See www.nod.org, click on "Religious Participation," then click on "Accessible Congregations Campaign."
- 2 See article, "Creating a Task Force on Disability Issues for Your Church," on the PHEWA/PDC web site.
- 3 There are a number of ways that disability awareness training can be offered. Begin by asking congregation members with a variety of disabilities, family members, and disability-related professionals (i.e. special education teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, caregivers, etc.) to discuss what type of training to provide and who might be presenters for that training. If your Presbytery has a Disability Awareness Task Force, seek their advice. Contact other disability-related professionals in your community if additional assistance or speakers are needed (i.e. Independent Living Councils, The ARC,



etc.). The video, “The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities,” can be borrowed from the PHEWA office. “Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities,” a publication of the United Spinal Association can be downloaded at www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf. The book *Different Members One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God’s Family* (Witherspoon Press) and *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities* (National Organization on Disability) have a wide variety of information which could be used in a disability awareness training. While simulation exercises were once thought to be a good way to help able-bodied persons feel what it is like to have a disability, that is no longer felt to be true. Simulations can create more misunderstandings. Instead, focus on having persons with disabilities who can share about their lives and experiences. “Developing Awareness about Persons with Disabilities in Children, Youth or Adults,” and a bulletin insert with some general guidelines about interacting with persons with disabilities are also available on the PHEWA/PDC site.

- 4 Download the policy statement and study guide from the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 5 See “Advocacy: A Young Person’s Perspective” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 6 See chapter 3, “Recognizing the Gifts of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Mental Retardation, Mental Illness and Other Brain-Based Illnesses,” *Different Members One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God’s Family* and “Varieties of Gifts – One Body, One Spirit,” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 7 See chapter 6, “In Service to the Church – Embracing Our Workers,” *Different Members One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God’s Family*.
- 8 Disability awareness training is highly recommended for ushers and greeters (see endnote #2 for ideas).
- 9 See article, “Sermon Tips and Ideas,” on PHEWA/PDC website. *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* (Abingdon Press) is an excellent resource for articulating theological and biblical interpretations of gospel narratives in a way that is sensitive to persons with disabilities.
- 10 Each year the Presbyterian Church (USA) designates a date to celebrate our commitment to inclusion. PDC provides materials to aid congregations in their planning. Worship, education and advocacy materials are included. These materials can be downloaded from the website or requested from the PHEWA office.
- 11 See “Stories from Celebration of Sacraments,” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 12 See “Making Communion Elements Accessible for People with Allergies,” on the PHEWA/PDC web site.
- 13 See “The Word in Action,” about a man with Down Syndrome, receiving membership into his church on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 14 If your congregation has a Parish Nurse, that individual will know appropriate community resources. In most places in the country, the Crisis Clinic now offers assistance to persons with disabilities, their family members and friends through their 2-1-1 Community Information Line. Call 2-1-1 or go to their website at www.crisisclinic.org/disability.html for more information.
- 15 Read “Advocacy: A Mother’s Perspective,” on the PHEWA/PDC website.

- 16 See “Lost and Found: An Integration Story” and “Curriculum Adaptation: Special Approaches for Special Needs” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 17 A good resource is *A Drama of Love: A Christian Educator’s Guide to Creating Classes Where Everyone Belongs* by Judith Mullet and Paula Snyder. Available at <http://tinyurl.com/5jxgt> or contact AdNet at 1-877-214-9838. (As stated above, however, we do not recommend “simulation exercises”)
- 18 Read “Bring on the Church Coach!” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 19 See the bibliography of resources on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 20 The Graphic Artists Guild Foundation has made disability access symbols available for downloading from their website, <http://www.gag.org/resources/das.php>.
- 21 See the PHEWA/PDC website for “When Emergency Strikes...A Call to Care,” “Creating a Personal Support Network,” and “Church Emergency Information Form.”
- 22 The National Organization on Disability (NOD) has helpful suggestions as to how to locate people in your community who have disabilities. See www.nod.org, click on “Information and Resources,” and then click on “Locating People with Disabilities in Your Community.”
- 23 See the PHEWA/PDC website for “The Household of God: Practicing God’s Economy,” “Building Relationships of Mutuality,” and “Circles of Friends: Building Community with a Person who has a Disability.”
- 24 See “Guide Dogs” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 25 See “Friends at Home” on the PHEWA/PDC website.
- 26 See “Alternative Formats, a Tool for Full Inclusion,” “Make Your Church More Accessible” and “Preparing a Church Bulletin for Braille.” Also see chapter 2, “Communication Access” in *Different Members One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God’s Family*.
- 27 The entire worship service, including announcements, liturgical text, prayers and sermon, should be scripted and given to a sign language interpreter several days before the day of worship. Persons who are deaf and sign interpreters should be consulted as to the best placement of the interpreter and seating for those using this service.
- 28 See “Assistive Listening Devices” on the PHEWA/PDC website.



**PRESBYTERIANS FOR
DISABILITY CONCERNS
NETWORK**

One of ten networks of the
Presbyterian Health, Education and
Welfare Association (PHEWA)

www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc