

Disability Awareness



Sunday

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Creating An Inclusive Environment

Disability Awareness Sunday celebrates “the gifts and graces of persons with disabilities and calls the Church and society to fully include persons with disabilities.” The United Methodist Church promises “open doors,” but many people with disabilities and their families find barriers to full life in the church.

All churches are asked to receive a Special Offering on **Disability Awareness Sunday**. The gifts fund grants to help Western PA congregations with accessibility projects that allow all people to attend worship and other church activities as they seek to enrich their faith and establish Christian community.

Another way to observe **Disability Awareness Sunday** is to take a tour of your church facilities. United Methodist churches are required to perform an accessibility audit each year. But it’s important to also consider programs and the congregation. Is your church accessible and welcoming to those with mobility issues? Do you provide amplifiers for the hearing impaired? Would a family with an autistic child or someone with Down’s Syndrome feel welcome? Does your church school use methods that could help children with different learning styles or abilities feel welcome?

The spiritual resiliency necessary to overcome limitations is empowered by God’s love, experienced through the supportive caring and mutual faith of a church congregation. Every door we open allows more people to freely participate in the worship of our Lord.

The Western PA Conference Disability Concerns Committee administers the grants to help churches fund accessibility projects. To apply, a church should send a letter of intent on church letterhead, with a brief description of the project and the anticipated cost and time of completion. When the project is complete a second letter confirming completion must be sent to the committee. The committee will reimburse the church 10% of the cost, up to a cap of \$1000 generally. The request can be sent to the committee chair, the Rev. Debbie Hills at PO Box 263, West Springfield, PA 16443.

*Jackie Campbell,
News & Information Specialist
Western PA Conference*



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