

# **The Commission in Ministry with Persons with Disabilities**

## **Introduction:** The Accessibility Audit for Churches

Every church should expect to have members with disabilities. In order to better serve the entire congregation, the church can use the Accessibility Audit to determine if their building or buildings have architectural or physical barriers that restrict or prevent anyone from having full access to the ministries of the church.

Accessibility is more than a ramp, parking space, or a restroom. Accessibility means more than eliminating physical barriers. It means also eliminating communication and attitudinal barriers. The greatest barrier that exists in a church is attitude. Unfortunately, there is no adequate way in which to measure or identify that kind of barrier. A church seeking to be totally accessible needs to be aware that attitude barriers do exist.

The Accessibility Audit can enable each local church to discover where these barriers exist and what can be done to remove them.

When church facilities are used by persons in the community (i.e. preschool programs, day care centers, adult day care programs, etc.) the facilities are considered to be a public accommodation and must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Accessibility Audit can be used for all churches regardless of size. *Few churches will be able to eliminate all barriers.* The church should develop a plan to reduce barriers that keep anyone from participating in the life of the church.

***The Commission in Ministry with Persons with Disabilities*** will work with you to be supportive of persons with disabilities and speak out for their rights. We can assist you and your congregation to increase awareness and sensitivity to the needs, gifts and interests of persons with disabilities and their families in your community. We continue to urge you to work prayerfully and diligently toward barrier free accessibility in churches, being aware that full accessibility applies not only to physical capabilities but also to limitation of hearing, sight or mental abilities. We want to help you help those whose ability to learn in the usual setting is compromised. Just ask us, we're in the Conference Journal, or contact your district office for the Commission representative for your area.

## IS OUR CHURCH ACCESSIBLE?

Please check off those that you have in place at your church

### **ACCESSIBLE PARKING**

- Close to the entrance
- Clearly marked sign
- Level surface, paved
- Clearly marked access aisle 60 wide x 96" long for vans
- 1 accessible space to 25 total spaces

### **PASSENGER LOADING ZONES**

- Have you provided a passenger load zone?
- Is its access aisle a minimum of 60" wide and 20' long
- Is the loading zone's surface level and even?
- Can passengers get in and out of vehicles sheltered from weather?

### **CURB RAMPS**

- Is the ramp's width, not including the flared sides a minimum of 36 inches
- Is the slope no steeper than 1:20 (1 ft rise to 20ft)

### **ACCESSIBLE RAMPS AND CUTS**

- Maximum incline of 1 inch per foot
- If rise is more than 6 inches or is longer than 72 inches, does it have a handrail on each side that extends the length of the ramp
- Ramp has non-slip surface
- Ramp at least 42" usable width between handrails
- Is there a level landing (as wide as the ramp & at least 60" long) at the top and bottom of each ramp and each ramp run, and a resting platform every 30'?



### **ACCESSIBLE DOORS/THRESHOLDS**

- Doors at least 36" wide
- Threshold height maximum 1/2 inch indoors and 3/4 inch exterior
- Lever type handles or automatic openers

### **ASSEMBLY SEATING**

- Aisles at least 48" wide Wheelchair seating spaces 30" x 48" distributed throughout
- Is the chancel platform accessible via ramp?
- Are people who are physically challenged encouraged to be liturgical leaders in the worship service?
- Is the choir loft accessible to wheelchair users
- Is the communion accessible?
- Is the Sunday School area accessible?

### **STAIRS**

- Handrails on both sides
- Non-slip surface
- Minimum of 44" wide
- Well Lighted Elevator or lift

### **FLOORS**

- Smooth, hard, slip-resistant
- Non-glare finish surface
- Tightly woven carpet

### **WALKS**

- 48" minimum width
- Firm, non-slip surface
- Well lighted and marked
- Grates-3/8"-maximum-holes

### **CORRIDORS**

- 72" minimum width
- Handrails on both sides

**\_\_\_ RESTROOMS**

- \_\_\_ At least one wheelchair accessible restroom (may be unisex)
- \_\_\_ Lever type faucets
- \_\_\_ At least 5'x5' clear floor space
- \_\_\_ Grab bars on both sides of stall(s) 29" clear space below lavatory

**\_\_\_ SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**

- \_\_\_ Handicapped symbol displayed
- \_\_\_ High-contrast color Letters raised or recessed 4 1/2' to 5' above the floor

**\_\_\_ COMMUNICATION**

- \_\_\_ Large print bulletins, hymnals & other worship or study materials
- \_\_\_ Cassette tapes of service available
- \_\_\_ Interpreters for deaf persons
- \_\_\_ Church School & Worship Materials in Braille
- \_\_\_ Hearing assist devices for the hard of hearing
- \_\_\_ Adequate lighting for reading and on speaker

**\_\_\_ TELEPHONE**

- \_\_\_ At least one phone with volume control 48" maximum height from floor
- \_\_\_ Have a TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf)

**\_\_\_ ATTITUDE**

- \_\_\_ Accepting/Caring/Loving
- \_\_\_ Special classes when needed
- \_\_\_ Include persons with disabilities
- \_\_\_ Hold training sessions for greeters & others to help them realize the challenges of the disabled.

**\_\_\_ USHERS TRAINED TO WELCOME**

- \_\_\_ Be friendly and helpful
- \_\_\_ Be prepared to provide seating
- \_\_\_ Know how to handle an emergency

If you had two (2) or more no answers in any category, you are not considered accessible in this area of your facility. Look at ways your facility might become more accessible.

**How is the accessibility health of your parsonage?**

- Can a person in a wheelchair park and easily access the parsonage? Yes \_\_\_
- There is at least one outside entry to the ground floor that has no steps, or is ramped. Yes \_\_\_
- Hallways are at least 36 inches wide. Yes \_\_\_
- All doorways are at least 36 inches wide. Yes \_\_\_ If not all, how many are 36 inches wide? \_\_\_
- There is at least one bathroom on the ground floor and accessible. Yes \_\_\_
- There is at least one bedroom on the ground floor and accessible. Yes \_\_\_
- The laundry facility is on the ground floor. Yes \_\_\_
- Can you navigate the kitchen in a wheelchair? Yes \_\_\_
- Is the stove accessible from a wheelchair? Yes \_\_\_
- Is the refrigerator able to be opened from a wheelchair (no obstacles in the way)? Yes \_\_\_
- Do you have a deck or patio that is accessible so that a person in a wheelchair or with limited mobility could easily enjoy the outdoors? Yes \_\_\_
- Have you tried to navigate around your parsonage in a wheelchair? Yes \_\_\_

What building modifications could you make or are planning to make in the next 18 months to assist in accessibility?