

# Money and Ideas

Creative Approaches to  
Congregational Access



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A publication of the Alban Institute and the National Organization on Disability. This booklet was made possible by support from the Scaife Family Foundation and Lilly Endowment Inc.

## The Alban Institute

An ecumenical, interfaith organization founded in 1974, the Alban Institute gathers, generates, and provides practical knowledge across denominational lines through action research, books and periodicals, consulting and training services, and educational seminars for those involved with congregations. The Alban Department of Research and Resource Development seeks to identify the most urgent questions facing congregations and quickly mobilize resources to respond.

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## National Organization on Disability

Founded in 1982, the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) promotes the acceptance and full participation, in all aspects of life, of 54 million Americans with physical, sensory, or mental disabilities. The N.O.D. Religion and Disability Program is an interfaith effort urging local congregations, national denominational groups, and seminaries to remove architectural, communication and attitudinal barriers. Publications available through the program include *That All May Worship*, *Loving Justice*, and *From Barriers to Bridges*.

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# Introduction

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law on July 26, 1990, ensures that 54 million children and adults with disabilities receive equal protection under the law and an equal opportunity to participate in society. The ADA has posed a challenge to congregations across the United States. In a few places this challenge has been legal. In Texas, for example, ADA requirements apply to congregations. More frequently, however, it has been a moral challenge or a challenge of faith. Religious congregations must now envision a level of inclusion that is based on their own deepest beliefs in the wholeness of every person before God and the universality of God's love. If God presents no barrier to inclusion, how can the House of God?

Responding to this new vision of welcome and hospitality, each congregation has been encouraged to undertake a somewhat different journey. Some congregations have undertaken this journey almost without a perceptible decision. As they have planned and built new structures, they have found that access for people with disabilities has become part of standard architectural procedure: designated parking spaces, grade level entrances, elevators between levels, pew cuts, and accessible restrooms. For other congregations, the journey has been more difficult. Renovations have required much planning and many difficult decisions. The journey has been especially daunting for congregations in historic buildings or buildings whose front steps or steps up to the bimah, chancel, or altar are interwoven in their histories and their understandings of who God has called them to be.

For many congregations, one key issue on the journey to accessibility has been the availability of resources, particularly the availability of funds. How do we find the money to build a ramp for those of us with physical disabilities? How can we afford the services of a sign language interpreter for those of us who cannot hear? For some congregations such questions present a frustrating barrier. For others they present an invigorating opportunity.

We hope this booklet will assist congregations in their struggle to identify resources for accessibility. We want to help them, but not by telling them “how to do it.” Instead, we want to free up their creativity by telling brief stories of how 50 congregations have actually become more welcoming to people with disabilities. Telling these stories doubtless will cause some congregations to think more creatively about raising funds as they work to identify and remove barriers. Equally possible, in reading these stories some may conclude: “that wouldn’t work here but this would.” Or, “if they can do that, then certainly we could do this!”

It would be a mistake to draw one unified message from the huge diversity of stories that we heard in our own journey of writing this booklet. The stories are collected from a great diversity of congregations: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, rural, urban, suburban, Southern, Northern, Western, and Midwestern. These stories tell us that God leads each congregation on a different path, even if those paths lead to the same destination.

Yet, while these stories do not speak a single message there are many common themes. Those of us who work at the Alban Institute read these stories as part of the larger story of American congregations; the challenges of welcoming people with disabilities are the same challenges that congregations face in welcoming the newcomer or stranger. Congregations find it difficult to turn from serving those they know—or think they know—to serving the stranger. If we listen to them, strangers—whether of race, politics, income, or disability—can show us how to transform our congregations into places of welcome. And by asking for their advice and input, we honor their experience and receive some common-sense solutions to nagging problems. For a Christian church, a Jewish temple, or an Islamic mosque, this is not merely a part of good organizational practice—though it is that—but rather a core part of living out the story of faith.

Creativity in finding resources for accessibility is similar to creativity in finding resources for other purposes. While many congregations find themselves with a vision of ministry beyond their means, the story does not end there. If we begin by treating one another with dignity and

respect, if we honor all of God's people in a spirit of genuine friendship, and if we are willing to think creatively and act collaboratively, the money and ideas will be found. A large portion of the stories in this booklet confirms this fact: new and unexpected approaches—often audaciously new—can uncover new resources.

The Alban Institute, at the request of the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) and with the generous support of the Scaife Family Foundation, accepted this project as an opportunity to survey American congregations a decade after the ADA became law. The short stories are but snippets of the rich narratives that were collected through the work of the Rev. Ric Justice who did the basic research for this booklet and for whom this was a labor of love. Alban research associate Claudia Greer oversaw the project and compiled the resource recommendations. Crystal Devine designed the booklet. Ginny Thornburgh and Lorraine Thal of N.O.D. provided both the original concept for the project and editorial support for the “Money and Ideas” booklet.

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Summer, 2001

# Stories

Faced with the difficulty of raising money for accessibility, congregations around the country have learned to think in creative ways. While they have been creative about raising money, they have also rethought what funds were necessary and how to approach the overall task of welcoming children and adults who have disabilities.

## Put Yourself in the Shoes—or Chair—of Another

Education builds support. A small, urban congregation in California began an accessibility campaign following the visit of a person who uses a wheelchair. On a congregational work day, they built a ramp with donated materials. They suggest putting yourself “in the shoes, or chair, of another to see what changes are necessary.” This advice can be followed experientially by, for example, inviting members to try to access the building using a wheelchair.

## Dedicating Accessibility

A key way to make accessibility integral to the life of a faith community is to embody it liturgically. A large synagogue in Ohio has worked toward accessibility with a creative combination of fund-raising strategies. The synagogue addresses remaining attitudinal barriers by ongoing education and involving the whole congregation in dedication services for each accommodation.

## Nurture Creativity with a Think Tank

Maintaining an innovative attitude and a creative spirit is crucial to the success of any venture. A new, suburban Presbyterian congregation of about 90 members in Georgia envisions forming a think tank that would foster outreach to people with disabilities, identify special needs, and suggest creative responses. The pastor says, “We are a young congregation with modest growth but with a heart to be used in this area.”



## **Designing Accessibility—Professionally**

Congregations in older buildings often feel caught between the need for accessibility and the need to preserve the architectural integrity of their buildings. Through the assistance of a member who is a building engineer, one 400-member, suburban congregation in Texas was able to prepare an architecturally compatible design for a ramp and—with the construction expertise of other members—install the ramp for much less than market cost.

## **Ask and It Might Be Given**

Sometimes congregations underestimate the power of directly asking for what they need. The highlight of the church year at a Greek Orthodox Church in Texas is the annual festival. Their building was inaccessible to persons with physical disabilities, so they conducted a special offering to build ramps and adapt restrooms. Within a week, the cost was covered. While congregational resources vary, no congregation should underestimate the power of asking directly for what is needed.

## **Bonding the Community Together—By Issuing Bonds**

A small town Disciples of Christ congregation in West Virginia knew that—in their circumstances—it would take a long time to raise the needed funds for architectural access. They quickly raised the money by selling five-year low interest bonds to members. This enabled them to make their entire building ADA-compliant with ramps, elevators, large-print materials, and assistive listening devices. People with disabilities now lead worship, teach classes, and serve sacraments.

## **Scouts to the Rescue**

A small United Methodist church in Pennsylvania needed a substantial wooden ramp to allow full access to its entire two-story building. Lacking the funds, they turned to a local Boy Scout troop and found that a community service project is a requirement for scouts to achieve the rank of Eagle. The boy scouts raised the money and then used the project as a

chance to train their members in building a wooden structure—at no cost to the church itself.

## **New Congregation Goes Public**

Congregations that do not have their own buildings have the option of renting already accessible facilities. After beginning its ministry a few years ago, an Illinois congregation continues to meet in an accessible public school auditorium. The church finds it can rent for less than the cost of owning, allowing it to use its resources to develop a more effective ministry.

## **Accessibility as Your Legacy**

Money is often available through memorial gifts that could not be raised through regular annual fund drives—especially if congregations are specific about their needs. The pastor of a 300-member, Presbyterian congregation in Iowa reported that his congregation recently has added pew cuts for wheelchair accommodation, a ramp, and an elevator. Accommodations were paid for by a memorial gift and donations through the church's Trustees Fund.

## **Go Beyond Your Own Building**

Creative congregations do not let the walls of their building limit their approaches to accessibility. A Presbyterian congregation in Georgia sponsored an extension congregation in a local assisted living community, through a ministry that involves all of the components of a conventional congregation. Because the facility houses only about 25 persons, most of whom could not easily travel to services, this arrangement has made possible a great ministry that would have been very difficult otherwise.

## **Being Inclusive as a Priority**

Nothing can be more powerful than a strong sense of purpose. The 24-year-old building of a 240-member congregation in Florida now has ADA-compliant restrooms, ramps, pew cuts, and large-print materi-

als—all of which have been paid off quickly from yearly budgets, without special funding. Consequently, the church has attracted persons with disabilities and their families. What prompted them to make these improvements? Says the pastor: “That is our purpose: to include people.”

### **Raise Awareness with Disability Awareness Sunday**

A yearly observance in a California congregation of 110 members, Disability Awareness Sunday, has served to raise money for continuing accessibility improvements as they become evident. To enhance the giving on this special day, the church’s staff sends letters requesting funds for specific access projects. Since this is an integral part of the church year, it has been successful and is expected to continue raising the consciousness of congregational members.

### **New Beginnings Arise from the Ashes**

When a fire destroyed a rural Brethren church in Michigan, its 154 members imagined new possibilities arising from the ashes. The subsequent insurance payment was applied to building a structure that was largely accessible. The members rose above tragic despair, and above a desire to simply restore the status quo, to create a new structure that reflected their vision of a welcoming, inclusive church.

### **Raise It by Renting It**

Because 30 percent of the members belonging to a 350-member suburban church in Florida have disabilities, accessibility is a high priority. A few years ago, they agreed to rent the church’s upstairs area to a local AIDS outreach program. The revenue enabled them to build an elevator and make other improvements. This congregation believes it can accommodate people with any type of disability.

### **Congregation Takes It Personally**

The pastor of a 98-member Metropolitan Community church in California says that when it comes to accessibility, two simple things have

worked wonders. First, they address disability issues with individuals on a personal level. Rather than simply saying “We can help,” they ask, “What would help you most and make you most comfortable?” Second, the congregation has made accessibility a key component of their mission.

### **Extending Support to and through Extended Families**

An urban, largely African American congregation of 350 members in California meets in an old building that required ramps so that a group of older women who use wheelchairs could worship with their families. Money for this project was raised by special appeals sent to members and their extended families, as well as by bake sales and rummage sales.

### **Sweat and Elbow Grease Count, Too**

At times, hard work can make a bigger difference than money. When the need for greater accessibility became apparent after some members of a Texas-based Nazarene church experienced accidents, members of this large congregation organized themselves into work groups that built ramps, widened doors, rearranged pews, and replaced restroom stalls with curtains to allow for maneuvering wheelchairs and walkers. Members also raised money by organizing car washes, bake sales, and church dinners.

### **Placing Trust, Even When People Aren't Trustworthy**

Consider trust funds. The new lift installed in a 150-member, United Methodist church was financed by congregational gifts put into a trust fund. Although leaders in this Oregon-based congregation lost money because of a contractor's fraudulence, they dipped into the fund's principal and received a grant from the Annual Conference offices. In addition to the lift, accessible features of this church now include an audio loop, large-print hymnals, a sanctuary ramp, and accessible restrooms.

### **Making Accessibility Interest-ing**

A 200-member United Methodist congregation in Oregon installed an

elevator. It was financed after some church families made large gifts to an interest-earning Special Projects Account. As soon as the large gifts were given, the planning and execution of the project began. Members are now remodeling the restrooms for greater accessibility.

### **Persons with Disabilities Lead the Way**

A small town, 150-member Disciples of Christ congregation in Kentucky began building a ramp to accommodate members of short stature, as the steps and pews were difficult for them to negotiate. People of short stature led the way by contributing the seed money for the project. Gifts from the rest of the congregation then poured in to complete the payment for the ramp.

### **Raise Attendance and Accessibility at the Same Time**

A 480-member, urban Disciples of Christ church in Wyoming wasn't sure if it "needed" to be accessible, because there were no current members with disabilities attending. But after reading publications about accessibility, the board applied to the denomination for a loan to add handrails, elevators, and accessible restrooms. The loan was paid off in record time because more and more people who had not been able to attend came to worship and contributed.

### **Anonymous Kindness Counts**

When a pastor with disabilities was called to a small, rural United Methodist church in Arkansas, it was apparent that she would not be able to access the dais and the pulpit. On the Sunday following her appointment, she was surprised to find that a congregational member had taken the initiative, bought the supplies, and installed a sturdy handrail for her to use. This wonderful anonymous gift cost the congregation nothing.

### **Sometimes, You Just Have to Operate**

With an aging congregation and a large proportion of board members

who had disabilities, a Greek Orthodox congregation of 1,700 members in Rhode Island transferred money out of its operating budget to install ramps and make the restrooms accessible. While the funds were repaid into the operating budget within two years, members recognized that there are times when accessibility must be a high priority for any congregation.

## A Capital Idea

Consider capital campaigns. As more than 20 percent of this 400-member Disciples of Christ congregation in West Virginia have disabilities, accessibility became a pressing issue. Through an annual capital campaign aimed at improving the church, money was raised for pew cuts to accommodate wheelchairs, an elevator, and an audio loop system.

## What's in a Name?

The name of this small, California church, “Grace Inclusive,” bespeaks its commitment to include everyone. Relying on direct donations of money, materials, time, and talents, the congregation provides sound and projection systems, seating accommodations, and large print materials for persons with disabilities. With plans to construct their own building for community based programs, this church lives the values inherent in its name.

## The Scholarly Thing to Do

Believing that “each one of us has special needs,” an urban Metropolitan Community church in Iowa gives highest priority to making accessibility a reality for all persons. One approach it has used is to establish a scholarship fund for training a congregational member in American Sign Language. Other scholarship opportunities for someone with a disability may include training in Braille or in white cane travel.

## Lobby Your Landlord

If your congregation rents space and facilities from a larger congrega-

tion, find out if that rent money can be applied to accessibility improvements. Members of one small congregation are negotiating with the board of their “landlord” congregation for ramps to be installed and restrooms to be made ADA-compliant. Here, two congregations are partnering to share the accessibility costs so that each of them benefit.

## Access through Bequests

Bequeathing equipment to a congregation can be a loving legacy to those who share your disability. A Presbyterian church in Pennsylvania had ramps to the sanctuary, offices, and classrooms, but the downstairs fellowship hall could only be reached via stairs. When an elderly church member died, the family sold the member’s lift to the church for a nominal fee; another church member removed the lift from the home and installed it in the church without charge.

## Valuing Variety

A variety of methods were employed to make a 300-member independent congregation in California more accessible: the general church building fund paid for installing ramps and converting bathrooms; memorial gifts financed closed circuit monitors in some rooms and adaptive seating in the sanctuary; two members volunteered to share sign language interpreting duties at services and meetings. The variety of approaches seemed to spring from a particularly open attitude that values and welcomes all.

## Staying Grounded

With its ground-level original construction, the sanctuary, church offices, and classrooms of a small, Louisiana independent church are all accessible to people using wheelchairs and walkers. When the pastor’s wife needed to use a wheelchair, members who were building contractors donated the materials, labor, and expertise to build a concrete ramp to the fellowship hall.

## **Make It Your Mission**

Ministry to persons with disabilities is an integral part of a very large (over 10,000 members) Baptist church in California. They cannot imagine a congregation that would tolerate barriers to full participation in worship and service. Because this congregation has many people involved in many ministries, and because they quickly see the effects of their actions, they take a broad approach to fundraising. They have found it easy to raise money through classroom announcements, youth group activities, and a broad array of other group appeals and activities.

## **Pastor Bears the Burden**

When the pastor of a small, rural congregation in Mississippi realized that access to worship and classrooms was needed, he took it upon himself to buy the materials and build a small ramp from the parking lot to the building. He did the work by himself, and all costs were borne by him personally. While this approach only works in a small church with a skilled and generous pastor, it shows that clergy as well as laity can be directly involved in making congregations accessible and sets an example for others to follow.

## **Church Dinners Feed Disability Awareness**

The pastor of a small, Mississippi independent Baptist congregation insisted on making sanctuary seating and restrooms easily accessible. Through a series of church dinners, money was raised to pay for these improvements. Dinners provide opportunities to enjoy food and fellowship while raising awareness about both the needs of persons with disabilities and their potential to contribute to congregational life.

## **Public Partnerships Promote Accessibility**

A United Methodist congregation in California found its membership dwindling as the neighborhood changed, but a core group of dedicated members was able to make accessibility improvements by participating in city-sponsored programs for the homeless and for at-risk youth. These



members' participation entitled them to public funds, which were then applied to accessibility. The church has found new life by turning its focus to serving its diverse community.

### **Start Small to Get the Ball Rolling**

While many churches think they can't do anything for accessibility because they do not have the money for an elevator or a ramp, one Pennsylvania urban congregation took the reverse approach and started small. Church funds from the worship budget were used for large-print bibles, hymnals, and bulletins. As a result, people with visual impairments and their families appeared; with their appearance, offerings increased and attitudes improved. Inspired members then built a ramp, and now they have established a fund for a lift. The successes from small starts have led to greater awareness and increased access.

### **Lord's Acre Sale Yields Rich Harvest**

A small, rural congregation in Missouri started sponsoring a "Lord's Acre Sale" every October. Throughout the year, members do small projects (such as canning vegetables, sewing unique pieces, smoking hams) and donate the proceeds to the church. In October, these items are auctioned off after a harvest dinner celebration. In this way, the congregation raises several thousand dollars to meet the expenses of making the church more accessible.

### **Accessibility: One Stitch at a Time**

As the need for accessibility has grown in one small, aging, Arkansas congregation, so has the number of United Methodist women who gather weekly for quilting in the fellowship hall. Every week they add to the quilts, and now have standing orders from local merchants and others. Proceeds from quilt sales have purchased improved lighting, ramps, and large-print bibles and hymnals. Valuable by-products, of course, have been the friendships that have arisen out of this important venture.

## Simple Celebrations Fund Accessibility

To raise funds for an elevator, leaders of a mosque sponsored a series of dinners and celebrations away from their house of prayer; profits from tickets sold to the public for the dinners brought the needed funds. The elevator was especially important here because Muslim worship requires separate prayer areas for men and women. Women who were unable to walk upstairs can now ride to the second floor, where they can pray with other women.

## Festivals Fuel Disability Access

Numerous Greek Orthodox Churches sponsor annual “Greek Festivals,” which invite church members and residents of the surrounding community to enjoy Greek food, music, dance, and culture. Admission is charged, but all who participate feel they get their money’s worth. Some of the festival proceeds—from ticket sales and the sale of Greek food and handmade crafts—are used to build ramps, improve lighting and sound systems, and install elevators.

## Try Renting a Kid

One of the strongest forces in a 300-member, Arkansas church is its youth ministry. Every summer the congregation sponsors a “rent-a-kid” program, in which young people are “auctioned off” to do odd jobs for people in the community. The kids might clean up a yard and paint a fence, scrape and paint a house, or baby-sit. Money from this program has been used to widen restroom doors and purchase assistive listening devices, large-print materials, and a wheelchair.

## Holiday Appeals Help Accessibility

Christmas, Easter, and other special holidays are times when people are made aware of the needs and aspirations of others and generally are more generous. From holiday food sales at village functions to particular plate offerings, a small Baptist Church in Connecticut has raised funds for ramps and handrails. They have demonstrated that certain liturgical

seasons and holy days can provide opportunities for disability awareness.

### **Earmark It for Accessibility**

Several years ago, a member of a small, urban Presbyterian church in Georgia bequeathed to the congregation a substantial gift of money earmarked exclusively for accessibility. Since then, basic accommodations have been made, including the building of ramps and the designating of accessible parking places. This member's act of kindness has opened the door to considering additional accessibility actions, such as the construction of ADA-compliant restrooms.

### **Foot the Bill for Accessibility**

Marathon runners can put their feet to good use on behalf of persons with disabilities! The pastor of this Lutheran church in the District of Columbia raised pledges for her 26.2-mile marathon to support accessibility accommodations in her church. By inviting church members and others to pledge funds, this pastor raised \$880 per mile, or a total of more than \$23,000. A *Washington Post* newspaper article about the pastor and the race inspired additional donations, bringing the total to \$30,000.

### **Have a Good Time**

As this suburban Episcopal congregation discovered, the timing of worship can make a difference. Seeking to accommodate families with young children and Sunday morning commitments, the clergy at this church in Ohio instituted a 5:30 Saturday evening service. They discovered that some people with disabilities, who had been unable to dress and transport themselves in time for Sunday morning services, were now able to participate in worship for the first time in years.

### **From Dream to Reality**

Never underestimate the power and importance of dreams. A 250-family Roman Catholic congregation in Ohio asked a parishioner with cerebral

palsy and mental retardation to communicate her dreams for full participation and inclusion. When she did, the congregation came together as a community and responded. She now leads religious education classes, teaching others how to interact with love, not pity. She also serves communion, sending a clear message that disabilities need not be barriers.

### Making Your Garden Grow

Not many congregations think of gardens when they contemplate accessible worship spaces. But a suburban Roman Catholic congregation in Maryland believes in accessibility on both the outside and inside of its church. Through parishioner labor, offertory collections, and foundation grants, this 600-family parish is creating a garden with raised beds, so that persons in wheelchairs may not only visit the garden but participate in gardening. In addition, members have constructed a wheelchair-accessible labyrinth for meditation and spiritual reflection.

### Sing Out for Accessibility

When a Lutheran congregation in suburban Kansas conducted a building campaign to renovate its 125-year-old structure, the new pastors encouraged the inclusion of accessibility features. One feature was the addition of an elevator that enabled the choir loft to become accessible to people with physical disabilities. The result: the choir has some new, lovely voices that would otherwise be missing.

### Put It in Writing

Members of a Jewish temple in Arizona believe that disability should not prevent a person from having a bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah. But when the congregation put that belief into writing, it was transformed from a wish into concrete reality. This enabled them to face and move beyond pessimistic attitudes, develop creative strategies, and enroll the surrounding community in their vision. They emphasize that specific strategies—such as raffles, auctions, and gala fundraisers—crystallized after the commitment was written down.

## Moveable Feast Extends Accessibility

If you cannot immediately afford to make worship, program, or fellowship spaces more accessible, try moving the locations of these activities. A 200-member Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Georgia had been holding dinners in a downstairs hall that was inaccessible to persons with physical disabilities. While they raised funds for accessibility through member donations, loans, and the regional conference office, they also moved the location of dinners and other meetings to the first floor so that all could participate.

## Pick a Partner

Through the partnership of local, regional, and national organizations that provide resources and encouragement, an independent church in California has opened its doors, its ministries, and its attitudes to people with developmental and physical disabilities. Of particular value for this congregation and others in the region was the “That All May Worship” conference designed by the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.) and outlined in N.O.D.’s guide, *From Barriers to Bridges* (see “Selected Resources”).

# Selected Resources

## BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Community Building Partners in partnership with The Religion Division, American Association on Mental Retardation. *Dimensions of Faith and Congregational Ministries with Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families*. Piscataway, NJ: The Boggs Center–UAP, 2000.

With its mission of sharing resources that foster spiritual growth for persons with developmental disabilities, the Religion Division of the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) has updated and expanded its bibliography for clergy, laypersons, families, and service providers. *Dimensions of Faith* includes information on worship, theology, and pastoral care for persons with developmental disabilities, their caretakers, and their families. Religious education curricula for various age groups, audiovisual resources, articles, journals, magazines, and the addresses of national faith organizations are also listed.

Religion Division, AAMR  
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P.O. Box 2688  
New Brunswick, NJ 08903-2688  
phone: (732) 235-9300  
gaventwi@umdnj.edu

Ramnaraine, Barbara, and Mary Jane Steinhagen. *Accessibility: A Manual for Churches*. Minneapolis, MN: The Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota and the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, 1997.

Asserting that attitudes and fears form some of the greatest barriers to full congregational inclusion, the authors of this bibliography

begin with a discussion of disabilities and reminders of the words and behaviors that both hurt and help interactions between people. They follow with practical suggestions for fundraising and making physical spaces more accessible. The manual concludes with a useful and extensive listing of resources (books, catalogs, toll-free numbers).

Office for Persons with Disabilities  
Catholic Charities  
215 Old 6th Street West  
St. Paul, MN 55102-1052  
phone: (651) 215-2216

## BOOKS

Abrams, Judith Z. *Judaism and Disability: Portrayals in Ancient Texts from the Tanach through the Bavli*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1998.

In this scholarly exposition of the historical basis for attitudes towards people with disabilities, author Judith Abrams provides insight and explanations about their limited status in the Jewish community as it evolved from interpretations of the Torah and subsequent commentaries through the centuries. With explanations of the ancient categorization system for people with disabilities, Rabbi Abrams provides a foundation for understanding the long struggle for acceptance and inclusion in Jewish communal life. For today's rabbis, educators, and other service providers, as well as for individuals with disabilities and their families, this book offers a thorough exploration of the Jewish historical perspective on special needs.

Gallaudet University Press  
800 Florida Ave., N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002  
phone or TTY: (202) 651-5488

fax: (202) 651-5489  
jck@press.uchicago.edu  
gupress.gallaudet.edu

Black, Kathy. *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*.  
Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Noting that a preacher's approaches to biblical "healing" texts have a profound impact on churchgoers' attitudes toward people with disabilities, author Kathy Black examines scriptural "healing" passages and discusses Jesus' responses to both people with disabilities and their communities. She compares and contrasts "traditional" homiletics with "healing" homiletics that remain true to scripture while affirming God's love and the worth of all people. Although aimed primarily at Christian pastors, this book will be valuable for everyone who cares about the implications of scriptural healing texts for people with disabilities and their communities of faith.

Abingdon Press (Cokesbury)  
P.O. Box 801  
Nashville, TN 37202  
phone: (800) 672-1789; TDD: (800) 227-3091  
fax: (800) 445-8189  
www.cokesbury.com

Clark, Doris C., with music by Kinley Lange. *Feed All My Sheep: A Guide and Curriculum for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996.

Recognizing the needs for religious education among adults with developmental disabilities and their parallel needs for full inclusion, Doris Clark has written a book that helps guide churches in planning and implementing this special education ministry. Part One is a guide to identifying needs, engaging the church, recruiting class leaders, and publicity. Part Two supplies a detailed curriculum, with scriptural passages and lesson plans for each class. Part Three presents



hymns and songs. The book concludes with a list of education and music resources, newsletters, and videotapes.

Geneva Press  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202-1396  
phone: (502) 569-5058 or (800) 227-2872  
fax: (502) 569-5113  
[www.ppcpub.com](http://www.ppcpub.com)

Eiesland, Nancy L., and Don E. Saliers, eds. *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Encouraging congregations to explore the assumptions underlying their worship and programs, this essay collection presents fresh insights into the issues raised when we consider the full and central participation of people with disabilities in congregational life. Writing from multi-disciplinary perspectives, the authors propose a re-explication of biblical texts that have been distorted to exclude people with disabilities; a re-interpretation of theological themes so that the gifts of people with disabilities are incorporated into the celebration of Word and Sacrament; a re-examination of the cultural norms that have narrowed our vision of ministry; and a re-investigation of practical programs and prayer forms so that all may know and experience inclusion.

Abingdon Press (Cokesbury)  
P.O. Box 801  
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[www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

Eiesland, Nancy. *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Asserting that persons with disabilities have been marginalized as a minority, Nancy Eiesland expands the notion of “access” beyond “barrier removal” to encompass images, mutual ministry, and the dilemmas of everyday life. Human experience and human bodies—with or without current or future disabilities—are part of God’s creation. This book can help engender an inclusiveness that dispenses with romanticisms and unreflective conventions, and confirms the worth and dignity of all people’s lives.

Abingdon Press (Cokesbury)  
P.O. Box 801  
Nashville, TN 37202  
phone: (800) 672-1789; TDD: (800) 227-3091  
fax: (800) 445-8189  
www.cokesbury.com

Hornstein, Becca, ed. *Disability Resources Directory of Jewish Agencies*. Phoenix, AZ: Council For Jews With Special Needs, 2000.

Here is a handy resource directory for parents and professionals who want information about the availability of programs and services in Jewish communities throughout the USA and Canada for children and adults who have disabilities. The 200-plus page directory lists agencies, schools, camps, community centers, residential and vocational programs, and other Jewish organizations which provide programs and services to children and adults who have developmental, physical, sensory, emotional, and learning disabilities. The directory is arranged alphabetically by state and province.

Council For Jews With Special Needs  
32 West Coolidge, Suite 102  
Phoenix, AZ 85013-2773  
phone: (602) 277-4243; TTY: (602) 277-4243  
fax: (602) 277-7064

info@cjsn.org  
www.cjsn.org

Nouwen, Henri J. M. *The Wounded Healer*. New York: Image Doubleday, 1979.

Although not focused on disability and accessibility, this book articulates the importance of accepting and ministering from both our unique wounds and the universal wound of loneliness. When we are willing to acknowledge that no person or community can ever release us from our lonely condition, we may come to know that “being alive means being loved” by a God “whose heart is greater than ours.” From this awareness we are able to offer hospitality to others, sharing our pain so that we may become a source of healing.

Image Doubleday  
Random House, Inc.  
1540 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036  
phone: (212) 782-9000 or (800) 733-3000  
fax: (212) 302-7985  
www.randomhouse.com

Reeves, Kathy N., ed. *Accessibility Audit for Churches*. Cincinnati, OH: General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, 1994.

Based on the commitment to full access in worship communities, this publication provides very specific audits that religious institutions can use to determine their level of inclusiveness. It notes that a truly accessible congregation includes all people in worship, ongoing education, and congregational ministry. The audits center on accessibility levels in parking, doors, corridors, walls, ramps, handrails, restrooms, elevators, telephones, water fountains, and signs. In addition, audits cover access in the areas of worship, administration, education, fellowship, and pastoral care. The document concludes

with a glossary and resource lists of consultants, architects, associations, manufacturers, informational organizations, and print and audiovisual materials.

General Board of Global Ministries  
Health and Welfare Ministries  
The United Methodist Church  
475 Riverside Drive, Room 350  
New York, NY 10115  
phone: (212) 870-3600

Thornburgh, Ginny, and Ann Rose Davie. *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome To People With Disabilities*. Sixth Printing. Washington, DC: National Organization on Disability, 2000.

Seeking to assist congregations, national faith groups, and seminaries with becoming more welcoming and hospitable in their places of worship, this interfaith handbook features sections on including people with particular disabilities: mobility impairment, blindness or visual impairment, deafness or limited hearing, mental illness, developmental disability, learning disability, and chronic illness. Equally valuable is the Audit of Barriers (Architecture, Communications, and Attitudes).

Religion and Disability Program  
National Organization on Disability  
910 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006  
phone: (202) 293-5960; TTY: (202) 293-5968  
fax: (202) 293-7999  
religion@nod.org  
www.nod.org

Thornburgh, Ginny, and Janet Miller Rife. *From Barriers to Bridges: A Community Action Guide for Congregations and People With Disabilities*. Washington, DC: National Organization on Disability, 1996.

Building on the principles and practices expressed in the handbook, *That All May Worship*, this guide asserts not only that people with disabilities be welcomed in places of worship, but that they also be full participants in worship, study, service, and leadership. It provides guidance on organizing a “That All May Worship” conference and other community-building activities. Appendices include songs, readings, and prayers for a conference, as well as a list of faith group resources.

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910 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006  
phone: (202) 293-5960; TTY: (202) 293-5968  
fax: (202) 293-7999  
religion@nod.org  
www.nod.org

Thornburgh, Ginny, ed. *Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community*. Washington, DC: National Organization on Disability, 1999.

Providing both legal and moral guidelines, this publication explains the relationship between the ADA, other disability legislation, and the religious community. Specifically, it addresses questions about the requirements placed by the ADA on places of worship and on religious schools and programs. Also helpful are a list of resources (organizations, agencies, databases, and publications) and a glossary of important terms.

Religion and Disability Program  
National Organization on Disability

910 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006  
phone: (202) 293-5960; TTY: (202) 293-5968  
fax: (202) 293-7999  
religion@nod.org  
www.nod.org

Webb-Mitchell, Brett. *Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities Into the Church*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1994.

Beginning with Jesus' parable of the banquet, Webb-Mitchell provides a vision for including persons with mental, emotional, sensory, or physical disabilities in the life of the local congregation. The book's theoretical and practical discussion of including vital members who have particular gifts and limitations features ideas for religious education and worship, and calls on congregations to welcome all.

Crossroad Publishing  
481 Eighth Avenue, Suite 1550  
New York, NY 10001  
phone: (212) 868-1801 or (800) 395-0690  
fax: (212) 868-2171  
sales@crossroadpublishing.com  
www.crossroadpublishing.com

## ORGANIZATIONS

### Center for Spirituality and Disability

As a resource for congregations, clergy, persons with disabilities, and disability-related organizations, the Center for Spirituality and Disability advocates for more inclusive worship spaces and educates society about disabilities. The center works with congregations to eliminate architectural and attitudinal barriers, train staff, and

**support families and friends of persons with disabilities.**

**442 W. School House Lane  
Philadelphia, PA 19144  
phone: (267) 257-9541  
J\_McIntire@msn.com**

### **Christian Council on Persons with Disabilities**

**The Christian Council is a consortium of Christian organizations that provides a platform and sounding board for dialogue, communication, and interaction for leaders interested in promoting the spiritual well-being of people who have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. This evangelical consortium publishes a quarterly newsletter and a semiannual periodical. Links, discussion groups, information and research are available at no charge.**

**7120 W. Dove Ct.  
Milwaukee, WI 53223  
phone: (414) 357-6672  
info@ccpd.org  
www.ccpd.org**

### **Council for Jews with Special Needs**

**Serving persons with physical, developmental, emotional, and learning disabilities, the Council for Jews with Special Needs provides programs, services, support, news, and resources to foster the full participation of all Jewish people in Jewish religious and cultural life. Resources include links, articles, and the Disability Resources Directory of Jewish Agencies.**

**32 West Coolidge, Suite 102  
Phoenix, AZ 85013-2773  
phone: (602) 277-4243; TTY: (602) 277-4243  
fax: (602) 277-7064  
info@cjsn.org  
www.cjsn.org**

## **Gifts in Kind**

Gifts in Kind provides high tech equipment, building materials, and accessibility supplies for nonprofit organizations. Assistance is often available for congregations expanding their services to the community or lending their facilities for community services. After an organization registers, pays a fee, and specifies what is needed, Gifts in Kind matches it with a firm that has the needed equipment. Congregations entering a new field of ministry, while making their own facilities more welcoming, will especially benefit.

333 North Fairfax Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
phone: (703) 836-2121  
fax: (703) 549-1481  
feedback@giftsinkind.org  
www.giftsinkind.org

## **John Milton Society for the Blind**

John Milton Society for the Blind provides nondenominational Christian ministry to people with visual impairments through free religious literature and scholarships. Religious literature includes three periodicals and an extensive Directory of Resources for the Blind and Visually Impaired. International and New York area scholarships are available. Their web site includes links to related organizations.

475 Riverside Drive, Room 455  
New York, NY 10115  
phone: (212) 870-3335  
fax: (212) 870-3229  
order@jmsblind.org  
www.jmsblind.org

## **Joni and Friends**

With an evangelical focus, Joni and Friends encourages Christian ministry in the disability community by increasing disability aware-



ness, providing practical suggestions on ways to serve persons with disabilities, fostering independence, and focusing on a biblical response to disabilities. Its web site includes a product guide, links, a newsletter, and information about outreach programs.

P.O. Box 3333  
Agoura Hills, CA 91376  
phone: (818) 707-5664  
[www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)

### **National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry**

Seeking to promote the full inclusion and spiritual development of people with mental retardation in the Roman Catholic Church, the National Apostolate for Inclusion Ministry provides a forum for priests, pastors, and caregivers and presents to various publics the gifts of people with mental retardation. Member benefits include journal publications, a quarterly newsletter, and consulting services. Its web site features news, a directory of local and regional members, and a set of links to related organizations.

P.O. Box 218  
Riverdale, MD 20738-0218  
phone: (301) 699-9500 or (800) 736-1280  
fax: (240) 220-8374  
[qnafim@aol.com](mailto:qnafim@aol.com)  
[www.nafim.org](http://www.nafim.org)

### **National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities**

The National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities helps parishes to include Catholics with disabilities and promotes the implementation of both the 1978 Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities and the 1995 Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities. They provide a quarterly newsletter and a resource service that links interested persons to relevant publications.

**McCormick Pavilion**  
415 Michigan Avenue, N.E., Suite 240  
Washington, DC 20017-1557  
phone: (202) 529-2933; TTY: (202) 529-2934  
fax: (202) 529-4678  
ncpd@ncpd.org  
www.ncpd.org

### **National Christian Resource Center**

An extension of Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, the National Christian Resource Center on Mental Retardation provides educational resources to persons with mental retardation and their families. Their services include information and referrals, staff development, scholarships and grants, publications, speakers, consultants, and religious education resources and workshops.

700 Hoffmann Drive  
Watertown, WI 53094  
phone: (800) 369-4636  
ncrc@blhs.org  
www.blhs.org

### **NICHCY: National Information Center on Children and Youth with Disabilities**

NICHCY is a national information and referral center, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. It provides information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, educators, and other professionals. NICHCY offers free publications, referrals to national organizations and agencies that specialize in disability issues, and state-by-state resource sheets that list disability groups, parent groups, and early childhood and state education agencies.

P.O. Box 1492  
Washington, DC 20013  
phone: (800) 695-0285  
nichcy@aed.org

[www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

### **Self-Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.**

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) provides information, education, support, and advocacy to people with hearing loss. Their web site features links to government agencies, state offices, and other national and international organizations, as well as information on technical assistance, medical research, hearing aids and cochlear implants, and noise.

7910 Woodmont Ave - Suite 1200

Bethesda, MD 20814

phone: (301) 657-2248; TTY: (301) 657-2249

fax: (301) 913-9413

[national@shhh.org](mailto:national@shhh.org)

[www.shhh.org](http://www.shhh.org)

## **PERIODICALS**

### **Journal of Religion, Disability & Health**

Applying an interfaith perspective, this journal explores religion and spirituality in disability and clinical services. By connecting the viewpoints of theologians, pastoral counselors, and religious educators with those of health care practitioners and researchers, it seeks to develop more holistic and inclusive health practices and congregational communities. Papers, editorials, book reviews, and news items center on a variety of disability-related topics.

10 Alice Street

Binghamton, NY 13904

phone: (800) HAWORTH

fax: (800) 895-0582

[getinfo@HaworthPress.com](mailto:getinfo@HaworthPress.com)

[www.HaworthPress.com](http://www.HaworthPress.com)

## WEB SITES

### All One in the Image of God

Sponsored by the South Dakota Parent Connection, this web site functions nationally as an interfaith guide on including persons with disabilities in congregational life. The site includes many practical suggestions on hospitality, language use, strategies for including persons with specific disabilities, and creating an accessible building. In addition, it provides program suggestions for family, nursery, children's, youth, and adult ministries. A final and valuable feature is its phone and address directory of accessibility resources.

3701 W. 49th Street, Suite 200B  
 Sioux Falls, SD 57106  
 phone: (800) 640-4553  
 fax: (605) 361-2928  
[www.sdparent.org/image/resources.html](http://www.sdparent.org/image/resources.html)

### DISC (DISability Concerns)

Through the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, DISC supports the spiritual care of people with disabilities by offering interfaith resource lists, articles, and information on making worship and gathering more accessible. An invaluable service of DISC is the Disability Concerns public discussion and information email list, which allows people concerned with the spiritual care of people with disabilities to share resources with each other. It includes a listing of denominational groups and others offering religious disability resources.

General Board of Global Ministries  
 The United Methodist Church  
 Health and Welfare Ministries, Room 330  
 475 Riverside Drive  
 New York, NY 10115  
 Phone: (800) 862-4246; TTY: (212) 870-3709

fax: (212) 870-3624  
hwmin@gbgm-umc.org  
<http://gbgm-umc.org/DISC/>

### **The International Center for Disability Resources on the Internet (ICDRI)**

The ICDRI aims to collect and present a variety of resources for people with disabilities and those who advocate or care for them. The web site provides links to disability-related resources in education, technology, health and medicine, sports and leisure, the arts and media, the law and public policy, and other areas. Special features include links for U.S. veterans and caregivers and lists of books on disability issues and web site construction. International in scope, this web site allows disability-related organizations from around the world to register and be included in its links.

1534 Plaza Lane, #129  
Burlingame, CA 94010  
director@icdri.org  
www.icdri.org



The Alban Institute  
7315 Wisconsin Avenue  
Suite 1250 West  
Bethesda, MD 20814-3211  
(301) 718-4407; (800) 486-1318  
[www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)



National Organization on Disability  
Religion and Disability Program  
910 Sixteenth Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 293-5960; (202) 293-5968 TDD  
[www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org)