



PO Box 959
Goshen, IN 46527-0959
Phone 574-535-7053/ Fax 877-214-9838
Email: adnet@adnetonline.org
Website: www.adnetonline.org

Disabilities Advocacy in All Aspects of Church Life

By Christine Guth, ADNet Program Associate

Disability issues cut across every aspect of congregational life and do not fit neatly into the work of a single commission or committee.* Here is a sampling of questions that a disabilities advocate might bring to the attention of a congregation.

Building/grounds: Is your church building and its parking lot and restrooms easily accessible to people with physical disabilities?

Christian education: Are the church's educational programs inclusive of children and adults with disabilities and meeting their needs?

Communications: Are print materials available in large type and alternative formats? Is your church website accessible to people with vision impairments and hearing loss? Are opportunities available to people with disabilities to share their stories and unique perspectives?

Evangelism: People with disabilities participate in faith communities in significantly smaller numbers than people without disabilities. Are people with diverse disabilities present in your congregation? Does your wider community know the ways your congregation is welcoming for people with disabilities? How prepared are you for individuals with disabilities who might visit your congregation?

Fellowship: Do fellowship events and community life make an effort to include those whom the wider society often leaves out, for example those with hearing loss, developmental disabilities, autism, or mental illness? How comfortable are your physical spaces for socializing to people with sensory hypersensitivity or hearing loss?

Leadership: Are people with disabilities represented in the congregation's leadership? If not, why not? Are people with certain disabilities acceptable as leaders, but not other disabilities?

Mission/service: People with a wide range of disabilities are unified by their common experience of stigma and discrimination. How is your congregation engaged with meeting the needs of people with disabilities in your wider community? How are you advocating for justice and an end to discrimination for people with disabilities?

Stewardship: How well is your congregation recognizing and drawing on the gifts of people with diverse disabilities?

Worship: How inclusive of people with disabilities is your worship? Can everyone hear? See? Understand? Do people with disabilities contribute? Lead? Preach? How accepting is your congregation of behavior in worship that is outside the norm (e.g., those whose disability makes it hard to sit quietly)?

* Remember that disability includes people with hearing and vision impairments, mental illness, developmental and intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum, chronic illness, etc.