

Dear deacons,

Disability Concerns ministry was created *by* Christian Reformed churches *to serve* Christian Reformed Churches. About 17 percent of people live with disabilities such as people with hearing and vision impairments, Down syndrome, autism, mobility issues, mental health challenges, and effects of stroke. Since 1982, we have been helping churches reach for this biblical ideal: everybody belongs and everybody serves. Since 2009, we have been working closely with the Disability Concerns ministry of the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

We serve Christian Reformed churches through a variety of means:

- Most important, we equip a network of [disability advocates](#) who work in Christian Reformed churches and classes, and coordinate this work with RCA Disability Concerns. If your church does not have a disability advocate or you are not sure who yours is, please [contact us](#) (disabilityconcerns@rcna.org); we'll help identify and equip someone in your congregation to serve your congregation. The name of your Regional Disability Advocate can be found by clicking on your classis' name in the [classis listing](#) and looking for the advocate's name in the right sidebar. (If your classis does not have an advocate, Synod 2016 encouraged your classis to identify someone whom we will be pleased to equip for ministry.)
- We are co-sponsoring a conference this year in Niagara Falls, Ontario, October 28-30 called [Life to the Full. Ability. Belonging. Community](#). We encourage you to send your church disability advocate (or a team) so that they can come back better equipped for service in your congregation. **If anyone from your church has a disability, we have a scholarship fund to pay the full registration price for CRC members with disabilities; [contact Heather for more information](#).** Check out the brief videos found on the conference website (www.lifetothefull2016.org) which can be shown during a worship service to encourage people to attend.
- Our website (www.rcna.org/disability) has resources tailored for churches on worship, caring, accessibility, awareness, church education, and more. You can also subscribe there to our electronic editions of *Breaking Barriers* and our monthly e-newsletter.
- To receive as many hard copies of [Breaking Barriers](#) as your church needs, please [contact us](#) to be added to our free bulk-mailing list.

Here are a few specific suggestions for you deacons:

- **Please meet with your church's disability advocate** to discuss ways to minister together. This year we are encouraging churches to help members with disabilities find employment. We have [bulletin inserts and other resources](#) on this topic available for you online, or let us know and we'll print and ship them out to you.
- **Pray** for the people with disabilities and their family members in your congregation. Please pray that God will help Disability Concerns be an effective tool for God in assisting congregations.

- **Please schedule an offering for Disability Concerns.** (Nearly a third of Disability Concerns budget comes from offerings and donations.) Synod encourages churches to receive an offering for us on October 16, 2016, dates chosen in part to coincide with the Reformed Church in America's Disability Awareness Sunday. Depending on your church's schedule, another date may be more appropriate. [Find resources for Disability Week](#) on the Network.
- [Contact Disability Concerns](#) with your questions, concerns, or ideas. We are here to assist you in the important ministry you do.

May God bless you richly in your ministry,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Stephenson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent than the last name "Stephenson".

Rev. Mark Stephenson
Director, Christian Reformed Disability Concerns