Disability Concerns

# Accessibility Audit Guide for Churches

Barriers of attitude:

* People with disabilities are welcomed to worship.
* Ushers have been trained regarding appropriate ways to greet and meet the needs of people with disabilities.
* An accessibility logo is in the parking lot or on the church door.
* People with disabilities are included on congregational committees and/or other leadership roles.
* The church has a Church Disability Advocate and/or Disability Team.
* The council has adopted a policy on disability.
* The church has an annual Disability Awareness Sunday or other training for the congregation.
* People with disabilities are encouraged to participate in the life of the church (for example, to attend social events, contribute their gifts for ministry, participate in service projects, be involved in small groups, and so on).
* Transportation is offered for people with disabilities who cannot drive.
* The church library includes resources about various disabling conditions, disability theology, and creating inclusive community.

# Barriers of Communication:

* The sanctuary has assistive listening devices (such as hearing loop or FM) available for people who are hard of hearing.
* Sign language interpretation is provided by prior arrangement.
* The overall lighting is adequate for signing and for individuals with low vision.
* Songbooks, Bibles, bulletins and handouts are available in alternative formats such as large print (and Braille when requested in advance). These resources are displayed where they are readily accessible.
* Written copies of the current sermon and of all spoken parts of the service are available for people with impaired hearing.
* Captioning is used with visual projection.
* Projected slides follow guidelines for readability by people with visual impairments.

Barriers of architecture:

* Accessible Parking is provided. The path from accessible spaces to church is barrier free—no gravel, no curbs, not blocked by other parked cars.
* The main entrance door is automatic or powered by a switch.
* There are no barriers that can halt a wheelchair (big thresholds, grates, thick mats).
* Door handles are lever style on all inside doors.
* If a ramp is needed, it has a slope no greater than 1 to 12. It is at least 43 in/1100 mm wide, and has a smooth handrail 31 to 36 in/800 to 920 mm above the ramp.
* Doors to rooms, especially washrooms, are a minimum of 35 in/900 mm wide.
* Public sinks have lever style handles or automatic motion sensors.
* Towel dispensers or other hand drying items can be reached from a sitting position (no higher than 40 in/1020 mm from the floor), or two dispensers are provided with the lower one also useable by children.
* Grab bars are installed in all toilet areas for assisting in transfer and standing, 30 in/750 mm to 35 in/900 mm height, and 2 in/50 mm from the wall. All sink area fixtures and cabinets allow for knee access, 29 in/740 mm from the floor.
* At least one toilet stall for each gender accommodates turning a wheelchair around with a minimum 60 in/1520 mm radius. The ideal solution is to provide at least one single-stall, gender neutral, accessible bathroom.
* Light switches, phones, phone books, etc., are at a level for wheelchair accessibility.
* Coat racks are set up so that wheelchair users can hang coats without assistance, or coat hooks are provided.
* Elevators and lifts are fully useable by the people who need them, big enough to accommodate at least two people. Control buttons are at an accessible level.
* Pew cut outs allow wheelchair users a choice of places to sit with their families. Also, a few pew pillows are available for individuals who need them.
* Steps to the pulpit area have sturdy handrails.
* The main pulpit area is accessible by wheelchair using a ramp or lift.
* Mailboxes, if used, are set up so that wheelchair users can use a lower box.
* Signage is bold and placed about 68 in/1730 mm from the floor.
* Stairs are plainly marked and bright tape or paint marks the edge of each step to aid in visual perception.
* Refreshments are placed at a level accessible from a wheelchair with an attendant on duty. Lists of ingredients—especially nuts, eggs, milk, and gluten—are set by the food item where it will be clearly visible for those with food allergies.
* The worship area, and better yet the entire building, is declared "fragrance free". Members are urged to refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or after-shave. Only unscented candles, soaps, cleaning supplies, air fresheners, and so on are used.
* The air filters on the furnace/air conditioning units are changed as directed.
* Private consultations with particular attendees concerning their disabilities have taken place to identify unique requirements not covered by normal solutions. (Be creative and improvise so that all individuals may worship in comfort. For example, if an individual has trouble holding items, (especially books) mount a swivel arm stylebook holder onto the end of a pew.)

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