

# Disability Awareness Sunday Resources

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# Disability Awareness Sunday 2005

By Helen R. Neinast

*Adapted from UMC Interpreter Magazine Online [www.interpretermagazine.org](http://www.interpretermagazine.org)*

Disability Awareness Sunday is both a celebration and a challenge. We celebrate the lives and witness of those with disabilities who contribute so much to our faith community. We also open ourselves, our churches, and the Church to the call to full inclusion and full accessibility for those with any disability – physical or mental. This is an opportunity to raise awareness and to find solutions to the physical, architectural, communication and attitude barriers to those with disabilities.

## **Some Ideas for the Service**

This Sunday, observed annually on a date determined by the Annual Conference, gives your church the chance to challenge its hospitality toward and inclusion of all persons in the life of the church. Ask persons with disabilities to participate in worship as liturgists and leaders in worship. If there are no people with disabilities, this is a good time to examine why that is – is the church open and actively seeking to make itself open to all? You could invite someone who is or works on behalf of persons with disabilities to preach this Sunday.

Set the scene for the worship service:

If it were possible to gather all the people with disabilities into one nation, that nation would number over 650 million women, men and children. That nation would be the world's third largest country, after China and India. (World Health Organization statistic)

That nation would have the least access to education. Many people with disabilities receive little or no education, especially in developing countries. That nation would have the highest unemployment rate in the world and be the poorest nation on earth. It would have the least access to any sort of transportation. And, it would be the least evangelized nation with the lowest proportion involved in a church.

Try to interpret for your church the status of the people with disabilities in the United States and beyond. Go to [www.icdri.org/Statistics/mainstats.html](http://www.icdri.org/Statistics/mainstats.html). This site gives an extensive look at statistics and public policy regarding people with disabilities. It will be an important tool for you as you prepare for Disability Awareness Sunday, and it will be important for your congregation as well.

## **Ideas from the Local Church**

Park Street Church in Boston has a Special Needs Ministry that encourages, assists and enables people to participate more fully in church activities. The ministry includes anything from working one-on-one with children during church events to assisting individuals with limited mobility to supporting families of special needs children with occasional childcare or help with housework.

## **WORSHIP AIDS**

### **Suggested Hymns**

"We Meet You, O Christ" (UM Hymnal 257)

" Through It All" (UMH 507)

" All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" (UMH 154, Mil Voces Para Celebrar 60)

" It Is Well with My Soul" (UMH 377, Mil Voces 250, Let Us Worship (Korean-English) 304)

" Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love" (UMH 432, Mil Voces 288, Let Us Worship, 179)

## Scriptures

Genesis 1:26-27 "We are created in God's image"

Mark 2:1-4 "His friends lowered him down through the roof"

I Corinthians 12:22-27 "The body of Christ"

Psalms 103:8, 13-14, 17-18 "The Lord knows our frame"

## Sermon Notes

People with disabilities are trying to be included in the life of the faith community. They, too, want recognition of their values as children of God worthy of unconditional love and acceptance.

Hunger, more specifically malnutrition, is the number one cause of disabilities worldwide. Accidents and disease are the leading causes of disabilities in the parts of the world where hunger is not a factor.

However, even if we are fortunate enough to live without material deprivation and with outstanding medical care, all of us face the toll that aging takes. Eyesight, hearing, mobility, memory – these disabilities await most all of us. Disabilities do not know boundaries of age, race, sex or social status. And yet disabilities are the biggest barrier to full participation in our churches. Someone has pointed out that a person in a wheelchair is not disabled in a community or building that has wide doors, slight ramps in place of stairs, and furniture that is wheelchair accessible.

Genesis tells us that we are created in the image of God. Yet we are all different – skin color, personalities, mental and physical capabilities. This passage, then, must refer to something besides the physical. God is spirit, and to be created in the image of God is to have a spirit that is in God's image.

And yet we – like Jesus – are incarnate. It is with our bodies and our minds that we live out our lives. So to have a mind or body that is different is not a judgment on our relationship with God, but is a statement about our humanity.

As we read the Bible, it is clear from beginning to end that God wants to be in a relationship with each and every one of God's creatures. Therefore, it becomes clear that our God is a God of accessibility – to all – and that we therefore must make our churches, and our hearts, accessible to all.

## Prayers

Leader: We come together today as people with different skills, different abilities, different disabilities.

**People: We come, however, as one body in Christ.**

Leader: We ask God to help us be compassionate toward all, even as God has been compassionate toward us.

**People: Gather us together, in compassion and in faith. Help us to welcome and honor everyone in this community.**

Leader: Regardless of physical strength and ability,

**People: Regardless of differences of mind or spirit,**

Leader: Open us, O God. Make us accessible to your Spirit, and accessible to all your people.

**All: Amen.**

## Benediction

May the God of hope

Fill you with joy and peace

So that you may abound in hope

By the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Adapted from Romans 15)

[http://gbgm-umc.org/global\\_news/full\\_article.cfm?articleid=3165](http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=3165)

*How Do We See Each Other?*



*As Separate Pieces  
or the Whole Body of Christ?*

*This booklet is a publication of the Virginia Annual Conference  
and can be downloaded as a Word file from  
<http://www.vaumc.org/repository/Disabilities/2005DisabilityAwareness.doc>*

In I Corinthians 12:12, we read:

***For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (NRSV)***

Yet for many people with disabilities and challenging conditions in our churches, we don't move beyond being welcoming – if they can even make it into our church buildings. We don't take that next step of nurturing them and transforming their lives through the example of Jesus.

Sue Sterling Montgomery, pastor of the Nickleville Presbyterian Church in Emlenton, PA uses a wheelchair due to bilateral osteoarthritis. Montgomery says churches that welcome wheelchair users give themselves hearty slaps on the back, "but being welcomed still leaves me as a guest. There has to be more. We have to break the mold of what is understood as Christian community and rebuild it with disability being part of it from the ground up. We can't build the community and then say, 'Welcome, now you're an invited guest.'" She adds, "Hear us, hear our experiences, hear our life stories, and hear how God is working through us."

In essence, Montgomery is saying see us – all of us with whatever gifts and abilities we bring – not as separate guests to be welcomed for a Sunday morning but as a part of the whole Body of Christ to be loved and cared for every day. Use our talents, learn from our experiences, show by example how Christ transformed all those with whom he had contact.

*How do we see each other?*

### *What is Disability Awareness Sunday?*

The 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church voted to create **DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY**. The **2000 Discipline** states in ¶265.4:

*Disability Awareness Sunday shall be observed annually on a date to be determined by the annual conference. Disability Awareness Sunday calls the Church to celebrate the gifts and graces of persons with disabilities and calls the Church and society to full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community. If the annual conference so directs, an offering may be received and the funds used by the annual conference to promote the work of creating architectural and attitudinal accessibility in local churches.*

### *How Should We Celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday?*

This special Sunday gives every congregation the opportunity to challenge our hospitality and our inclusion of all persons into the full life of the church. This can be a time when persons with disabilities can offer their gifts and graces to the congregation and to God as participants, liturgists and leaders in this celebration. As you celebrate this special Sunday, let it be an opportunity for the congregation to launch or extend its hospitality to persons with disabilities. The trustees and other groups should involve members of the congregation along with their sisters and brothers with disabilities in identifying and offering solutions to physical, architectural, communication and attitudinal barriers. Develop specific plans and strategies to eliminate those barriers so that your congregation might be fully hospitable to all of God's people.

## *How to Use These Materials*

The worship material included in this packet is designed so that you can incorporate pieces into your Order of Worship or fellowship times. The awareness materials which are included can be used for Sunday School or small group activities at any time during the year.

# Worship Service Ideas

## Call to Worship

*(The congregation will divide left & right)*

Left: We gather together as people with abilities and disabilities,

Right: **With hopes, dreams, and visions,**

Left: Glimpsing a time when there will no longer be insiders and outsiders,

Right: **When all are held together in the love of God.**

All: **Let us worship as a foretaste of this vision!**

## The Confession of Sin

Almighty and creating God; we come before you today as people who are separated from one another by fears, prejudices, and an inability to reach beyond ourselves to discover the joy of community. By our language, actions, and facilities we declare insiders and outsiders in our lives and in our church. Forgive us and create in us the vision of opening our hearts, minds, and doors as wide as the love of God, so that no one is left outside. Give us the vision to see that all people have gifts and abilities to share as part of our community of faith. We pray in the name of the one who always saw the best in people, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*(2004 Disability Awareness Sunday materials, Southeastern United Methodist Agency for Rehabilitation, Inc.)*

## Prayer of Petition/Response

*(After each petition, all respond, "Lord hear our prayer.")*

Leader: Recognizing our dependence on the Lord to care for all God's people, we bring these petitions before God:

that our churches may be welcoming inclusive communities to all people, especially those who may be overlooked by the rest of society;

that we and our brothers and sisters with challenging conditions may realize our dignity as sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ;

that the people of God will openly receive the gifts brought by people who have disabilities;

that we recognize the beauty of God's creating hand in each person regardless of any human limitations we may have;

that the God of Reconciliation will unite all of us in praise for making each of us the special person we are;

**ALL: God, we praise you for the gifts you give each person. Help us accept ourselves and one another as brothers and sisters regardless of abilities and challenges. Let us love with Your love which excludes no person. We ask this in Jesus' name, our Lord and Savior. Amen.**

*(Mennonite Mutual Aid Worship Resources:  
Celebrating Our Oneness in the Body of Christ)*

## **Affirmation**

As God's creations, we are fashioned uniquely,  
Each endowed with individuality of body, mind, and spirit  
To worship freely the One who has given us life.  
Each of us has abilities; each seeks fulfillment and wholeness.  
Each of us has disabilities; each knows isolation and incompleteness.  
Seeking shelter from the vulnerability we all share,  
Claiming our promised place in God's Household of Faith,  
We are transformed by invitation, affirmation, and love.

In grateful response, we:

worship and serve God, the source of hope and joy;  
celebrate and serve one another, rejoicing in our diversity;  
transform and serve the world, until we become a community which reflects God's Oneness and  
Peace.

Let the House of God be open to all who would enter and worship.

*(That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to Persons with Disabilities, National Organization on Disability,  
Wash., DC, 1997)*

## **Children's Story**

**Preparation:** Put a small jigsaw puzzle together. Apply masking tape to the back to hold the pieces together so that the entire picture shows. Remove an important piece or two, leaving holes in the picture.

**Story:** Explain how the puzzle was put together, whether it was hard or difficult, how many people it took. Once it was done, you realized there were important pieces missing, pieces that helped to make the picture whole. Explain that as you worked to put the puzzle together, it struck you as to how the church is like a jigsaw puzzle. We have to put the church together – piece by piece. It's hard. It takes time. It takes many pieces working together. If a piece is left out, the picture is not clear. And there are times when we don't know if all the pieces are going to fit together. With each piece, the picture becomes clearer. Ask, "Have you ever put together a puzzle, only to find there were pieces missing?"

Explain that at times people who are different from ourselves for many reasons – disability, color of their skin, the clothes they wear, how much money they have, or where they live –are the missing piece



of life's puzzle. They are often not seen as a piece of the whole picture, and that makes the picture not be complete.

Only when we accept everyone for the gifts and graces they bring, can the picture of the church be made clear. We need to welcome and support the ability of all people be a contributing part of God's family.

## **Responsive Reading**

*This reading is paraphrased from I Corinthians 12:12-27  
and adapted from The Banner Newspaper, May 27, 1985.*

**Reader 1:** For just as the body is one and has many kinds of members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were baptized into one Body – healthy, wise, challenged – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

**Reader 2:** For the church does not consist of one kind of member, but of many. The person who is physically challenged may say, "Because I am not able to move as freely as others, I cannot do all tasks by myself. Yet I am no less a part of this body." And the person with mental retardation may say, "Because I learn new things differently than you do, I need extra help and time. Yet I am no less a part of this body." The person who is hearing impaired may say, "Because I do not hear well, I cannot sing on key. Yet I am no less a part of this body."

**Reader 3:** If the whole church were teachers, where would the learners be? If the whole church were well off, where would the needy be? As it is, God arranged the kinds of people in a church, each one of them, as God chose. If all were a single kind with the same mind, where would the church be?

**Reader 4:** As it is, many kinds of people are needed, yet there is one church. People who are able to read litanies cannot say to the non-readers, "We really don't need you." Nor can folks who are emotionally stable say that they don't need those who are emotionally challenged. On the contrary, the people of the church who seem weaker are indispensable. But God has so composed the church that there may be no discord in the membership and that members may have the same care for one another – a covenant of care for one another.

**All Readers:** If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is left out, all are hurt. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now we are the Body of Christ, and each one of us is a part of it!

*These gleanings are written by Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Binford III, Pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Pulaski, Tennessee. Dr. Binford is the Chair of the Board of Directors of The Southeastern United Methodist Agency for Rehabilitation, Inc. (SEMAR).*

***Suggested Scripture: Exodus 3: 1-17***

***Answering a Call:*** In the call of Moses, he has all kinds of excuses for not responding to God. But for every reason, God has a response. Finally, Moses says send someone else. God gets angry with Moses. So is the call of those who are called by God to set people free. People with disabilities continue to be on the edge of society and many with little or no power to change their lives. When more than 1 in 10 or 1 in 7 (depending on your source) has a disability, this gigantic proportion of our population needs people like you and me to respond to the call of God to open the hearts, minds, and doors of our churches and society to people with disabilities.

The American with Disabilities Act has some holes in it. It still takes people making practical moral decisions to open the doors of society. The response of many churches has to do with the cost of making their facilities accessible. But when all of America's society has to be accessible, what kind of statement is it when churches are not? Keep Out! Not wanted! Remain Outside!

What stand is God calling you and your church to take?

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***Suggested Scripture: Acts 3: 1-10***

***Left Outside:*** In this text we find a man with a disability who every morning is laid at the entrance to the gate called beautiful. Because he is different, because he is not able to perform like everyone else, he is an outsider. He is not able to participate in worship, in the community, or in a fulfilling life. He has been pressed down to being a beggar.

The action of Peter and John changes this man. By introducing him to Jesus he is made whole. He can walk by his two feet, or with crutches, braces, or artificial legs. He is made whole because he has become an insider able to participate in worship, share with others in community, and discover who God intended him to be as a child of God.

Are we willing to reach out in faith to those who are different from us and invite them to join us in the living of life?

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***Suggested Scripture: Luke 5:17-26***

***Standing in the Way:*** There are many barriers which prevent people from coming to Jesus. Some are physical barriers like steps, ramps that are too steep, narrow doors or restrooms that are too small. Other barriers become people like you and me who literally are blocking the way by our attitudes, insensitivity to the needs of others, or inability to dream.

The friends in this text are creative and remove the roof to lower the man who is paralyzed down to Jesus. Have we been creative lately? People with disabilities are like every one else with a need for housing, transportation, employment and some need more personal care than others. In a changing

society, we need to be creative to enable people with disabilities of all ages to live out their calling of God to the best of their abilities.

The story sets up a controversy with the Pharisees over who can forgive sins. The true sin is not that a person was paralyzed, but that he was left outside. We must all come before our forgiving God for those we have prevented from coming inside to Christ.

Other Message Gleanings
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A message using the United Methodist Igniting Ministry message theme: *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors*.

As we seek to have open hearts - open minds - open doors, we must move beyond opening the door to welcome only those who can climb the steps to enter. We must move beyond opening our hearts to love only those who look like us. We must move beyond opening our minds to accept only those who think like us.

A message on the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in our churches: Suggested scriptures include: Psalm 15:1-5 (1989 UMH #747); Genesis 1:26-31; Matthew 28:16-20; I Corinthians 12: 14-27.

As the Body of Christ, we are called to care for all the parts of the Body. If we truly want to live as the Body of Christ, we cannot let part of the body suffer from neglect. There is the challenge facing the church of Jesus Christ: Will we be a whole church that includes all people, or will we be a broken incomplete church?

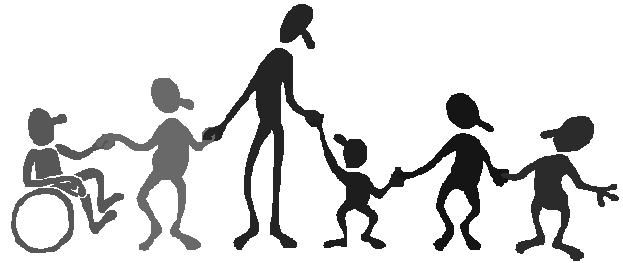
A message on accessibility and the church using Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

At different times in the life of almost every church, there is the great opportunity of building or construction. This is an opportunity for accessibility. The issue is whether we are committed to making the life of our church open to everyone.

A message on the accessible God based on John 3:16-21.

If God is accessible, then God's people ought to be accessible. "For God so loved the world" becomes an invitation to be open to all people with our love and care.

## Christian Education Ideas



### Discussion Starters and Questions for Sunday School, Bible Study, and Fellowship Groups:

Raise questions such as these and follow-up with a discussion of our United Methodist beliefs, Social Principles, doctrinal standards, and scriptural references relating to health and wholeness.

- How does your congregation celebrate the unique gifts of people who cope with disabilities and their families? How does your church family continue to nurture and support these individuals? Does our support and time wane over the years?
- Reflect on this quote: “Where you place your time you place your life, and where you place your life you place your love.” Have you taken the opportunity to interact with others who experience mental retardation and other disabilities or chronic illness?
- What are the obstacles that prevent your congregation from celebrating the diversity, gifts, and graces of ALL people within your congregation?
- What would you do if . . .
  - An organization that provides group homes for adults with mental retardation wants to buy the house next to yours?
  - A new member of your congregation who has cerebral palsy and involuntary muscle spasms has asked to be a greeter or usher?
  - The church is voting today whether to spend \$30,000 to make the church accessible for those who use wheelchairs for mobility and no one in a wheelchair attends?
  - The parents of a man with mental retardation and non-verbal have asked that he participate in the confirmation class and become a member of your congregation?
  - The new pastor appointed to your church is blind, or hearing impaired, or has another type of disability?

## Awareness Activities for All Ages:

- Use a video or book as a discussion starter for a Sunday school class or other program.
  - Our Conference Resource Center has videos and DVDs available dealing with topics related to disabilities and health concerns.
- Visit a local group home or plan a special activity with group home residents at your church.
- Conduct a disability awareness simulation exercise for church groups. The following activities can be conducted within the church building. They can be adapted for church members of all ages and are most successful with existing groups where relationships of trust already exist (i.e. youth group, Trustees, missions committee, Church Council). Examples of simple, but effective activities include:
  - Borrow a wheelchair, crutches, and walker and use masking tape to keep knees and ankles together. Be careful to prevent injury by using tape that can be easily broken if balance is lost. Assign participants to visit selected areas of the church (i.e. restrooms, balcony, drinking fountains, chancel area, or enter the building from the parking lot). Follow-up by completing an accessibility audit of your church building.
  - Place slings on dominant arms, tight socks on writing hands, or tie rolled up newspapers around a limb so bending is impossible. Ask participants to eat snacks, tie shoes, put on a coat, complete a puzzle, or carry things to another room.
  - Play “Simon Says” using ear plugs or silently mouthing directions to simulate hearing challenges or conduct a “Reverse Simon Says” to simulate learning challenges. In “Reverse Simon Says,” tell participants that they are to reverse the directions that are given (i.e. When I say, “Stand on your left foot,” you should stand on your right foot).
  - Put cotton balls or earplugs in both ears. Assign participants to attend worship, Bible Study, or other activities and ask them to write down what the speaker is saying.
  - Wrap several layers of plastic wrap or sandwich bags to old sunglasses or rub Vaseline over existing glasses. Ask participants to read from their Sunday school materials, hymnal, or Bible.

**Conclude all the sessions with opportunities for participants to vent their feelings concerning the activity and the church’s accessibility to ALL persons.**

- Invite individuals representing various types of disabilities to help educate the church. Extend invitations to individuals with disabilities to teach a special Sunday school class, sing or play an instrument during the worship service, serve as worship leader, or provide a program for a church group.



# **Disability Awareness Sunday Materials from The Southeastern United Methodist Agency for Rehabilitation, Inc. (SEMAR),**

## **WHAT IS DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY?**

**The 2004 Discipline states in ¶ 265.4,** Disability Awareness Sunday shall be observed annually on a date to be determined by the annual conference. Disability Awareness Sunday calls the Church to celebrate the gifts and graces of persons with disabilities and calls the Church and society to full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community. If the annual conference so directs, an offering may be received and the funds used by the annual conference to promote the work of creating architectural and attitudinal accessibility in local churches. The observance of Disability Awareness Sunday shall be under the general supervision of the General Board of Global Ministries.

This is a call to celebrate the gifts and graces of all persons and that everyone is welcome in our churches, especially persons with disabilities.

**HOW SHOULD WE CELEBRATE DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY?** This special Sunday gives every congregation the opportunity to challenge our hospitality and our inclusion of all persons into the life of the church. This can be a time when persons with disabilities can offer their gifts and graces to the congregation and to God as participants, liturgists and leaders in this celebration.

**HOW CAN DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY HELP US?** As you celebrate this special Sunday, let it be an opportunity for the congregation to launch or extend its hospitality to persons with disabilities. The trustees and other groups should involve members of the congregation along with their sisters and brothers with disabilities in identifying offering solutions to the physical, architectural, communication and attitudinal barriers. Develop specific plans and strategies to eliminate those barriers so that your congregation might be fully hospitable to all of God's people.

**HOW SHOULD WE USE THESE WORSHIP MATERIALS?** The material is designed so that you can use it as it is or excerpt from it to incorporate in your Order of Worship. You may photograph and print in this large size and use it with the cover Page for your Church Bulletin.

These materials were compiled and prepared by Chase Todd Bannister, MDiv, MSW, LCSW-P. Chase has served as a SEMAR summer intern, teaching workshops on disability awareness and providing program support for HIV/AIDS advocacy and affordable housing development. Many thanks to Dr. Thomas W. Binford III, the Pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Pulaski, Tennessee and former Chairperson of the Board of Directors of The Southeastern United Methodist Agency for Rehabilitation, Inc. (SEMAR), for providing a framework for these materials. Thanks also to the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries and the Presbyterian Church USA for resource support.

SEMAR is an agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church and is funded through SEJ apportionments, grants, and special gifts from groups and individuals who share in this mission to make our church hospitable to all persons, especially persons with disabilities. Churches can partnership through contributing \$1 per child in your congregation.

For additional information contact:

SEMAR,  
P.O. Box 128, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745  
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[www.semar-umc.org](http://www.semar-umc.org)  
Email: [ceure@sejumc.org](mailto:ceure@sejumc.org)

# A SERVICE OF WORSHIP

## DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY- 2006

### THE PRELUDE

#### \*THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We come together today as people with different skills, different abilities, different disabilities.

**People: We come, however, as one body in Christ.**

Leader: We ask God to help us be compassionate toward all, even as God has been compassionate toward us.

**People: Gather us together, in compassion and in faith. Help us to welcome and honor everyone in this community.**

Leader: Regardless of physical strength and ability,

**People: Regardless of differences of mind or spirit,**

Leader: Open us, O God. Make us accessible to your Spirit, and accessible to all your people.

**All: Amen.**

\*THE OPENING HYMN We Meet You, O Christ

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### THE CONFESSION OF SIN

**Merciful and Life-giving God, we confess that we have been wayward children. You taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves and we chose to be selfish with our love. You taught us to feed the hungry and poor at whatever cost and we chose to be greedy and limit our willingness to serve. We have disregarded Your example and dishonored Your name when we chose not to celebrate the holiness of Your created world or proclaim the sacred worth of our brothers and sisters with handicapping conditions. Forgive us, God of compassion, when we have veered from the path You created for us and when we forget what it means to welcome You in our midst. Help us remember Your teachings. Help us mold our life to Your example. Free us from our sinfulness, Holy Creator, and lead us in the ways of justice and truth.**

### THE WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND PARDON

Pastor: When we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

**People: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.**

**ALL: Glory to God. Amen.**

THE PSALTER: Psalm 99:1-9 819-820

\*THE GLORIA PATRI 71

### PRAYERS AND CONCERNS

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

### THE PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS



## THE ANTHEM

### \*THE DOXOLOGY

## THE CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

THE HYMN OF PREPARATION Jesu, Jesu 432

\*THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 14: 7-14

## THE MESSAGE

\*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH The World Methodist Social Affirmation 886

\*THE HYMN OF DEDICATION Many Gifts, One Spirit 114

### \*THE BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH

Leader: May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

People: So be it! Amen!

\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE Shalom to You 666

## THE POSTLUDE

**\*The Congregation will stand if they are able and if they so choose.**  
The Numbers are selections found in The United Methodist Hymnal, 1989

## A Gospel Lesson Sermon Starter

### The Guest List Luke 14:7-14

This pericope in Luke's gospel account shows a Jesus keenly interested in messing with our guest lists. Jesus shows up at a Pharisee leader's home for a Sabbath day meal and is disgusted by what he sees: a who's who party complete with the noblesse oblige of social hierarchy and status. This was certainly the custom of the day, and still is today. When we draw up wedding guest lists or throw parties of all flavors, we like to fill up our lists with names of people who are like us and names of people who will make us look better just by showing up. Not only are they the focus of the invite-list, we put them at the head of the table when they get there. We talk to them at the party more than anyone else. We remember to get their coats at the door.

Jesus has no use for our self-aggrandizing list of invitees. He has a who's who list of his own. Jesus' list centers in on those persons who have handicapping conditions, are poor, or are otherwise marginalized. This rips apart convention for the Pharisees, and reveals a new kingdom politics: God rebuffs our sinful social structure in favor of an explosive hospitality that welcomes those who are different from us. Those whom we have treated as second-class, God welcomes as first-class, and we are invited to re-narrate our lives after his example.

Prior to writing your sermon, consider gathering a few persons from your church community who have a disability or are a parent of a child with a disability to talk about what they experience, what scriptures are particularly helpful or hurtful, what life experiences might be used as sermon illustrations, etc. It is the old adage: .Nothing about us, without us..

**Planning Guide:** In worship planning, remember to include persons with disabilities as liturgists, ushers, communion servers, and preachers - all the ways people who are able-bodied share their gifts with the church. Some things to keep in mind when preparing your sermon:

- Use people first language - not the disabling condition (the child who is blind vs. the blind child).
- Scripture is rich with stories that can be used for developing sermons. Most of the accounts we have of Jesus interacting with individuals were with people who had some kind of disability, were marginalized, or considered outcasts.
- Emphasize that persons with disabilities are made in the Image of God and that we all make up the Body of Christ - with value, dignity and gifts.
- Scripture does **not** teach that having a disability is the result of sin or a lack of faith. A cure is not withheld because a person did not pray hard enough. Healing comes in different ways and there is a difference between the concepts of healing and .cure.
- Promote mutuality of ministry. Persons with disabilities can minister to others. They are not looking to be the objects of charity or to be fixed.
- Persons with disabilities are not super-human, more spiritual, or more gifted by God because they live with a disability.
- Disability is not the will of God.
- We are all interdependent, wounded and broken.
- Preaching should never contribute to a person's isolation or exclusion. Demonstrate pastoral care in the midst of preaching.
- Avoid using terms like blindness, deafness, etc. as spiritual metaphors (we are blind to our transgressions; deaf to hearing the word of God).
- Use persons who have disabilities as positive models.

**NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR MENTAL ILLNESS**  
**RECOVERY AND UNDERSTANDING**  
Tuesday of Mental Illness Awareness Week  
October 9, 2007



**The National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding** has been designated as the Tuesday of Mental Illness Awareness Week which is first week in October of each year. Mental illness networks and faith leaders are urged to work together so that they may recognize and prepare for this day in a way that works best for each faith community. The prayers and actions of both faith communities and secular organizations (e.g. NAMI, NMHA, DBSA, OCF, ADAA, etc.) are needed to restore mental wellness in America. In seeking God's guidance, we can recommit ourselves to replacing misinformation, blame, fear and prejudice with truth and love in order to offer hope to all who are touched by mental illness. This flyer includes some resources you may find helpful.

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**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Leader:** *We confess that we are still uninformed about mental illness and how it impacts persons and their families.*

**Response:** *At times, because of our lack of knowledge and understanding we find ourselves separated from our sisters and brothers with mental illness, their families and ourselves.*

**Leader:** *There are lines drawn between us because we may define wholeness and normality with different words, but not a different spirit.*

**Response:** *Because of our lack of knowledge we live cut off from sources of strength and power that would help us be present to people with mental illness. This lack often makes us feel that we cannot act.*

**Leader:** *So many events, meetings and needs call to us, grabbing for our attention, that we find ourselves stretched to a fine, thin line.*

**Response:** *In the face of all this, we continue to seek knowledge and understanding of mental illness that will bring liberation and shalom to us and those we serve and unite us to action.*

**All:** *O God, our liberation and shalom, we seek the power of your Spirit, that we may live in fuller union with you, ourselves and our sisters and brothers with mental illness. Also grant that we may gain courage to love and understand each other. Amen.*

**PASTORAL PRAYER**

Loving Creator, we come to you on this National Day of Prayer for Mental Illness Recovery and Understanding because we know that you are a God of love and compassion. We come as people of all creeds and all nations seeking your presence, comfort and guidance. We come as consumers, family members, friends, co-workers and mental health professionals. We come this day because we believe that you, Divine One, love each one of us just as we are and you walk with us on our individual journeys through life. You see the ignorance and injustice that divides and separates persons struggling with mental illness and you weep with us. Give us courage to face our challenges and open us today to the many ways you are already working in our midst. Help us to identify mental illness as the disease it is, that we might have courage and wisdom in the face of ignorance and stigma. Inspire us as we seek to overcome fear, acquire knowledge, and advocate for compassionate and enlightened treatment and

services. Lead us as we open our hearts and homes, our communities and job opportunities, our houses of worship and communities of faith. Enable us to find ways to be inclusive of persons living with mental illness in our everyday lives. Be with doctors, therapists, researchers, social workers, and all those in the helping professions as they seek to overcome ignorance and injustice with care and compassion. Sometimes, Divine Spirit, we feel discouraged and hopeless in the face of so many challenges. Help us to see ourselves as you see us...persons of value and worth...persons of creativity and potential. May we come to understand the interconnectedness of mind, body and spirit in bringing about health and wholeness. And may we go forward into our communities with a renewed sense of vision, hope and possibility for the future. Amen.

Reverend Susan Gregg-Schroeder

### **CANDLELIGHTING SERVICE**

We light the candle of **Truth** that God will help us dispel ignorance and misinformation about major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, severe anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder. **(Silent prayer)**

We light the candle of **Healing** that troubled minds and hearts, broken lives and relationships might be healed. **(Silent prayer)**

We light the candle of **Understanding** that the darkness of stigma, labels, exclusion and marginalization might be dispelled for the sake of those touched by mental illness. **(Silent prayer)**

We light the candle of **Hope** for persons and families living with mental illness, for better treatment, for steadier recovery, for greater opportunity to work and serve. **(Silent prayer)**

We light the candle of **Thankfulness** for compassionate, dedicated caregivers and mental health professionals; for new discoveries in brain research and better medications. **(Silent prayer)**

We light the candle of **Faith** to dispel doubt and despair for those who have lost hope and are discouraged. **(Silent prayer)**

We light the candle of **Steadfast Love** to remind us of God's love and faithfulness, and to remind us to share the light of love and service for those living with mental illness. **(Silent prayer)**

Carole J. Wills

### **Other Options**

*After lighting the candles, participants can be invited to come forward and light a votive candle speaking the name of someone they wish to pray for aloud or in their heart. Other types of candles can be used and a song can be sung.*

*Another option is to have a fountain or bowl of water in the center of the candles. Participants can come forward and take a stone, colored marble or shell from the water and take it with them as a reminder of their personal prayer.*

### **Websites for More Resources**

FaithNET NAMI [www.faithnetnami.org](http://www.faithnetnami.org)

Mental Health Ministries [www.MentalHealthMinistries.net](http://www.MentalHealthMinistries.net)

Pathways to Promise [www.pathways2promise.org](http://www.pathways2promise.org)

FaithCEP NAMI Indianapolis [www.congregationalresources.org/mentalhealth.asp](http://www.congregationalresources.org/mentalhealth.asp)

[http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/links\\_resources/other\\_resources/nationaldayofprayer.pdf](http://www.mentalhealthministries.net/links_resources/other_resources/nationaldayofprayer.pdf)