

Resources and Ideas for Susquehanna Conference Disability Awareness Sunday: October 10, 2021

Introduction: This year during Annual Conference, we passed a motion to celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday on the second Sunday of October! We hope that you will join the Disability Ministries Task Force of the Susquehanna Conference as we celebrate this special Sunday. There are lots of ways you can be involved!

What is Disability Awareness Sunday?

Disability Awareness Sunday is a special Sunday dedicated to empowering people with disabilities and helping to raise awareness about the disability community. According to *The Book of Discipline*, every conference is encouraged to celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday on a date of their choosing. For the last three years, our conference has celebrated Disability Awareness Sunday on the second Sunday of October.

According to the CDC, 61 million adults in the United States live with a disability. The CDC also states **that one out of four adults in the US have some type of disability**. Statistically, it is highly probable that your church already includes members who have a disability. Many disabilities are invisible. Any person can become disabled at any point in their life. As our congregations continue to age, we will have many more church members experience some form of disability during their lifetime.

How Can I Help?

One of the biggest ways you can help is by taking a special collection! Donations can be made to Advance #3021054: The Susquehanna Disability Ministries Task Force does *not* have a budget. Instead, we ask that all donations be made to The Disability Ministries Committee (DMC) of the United Methodist Church. DMC serves the entire global connection of the UMC. They provide grants to help UMC churches and congregations empower people with disabilities. In the past, grants have been used to:

- Create church entry ramps, lifts, and elevators
- Provide Sensory equipment and toys for children's play areas
- Help reimburse costs related to auditing churches for accessibility and helping them become more accessible
- Provide accessible materials for church programs for people with disabilities
- Maintain a website full of great resources for worship leaders and congregations!

Help others today with your donation to the Advance #3021054.

More Ideas for Disability Awareness Sunday

Open your pulpit to a person with a disability. On Disability Awareness Sunday (or any time of year!) consider opening your pulpit to a person with a disability. Invite them to preach, lead a prayer, give a personal testimony, or read scripture. People with disabilities bring many unique gifts and graces to the body of Christ.

Ask before you grab! If a person with a disability joins you for worship, be respectful of their personal space. Do not talk to a guide dog that is working or touch a person's wheelchair without asking.

Little changes make a big difference. Consider having a few large print bulletins (size 14pt Arial or larger) every Sunday. Make large print hymnals and Bibles available. Always use a microphone when speaking and consider having a hearing loop installed (or perhaps apply to DMC for a grant to get a hearing loop!)

Remember that it is possible to have a disability and still live a full and meaningful life. Sadly, throughout history, having a disability has been viewed as a stigma. In the United Methodist Church, we are working to change that. Let's use Disability Awareness Sunday to empower our laity, advocate for the needs of our church members who are disabled and educate others about the disability community!

Planning a Disability Awareness Sunday Worship Service

To help assist you with worship planning, here is a CALL TO WORSHIP you could use at your church!

LEADER: Let us lift up our many voices and praise the Lord with all our heart.

PEOPLE: Though we come together with differing gifts, talents, and abilities, we all sing of God's glory.

LEADER: The Psalms tell us of God's compassion to those who believe.

PEOPLE: Likewise, we seek to be as compassionate and gracious in our community as our Lord is to us.

LEADER: Show compassion and love to your neighbors and enemies.

PEOPLE: With the Lord's guidance, there will be distinction in our love and kindness towards others.

LEADER: As a community, we can rejoice in the works of the Lord.

PEOPLE: For the works of the Lord are many, and we recognize that we are part of God's wonderful Creation.

ALL: Amen

(From Virginia Annual Conference, 2017 Source: <https://umcdmc.org/worship/disability-sunday-order-of-worship/>)

Suggested Hymns for Disability Awareness Sunday

#89 “Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee” is an inclusive hymn set to a joyful tune from Ludwig van Beethoven’s 9th symphony. The composer wrote this tune when he was totally Deaf.

#98 “To God Be The Glory,” “#369 Blessed Assurance,” and “#419 I Am Thine (Draw Me Nearer)” These hymns were written by Fanny Crosby. She was a talented and prolific writer who was blind and wrote many popular hymns.

#114 “Many Gifts, One Spirit”: This hymn can be used as a springboard to discuss including the gifts of all, whatever they are, and extend our ideas beyond the typical thinking of gifts.

For more song ideas, visit: <https://umcdmc.org/worship/songs/>

More Worship Resources for Disability Awareness Sunday

You can find all types of resources to help you plan your church’s Disability Awareness Sunday at **UMCDMC.org/worship** ! There you can find a suggested order of worship, prayers, litanies, printable sample bulletins, suggested scripture readings, and more!

Want to stay up to date with our conference’s Disability Ministry Task Force? Check out our website at: **disabilityUMC.org**

About the Author:

Rev. Rebecca L. Holland, Div. OSL is honored to serve as the chair of communications for the Disability Ministries Committee of the United Methodist Church. She is also the chair of the Disability Ministries Task Force of the Susquehanna Conference and the author of *The United Methodist Church and Disability*. Her latest book, *Hope for the Broken*, is currently available from Touch Point Press.