"Creating New Spaces for Persons with Disabilities"

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Abstract

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities, the most comprehensive, civil rights legislation for the Disability community led to advancements in accessibility. However, we face challenges as religious educators who serve in places of worship, denominational structures, and institutions of higher education. The development of the internet and the rapid pace of technological advancements are an unexplored frontier yet to be fully accessible for all people. By definition, Network Theology[1] is concerned with the intersectionality of theology and the various forms of communicate that "network" us together. In this paper, we explore ways religious educators, service providers, and disability advocates can work towards creating an accessible learning environment whether virtual or in person.

Keywords: Network Theology, Religious Education, Disability Studies

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[1]Campbell, Heidi A., and Stephen Garner. *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith In A Digital Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Church

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act provided protections for people with disabilities against discrimination. This game-changing legislation allowed accessibility provisions in employment, education, transportation, accommodations, state, and federal government programs. Under Title III, the ADA provides 12 categories of businesses and service providers who must use accessible public space for all people with a variety of abilities.[2] Churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of worship are not required to follow ADA regulations.[3] Whereas, we believe that providing accessible spaces for play, worship, community, celebration, and education is essential. Faith communities should not only be considering how to make physical spaces accessible but also virtual spaces that people may access.

Hans S. Reinders wrote, in *Disability in the Christian Tradition*, "The times that I have asked ministers and pastors about members of their congregations who are disabled, the most frequent response is, we don't have them." Often times places of worship do not realize they have persons with disabilities in their faith community or within the geographical population surrounding the Church, because they do not see them or are unaware of individual's needs. If you don't currently have persons with disabilities in your faith community, you should begin to ask "Why?" Are there barriers that prevent persons with disabilities' (PWDs) participation in your local church?

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[2] https://www.churchlawandtax.com/blog/2016/july/churches-and-americans-with-disabilities-act.html
[3] https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm

"According to a 2004 study, 84% percent of adults with disabilities and 84% of adults without disabilities, both found their faith to be "somewhat important" or "very important."[4] From this study, we can infer that lack of interest did not prevent participation in the faith community. Rather, barriers to full inclusion bared their access to the faith community. In *Including People with Disabilities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, and Congregations, Erik W. Carter* explains, "Sometimes, barriers related to architecture, attitude, communication, programming, and liturgy within a congregation have the effect of pushing people to the margins or away altogether." We know that people with disabilities live within all of our towns and cities, they surround our communities of faith, their absence from our places of worship must be examined to find the root cause.

According to the United States census one in five people have a disability. In 2010, a total of 56.7 million people of the civilian population had a disability.[5] The 2010 Americans with Disabilities report states that, "About 12.3 million people aged 6 years and older (4.4 percent) needed assistance with one or more activities of daily living (ADLs) or instrumental activities of daily living." (IADLs) In our local communities, it is likely we have persons with disabilities whom the Church alongside state and federal programs can help. As ministers our job is to support people's spirituality, empowering their mental, physical, and emotional wellness. Faith communities join in helping people wrestle with

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[4] Carter, Erik W. *Including People With Disabilities In Faith Communities: A Guide For Service Providers, Families And Congregations*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, 2010.

[5]

https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html

the sacred and the secular, advocating for a just society that removes discrimination. The 2010 Americans with Disabilities report identifies, "The probability of severe disability was 1 in 20 for people aged 15 to 24, while 1 in 4 for those aged 65 to 69." Given the statistics we have just seen, it is likely most religious educators, pastors, and volunteers will work with persons with disabilities. As our church population ages, the need for accessible spaces increases. Faith communities have the chance to reach out to PWDs, with the opportunity to enrich lives. The obstacle is often an absence of knowledge to do so, not a lack of desire

Disability Theology

In Genesis 1:26-27, it states that humans are made in the very image of God. Our first thought maybe to picture someone able bodied. But ponder what these verses reveal about both humanity and God. No one is outside the likeness of God whether in form or spirit.[6] God invites people with a variety of abilities to accept the task set before them, even providing accommodations when there is a need. As seen through the lens of the Exodus, God calls Moses, a man with a stutter to speak for the Divine, interpret God's will and deliver the Israelites from the bondage of slavery. In Exodus 4:10, Moses reveals he cannot speak eloquently as he has a "slow speech and slow tongue." According to David Tabb Steward, a better Hebrew translation is that Moses spoke with a "heavy mouth and

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[6] Melcher, Sarah J. "Genesis And Exodus." In *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, edited by Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong, 31–33. London: SCM Press, 2018.

tongue" (kebad-pe ukebad lason).[7] God revealed through Moses that the Divine has intentionally created people with a diverse spectrum of ability. In Exodus 4:11, it states "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" God does not see Moses' condition as impairing and empowers him with an accommodation - Aaron. In other words, God does not see Moses' physical disability rendering him unable to be called and sent for the task the Divine set before him.

Another example of God calling someone to service who has a chronic illness is seen in the ministry of Paul. Paul was called through a conversion experience in Acts 9. He goes on to become one of the most influential leaders of the Christian movement. His disability is mentioned in both Galatians 4:13-14 and II Corinthians 12:7. Scholars are unclear of the exact illness he faced, but it was substantial enough to be mentioned in the Bible.

In the Bible, illness and disabilities are often viewed as the mark of a sin committed by a parent or the person impacted by the ailment. We read about Jesus healing women and men with infirmities. Illnesses and disabilities are viewed as something that must be overcome. In no way, should we make light of the hardships faced by those who lived in Bible times. Illnesses and disabilities that people live with today, with the help of medical advances and accommodations, were life threatening in ways we cannot comprehend fully. With new breakthroughs and knowledge, we understand the science behind

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[7] Steward, Tabb David, "What Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy Say: Text, Topics, and Themes" in *the Bible and Disability: A Commentary,* edited by Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong, 31–33. London: SCM Press, 2018.

disabilities better than ever. For most of us, when we see a person with a disability, our first response is not a connection to the sinful nature of previous generations or to the person who has the disability. We accept that these things happen, sometimes we understand why and at other times we do not. We do know that Jesus showed concern for those who were in need of his help. Jesus wanted the best life for people, knowing God loved them no matter their circumstances.

These biblical ideas serve as the foundation for our belief that faith communities, classrooms, and learning environments should be accessible for all people. God saw potential in Moses and empowered him, stutter and all, to serve a vital role as the Messenger between God and Israel. Paul continued his tireless work as he struggled with a chronic illness. Jesus recognized the struggle of the people he came in contact with and tried to help them live full lives. As religious educators we recognize the value in developing accessible spaces and places where people of all abilities can learn together and use their distinctive gifts for the advancement of God's Kin-dom in the world. Accessibility allows for independence, empowerment, and enfranchisement of people with disabilities to be equal within Church and Society.

Moving Toward a Welcoming Church

According to the law, accommodations are to be provided and barriers removed whenever "readily achievable" in existing facilities.[8] Places of worship carry exemptions from implementing some ADA provisions. Yet, our desire should be to provide

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[8] http://nwadacenter.org/toolkit/ada-standards-and-international-building-code

accessibility whenever possible. Here are some suggestions for how faith communities, religious educators, and service providers can raise awareness about the experience of persons with disabilities.

- Develop a team consisting of trustees, staff, and members of the congregation willing to evaluate a church's accessibility. It's essential to address architectural, attitudinal, communication, liturgical, and programmatic barriers.

- Review ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities available online, the guide will provide specific instructions and surveys that help you to evaluate the space.[9] Begin to familiarize yourself with the guide, walk through your facility and consciously consider what barriers may be in place.

- Begin the evaluation process with a tape measure, carpenter's level, a pen, and a clipboard. Can individuals enter your building? Once participants enter your building are spaces between pews wide enough to accommodate mobility aids? Addressing architectural barriers can prove helpful for PWDs from birth as well as helping other individuals who face disabilities later in life.

Dealing with architectural barriers is important but as Erik W. Carter reminds us "Efforts that begin and end with ramps, pew cuts, automatic doors and designated parking spots will fall short of what is needed to communicate welcome."[10]

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[9] https://www.adachecklist.org/doc/fullchecklist/ada-checklist.pdf
[10] Carter, Erik W. "Designing Inclusive Religious Education Programs." In *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families and Congregations.* Baltimore, Md: Paul H. Brookes Publishing, 2010.

We recommend establishing intentional relationships with families in local congregations. Parents may have suggestions for managing behaviors in the learning environment to best help their child. Establishing dialogue with adults with disabilities is another strategy towards meeting individual accommodational needs. It is important to realize that all persons with disabilities are different and their individual needs unique. In other words, what strategies and care plans work for one person, may not work for another. Carter suggests, developing a religious educational plan that may include questionnaires and/or biographies for each person detailing their individual needs. These plans can shape how religious education programs adapt to meet their needs.[11] Just as public schools develop accommodation plans for students, faith communities should take the same opportunity to consider best practices and strategies to meet the needs of people in their care. By developing a streamlined process, we can reassure volunteers and empower them to serve people with disabilities.

Often overcoming attitudinal barriers is the most challenging step for faith communities. If a religious education program is functioning effectively, it is most likely already taking steps to meet people's needs. Functioning programs are finding ways to adapt, evolve, and include people in their care. In reality, caring for individuals with disabilities shouldn't be treated any differently than learning how to administer an EPI pen for a congregant with an allergy. We aren't trying to trivialize the ongoing struggle of becoming an inclusive church. This illustration demonstrates what it means to identity an

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[11]Carter, Erik W. "Designing Inclusive Religious Education Programs." In *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families and Congregations.*

individual need, develop an action plan, an adapt accordingly to meet congregational needs.

In order to be an inclusive church, faith communities need to have a shared vison among pastor, staff, and congregants, centered around the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The goal of religious education should be to remind all people that they are created in the image of the Divine, all persons are called to kin-dom building, and fully welcomed at God's bountiful table. Our approach towards ministry matters most, we as religious educators, pastors, and leaders set the example for others. If our attitude towards a new ministry venture is confident, optimistic, and supportive, then it is more likely we will receive buy in from the congregation.

It is important to remind ourselves that we can learn how to be more inclusive as we work with PWDs. It is often the little things we can do for others that is the most meaningful. It doesn't take a whole lot of training to say hello, smile and welcome others in, even if you don't receive verbal response. Individuals who are nonverbal are no less human than their verbal counterparts. No matter a person's ability the church should be a welcoming place. All people, verbal or nonverbal, deserve the same kindness, welcome, and dignity. The way we treat others sets a precedent for how our congregation engages with PWDs. Staff and volunteers may feel reluctant undertaking the process of making religious education programs disability friendly. In whatever forms faith communities decide to engage in ministry to PWDs, one thing is consistent, a shared value for extending God's grace to all persons as we work together to create a Beloved Community is essential.

The Church And The Call for Accessibility

From our research, we found that most mainline Protestant churches in the United States have passed resolutions and policies that advocate for inclusivity. It is our experience that levels of accessibility vary from denomination to denomination and furthermore from church to church. Below, we describe several actions taken by the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Most denominations call for adherence to the ADA, fair and equitable hiring practices, and the recruitment of persons with disability for church leadership.

The United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church has several provisions for adhering to equal employment, higher education, and opportunities within their doctrinal policies. *The Book of Resolutions* adopted Resolution 3302 titled "The Church and People with Intellectual, Physical, Psychological, and/or Neurological Disabilities" in 1984 that called for inclusivity, affirmative action, and accessible spaces in places of worship. Another notable feature of Resolution 3302 is the affirmative action calling for equal access to employment, hiring, and higher education opportunities, baring all forms of discrimination. *The Book of Disciple* defines inclusion as, "Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, community and the world; inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination."[12] Further, paragraphs call for training for clergy, and the recruitment of PWDs in leadership roles.

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[12] *The Book of Disciple of the United Methodist Church.* Nashville, the United Methodist Publishing House, 2016 (¶140, p. 101)

The United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ's General Synod adopted a resolution in 2005 affirming its commitment to be accessible to all and adhere to the Americans with Disability Act.[13] The resolution is titled "Called to Wholeness in Christ: Becoming A Church Accessible To All" which defined specific goals of the denomination. Like the United Methodist Church, UCC calls for the establishment of a governing body to oversee disability related concerns, implement ongoing change, manage accessibility grants, and advocate for inclusion. The UCC joined the National Organization on Disability which is committed to overcoming physical, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers to full inclusion for PWDs. Local churches are encouraged to overcome physical barriers in UCC owned facilities. Congregations can establish inclusion committees to provide evaluation of accessibility and adhere to the ADA.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

In 2010, the Church Council of the ELCA adopted a stance similar to both the UCC and UMC's promises to provide accessible spaces, equal employment, and higher education opportunities. The ELCA partners with Lutheran Services in America-Disability Network, a national organization to advocate for PWDs, lobby for federal legislation, and offer assistance as a service provider to Lutheran run facilities. The ELCA resolved to

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[13]http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/261/gs-25-called-to-wholeness-in-christ.pdf?1418423620

continue working with interdenominational bodies such as Definitely Abled Youth Leadership Event, the Definitely Abled Advisory Committee[14] (DAC)

the Lutheran Network on Mental Illness/Brain Disorders[15] (LNMI), and the Deaf Ministry, Blind and Braille Ministry within the ELCA. The denomination continues to make progress towards overcoming physical, attitudinal, and programmatic barriers that prevent the Church from being fully inclusive.

Web Accessibility

It is obvious that church bodies wish to be inclusive of people with a wide range of disabilities. Although we mentioned only a few, it is our perception that many churches are expanding their online presence as well. As communities of faith increase their use of technology, another critical public accommodation we should be aware of is ensuring virtual spaces are accessible for all persons. Having a medical condition, mobility disability, auditory processing disorder, epilepsy, vision impairment, deafness, or blindness could hamper a person's ability to access websites, blogs, and social media pages. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) provides measurable accessibility for a wide spectrum of disabling conditions that may interfere with a person's ability to access a website[16] WCAG 2.0 provides an expansive list of accommodations churches, and other organizations can use to make their websites accessible for all people that range from relatively simple to complex.

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[14] https://www.elca.org/Resources/Disability-Ministry

[15] https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Disability-Ministry

[16] https://seesparkbox.com/foundry/getting_comfortable_with_wcag

The four principles of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 include perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.[17] The WCAG 2.0 provides 12 guidelines to measurable accessibility of text, video, and audio. It measures the accessibility in three levels. Level 1, is the easiest level of accommodation empowering a person to use a website with the functions of their keyboard. Level 2, requires a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1 so that the size of text can be made smaller and larger depending on a person's need. It is expected that Level 2 guidelines will eventually become the standard of website accessibility for federal and state agencies. Level 3, is much more complex and will require the assistance of a person who can code websites. For example, the program Userway provides coding for universal access for all websites.[18] However, Userway requires the ability to access a website's code and add a new line for the program to be added to the pre-existing structure of the website's programming.

We will illustrate some examples of simple accommodations. Whenever using a picture, write a short caption titled Alternative Text or Alt. Text for short describing the photo so that a visually impaired or blind person can interpret the photo. If producing a video, provide closed captioning and transcripts of spoken speech. Be aware of presenting large blocks of text. Instead, break up passages of writing into more readable paragraphs. Below are a few examples on how to present information in a way that is more easily accessible.

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[17] https://seesparkbox.com/foundry/getting_comfortable_with_wcag
[18] https://userway.org/

- Use concise, clear language

- Visual Illustrations

- Alt. Captions

- Expand acronyms before using shorthand.

- Write short paragraphs

Other attainable ways to be more inclusive is to provide electronic versions of all print materials. It is a good idea to provide a link for any slides, graphics, and announcements made during service. Strive to post all electronic materials before the event to allow PWDs to covert the material into a useable format with their preferred programs including screen readers, PDFs, and word to voice programs. Avoid using content that may induce seizures such as flashing lights. If you use PDFs, use the Optimized Character Recognition setting, this can be done with Adobe Acrobat. Whenever you post a photo include a short caption describing the photo, this is known as "alt. text". You should use "alt text" for all non-text features on your online platforms. Chose easy to read fonts such as Sanserif and Arial to ensure a higher level of readability for your audience.

The Church In the 21st Century

Faith Communities now more than ever are constantly in contact through the internet. Navigating the unexplored frontier of technology is an ongoing process as pastors, religious educators, theologians and people of faith try to understand how our society and the Church communicate. *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in the Digital Culture* defines our current iteration of the Web 3.0. The unexplored frontier of the

internet continues to grow faster than we can keep up. Web 3.0 is significantly different than earlier iterations of the internet due to the rise of personal mobile devices with internet capability and increased world-wide access. Internet capabilities are no longer confined to computers alone. People can access the internet from their smart watches, tablets, and mobile phones. We also have the ability to access documents and files through file-sharing programs such as Google Docs or Dropbox.

Web 3.0 is a vast web of collaboration between content creator and content consumer with those roles having incredible flexibility. From these advancements in technology, the broader religious research community continues to study how people interact online and engage religiously. A study titled *The Sacred and the Virtual: Religion In Multi-User Virtual Reality*[19] explores the possibility of building virtual worshiping communities and determines whether authentic experiences can be felt through attending Church in virtual reality. The paper studied an E-Church, an online virtual world where users attend worship via networked VR systems. E-Church offered the researchers an opportunity to analyze both the implications of social interaction with VR and in-text functions. The E-Church community meets at a set location and time each week with 5 to 10 participants. The E-Church functions with a leader calling the meeting to order, leading the call and response. The other participants engage with the liturgical response with a responsive "Amen" or "Praise the Lord." Researchers Schroder, Heather, and Lee explain, "The service will go through a number of stages; various prayers, a sermon,

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[19] Schroeder, Ralph, Noel Heather, and Raymond M. Lee. "The Sacred and the Virtual: Religion in Multi-User Virtual Reality." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 4, no. 2 (December 1998). https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2001-03105-006&site=ehost-live.

giving thanks, discussion of issues of conce (Schroeder, Noel and Lee 1998)rn to members, and the like." The model structures that of a religious meeting as a real-world ritual would. The researchers in *The Sacred and the Virtual: Religion in Multi-User Reality* concludes, "A prayer meeting in the virtual world may not provide the same type of religious experience as a conventional church service, but it certainly reproduces some of the essential features of the latter - albeit in novel ways." Although the E-Church model may not be our goal, discovering new ways to make the church assessible using current technological advances should be a value we desire to pursue.

Conclusion

This paper is a result of a class project for Theology In Ministry at Oklahoma City University. After reading the book *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith In A Digital Culture*, students were challenged to use practical theology and technology as they examined Christian Education. The idea of using technology with people with disabilities came the topic of interest after some discussion. Students contributed various elements to the group assignment including spiritual exegesis, teaching strategies, worship planning, communication practices, and discussion on disability theology. The students produced a video interviewing fellow peers about their knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act and experience of PWDs in the Church. In addition to writing a paper, presenting a PowerPoint, and making a video, the class produced a PDF with suggestions for how places of worship could improve their use of online communications. We later used the basis of this project to inform religious educators on how to work with people with disabilities. For more information, see Appendix C.

Although many faith communities have set standards, many churches still struggle and fall short of meeting the ADA guidelines. This project has shown us that, it is time to become more creative and look around to see what is already being used and build on established ideas. We have talented people in our churches that can help us move forward, but we must be intentional about the work we do. Technology gives us a new opportunity to meet the needs of people who have a variety of disabilities. It can be a tool that develops community and offers an entrance to ministries that may have been closed to many. Using Erik W. Carter's book *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities,* is a good place for churches to begin. Identifying people in your faith community who understand and use technology is important. Asking them to use their experience and knowledge to help the church reach out to a broader community is a ministry we need people to help with if we are going to be the Church for ALL.

Appendix A

Specific Measures of Disabilities for Adults:

Listed in the American With Disabilities 2010 Report

Seeing, Hearing, and Speaking Limitations

- Difficulty Seeing – experiencing blindness or having difficulty seeing words and letters in ordinary newsprint, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses (if normally worn).

- Severe Difficulty – blind or unable to see the words and letters at all.

- Difficulty hearing – experiencing deafness or having difficulty hearing a normal conversation, even when wearing a hearing aid.

- Severe Difficulty – those who are deaf or unable to hear a normal conversation.

Upper and Lower Body Limitations

- Lower body limitations – include difficulty walking, climbing stairs, or using a wheelchair, can, crutches or walker.

- Upper body limitations – include difficulty lifting and grasping.

Cognitive, Mental, and Emotional Functioning

- Mental disabilities encompass a wide range of symptoms that can appear from the moment of life or come about later because of illness or injury.

These include learning disability, Alzheimer's, senility, or dementia, intellectual and developmental disabilities and other mental/emotional conditions with one or more selected symptoms including depression or anxiety, trouble getting along with others, trouble concentrating, and trouble coping with stress.

Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL)

- These are skills that under normal circumstances a person would not struggle to master. A disability in these areas means that there is a need for some level of assistance.

- The ADLs include difficulty getting around inside the home, getting into/out of bed, bathing, dressing, eating, or toileting.

- The IADLs include difficulty going outside the home, managing money, preparing meals, doing housework, taking prescription medication, and using the phone.

Appendix B

ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities

All guidelines and images below can be found at on the online PDF file published

by the New England ADA center, printed and developed with a grant from the Department

of Education.[20]

Door Clear Width

Open the door to a 90-degree angle, measure from the face of the door until you
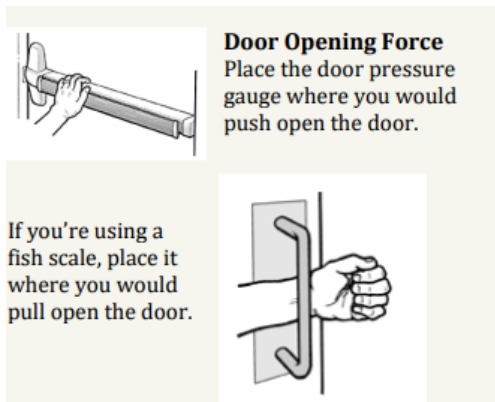
reach the edge of the door stop.

Door Clear Width
Open the door 90
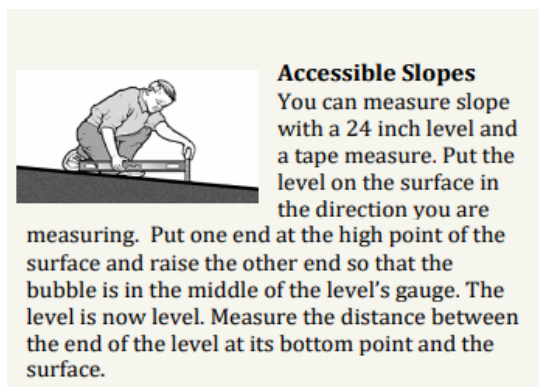degrees, measure from
the face of the door to the
edge of the door stop.

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[20] https://www.adachecklist.org/doc/fullchecklist/ada-checklist.pdf

Door Opening Force

Using your door pressure gauge determine how much force is needed to open a door.

Door Opening Force
Place the door pressure gauge where you would push open the door.

If you're using a fish scale, place it where you would pull open the door.

Accessible Slopes

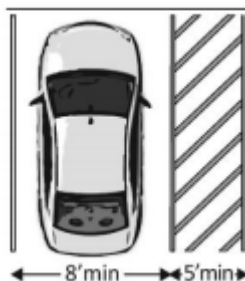Measure for a 1:12 ratio. For every inch of height, there should be at least 12 inches of ramp space.

Accessible Slopes
You can measure slope with a 24 inch level and a tape measure. Put the level on the surface in the direction you are measuring. Put one end at the high point of the surface and raise the other end so that the bubble is in the middle of the level's gauge. The level is now level. Measure the distance between the end of the level at its bottom point and the surface.

Accessible Entrances

A wheelchair requires a minimum of 36 inches wide to allow a wheelchair use access through the space.

36"min

Parking Spaces

A parking space should be at least 8 inches wide with an aisle access 5 inches

wide.

8'min — 5'min

Appendix C

HOW TO MAKE SOCIAL MEDIA MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

THE IMPACT
- ☐ Following Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 makes your content accessible to a wider variety of people.
- ☐ It will make content more accessible to those with blindness, vision impairment, deafness, hearing loss, learning and cognitive disabilities, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity, combinations of these disabilities, as well as many more.
- ☐ Updating your social media to follow these guidelines will not only expand your ministry to a new community, but it would expand your ministry to online users in general.
- ☐ It won't cost you a penny.

A FEW STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO BECOME A MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE
- ☐ Provide electronic versions of all print materials that are used for the congregation. This could include newsletters, bulletins, graphics that will be used in service, etc. You may even consider sending this information out prior to service (via email or website) so that those with disabilities have the proper time to convert the documents into their preferred programs.
- ☐ Avoid content that is known to cause seizures, such as flashing lights.
- ☐ Design your website and social media in a way that the background and foreground are easily distinguishable.

- ☐ Ensure that the text in all PDFs are set to Optimized Character Recognition (OCR). This can be done with Adobe Acrobat.
    Open PDF File in Acrobat > Edit PDF > Acrobat automatically converts to OCR
- ☐ Include "alt text" with all non-text items on your website and/or social media.
- ☐ Use an easy-to-read font.
- ☐ Make sermon slide shows available online so that members who have disabilities may follow along.
- ☐ Make your website completely functional via keyboard.
- ☐ If you choose to have a video on your website or social media, make sure to provide access to closed captions and transcription.

A FEW WAYS TO INCORPORATE DISABILITY THEOLOGY INTO MINISTRY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WITH DISABILITIES
- ☐ Designate volunteers who can help to "be the eyes" of those in your church who may have vision impairments.
- ☐ Designate volunteers who can help to "be the ears" for those in your church who may have hearing impairments.
- ☐ Print out a handful of bulletins with enlarged print before service.

- ☐ Encourage all speakers to use the microphone during service, no matter how little their part. We want our friends and family with disabilities to be able to participate in the service as fully as anyone else.
- ☐ Provide large-print versions of hymnals, bulletins, offertory materials, etc. This is a helpful tool for those who have vision impairments, but also for those who may have dyslexia or other reading impairments.
- ☐ Use an easy-to-read font for all documents and materials.
- ☐ Look into helpful resources such as braille Bibles, large print Bibles and hymnals, etc.
- ☐ Narrate visual elements of the service or program.
- ☐ Ask your congregation members if there is anything you can be doing to be more inclusive of their needs.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE SUPPORT DISIBILITY THEOLOGY?

- ☐ King David and Mephibosheth | 2 Samuel 9
- ☐ A Man Born Blind | John 9:1-3
- ☐ Fearfully and Wonderfully Made | Psalm 139:13-16
- ☐ One Body, Many Members | 1 Corinthians 12:2-27

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