



1 Body Many Parts

People with disabilities participating in the life of Christ's Church.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Cor. 12:27 ESV

Barriers in God's house

Jesus wants His Church to have open doors, welcoming all people to worship. But for America's 54 million men, women and children with disabilities, those doors can lead to barriers — barriers of architecture, communication and attitude.

- People with disabilities — and their families — often encounter negative experiences at church.
- People in wheelchairs struggle to get from the sanctuary to Bible classes in the fellowship hall.
- People with hearing impairments miss out when the Word is only spoken.
- People with visual impairments miss out on worship and fellowship opportunities if announcements are only printed.
- People with developmental disabilities are often overlooked by Christian education programs.
- People with mental illness — and their families — often feel excluded from the congregation.

But, people with disabilities long to be connected to the body of Christ. They have gifts and talents to share.

A matter for all congregations

Disabilities affect every congregation. Every pew likely holds someone whose family has, or will experience, a significant physical, mental or developmental challenge.

OF THE TOTAL U.S. POPULATION:

3% of people have developmental disabilities

4% of people are blind or visually impaired

7% of people are deaf or profoundly hard of hearing

15% of people have a learning disability

1 in 4 families is affected by mental illness

People with disabilities often are less likely to attend worship or participate in the life of the congregation because of physical barriers, concerns about rejection or neglect, or the simple fact that people have not asked them to participate in worship, Bible study, fellowship or service opportunities.





A PERSONAL STORY

Carl (the man pictured above) has Down syndrome. He leads a full life in his church. He sings with gusto and prays without inhibition. He helps with Sunday school and vacation Bible school classes. He carries the torch in special services. Carl also works in the church office. But, his inclusion did not just happen. It took great effort by his family and the cooperation of his congregation.

“People still are amazed that someone with a disability can do so much,” says Carl’s mother. “But Carl wants what any Christian wants — a place at God’s table and an opportunity to use his gifts as a part of Christ’s body.”

“People still are amazed that someone with a disability can do so much...”

Assessing your congregation

People with disabilities often feel lonely and isolated. So do their families. Learn how you and your congregation can reach out with God’s love. A congregational assessment is the key to discovering your congregation’s needs and opportunities.

- Perform a physical assessment of your church’s facilities.
- Analyze your church’s worship services, classes and programs to identify specific problems and challenges to people with disabilities.
- Determine your congregation’s attitude toward people with disabilities and their families.

Online resources

To get information and resources for ministering to people with disabilities, visit [lcms.org/socialissues/disability](https://www.lcms.org/socialissues/disability)

- Download our Disability Ministry Assessment Tool to determine your congregation’s challenges and opportunities.
- Find tips for equipping your congregation to welcome people with disabilities and their families.
- Learn from professionals and families who experience disabilities.

Together, we can help ALL parts of the body of Christ grow stronger today!

