

## 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. Take these steps:

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

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

- › **Download the LCMS 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!**



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# 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



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

Learn more: [lcms.org/disability](https://lcms.org/disability)

## 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 or 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

The matter of disabilities affects 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 (pictured standing) has Down syndrome. He leads a full life in his church. Singing and praying together with his fellow congregation members is important to him. 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 in his congregation 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.”