

Accessibility Mini-Audit for Churches

United Methodists, along with numerous other faith communities, have been working to improve the accessibility of their churches for persons with disabilities/ They are on a journey toward becoming faith communities that welcome, affirm, and invite people with disabilities to participate fully in congregational life. This brief audit, designed to help congregations conduct a site evaluation of their church facilities, offers some basic guidance. It is particularly useful for those just starting out on their journey toward accessibility and inclusion.

It is recommended that a committee of the church, including at least seven persons, be formed to conduct this audit. Members could include the chair of trustees, pastor, lay leader, persons with disabilities and others interested in disability concerns.

Place a check by the measures you have taken.

Planning and Policies

- Our congregation has a disability concerns planning committee whose members include people with disabilities. It advises and guides the congregation's accessibility efforts.
- Our staff can give driving directions and information about accessible public transportation.
- All registration forms for church-sponsored events are available in larger print and non-print formats, list a contact person and have space for people to indicate their accessibility needs.
- Service animals or guide dogs are permitted within the congregation and in the sanctuary space.
- Leadership roles are offered to people with disabilities, and needed accommodations are made to make this possible and comfortable.

Parking

- Accessible parking spaces, at least 96 inches wide, are provided at a ratio of 1:25 (one accessible space for every 25 total spaces) and are located near an accessible entrance. A freestanding metal sign showing the international accessibility symbol identifies each of these accessible spaces.
- Van parking spaces, at least 132 inches wide, are provided at a ratio of 1:6 (one van space for every six total accessible spaces). Signs identifying van parking spaces contain the designation "van accessible."
- All of our accessible parking spaces are paved.
- For loading and unloading, each accessible parking space has a clearly marked adjacent access aisle, which is at least 60 inches wide for cars and 96 inches wide for vans.
- Our staff and congregants know that they must not park in accessible parking spaces.

Passenger Loading Zone

- A passenger loading zone is provided where cars and vans can pull up to the building's main accessible entrance to load and unload passengers. Our loading area is at least 60 inches wide and 240 inches (20 feet) long.
- If our loading area is sheltered from the weather by a roof/canopy, there is at least 114 inches (9.5 ft.) of vertical clearance.
- The loading zone's surface is level and even.

Curb Cuts (also known as “curb ramps”)

- _____ All sidewalks on and surrounding the campus have good curb cuts.
- _____ Curb cuts are provided whenever it is necessary to connect the access lane and accessible route.
- _____ Sides of curb cuts: where provided, curb cut flares are not steeper than 1:10 (one foot rise in 10 feet).
- _____ Curb cuts are a minimum of 36 inches wide, exclusive of flared sides.
- _____ Landings are provided at the top of the curb cuts. The clear length of the landing is 36 inches, minimum.
- _____ Slopes are not steeper than 1:20 (one foot rise in 20 feet).

Ramps

- _____ Where there are steps or a change in grade level, and platform lifts or elevators are not appropriate, a ramp has been provided.
- _____ Ramps are as flat as possible (preferred slope is 1:20); steepest permissible slope is 1:12, and have a clear width between handrails of at least 36 inches?

Entrances

- _____ There is at least one accessible door at each accessible entrance to the building, and to the worship, fellowship, education and pastoral care areas.
- _____ All doors are at least 32 inches wide (preferably 36 inches), thresholds no higher than ½ inch wide with beveled edges. All doors have 12-16 inch kick plates so people in wheelchairs can push them open. Door handles are large, easy to grasp (e.g., lever handles). Doors are lightweight and easy to open (less than 6 pounds of pressure), or there are automatic door openers.

Accessible Route

- _____ All of our accessible “elements” are connected by an accessible route, so that our accessible parking spaces, our loading zone, streets and sidewalks and accessible entrance(s) to the building are all accessible to one another.
- _____ Our accessible route does not cross traffic or a driveway.

Corridors

- _____ Each corridor is at least 36 inches wide.
- _____ Corridors are equipped with handrails on at least one wall.

Restrooms

- _____ There is at least one accessible restroom (can be unisex), clearly marked with the international accessibility symbol.
- _____ Our accessible restroom has at least a 60-inch wide turning radius.
- _____ All faucet controls, door and stall handles are lever type, and hot water and drain pipes are insulated. All dispensers and hand dryers are 40 inches or less above the floor. The fronts of sinks are 34 inches maximum above the floor. There is a 27-inch clear knee space above the floor, under the sink, to accommodate wheelchair users.
- _____ The toilet stall is equipped with grab bars. Toilet seat height is 17 inches minimum and 19 inches maximum, measured to the top of the seat. There is a 36-inch wide door (minimum 32 inches).

Communication

- _____ Sign language interpreters are available on request, with advance notice. Staff knows how to contact local qualified sign language interpreters.
- _____ Printed copies of the sermon (or as a minimum, summaries), are available for people who have hearing difficulty.
- _____ The sanctuary has good acoustics and an amplifying sound system for people who depend primarily on their hearing to enjoy the service.
- _____ The sanctuary has an assistive listening system (FM, audio-loop, or infra-red) and ushers are trained to give out headsets when asked.
- _____ Worship materials are available in Braille or on tape.
- _____ Large print versions of the bulletin and worship materials are available.
- _____ The sanctuary or other worship area is well lit so that people with visual limitations can read the bulletin and worship materials. There is adequate lighting on the speaker's face for people who read lips.

Worship Area

- _____ The choir area is accessible so that adults and children using mobility aids can participate in choir activities.
- _____ All aisles in the sanctuary, including the side aisles, are at least 36 inches wide. All aisles and spaces where people move around during worship are at least 60 inches wide.
- _____ There is an appropriate number of wheelchair accessible spaces dispersed throughout the sanctuary or worship area. Either several chairs have been removed from a row, or selected pews have been shortened ("pew cuts"). Seating next to wheelchair space is marked with a sign, "Reserved-accessible companion seating."
- _____ If there are steps to the chancel, handrails are provided.
- _____ The worship leader invites people to rise "in body or in spirit."
- _____ There is a designated fragrance-free seating area in a well-ventilated part of the sanctuary or other space.

Telephones

- _____ If telephones are available for public use, at least one telephone is accessible.
- _____ At least one telephone is equipped with a volume control for persons who have hearing difficulty.
- _____ Our staff knows how to communicate with a caller using a relay operator to ask questions and directions.

Attitudes

- _____ Staff, volunteers and congregational members have all been trained in disability etiquette so that they are comfortable in their relationships with visitors and members who have disabilities.
- _____ Sign language classes are conducted to help members of the congregation learn to communicate with persons who are deaf.
- _____ Speakers from the community, curricula, awareness films and videos are used to help raise disability awareness, dispel myths and eliminate stereotypes about disabilities, etc.
- _____ Our church has started a mini-library, with books for adults and children, on inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as worship materials in alternative formats.

Our church school staff knows about and has obtained some of the many interfaith free and inexpensive disability awareness books, coloring books, etc., designed to use in inclusive classes by children with and without disabilities.

Access Sunday is observed each year.

Additional Resources

“Accessibility Audit: Resolution.” From **The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church**. (1992). The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Ave South, Nashville TN 37203. Phone: (800) 672-1789; Website: www.cokesbury.com

American Sign Language Hymns for Signing (United Methodist Hymnal). (1995). Kurt Keller, Editor.). The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Ave South, Nashville TN 37203. Phone: (800) 672-1789; TTY: (800) 227-4091. Website: www.cokesbury.com

The Faith We Sing: American Sign Language Edition (United Methodist Hymnal). (2004). The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Ave South, Nashville TN 37203. . Phone: (800) 672-1789; TTY: (800) 227-4091. Website: www.cokesbury.com

The View from Under the Pew. (2008). By Diane Winters Johnson. Abingdon Press. The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Ave South, Nashville TN 37203. . Phone: (800) 672-1789; TTY: (800) 227-4091. Website: www.cokesbury.com

United Methodist Hymnal Braille Edition Loose Leaf Binders. (1990). The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Ave South, Nashville TN 37203. . Phone: (800) 672-1789; TTY: (800) 227-4091. Website: www.cokesbury.com

United Methodist Large Type Hymnal. (1990). The United Methodist Publishing House, 201 Eighth Ave South, Nashville TN 37203. Phone: (800) 672-1789; Website: www.cokesbury.com

Upper Room Daily Devotional Large Print. (published bimonthly). The Upper Room, P.O. Box 340009, Nashville TN 37203. Phone: (800) 925-6847. Website: www.UpperRoom.org

Upper Room Daily Devotional Braille Edition. (published bimonthly). The Upper Room, P.O. Box 340009, Nashville TN 37203. Phone: (800) 925-6847. Website: www.UpperRoom.org