

People with disabilities often have felt alienated from houses of worship because they don't feel accepted or because there are barriers to their participation. Some accommodations, such as ramps and assistive listening devices cost money, but many accommodations and acts of hospitality and inclusion cost little or nothing and reap huge benefits in building community for everyone. Here are some things that we can do to be welcoming and inclusive.

Some General Guidelines for Interacting with Persons who have Disabilities:

- Sit down when talking with someone in a wheelchair. If you are seated next to someone who cannot stand up, remain seated yourself.
- When beginning a conversation with someone who is blind, tell them who you are (they might not recognize your voice), and say goodbye when you leave. Tell the person what you are doing if you want to shake their hand, pass the peace, hand them something or give them your arm to assist with walking somewhere.
- Guide dogs and other service animals are working. Do not pet or feed them without permission.
- If you are with someone who is hard of hearing, do not shout. Talk slightly louder, enunciate clearly and speak more slowly than usual. At times, going to a quieter room may be necessary to carry on a conversation.
- If someone is deaf and uses an interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- Don't be afraid to ask, "May I help you?" Let the person with a disability decide whether they need help and how you can be of assistance to them.
- Most importantly, be inclusive. Persons with disabilities are persons first. Get to know them and build a relationship. Assist them in finding opportunities to serve, not just to receive help.

By making people feel at home in the House of God, we can do much to build up the Body of Christ!

Visit our web site and learn more about Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC), our resources, and the Disability Consultants who are available to answer your questions in the areas of hearing, vision, mobility and developmental/cognitive disabilities.

www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc
1-888-728-7228, extension 5800

pdc PRESBYTERIANS FOR
DISABILITY CONCERNS

PDC is one of 10 networks of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA)
A ministry of the General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church (USA)



A Church Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities . . .

- Affirms that when one person is excluded from the Body of Christ, that Body is not complete. When the Body is incomplete, it does not function fully.
- Makes a commitment to "hear the voices of people long silenced." — *PC(USA) Brief Statement of Faith*
- Are intentional about getting to know the individual, seeing beyond their disability and engaging in relationships of mutuality.
- Understands that persons with disabilities may do things differently, but have rich gifts to offer our congregations.
- Makes "reasonable accommodations" so as to invite and enable full participation by all.
- Engages in ministry *with* rather than ministry *to* persons with disabilities.
- Includes those with disabilities in making decisions which affect their involvement.

Join Us in making the
Presbyterian Church (USA)
a Church for Everyone . . .

"We are All Glorious Gifts of God!"