

## ***Resolution on Disabilities: A Celebration of That All May Enter***

[A printed copy can be obtained from the Office of the General Assembly by calling 1-888-728-7228, extension 8018.]

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prepare to celebrate, reaffirm, and recommit to *That All May Enter* (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 99–108) as the basis for a call to greater concern for the inclusion of all members in every aspect of the life and work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and a call to broader concern for justice in our own and the wider communities, and to these ends approve the following actions and include the attached appendixes in the *Minutes*:

1. Encourage the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to engage in a celebration of the 25th anniversary of *That All May Enter*, beginning with the 214th General Assembly (2002).
2. Request that such celebration throughout the church begin with prayer so that the power of the Holy Spirit may be upon the church as it witnesses to its ministry and mission to be an inclusive community and to promote justice.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to send, by Internet and in print by request, the resolution and recommendations to all PC(USA) sessions and commend to the churches a celebration of *That All May Enter* in 2002, and make available, in a form that is convenient for their use, the following responsive reading:

### **Praise and Thanksgiving**

**We, your people with disabilities and without disabilities,  
gather to offer praise and thanksgiving.**

**We praise you, God of all creation,**

**For creating in our hearts and minds the will to conceive and give birth to *That All May Enter*  
twenty-five years ago;**

**We give thanks for the love of Christ,**

**Which has embraced us this past quarter-century as we have attempted to become more  
inclusive communities of faith.**

**We acknowledge that whatever we have accomplished as a result of *That All May Enter* was  
empowered by your Spirit.**

**We praise you, God, for the ramps, widened doorways, elevators, platform lifts, large-print and  
Braille hymnals, sign-language interpreters, adapted church school curricula, and other  
tools and services that have made the church more possibly inclusive.**

**We offer praise and thanksgiving for the increased visible participation of persons with  
disabilities in the life of the church—as volunteers, elected leaders, and employees.**

**We give you thanks for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and also the Individuals  
with Disabilities Education Act of 1997—landmark legislation that protects the human and  
civil rights of adults and children with disabilities.**

**And so, all of us—people with and without disabilities—come before you with gratitude for**

**your faithful generosity.**  
**We gather in prayerful anticipation of revitalized creation in us, renewed love among us, and the refreshing power of the Spirit.**

### **Becoming an Inclusive Community**

**God above,  
We pray with heavy hearts;  
In sorrow we confess our failures to become a fully inclusive community,  
The kind of community that was lived by Jesus the Christ,  
The community that he commissioned the church to establish and spread.  
Our hearts are contrite,  
Our hope is in your gracious Love and empowering Presence.  
Help us, we pray, to become your inclusive community.**

**You create all humankind in your image (Gen. 1:26). Your image is uniquely precious in each individual and not determined by cultural values. You ask us to see your image in all persons, including ourselves.**

**Help us, we pray, to see you in all persons.**

**When you called upon Moses, he judged himself disabled, but you were not deterred. You gave him assistance and empowered his abilities (Exod. 4:10–16). You ask us not to be deterred by any disabilities. You ask us to work with the abilities you have given to each of us.**

**Help us, we pray, to work with our collective abilities, and not be deterred by disabilities.**

**At the Last Supper your body was broken and given for us (Luke 22:19). After the resurrection, your followers encountered your scarred and broken body (Luke 24:36–39a). When we gather to be the body of Christ, we embody the scarring of life's hardships, the imperfection of all human life, and the brokenness of the whole creation.**

**Help us, we pray, to realize that we are the body of Christ.**

**Paul teaches the church that all are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27–28). He implores each church to see itself as a body with many members, and to trust that God has given each member different gifts for the work of the church. He tells us to be dependent on your power and interdependent communities of love (1 Cor. 12:4–26).**

**Help us, we pray, to be dependent on your power and interdependent communities of your love.**

**The Reformed tradition welcomes all God's children into the church with Baptism (Calvin, *Institutes* 4.15–16), and professes that Baptism makes each new member an integral part of this church, the body of Christ (*Book of Order*, W-2.3006; *Book of Common Worship*, 414). We who are Presbyterians have a clear mandate to see ourselves and others as God's children. Each one reflects the divine image in multifarious ways.**

**Help us, we pray, to honor our heritage and be your open community.**

## Heeding the Call to Do Justice

God above,  
We pray with heavy hearts;  
In sorrow we confess that sometimes we do not heed your call to do justice,  
According to your ways and your Word,  
In Scripture and in your church.  
Our hearts are contrite,  
Our hope is in your gracious Love and empowering Presence.  
Help us, we pray, to fulfill your call to do justice.

You ask of us a higher justice than the world requires. The exodus story makes clear that you do not tolerate conditions that prevent the children of God from being fully human. Today persons with disabilities are handicapped by structural and attitudinal barriers in our political, economic, and social institutions—and, yes, even in our churches. You call upon Christians—those with and those without disabilities—to help in the liberation of all people who are oppressed by the handicaps placed upon them by others.  
Help us, we pray, to remove the barriers that handicap the children of God.

The prophets call your people to do justice (Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8). The prophets understand that no matter what else the people of God do, we are not fulfilling your requirements of us unless we work for justice. You call all of us—members with disabilities and members without disabilities—to work together for justice wherever people are unjustly handicapped by structural and attitudinal barriers.  
Help us, we pray, to remove the injustices our church and our society place upon some of your people.

Jesus inaugurates his ministry with a proclamation: The time has come to right the wrongs of the past, to bring justice where there is injustice (Luke 4:19). You call your people to right the wrongs the church has committed in the past by excluding some of God's people from worship. You require your church—those of us with disabilities and those of us without disabilities—to take actions to help overcome injustices that oppress people with disabilities in our wider communities.  
Help us, we pray, to hear and obey your call to do justice.

When we turn to our *Book of Confessions*, "A Brief Statement of Faith" calls us to do justice:

In a broken and fearful world  
the Spirit gives us courage . . .  
to hear the voices of people long silenced,  
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. (10.4, lines 65–66, 70–71)

When we ask, "Why has God called us to be the church in this place?" we cannot escape your requirement that justice be done.  
Help us, we pray, to work for justice in our community and our world.

God above,  
We pray with heavy hearts;  
In sorrow we confess our failure  
To become a fully inclusive community,  
And to always heed the call to do justice.  
Our hearts are contrite,

Our hope is in your gracious Love and empowering Presence.  
Help us, we pray, to take actions and make changes.

4. Reaffirm the guiding policy principles contained in the historic *That All May Enter* as follows:

... be it resolved that we, the 189th General Assembly of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1977), declare that it shall be the policy of the General Assembly of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America that all planning for new church buildings and major renovations to existing church buildings shall take into consideration the needs of the handicapped members of our society, in order that all may enter into our fellowship. . . . (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, p. 100).

Be it further resolved, that we commit ourselves and our church—and encourage others within the Judeo-Christian community—to take action . . . (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, p. 101).

Summary of actions requested: General Assembly and presbyteries are directed to provide loans and grants for compliance with this resolution; the Program Agency is directed to develop ministries with persons having disabilities, including resources for use in local churches; and to encourage churches to identify and remove architectural barriers; all congregations are commended to seek ways to remove architectural barriers, to reach out to persons who are disabled, to engage in ministries of advocacy for disabilities concerns, and to work with other churches in order to use resources most effectively; commissioners are commended to encourage compliance as soon as possible; General Assembly is directed to assure that future meetings be held in locations that comply with the resolution (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 101-2).

5. Recommit the resources and people, the imagination and energies of the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that the goals of *That All May Enter* may be more fully accomplished; and toward that end direct the National Ministries Division to do the following:

a. Enhance publicity about the availability of loans and guidelines to help churches become more inclusive, and make clear that the loans are for more than only mobility accessibility.

b. Urge presbyteries to promote learning events to help ministers of Word and Sacrament and Christian educators to preach and teach in ways that show conscious acceptance of people with and without disabilities.

c. Urge presbyteries and congregations to promote educational events for sessions and church leaders to gain knowledge about ways churches can work for justice and become more inclusive.

d. Make available lists of resources to help with (2) and (3) above including, but not limited to, Appendixes A through C printed with this resolution.

e. Continue to develop educational and worship resources for churches to use with children and adults who have disabilities.

6. Support the work of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy task force as it convenes over the next three years

... to develop a comprehensive disabilities policy, including learning disabilities, disabilities prevention, and all other disabilities identified by the Resolution on "Disability Concern," and report to the 217th General Assembly (2005) (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 41, 308-9).

## ***Rationale***

This resolution is in response to a referral of *Commissioners' Resolution 98-3. Regarding an Update of "That All May Enter"* (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 92, 738-39).

### WITNESSES TO GOD'S WORD

Isaiah spoke God's word to the people: "You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43:10a).

God calls the whole church, regardless of geographic location, racial or ethnic identity, size or resources, to witness by words and deeds to God's creation of and salvation for all God's people—children and adults, with and without disabilities. Here are some of the witnesses God has given us for our time:

1. A youth director in Arkansas Presbytery shares the experience of having a junior high advisor who is in a wheelchair. She inspires the young people and they are learning to plan group activities so that their advisor can participate fully with them (75).

2. First Presbyterian Church, Warren, Ohio, in the Presbytery of Eastminster, has made structural changes with ramp, elevator, chairlift, and accessible rest rooms (66).

3. For the past twenty years, Amesville-New England Parish, in the Presbytery of Scioto Valley, has sponsored a seven-month program each year for children and adults with mental retardation (66).

4. From the Presbytery of Northern New York, a pastor reports that he has been blind since birth but has served the church as a teacher, seminarian, and ordained minister (72).

5. In the Presbytery of Louisville, Calvin Presbyterian Church provides space for a day-care program to serve adults with mental retardation and is associated with a summer camp for children with mental retardation (69).

6. In the San Joaquin Presbytery, First Presbyterian Church, Bakersfield, California, has instituted comprehensive resources to aid all with disabilities: teaching material that is suitable for the members' abilities, transportation, listening devices, large-print bulletins, audiotaped sermons, braille materials, and signers (73).

7. Jean D. May, a member of Mt. Pleasant Church in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina (Presbytery of Charleston-Atlantic), reports that her church has a ramp, handrails, and elevator; hearing devices; and large-print hymnals (74).

8. Kathleen Deyer Bolduc, a member of College Hill Presbyterian Church in the Presbytery of Cincinnati, has a son with mental retardation and autistic tendencies; she has written a book for churches to use: *A Place Called Acceptance: Ministries with Families of Children with Disabilities* (Louisville: Bridge Resources, 1999) (65).

9. North Presbyterian Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, reports that one half of the congregants are persons with mental illness, all of whom are full and equal participants in the life and work of the church (66).

10. The Reverend Linda Reinhardt, of Canyon Lake, Texas (Presbytery of Mission), writes about the Jeremiah Project—an organization that ministers to and with persons having disabilities caused by environmental toxins. The Jeremiah Project has a large resource library available to ministers, churches, and individuals (76).

11. Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, Iowa, in the Presbytery of Des Moines, has interpreters for people who are deaf, a van with a wheelchair lift, elevator, braille signs, and wheelchairs. The church plans to renovate to fully equip for all disabilities (67).

(Source: Sharon Kutz-Mellem, ed., *Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God's Family* [Louisville: Witherspoon Press, 1998])

## I. Choosing Words with Love

### A. *Who Are "We"?*

1. "We" are the church, which is understood as a community of the faithful—people with disabilities and people without disabilities, who have God-given abilities and gifts of the Spirit. Thus, in this paper "we" or "us" includes all God's people, some who happen to have disabilities, and some who happen not to have disabilities.

2. The definition of "persons with disabilities" that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has adopted illustrates the numerous possible disabilities of children and adults in a congregation:

Persons with disabilities are a diverse group of individuals who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as relating, caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, p. 630).

3. The breadth of the above definition enables us to understand why we—the church—are people with and without disabilities. We realize that the youth minister and her husband might have a new baby with severe mental retardation and cerebral palsy. Or the young man with the beautiful tenor voice in the choir could have an automobile accident that causes permanent spinal cord damage. Or the clerk of session may have a stroke that renders her unable to communicate or navigate independently. Or the new couple, after years of being childless, may decide to adopt a child who is blind. Or the pastor might be diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Ginny Thornburgh, director, Religion and Disability Program, National Organization on Disability (in a telephone conversation with Grace Cumming Long on January 3, 2000) indicated that many churches are reluctant to be open and inviting to persons with disabilities until one of their own members becomes disabled. Then they rally to the cause. Her observation confirms our resolve to think of persons with disabilities as one among us all, and to press this point to its fullest possibility.

4. One does not have to consider such disruptive occurrences in a congregation, however, to realize that we, the church, are people with and without disabilities. The natural aging process leaves some with painful and uncooperative joints, others with the aftereffects of hip fractures, some with the loss of visual acuity, others with impaired hearing. And temporarily or permanently disabling accidents and illnesses occur at all ages and stages of the life cycle. According to the latest available census figures, in 1994 America had 54 million persons with disabilities, which means that 20.6 percent of Americans have disabilities (John M. McNeil, *Current Population Reports: Americans With Disabilities: 1994-95*. Census Bureau, August 1997 [<http://www.census.gov/prod/3/97pubs/p.70-61.pdf> accessed January 7, 2000]) .

## B. “People-First Language”

1. In *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities* (Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1997, 10–11) the need to use words that are not hurtful is considered carefully. The rule that applies in most cases is “People-first language.” In other words, church members do not speak of a blind person, but a person who is blind. In this way the full humanity of the person is recognized first and the person is not dehumanized by being defined as a disability. Church members and leaders also are reminded not to use the hurtful words of the past—such as deaf and dumb, cripple, retard, etc. Various disabilities advocacy groups, however, have chosen their own terminology and sometimes it is not possible to know what language is most fitting or acceptable to a particular person.

2. The World Council of Churches—based on its biblical and theological understandings that all people are the children of God and all have unique qualities, natural abilities, and spiritual gifts—attempted for many years to speak of “differently abled” persons, but in 1997 adopted the more commonly understood terminology, “people with disabilities” (*Programme Unit I: Unity and Renewal: Report to the Assembly Hearing: 1991–1998* [Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998, p. 39]).

3. “People with disabilities” or “persons with disabilities” is the language employed most often in this paper. Besides being more commonly used and understood, it is the terminology chosen by the National Organization on Disability, and also by the disabilities advocacy groups who worked for the Americans with Disabilities Act, a major civil rights bill passed in 1990.

## II. Scriptural and Theological Foundations

This material, as well as the responsive reading in the resolution, treats inclusive community and justice separately. But it should be understood that, even though justice requires more than inclusive community, to exclude a person from a community of identity and support is an injustice, a violation of human and civil rights.

### A. *Inclusive Community*

1. The Reformed Tradition makes clear that all are to be welcomed into the church with Baptism, and that Baptism makes each new member an integral part of this church, the body of Christ. John Calvin defined Baptism as “the sign of initiation by which we are received into the society of the church, in order that, engrafted in Christ, we may be reckoned among God’s children” (John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960], 4.15.1, p. 1303). Calvin went on to argue for the baptism of children, with trust that God would bring them to understanding, or the baptism of adults, after they had reached an age of understanding (*Institutes* 4.16.20–23, pp. 1342–47).

2. Calvin’s views on baptism are of central importance for our thinking about children and adults with severe learning disabilities or mental retardation. There is enough anecdotal evidence to confirm that some churches will not accept into their membership children with severe mental retardation (see, e.g., Brett Webb-Mitchell, *Dancing with Disabilities: Opening the Church to All God’s Children* [Cleveland: United Church Press, 1996], chapters 8 and 12). If the church denies baptism to a person because of concern that the person will never understand Christian beliefs, then we are in essence saying, first, we do not trust that God will be working in the person to bring about whatever understanding and transformation God knows is needed; and second, some people are not children of God. The *Book of Order* says, “Baptism enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God’s redeeming grace offered to all people. Baptism is God’s gift of grace and also God’s summons to respond to that grace” (W-2.3006).

3. All people are children of God, made in God's image (Gen. 1:26, NRSV). "This image is not a measurable characteristic or set of characteristics. God's image is reflected uniquely in each person" (NCCCUA, "Disabilities, the Body of Christ, and the Wholeness of Society," 1998 [[http://www.nccusa.org/98ga/dis1.html,\\_12/7/99](http://www.nccusa.org/98ga/dis1.html,_12/7/99)]). Just as there are no particular mental or physical characteristics that identify a person as a child of God, there are no mental or physical requirements for baptism. Baptism is an occasion to celebrate the embrace of another child of God into the body of Christ. The *Book of Common Worship* offers a celebratory response to be used after a baptism: "With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you into Christ's church to share with us in his ministry, for we are all one in Christ" (414). The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a clear mandate to be an inclusive community, open to all God's children who reflect the divine image in multifarious ways.

## B. *God's Justice in an Unjust World*

1. From the church's perspective, justice is more demanding than merely fulfilling the laws of our nation. When asked whether religious organizations were subject to the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Jim Brady, then vice chairman of the National Organization on Disability, replied "Yes! And to a higher authority as well" (*In Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community*. [Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1996], inside front cover).

2. The exodus story makes clear that God does not tolerate conditions that prevent the children of God from being fully human. The liberation that God empowered Moses to carry out was for the purpose of freeing people whose very humanity was handicapped by the political and economic structures, along with the attitudes about foreigners and slavery, that controlled their lives.

3. The liberated people of God are called into a covenant that requires justice and righteousness. The people of God understand that we are responsible for treating others the way God treats us. When we fail to fulfill the covenant to be just, the prophets call us to task: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream," cries the prophet Amos (5:24). And the prophet Micah asks: "What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). The prophets understand that no matter what else the people of God do, we are not fulfilling God's requirements of us unless we work for justice.

4. The Hebrew Bible presents us with a form of justice that presupposes a theocracy, a nation ruled by God's will. In our democratic world, where understanding of the separation of church and state are often unclear, it might be easy to find reasons to avoid the biblical mandate to do justice. But consider Jesus's call for justice. He is not speaking to the Roman Empire. He is calling the people in his religious community to do justice. Jesus inaugurates his own ministry by declaring that he has come "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:19). Biblical scholars note that he is referring to the year of jubilee described in Leviticus 25:8-55. The jubilee year is a time to correct injustices, to restore people to their own land and families, to release slaves, and to worship God. Jubilee is a time to put into action the justice and mercy that God requires of the people to whom God showed mercy when they suffered oppression. The people to whom Jesus speaks have neither a theocracy nor a democracy; they live under an emperor. So they cannot bring pressure on the leaders to do justice. Jesus calls them to restore justice within their own community. That is a place for Christians to start. Is the church just when it excludes some people from the family of God by structural, communication, or attitudinal barriers? Does the church do justice when people's civil and human rights are violated because they are unable to participate in the community of their faith?

5. But for people in a democratic society, doing justice requires much more. If some of God's children are denied access to the housing, education, transportation, employment, and health insurance that are needed for them to obtain the necessities and comforts of life, they are being treated unjustly. In many cases such injustice constitutes society's sins of omission—simply failure to consider the matter. In other

cases such injustice constitutes society's sins of commission—a deliberate attempt to deny people their human and civil rights. We need to realize that people with disabilities are stigmatized in our society, and are one of the groups against whom hate crimes are committed (Katharine Q. Seelye, "Citing 'Primitive' Hatreds, Clinton Asks Congress to Expand Hate-Crime Laws," *New York Times*, National Desk, April 7, 1999 [<http://www.nytimes.com/archives>, Dec. 18, 1999]; see also U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Hate Crimes Statistics*, 1998 [<http://www.fbi.gov/pressrm/pressrel.htm>, Nov. 18, 1999; accessed Nov. 27, 1999]). The church is called to confront both the benign neglect and the deliberate mean-spiritedness that deny some of God's children basic human and civil rights.

### III. Cultural, Theological, and Biblical Bases of Attitudinal Barriers

#### A. *The Heresy and Tyranny of Independence*

1. One of the most painful attitudinal barriers to feeling accepted and possibly to being accepted for people with disabilities is the cultural norm of independence. One of the ways our society judges a person's worth is by the degree of independence he or she is able to achieve. But Christians live with a different reality and therefore should embrace a different set of values.

2. Christians know, first of all, that we are totally dependent on God. We call ourselves "children of God" for good reason. We know that our very existence depends on God's empowering presence in the universe; this is one of the underlying beliefs found in the biblical creation stories (see, e.g., Gen.1:1-2:25; 8:20-9:17; Job 38:1-40:1; Prov. 8:22-31). Being a child of God also means that we are in relationship with God, and we know we depend on that relationship. We know we cannot be faithful without the love of Christ that lifts us to our full humanity and the guidance of the Spirit that empowers us to be God's witness to the world. So to think of the human condition as one in which independence is possible is a heresy.

3. Paul calls upon the early Christians to live this reality. The churches that Paul founded are taught by him that the church is one body with many members. In baptism all become children of God in a new way (Gal. 3:27-28). As members of the Christian community, we learn that the church depends on God's empowering presence and the diverse gifts from God for its very life.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

4. Paul's churches are expected to live in Christian community so that all the members are interdependent and each member can depend on all the others to care for his or her needs.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. (1 Cor.12:12, 24b-26)

5. The reality of the dependence and interdependence that the early church lived was not so different from the world around them. It was a time when life was fragile and people understood their needs for families and communities to care for them (Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996], 45-47). But if we observe life in our times, we realize that the Christian understanding, that we are dependent on one another, is not otherworldly or out of touch with present reality. Not one of us would be here without having been dependent in our infant and childhood years. Most of us will be dependent in our final years. But are people without long-term disabilities really independent in the middle years? If we actually stop and think about the question, the answer has to be

“No!” All of us are dependent, and all of us have people who depend on us. We are dependent on the farmers to grow our food and the grocers to market it. The farmers are in turn dependent on the people who purchase their food. We are dependent on our federal, state, and local governments to protect us from disease-causing food, from crime, from invasion by other nations. Our governments are dependent on our taxes for the funds to carry out their mandate. We are dependent on our employers and our coworkers for economic viability. Our employers and coworkers are dependent on us for their economic well-being. We might go on *ad infinitum* recognizing that being a human being in today’s world, just as in the first century, means being a dependent being who lives in an interdependent society.

6. People with disabilities are dependent on others for the same reasons that people without disabilities are dependent on others. But many persons with disabilities are dependent on others for additional assistance. And even though people with disabilities can be depended on to serve the needs of others in many ways, if a person with a disability requires assistance or adaptations that differ from or exceed what a person without a disability needs, this causes problems for all concerned. The person who is forced to be more dependent because of conditions beyond his control is made to feel less than human in a world that expects humans to be independent. And the person who is asked to make the changes and adaptations for the person with a disability may feel imposed upon—after all, she thinks, “People are supposed to be independent, aren’t they?” The tyranny of independence as a norm stands in the way of inclusive community and justice (see Black, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*, 34–42, for “A Theology of Interdependence”).

7. The church, the children of God (we who live and move and have our being only in dependence on our God and interdependence in our world) is called to help all church members—those with disabilities and those without disabilities—to recognize the reality of human dependence and to think in new ways about how we value ourselves and others.

## B. *Election*

1. Our culture holds to a common misconception regarding Christian beliefs about God’s election of the saints. Many Christians, some with and some without disabilities, have believed that the culturally defined “successful” life—good health, great wealth, public appreciation—is indicative of God’s divine favor; and the culturally defined “difficult” life—poor health or disability, poverty, and public scorn—is indicative of God’s disfavor. But God’s election does not guarantee a good life, perfect health, or freedom from pain. As pointed out by John Calvin (*Institutes* 2.10.12, pp. 438–41), no biblical story makes this more evident than the life of Jacob. Elected by God while still in his mother’s womb to be the progenitor of the new people of God, Jacob suffers multiple difficulties throughout his life. He does battle with his twin brother from before birth to their adult years. He is sent away from his home to protect his life. He is deceived by his father-in-law and lives in enmity with his wives’ family until he finally has to flee. He suffers a hip displacement while wrestling with an angel, which doubtless causes him to have a painful limp thereafter. His family suffers starvation and he has to appeal to Egypt for survival. Finally, he is forced to move his whole family to Egypt where he has to admit to economic ruin and then dies in slavery (selections from Genesis 25–33, 35–37, 42–48). But all these difficulties (and many more) were never understood as indicative that Jacob was not God’s elect.

2. As Calvin’s teachings admonish us, God’s election is not measurable in the ways of the world or knowable by any except God alone (McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 1954], 221–23, 413).

### C. *Troubling Biblical Passages:*

1. Some biblical passages can be read in ways that seem to justify exclusion of certain kinds of people from the community of God, and the church needs to face these passages with humility. Christians cannot in good faith use the Bible selectively in order to overcome hurtful attitudes about disabilities.

a. In Leviticus, there are clear instructions that any persons in the community who have physical blemishes must live outside the community.

The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp. (Lev. 13:45-46)

b. Altar presence was denied to anyone

... who has a blemish ... who is blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, or one who has a broken foot or a broken hand, or a hunchback, or a dwarf, or a man with a blemish in his eyes ... (Lev. 21:18-20)

c. Christians today—those with and those without disabilities—need to understand the fear of contamination and evil that provoked such harsh restrictions, because in those days the people did not understand the causes of disfiguring diseases and disabilities. Today people of faith no longer need have such fears because most understand more fully the etiology of diseases and disabilities. As the gathered body of Jesus the Christ, the faithful need to look at how he acted in his earthly ministry toward the outcasts of his society. The church is called to realize that Jesus rejected by his actions and words the wrong understandings that his own community of faith held about God's relationship with people who have disabling conditions.

2. Yet the Christian Bible does not provide unambiguous answers to questions about the church and disabilities. Two stories give contrasting messages and meanings to people with disabilities and the church. Both the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-7) and Paul's battle with a thorn in his side (2 Cor. 12:7-10) have mixed messages.

a. On the one hand, the man born blind is healed to show God's works. On the other hand, God refuses to remove Paul's disability, so that Paul will know that God's grace is sufficient for him.

b. Jesus assures his audience that sin was not the cause of disability in the man born blind. Jesus' assurance that disability is not the result of sin is certainly a welcome message to many who have disabilities and, based on the conversation Jesus has with the Pharisees, he clearly is countering a wrong understanding prevalent at the time (John 9:34). In contrast, Paul's belief that his disability is a torment from Satan gives a disturbing message (2 Cor.12:7b).

c. The man born blind gains faith in Jesus as the Christ after he has been cured (John 9:35-38). The story in John makes clear that the man's faith was not the cause of the cure, and this can be a positive message to persons whose disabilities are not cured. Paul's faith is heightened because he sees that God's grace is made more perfect in him due to his disability. When Paul argues that his own faith is made stronger by his disability, some persons with disabilities may be helped and supported by that belief; whereas others may be bitter about such an expectation.

d. Both the man born blind and Paul take on salvific personae. The man is born blind in order to become a sign of God's redeeming acts in Christ (John 9:3-4). Paul writes: "So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9b). These two persons—because they have disabilities—are portrayed as consecrated, set apart to glorify God. Such a position might

seem positive for persons with disabilities, but in fact it only separates persons with disabilities from those without them. Aside from the needed awareness that having a disability does not make one a saint any more than it makes one a sinner, a pedestal is a lonely, isolated place. (For a fuller discussion of these passages see Donald Senior, "Beware of the Canaanite Woman: Disability and the Bible," in Marilyn Bishop, ed., *Religion and Disability: Essays in Scripture, Theology, and Ethics* [Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995] pp. 23-25 and Black, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*, pp. 29-30, 60-77).

3. Numerous stories of Jesus forgiving sins, casting out demons, and healing all sorts of illnesses and disabilities on the basis of a person's faith are troubling. Many who are chronically ill or permanently disabled are left with the understanding that God in Christ took away illness and disability in New Testament times but does not remove our diseases, pains, and infirmities. Persons with disabilities or the families of children with disabilities may react to some healing stories by perceiving themselves as sin-filled or lacking in sufficient faith.

4. Because many healing stories equate disabilities with sin and failure to receive a cure is seen as showing a lack of faith, a church member without disabilities in her family may unwittingly ask "What sin have those parents committed to have a child with mental retardation and cerebral palsy?" Or a faithful Christian who happens not to have a disability may look at a person who has an acquired disability from accident or disease and say "But for the grace of God, there go I." Another well-meaning member who happens to be healthy may urge a person who is disabled by disease to have more faith so that she can be healed.

5. A healing service for a person with disabilities can be a traumatic experience for all concerned. If cure does not take place, those who were ministering to the person with a disability have doubts about their faith; and the person who was not cured also wonders if his faith is sufficient. Equally painful is the increased isolation experienced by the person with a disability, who fears that she will be accepted by the other members only if she is cured (see Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996], pp. 51-52).

6. As Christians with or without disabilities, we need to admit our inability to understand the healing miracles and accept the reality that not all of us who are God's children have our illnesses and disabilities removed. This makes us no less children of God. We also need to stop focusing on evil, sin, or faith in relation to the miraculous cures—concepts few, if any, can comprehend—while ignoring the other aspects of these stories about Jesus that the faithful can clearly understand and emulate. Indeed, many of the healing stories say nothing at all about evil, sin, or faith.

a. Jesus heals the multitudes simply because they are brought to him (Matt. 15:29-31; Mark 3:7-12; Luke 4:40-41).

b. Jesus often heals in order to restore people to their communities and families. Peter's mother-in-law is healed and then takes her rightful place in the family structure (Matt. 8:14-15). A young girl who is believed to be dead is healed and returned to her family's care (Luke 8:40-56). Jesus raises from the dead a widow's only son to provide her with the sole source of income she has in that culture (Luke 7:11-17). He raises Lazarus from the dead so that he may be with his sisters, Martha and Mary (John 11:1-12:2). He heals lepers and sends them to the priest, thereby returning them to the community of faith that had excluded them because of their illness (Matt. 8:1-4; Luke 17:11-19).

c. The above stories might convey the message that people with disabilities cannot be restored to their communities of interaction without first being healed. Again, we need to keep in mind our inability to understand the miraculous cures these stories portray. Instead, we need to ask about the relational purpose of Jesus' actions. What we need to concentrate on is the reality that Jesus heals people's isolation. By his healing actions Jesus calls the church to restore all God's people—regardless of their health or abilities or disabilities—to their rightful communities of relationship and faith. (For a discussion of healing and curing, see Black, *A Healing Homiletic*, pp. 50–54.)

7. Many of the healings occur on the Sabbath, and these offer a different kind of insight about Jesus' ministry that the church can understand and is called to emulate. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus shows that there should be no rules or codes or religious understandings that prevent the faithful from reaching out to touch and love those who are the children of God (e.g., Matt. 12:9–14; Luke 14:1–6; John 5:1–7:2; 9:1–14). Jesus the Christ demonstrates that God does not reject persons with disabling conditions and neither should the religious community.

8. Finally, the healing stories show us that Jesus has no fear of people with illness and disability. For him they are not untouchables. He reaches out to touch them and brings them into the loving embrace of God. He demonstrates by his ministry that Christians are called to reach out to persons who feel excluded from the church and bring them into the loving embrace of Christ's inclusive community of faith.

#### IV. *That All May Enter* in the Context of the Church

##### A. *The World Council of Churches*

1. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has viewed disabilities concerns as having to do with both inclusive community and justice. The WCC issued a pivotal statement on persons with disabilities at its Fifth Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1975 (“Interim Statement on the Theological and Empirical Understanding of the Issue of Disabilities,” Lay Participation Towards Inclusive Community Working Group Meeting, May 1997, WCC, 1). This statement heavily influenced *That All May Enter*. In 1977, the WCC established a Task Force on Persons with Disabilities, and in 1994 the WCC hosted a Global Consultation on “differently abled persons” (*Programme Unit I: Unity and Renewal: Report to the Assembly Hearing: 1991–1998* [Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998], pp. 31, 43–44).

2. At the 50th anniversary assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998, a comprehensive human rights statement was adopted by the WCC. This statement includes a specific concern about persons with disabilities:

We reaffirm the right of persons who have special needs because of physical or mental disabilities to equal opportunity in all aspects of the life and service of the church. The cause of such persons is a human-rights issue and should not be understated as charity or a social or health problem, as has often been done. All members and leaders of the churches should respect fully the human rights of persons living with disabilities. This includes full integration into religious activities at all levels and the eradication of physical and psychological barriers which block the way to righteous living. Governments at all levels must also eliminate all barriers to free access and full participation of people with disabilities to public facilities and public life. We welcome the creation of the new network of ecumenical disability advocates and encourage churches to support it. (“Together on the Way: 5.8. A Statement on Human Rights,” [www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/hr-e.html](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/hr-e.html) [Dec. 12, 1999])

B. *The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.*

1. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC) emphasized justice more than inclusive community in its earliest statement (1958); but more recent statements have been equally concerned about both inclusion and human rights. In 1977 the NCC issued a “Resolution on the Church and Persons with Handicaps.” The NCC formed a Committee on Disabilities in 1978 and collects information about policies of member churches (see Appendix B). In a 1995 statement on human rights, the NCC included specific concerns about persons with disabilities.

2. In 1997, the NCC adopted a policy on “No Barriers for Deaf People in Churches.” This is a comprehensive statement including theological/biblical rationale, identification of specific barriers for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and recommendations for having a worshipping community that is inclusive of people who are deaf or hard of hearing in all activities of congregational life. This statement also informs us that some deaf people see themselves as members of a cultural and language minority group, rather than as individuals with an audiological disability. The policy recommends that these persons have separate deaf worship services, giving deaf people the freedom to develop indigenous forms of worship that reflect deaf culture (<http://nccusa.org/assembly/deaf.htm> [Dec. 12, 1999]).

3. A brief but powerful policy, “Disabilities, the Body of Christ, and the Wholeness of Society” was adopted by the NCC in 1998. This policy provides sound biblical foundations for an inclusive community and ministry with persons having disabilities. In addition, the policy sees the human rights implications and calls for the church to exercise its leadership in promoting those rights in the larger society (<http://www.nccusa.org/98ga/dis1.html> [Dec. 7, 1999]).

C. *The Presbyterian Church: UPCUSA, PCUS, and PC(USA)*

(Please see Appendix C for a fuller listing of General Assembly actions from 1960–1999.)

1. The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) has given attention to disabilities concerns since 1960.

a. In a 1960 statement on “The Church’s Responsibility for Ill-Health,” the General Assembly issued a prophetic challenge, charging the church with being no better at addressing the needs of “physically, mentally and culturally ‘different’ human beings” than the wider culture and added:

where the Church demonstrates in her own congregational life the breaking down of all the barriers which separate individual persons from one another and the reconciliation of them in Christian fellowship—where the church does these things she makes untold contributions to the improved health of society (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1960, Part I, p. 310).

b. The UPCUSA General Assemblies adopted policies concerning mental retardation in 1970, 1972, and 1973.

c. In 1977, explicitly responding to the 1975 WCC statement on disabilities concerns, General Assembly passed *Overture 16: “That All May Enter.”* Actions at General Assemblies in 1978 and 1979 reinforced *That All May Enter* and called for implementation.

d. Justice in the wider community has been a concern of UPCUSA. In 1981, a resolution gave support to the United Nations’ International Year of Disabled Persons and urged local governments to be attentive to the rights and needs of persons with disabilities (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1981, Part I, p. 255). A 1986 statement called on governmental agencies who oversee public transportation to be attentive to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1986, Part I, p. 787).

2. The Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) also expressed concern about disabilities in the 1960s and early 1970s.

a. In 1966 and 1970, the PCUS Standing Committee on Christianity and Health sought resolution to concerns about members and clergy with mental illness.

b. In 1976, explicitly responding to the 1975 WCC statement on disabilities concerns, the General Assembly passed a policy statement with recommendations that General Assemblies and churches be made accessible to present and potential members with disabilities. The actions recommended were related largely to mobility disabilities (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1976, Part I, p. 81).

c. In a response to the 1977 NCC statement on disabilities concerns, the General Assembly passed a policy statement in 1978 that broadened the concerns about disabilities to include physical, mental, and emotional impairments. Stating: “Often barriers of architecture and of attitude are erected which prevent full participation of the handicapped in our common life,” this policy requested multiple actions for accessible congregations and ministry to and with persons having diverse disabilities (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1978, Part 1, pp. 190–91).

d. In 1981, responding to both the United Nations’ International Year of Disabled Persons, and the pending union with the UPCUSA, the General Assembly passed *Overture 81-18* requiring resources for the reunited church’s work with people having diverse disabilities and communication with UPCUSA on meeting these needs (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1981, Part I, pp. 57, 123).

3. Since formation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), numerous policies pertaining to a broad range of disabilities concerns have been passed.

a. Committees on representation came into being as a result of the reunion of the southern and northern churches in 1983. The purpose of these committees is reflected in the new *Book of Order*, where diversity and inclusiveness are exalted in the church (G-4.0400). The *Book of Order* also specifies that “Persons of . . . various disabilities . . . shall be guaranteed full participation and access to representation in the decision making of the church” (G-4.0403).

(1) Yet the original composition of committees on representation (G-9.0105) did not include “persons with disabilities.” As well-meaning as the authors of that section of the *Book of Order* were, they did not contemplate that persons with disabilities could be self-advocates or advocates for other groups of people habitually excluded from leadership within the church.

(2) Even though committees on representation have done commendably well in advocating for and monitoring the fair representation of racial and ethnic persons in leadership positions since 1983, their accomplishments with respect to persons with disabilities have been minimal. Evaluations of these committees have always revealed this shortcoming. Committees on representation claim they are limited because (a) some persons with disabilities do not identify themselves as such; (b) pastors and other leaders are reluctant to label their members as having disabilities; and (c) nominating committees tend to think only in terms of people with severe disabilities, and decide that adaptations for inclusion of such persons on committees would be too costly. Thus they debate the issue rather than find qualified persons with disabilities to serve.

b. A concern for families with children having seriously debilitating conditions was expressed in the mid-1980s. The emphasis was on the need for the whole community—church, town, state, nation—to help in the care of these children.

c. Accessible worship, educational, and General Assembly materials have been repeated concerns, increasing in scope during the 1990s as awareness has grown about the multiplicity of disabilities that require changes so that all may participate fully.

(1) *Overture 95–46*, at the 207th General Assembly (1995) calls for ministerial and teaching tools to enable congregations to welcome people with disabilities in all aspects of the congregation’s life and work; and requires that “all materials; or a suitable summary thereof—minutes, resources, curriculum, etc.—produced by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) be made available . . . in alternative formats . . .” (*Minutes*, 1995, Part I, pp. 690–91). As a result of *Overture 95-46*, the Commission on Enabling Ministry Services was formed, and its mandate has been extended to the 210th General Assembly (2000) (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 25, 684–85).

(a) The work of this commission has included the Witherspoon Press publication of *Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God’s Family*, edited by Sharon Kutz-Mellem, in 1998. This is a multi-disability resource with specific guidance related to each disability category, and additional resources are listed at the back of each section. Also included are suggestions on how congregations can obtain funds for making their churches totally accessible.

(b) Braille, large-print, and other alternative media versions of some church texts (e.g., the Book of Order, *The Book of Confessions*, *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, some curricula, and others) have been made widely available. General Assembly *Minutes* and other materials have not been provided in alternative formats.

(c) At the 211th General Assembly (1999), the Commission on Enabling Ministry Services recommended and received approval for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to have an 800 number for concerns and questions about disabilities (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 25, 684–85).

(d) More information about the work and resources of the Commission on Enabling Ministry Services can be found at [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org).

4. In addition to the financial assistance and accessibility guidelines that resulted from the earlier policies of both the UPCUSA and PCUS, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has responded with other programs and resources to help congregations address disabilities concerns.

a. Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) is an active network of the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA) and provides helpful resources and guidelines for churches to become more fully accessible, including accessibility consultations.

(1) Established in the 1980s, PDC, which is composed of members who themselves have disabilities, describes its mission thus:

To affirm that all people are created in the image of God; to affirm, support and advocate the gifts, rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities in the total life of the church; to hold the church accountable for its brokenness; and to assist the church to fully accept persons with disabilities and embrace their gifts (adopted December 1995, included as an insert in the 1999 newsletter).

(2) The PDC issues a newsletter that includes stories of persons coping with disabilities, suggestions for improving accessibility in structures and attitudes, notification about Presbyterian and other disability resources, and current information about the work of the PDC.

(3) In 1998, PDC produced a fifteen-minute video, *Surprising Grace: People, Disabilities, and Churches*, an ideal resource for introducing a congregation to the fullness of church when persons with disabilities are included.

(4) More information about the work and resources of PDC can be found in *PDC Newsletter* and at [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org).

b. “Access Sunday” is observed annually. The idea for this kind of observance was first suggested in 1978, when presbyteries of the UPCUSA were urged to conduct a “Handicapped Awareness Day” (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1978, Part I, pp. 49, 401.) In 1981, PCUS recommended that its congregations also begin observing this event (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1981, Part I, pp. 57, 123). A Sunday in May has become the usual date. A packet of materials is made available to churches each year to assist them in this observance.

c. In 1993, the Christian Education staff in the Congregational Ministries Division, published a collection of essays by pastors and scholars: *And Show Steadfast Love: A Theological Look at Grace, Hospitality, Disabilities, and the Church*, edited by Lewis H. Merrick (Louisville: KY: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

5. Two Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) surveys, one on attitudes and actions, the second on actions only, demonstrate that the objectives of *That All May Enter* are not being ignored by the churches, and progress is being made at the congregational level.

a. A November 1993 survey, “Presbyterian Panel Report: Listening to Presbyterians: Disabilities Issues” yielded helpful but somewhat contradictory information about churches’ views and actions regarding persons with disabilities. Here the “Highlights” (p. iii) are partially reproduced:

- “Presbyterians tend to view persons with disabilities favorably. Vast majorities of members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy reported that they feel disabled persons have gifts to be used by the church. . . .” (p. 3).

- “Most Presbyterians think it is important for church facilities and programs to be made accessible to persons with disabilities. . . .” (p. 4).

- “Presbyterians do *not* think that greater accessibility of church facilities will result in increased attendance at worship services or at other church events. Fewer than one in four members think that greater accessibility will result in increased attendance” (pp. 4–5).

- “Church sanctuaries are reportedly the most accessible parts of Presbyterian churches. . . . Other church facilities (such as church school classrooms, restrooms, and chancels) are less likely to be accessible” (pp. 6–7).

- “Large numbers of Presbyterian congregations are taking steps to accommodate the needs of disabled persons. Presbyterian congregations are most likely to accommodate the needs of persons with mobility or hearing impairments, and least likely to take steps to accommodate the needs of blind persons” (pp. 8–10).

- “Members of the clergy within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have received little training regarding disabilities-related issues in the church. Approximately two-thirds of pastors indicated that they

received no training regarding disabilities issues in seminary. Additionally, less than one-quarter have received continuing education relating to disabilities issues in the last five years” (p. 12).

· “Most Presbyterians think that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) today is a stronger advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities than it was ten years ago” (p. 13).

b. *The Monitoring Report on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Health Care Policies and Activities* (1998) (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, p. 326) records the following findings:

- (1) Eighty-seven percent of churches have wheelchair accessibility to their building;
- (2) Eighty-three percent of congregations have examined their facilities to determine where barriers exist;
- (3) Seventy-five percent say they have developed ways of addressing the needs of persons with disabilities;
- (4) Seventy-two percent have addressed the needs of people who have hearing disabilities;
- (5) Sixty-four percent offer transportation to help people get to medical services;
- (6) Thirty-nine percent have made adaptations for persons who are blind or have impaired vision;
- (7) Thirteen percent are addressing mental illness needs;
- (8) Ten percent offer mental health support groups;
- (9) Three congregations are engaged in advocacy for mental health needs.

#### V. *That All May Enter* in Socio-Political Context

A. Federal legislation for people with disabilities was first passed in 1918 to provide vocational training for veterans who were disabled by World War I, and the Disabled American Veterans became the first disabilities advocacy group in 1920 (Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994] pp. 50–51). Franklin D. Roosevelt established the March of Dimes in 1938. Originally, the organization was dedicated to care and rehabilitation for persons with polio, today the March of Dimes campaigns for prenatal care and other preventive measures (see [www.modimes.org/about2/Milestones/Default.htm](http://www.modimes.org/about2/Milestones/Default.htm)).

The Paralyzed Veterans of America were organized for advocacy after World War II. The Easter Seal Society, later called The Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults, was established in the 1940s. Rehabilitation remained the primary interest during these years.

The disability rights movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and prompted passage of three major federal laws in those decades: The Architectural Barriers Act (1968) mandated that federal buildings remove barriers to mobility; The Rehabilitation Act (1973) had a provision that included people with disabilities among those who were guaranteed the rights of access to federally funded programs and services; and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (amended in 1977) was intended to give all children with disabilities a public education in the least restrictive setting possible. Disability

rights advocates continued to press for inclusive legislation and eventually put enough pressure on government leaders to gain the passage of a major civil rights bill—the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 (Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, pp. 51–56).

1. For the church, an indispensable resource for understanding ADA and the churches' responsibilities regarding it is *Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community* (Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1996.)

2. A copy of the ADA also can be found in Kutz-Mellem, ed. *Different Members, One Body*.

B. Numerous court cases since ADA continue to define the boundaries of “disability” and these need to be followed closely by persons with disabilities and their advocates.

C. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (I.D.E.A.) clarified, expanded, and reinforced the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. The current act includes the following statement that speaks loudly and clearly to the church, which God calls to be an inclusive community that works for justice:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy. . . . (PART A-SEC.601 [<http://www.enter.net/%7Ekidstogether/a-601.html>])

D. In December 1999, President Clinton signed into law the Work Incentives Improvement Act, which allows persons with disabilities who return to work and lose their Social Security benefits to continue under Medicare coverage. There are similar provisions for people with disabilities who were covered by Medicaid before returning to work. This legislation also allows states to provide Medicaid coverage for persons who have chronic illness and may become disabled if they do not receive appropriate medical care.

E. In December 1999, the Surgeon General of the United States cited alarming statistics about mental illness: One fifth of the American people suffer mental disorders each year, and nearly half will have a mental disorder at some time in their lives. An effort is being made to help people understand the biochemical bases of mental illness and know that effective treatment can be obtained. And the government hopes—if the stigma of mental illness is overcome and insurance companies provide coverage equivalent to what they provide for other illnesses—that this large group of Americans (who are included under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) will receive appropriate care.

F. The National Organization for Disabilities (N.O.D.), founded in 1982, describes its work and structure:

The National Organization on Disabilities (N.O.D.) promotes the acceptance and full participation in all aspects of life, of America's . . . men, women, and children with physical, sensory or mental disabilities. . . . [It] is the only national disability network organization concerned with all disabilities, all age groups and all disability issues. (*That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities* [Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1997], p. iv)

1. This organization has an interfaith Religion and Disability Program that has produced *From Barriers to Bridges* (1996), *Loving Justice* (1996), and *That All May Worship* (1997)—all of which are available on audiotape. These are helpful resources for all churches, and congregational leaders also may consult with the Religion and Disability section of N.O.D. about particular questions and problems.

2. In 1999 and 2000, the Religion and Disability section of N.O.D. distributed a pamphlet, “Access: It begins in the Heart,” and launched an “Accessible Congregations Campaign” with the goal of reaching 2,000 accessible congregations by July of 2000.

3. For more information about the work of the Religion and Disability section, write to Director, Religion and Disability Program, National Organization on Disability, 910 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; or call 202-293-5960 or 202-293-5968; or fax 202-293-7999; or go to their Web site: [www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org).

## VI. *That All May Enter*: Retrospect and Prospect

A. As the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) plans to celebrate, reaffirm, and recommit to *That All May Enter* (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 99—108) at the 214th General Assembly in 2002, it is appropriate to reflect on this policy statement adopted twenty-five years ago.

1. Not only the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) but the whole church has reason to celebrate *That All May Enter*. This comprehensive policy sought to remove structural, worship, attitudinal, and transportation barriers to inclusive community, and promoted advocacy for disability rights. It was on the cutting edge of disability concerns when approved in 1977, was published in 1989, and has been widely recognized and acclaimed.

2. When examined in its 1970s context, *That All May Enter* can be seen as a comprehensive response to many of the disabilities currents of its time.

a. *That All May Enter* was heavily influenced by the World Council of Churches (WCC) statement of 1975 that called for people with disabilities to be seen as integral members of the Christian community, not as persons to be served. *That All May Enter* makes this clear as it points out the need to have a diverse expression of humanity in the church. By combining the challenge of the ecumenical church with the specific details and programmatic concerns to physically change the church for accessibility, *That All May Enter* gave more than voice to the gospel vision of inclusive community.

b. *That All May Enter* also followed the WCC statement in its concern about attitudinal barriers by recognizing that the church needs to think in terms of ministering with persons who have disabilities, not just to them. And *That All May Enter* explicitly pointed out the need to have people with disabilities serve in leadership roles to help the church make decisions about becoming more inclusive.

c. One recommendation to General Assembly from *That All May Enter* was a program of loans to help churches bear the financial burdens of making their buildings and activities accessible to persons with disabilities. Incentive Loans to assure accessibility continue to be available for amounts up to \$30,000 at 3 percent interest for a maximum of 15 years (*General Assembly Church Loan Funds: Policies and Guidelines*, revised September 1998).

d. The heavy emphasis in *That All May Enter* on removing churches’ structural barriers for people with mobility difficulties was consistent with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, which required that all federal buildings be made accessible to persons with mobility disabilities. *That All May Enter*, however, was able to transform the expectations of a law affecting only a limited number of public facilities into a Christian mandate for the church to be more inclusive.

e. *That All May Enter* also reflected the disability rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s by calling on Christians to undertake ministries of advocacy with persons having disabling conditions so that their civil rights would be protected. In the published version of this resolution(*That All May Enter*:

*Responding to People with Disabilities*. [Louisville, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1989]), a section on advocacy explicitly cites the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which “prohibits discrimination against handicapped people in all federally funded services, including transportation” (27).

f. *That All May Enter* did not respond explicitly to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. In the resolution there was reference to children being injured by accidents and war; and to the fact that “genetic disorders and famine leave millions of children physically or mentally impaired” (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, p. 100). Yet no specific actions were recommended to adapt the churches’ facilities or education programs for children with disabilities.

3. As the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prepares to expand its understandings and actions regarding disabilities, it is important to evaluate *That All May Enter* in the contemporary context and identify concerns to be referred to the task force to be formed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. This task force is to formulate a more comprehensive disabilities policy by 2005, in compliance with Recommendation 25.038, 211th General Assembly (1999) (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 41, 308–9).

a. Despite its inclusive intentions, *That All May Enter* was written with the insider/outsider perspective that was prevalent at the time. There is a sense that “we”—people without disabilities, people who are inside the church—are called to include “them”—people with disabilities, people who are outside the church. For example, in addition to speaking of the church as “we” and of persons with disabilities as “they,” *That All May Enter* directed the program agency to begin “exploring possible ministries with the physically, emotionally, and developmentally disabled . . .” (102). As the 1993 survey outlined above demonstrates, this perception continues. That sad fact is clearer in the report’s discussion of respondents’ answers: “It appears that Presbyterians, by and large, hold favorable views regarding persons with disabilities and favor the inclusion of such persons in the life of the church” (“Presbyterian Panel Report: Listening to Presbyterians: Disabilities Issues,” 2). Such language conveys the message that persons with disabilities are a clearly identifiable and definable separate group of people who are not like the members of the church, and this is a major barrier to inclusion. Ginny Thornburgh, of N.O.D., reports that many churches have worked to become accessible, but do not want to advertise their accessibility because they do not want unknown outsiders to join them. (telephone conversation with Grace Cumming Long, January 3, 2000) The church needs to find ways to change the insider/outsider perspective as a first step to becoming a more fully inclusive community. This may be the most difficult problem to be addressed by new policy on disabilities.

b. Even though *That All May Enter* included a broad range of disabilities in its thinking, the specific actions that were requested concentrated on removal of architectural barriers to allow people with wheelchairs, scooters, or walkers to participate in the church’s worship life. As the two Presbyterian surveys show, this has been the extent of many churches’ adaptations to accommodate members with disabilities, and according to the 1993 data, the attention has been on making the sanctuary accessible, not the social hall, meeting rooms, and restrooms—those areas of the church that must be structurally barrier free for the member with a mobility disability who attends worship also to participate in the full life and work of the church.

According to the most recent census statistics, only 1.8 of the 54 million Americans with disabilities use wheelchairs (or other wheeled modes of navigation) (John M. McNeil, *Current Population Reports: Americans with Disabilities: 1994-95. Census Bureau, August 1997* [<http://www.census.gov/prod/3/97pubs/p.70-61.pdf> accessed January 7, 2000]). Thus, having only mobility accessibility is not sufficient. Of particular concern is that, in the churches surveyed, apparently little change has occurred to assist members with learning disabilities or mental retardation; and too few

are addressing mental illness. Of critical concern is the silence about children with disabilities. Clearly the churches need more guidance and understanding to be fully inclusive of all members, no matter which of the multiple disabilities they may have, and children will need to be a major emphasis in new policy on disabilities.

c. The 1993 survey also shows that clergypersons received little or no training in seminary regarding disabilities and have received little or none since. Even the younger generation of clergy—those attending seminary since 1980—who were more likely to have received training regarding disabilities, have received little if any training regarding the church and disabilities concerns (“Presbyterian Panel Report: Listening to Presbyterians: Disabilities Issues,” 12). Clergy education on disabilities concerns is another area where the task force can make policy recommendations.

d. *That All May Enter* included advocacy for justice in its mandate. But with the passage of time it is clear that the church has a much wider advocacy role than originally anticipated. The civil and human rights of persons with disabilities to have housing, appropriate and effective education, transportation, employment, and health insurance—all the opportunities people without disabilities expect for themselves and their children in order to participate fully in the American dream—have been legislated, but that does not mean they have been accomplished. Because disabilities concerns are primarily justice concerns, in formulating new policy the task force should seek ways to teach and support individual Christians and churches about advocacy (see, e.g., *How to be an Effective Advocate: Making Our Voices Heard!*, prepared by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office and available from the Presbyterian Distribution Service). The task force also should try to obtain statistics on the effectiveness of the new legislation, and then craft specific target areas at the local, state, and federal levels where Christians can bring pressure for full implementation of these civil and human rights laws.

e. *That All May Enter* mentioned children but did not recommend action explicitly for children with disabilities. This is a critical area of the church’s ministry that cannot be ignored. In 1997 the United States updated and strengthened the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which is now named the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.). The church is called to respond. The task force should seek ways to expand the church’s inclusion of children with disabilities in worship, education, and social activities of their congregations; and promote advocacy for children with disabilities in all arenas of their lives.

4. Because of its strengths and despite its weaknesses, *That All May Enter* should be reaffirmed as a milestone in the journey of the Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA and PCUSA). Becoming inclusive community is a journey, and everything *That All May Enter* requested of the church is still work in progress.

5. Furthermore, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) needs to recommit its imagination and energies, its people and resources to *That All May Enter* now, even as a task force is working to broaden the church’s policy in 2005. Many changes have occurred and for that the church can praise God. Yet there should be no satisfaction that the goals of *That All May Enter* have been met in all the congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Nor should there be any negation of the inclusive vision placed before the church in 1977 by *That All May Enter*.

## Appendix A

### Bibliographic Resources

For Presbyteries, Elders, Sessions, and Congregations:

Ball, Marshall Stewart, *Kiss of God: The Wisdom of a Silent Child*. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc., 1999. The writings of a deeply spiritual child genius who is unable to walk, care for himself, or speak. Inspirational! Revealing of profound truths!

Bolduc, Kathleen Deyer, *A Place Called Acceptance: Ministries with Families of Children with Disabilities*. Louisville, Ky: Bridge Resources, 1999. A resource for all family religious education, but especially helpful for families with children who have autism or mental retardation.

*From Barriers to Bridges: A Community Action Guide for Congregations and People with Disabilities*. Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1996. This resource includes helpful tips and resources for any congregation regardless of where they are in the journey toward becoming fully inclusive community. Works well with *That All May Worship* from the same organization.

*How to Be an Effective Advocate: Making Our Voices Heard!*. Washington, D.C.: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), n.d. (PDS 72940-95-001—free).

Kutz-Mellem, Sharon, editor, *Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God's Family*. Louisville, Ky.: Witherspoon Press, 1998. Addresses all aspects of a fully inclusive ministry with persons who have many different abilities and disabilities. Filled with resources and implementation helps. A handy, helpful resource for every church.

*Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community*. Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1996. From the front cover: "How the Americans with Disabilities Act affects religious institutions including congregations, hospitals, nursing homes, seminaries, universities, colleges, schools, camps and social service agencies."

Parvin, Debbie W., *That All May Understand: Ministering with Persons Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*. St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1992. From the back cover: "This practical manual tells in straightforward terms how to bridge the gulf between hearing and deaf people and deliver the good news in ways that benefit and empower both."

*Presbyterian Panel Report: Listening to Presbyterians: Disabilities Issues*. Louisville: Research Services, Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), November 1993.

*Surprising Grace: People, Disabilities, Churches*. Louisville, Ky.: Media Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); produced and directed by William W. Gee, 1998. A fifteen-minute video that helps viewers to see that the church is indeed people with and without disabilities. Gives attention to all levels of the church's life and work. Useful way to get a presbytery or congregation started on thinking more broadly about disabilities concerns.

*That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities*. Washington, D.C.: National Organization on Disability, 1997. A helpful hands-on resource that works well with *From Barriers to Bridges* for churches at any stage of becoming fully inclusive.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett, *Dancing with Disabilities: Opening the Church to All God's Children*. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1996. This book is an easy read, but confronts the reader with the hard truths about the church's isolation of children with disabilities—especially children with mental or behavioral disabilities.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett. *God Plays Piano, Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children*. New York: Crossroad, 1993. From the cover, by Parker Palmer: "First, he gives voice to the spiritual lives of children who are seldom

heard, and with a power and grace that allows us to grow from the remarkable insights they possess. Second, he smashes our ignorant images of what makes a person worthwhile and reveals the ‘hidden wholeness’ that lies beneath the broken surface of all our lives.”

For Seminary Students, Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and Christian Scholars:

Black, Kathy, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. This book is a must read for everyone who preaches and teaches in the church. It demonstrates ways to transcend the hurtful biblical passages that reenforce attitudinal barriers and cause pain to persons with disabilities.

Bishop, Marilyn E., editor. *Religion and Disability: Essays in Scripture, Theology and Ethics*. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995. A probing look at disabilities; this book offers depth of thinking.

Campbell, Alastair V., *Health as Liberation: Medicine, Theology, and the Quest for Justice*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995. This book has general application for pastoral ministry; it also includes one chapter directly relevant to disabilities.

DeVries, Dawn. “Creation, Handicappism, and Differing Abilities,” in Rebecca Chopp and Mark Lewis Taylor, editors, *Reconstructing Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994, 124–40. Reconsiders the biblical stories of creation.

Eiesland, Nancy, and Don E. Saliers, editors, *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. A rich assortment of essays on worship, biblical texts, and practical theology. This book—which might serve as a text in theological school—is a helpful, thoughtful resource for the church as well.

Eiesland, Nancy L., *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. A good mixture of historical background, story, and groundbreaking theological insights.

Hauerwas, Stanley, *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. This is a compassionate book with a compelling message for the church.

Merrick, Lewis H., editor, *And Show Steadfast Love: A Theological Look at Grace, Hospitality, Disabilities, and the Church*. Louisville, Ky: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1993. Developed by Christian Education staff in the Congregational Ministries Division to address attitudinal barriers.

Mitchell, David T., and Sharon L. Snyder, editors, *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997. A humanities text, which includes essays about western culture from ancient Greece to the twentieth century.

Mohrman, Margaret E and Mark J. Hanson, editors, *Pain Seeking Understanding: Suffering, Medicine, and Faith*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1999. From the back cover: “. . . experts in the fields of medicine, ethics, theology, and pastoral care . . . help weave the complex story of faith and science working together to ease suffering—and to help broaden our understanding of God’s role in suffering and healing.”

Webb-Mitchell, Brett, *Unexpected Guests at God’s Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities Into the Church*. New York: Crossroad, 1994. Gives biblical foundations and practical steps for becoming more inclusive communities.

Wendell, Susan, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. From the back cover: “. . . a remarkable look at how cultural attitudes towards the body

contribute to the stigma of disability and to widespread unwillingness to accept and provide for the body's inevitable weakness."

## Appendix B

### Statements on Disabilities by Other United States Denominations as Complied by the National Council Of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

- 1976 The Lutheran Church in America issued a comprehensive policy statement that calls for inclusive Christian community and advocacy for the rights of persons with disabilities.
- 1977 The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod issued "To Improve Services to Persons with Handicaps" that includes totally inclusive church community, public advocacy, social needs.
- The Unitarian Universalist Association of Churches and Fellowships in North America initiated a policy entitled: "Persons with Special Needs."
- The United Church of Christ issued a comprehensive policy statement on disabilities.
- 1978 American Baptist Church: "Resolution on the Church and Persons with Disabilities."
- 1979 The United Methodist Church issued "A Statement of Faith and Call to Action: Study Guide on the Church and Persons with Handicapping Conditions."
- 1980 American Baptist Church: "Resolution on Mental Illness."
- 1981 Church of the Brethren: "The Church and Persons with Disabilities."
- Church of the Brethren: "Resolution: International Religious Year of Persons with Disabilities."
- 1983 American Baptist Church: "Resolution on Employment of the Handicapped."
- 1984 American Baptist Church: "The Handicapped and the Church."
- Lutheran World Federation: "Enabling Ministry/People with Disabling Conditions."
- United Methodist Church: "Resolution on the Church and Persons with Mentally, Physically, and/or Psychologically Handicapping Conditions."
- 1985 The Episcopal Church: "Resolutions Related to Disability Concerns."
- The United Church of Christ: "Resolution on the Full Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Life of the Church."
- 1987 The United Church of Christ: "Helping Those Who Suffer from Chronic Mental Illness."
- The United Church of Christ: "Resolution: Persons with Onsetting Disabilities."
- 1988 The Episcopal Church: "Encourage Education Relating to Disabled People."
- 1989 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Metropolitan New York Synod: "Ministry to the Mentally Challenged."

- 1990 The United Church of Christ: “Resolution Concerning the Church and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.”
- 1991 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): “Substitute Resolution Concerning Ministry to Children with Special Needs and Their Families.”
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): “Resolution in Support of Ministering to Persons with Serious Mental Illness and Their Families.”
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Central/Southern Illinois Synod: “Mental Health.”
- The Episcopal Church: “Authorize Continuation of the Task Force on Accessibility.”
- The Episcopal Church: “Resolution DO88a (Mental Illness).”
- 1992 United Methodist Church: “The Social Community—Accessibility of Meeting Places Beyond the Local Church.”

### Appendix C:

#### General Assembly Actions of the Presbyterian Church on Disabilities Concerns 1960–1999

##### UPCUSA:

- 1960 *The Relation of Christian Faith to Health*: Includes a call for the church to engage in reconciling ministries with persons who are physically or mentally “different.” 172nd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1960, Part I, pp. 279–350; this item p. 310).
- 1969 *Reference 12*: Requests a study of mental retardation, including total care and physical and vocational rehabilitation. 181st General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1969, Part I, pp. 64, 769).
- 1970 *The Church and the Mentally Retarded*: Directs churches and judicatories to engage in broad-based ministries regarding persons with mental retardation, including advocacy. 182nd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1970, Part I, pp. 971–79).
- 1972 *Overture 80: On a Study of Conditions in Institutions for the Mentally Retarded—From the Presbytery of Albany*. 184th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1972, Part I, p. 640)
- 1973 *Response and Recommendations on Overture 80*: Calls for work from the congregational level to civil rights advocacy for persons with mental retardation. 185th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1973, Part I, pp. 575–77).
- 1977 *Overture 16: “That All May Enter”*: Responding to the Concerns of the Handicapped. 189th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1977, Part I, pp. 99–108).
- 1978 *Recommendation Regarding Overture 16: “That All May Enter”*—reaffirms the resolution and expresses concern that no actions taken yet. 190th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1978, Part I, p. 62).
- 1978 *Referral 13*: Addresses the reuniting churches’ plans to implement previously approved guidelines by both Assemblies for making congregations accessible to persons with disabilities. 190th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1978, Part I, pp. 337–38).

- 1978 *Overture 10: On Providing Sign Language Interpreters for all Planning Sessions of the General Assembly—From the Presbytery of the Redwoods*: Includes additional recommendations, such as that Presbyteries “conduct a “Handicapped Awareness Day.” 190th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1978, Part I, pp. 49, 401).
- 1979 *Overture 52: On Amending the Form of Government to Include Reference to Physical Handicaps in Lists of Factors Not Subject to “Prejudicial Regard” in Considering Candidates for All Church Offices—From John Knox Presbytery*. 191st General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1979, Part I, pp. 84–85).
- 1979 *Response to Referral 8*: Architectural drawings and other resources made available to help in the removal of architectural barriers. 191st General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1979, Part I, pp. 373–74).
- 1981 *Reference X-36, Report of the General Assembly Mission Council, Section IV, B, Recommendation 11-VI* to change wording regarding inclusive practices to include “disabled persons” as a minority group. 193rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1981, Part I, p. 50).
- 1981 *International Year of Disabled Persons, 1981*: Reviews church’s past actions regarding disabilities, notes legislation on disabilities, and calls for the 193rd General Assembly (1981) to support the United Nations’ “International Year of Disabled Persons.” 193rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1981, Part I, pp. 254–55).
- 1981 *Joint Committee on Presbyterian Union Recommendation to Establish Permanent Committees of Nomination* in order to find capable people and have an “inclusive presence.” 193rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1981, Part I, p. 123).
- 1981 *Overture 2: On Reaffirming the Church’s Commitment to the Disabled—From the Presbytery of Sierra Blanca*. 193rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1981, Part I, pp. 83, 489–90).
- 1981 *Overture 13: On Calling for Specific Action to Reaffirm the Church’s Concern for the Disabled—From the Presbytery of the Redwoods*. 193rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1981, Part I, pp. 83–84, 494–95).
- 1982 *General Assembly Mission Council Recommendation* to establish affirmative action and equal employment opportunity committees at every level of the church. 194th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1982, Part I, p. 194).
- PCUS:
- 1966 *The Report of the Standing Committee on Christianity and Health*: Includes a call for concern about mental health. 106th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1966, Part I, pp. 68, 128–39).
- 1970 *Minister and His Work*: Includes concerns about compassionate responses to mental illness among the clergy. 110th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1970, Part I, 154–55).
- 1976 *Overture 23: To the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Development*: Concerned with removing architectural barriers to members with physical disabilities. 116th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1976, Part I, p. 81).
- 1978 *Communication 78-10 from the NCCC Governing Board*: A response that provides a broader mandate for the church’s ministry to and with children and adults having physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. 118th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1978, Part I, pp. 190–91).
- 1981 *Overture 81-18: From the Presbytery of New Covenant*: Calls for fuller implementation of the 1976 and 1978 mandates regarding persons with disabilities and makes recommendations for cooperation with similar efforts by the UPCUSA, including the observance of “Handicapped Awareness Days.” 121st General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1981, Part I, pp. 57, 123).

PC(USA)

- 1983 *Overture 1-83. On Requesting the Council of Theological Seminaries to Adopt Guidelines for Inclusiveness of Persons with Handicapping Conditions—From the Presbytery of the Redwoods.* A nonbinding request on which no action was taken. 123rd General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the United States and 195th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, p. 117).
- Overture 57-83: On a Training Program for Committees on Representation—From the Presbytery of Chicago.* 123rd General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in the United States and 195th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (*Minutes*, 1983, Part I, pp. 67-68).
- 1985 *An Ethical Statement of Care: About providing care facilities, resources, and ministries for and with families who have children with severe disabilities.* 197th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1985, Part I, pp. 477-78).
- 1986 *Overture 30-86. On Persons with Disabilities Having Equal Access to Public Transportation—From the Presbytery of Denver* 198th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1986, Part I, p. 787).
- 1988 *The Church and Serious Mental Illness: A comprehensive response to perceived needs.* 200th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, pp. 443-46).
- 1989 *Overture 89-73: Requests that Presbyterians for Disabilities Concerns provide a clear definition of “persons with disabilities” for use in all aspects of the church’s life and work.* 201st General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, p. 617, Item 1).
- Overture 89-73. On Regarding Fair Representation of Persons with Disabilities—From the Presbytery of Long Island.* 201st General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, p. 617).
- 1990 *Overture 90-40. On Directing the General Assembly Council to Look at Previous Mandates Regarding Disabilities and Propose Concrete Recommendations for Increasing Resources—From the Presbytery of Santa Fe.* 202nd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, pp. 760-61).
- Overture 90-25. On Aggressively Providing Relief for Abused Adults—From Presbytery of Coastal Carolina.* Concerns care and advocacy for persons with Down Syndrome and mental illness. 202nd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, p. 754).
- 1991 *Response to Overture 90-40 (1990): “Strategies for Disabilities Work in Education/Congregational Nurture Unit.”* Includes programmatic, curricula, and other adaptations for fuller inclusion of persons with diverse disabilities. 203rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, p. 627-31).
- Response to Overture 89-73 (1989). A Definition of “Persons with Disabilities” and a call for implementation of strategies recommended for handicapped children in 1985.* 203rd General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, pp. 630-31).
- 1992 *Commissioners’ Resolution 92-43. On Affirmative Action for Persons with Disabilities at Theological Institutions.* Requests that Presbyterian Seminaries include and accommodate persons with disabilities. 204th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1992, Part I, p. 924).
- Overture 92-21. On Amending G-9.0105a, G-10.0301, G-11.0502g, G-14.0201, G-14.0201b, G-14.0202a (1), and G-14.0502a to Include Persons with Disabilities—From the Presbytery of Long Island.* Calls for affirmative action regarding persons with disabilities on governing boards and in employment. 204th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1992, Part I, pp. 844-55).

- Overture 92-16. On Amending Standing Rule 21.a. to Remove Barriers to Full Participation at General Assembly Worship Services—From the Presbytery of Kiskiminetas.* 204th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1992, Part I, p. 842).
- 1995 *Overture 95-46. On Ministry Tools and Services for Persons with Disabilities—From the Presbytery of Northern New York.* Reaffirms *That All May Enter* (1977) and requests basic tools of ministry to work with persons having diverse disabilities, especially hearing and understanding disabilities. 207th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1995, Part I, pp. 690-91).
- 1998 *Commissioners' Resolution 98-3. Regarding an Update of "That All May Enter"* in anticipation of a reaffirmation and recommitment on the twenty-fifth anniversary at the 214th General Assembly in 2002. 210th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1998, Part I, pp. 92, 738-39).
- 1999 *Directive 25.038* to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to formulate a comprehensive policy on disabilities concerns by the 217th General Assembly in 2005. 211th General Assembly (*Minutes*, 1999, Part I, pp. 41, 308-9).