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A STRATEGY FOR EDUCATING THE CHURCH
CONCERNING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY FOR EDUCATING THE CHURCH CONCERNING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

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The purpose of this paper is to inform and educate the church of the needs of people with disabilities. There is information given as to what the church can do to assist and understand the needs of the people, the requirements of the Law and the moral obligations as Christian disciples. Through a questionnaire, the author has compiled statistics for an overall view of what some churches are doing to accommodating these people. This thesis will also give Biblical and theological perspectives as the foundation for the research.

Abstract length: 87 words.

DEDICATION

To my loving wife Carla,
who is faithful in all she does for the Lord
and to her belief in God's will for my life.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EV	The Holy Bible: Holman Edition-English Version
KJV	The Holy Bible: King James Version
NCV	The Holy Bible: New Century Version
NIV	The Holy Bible: New International Version
TC	The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible: The New International Version

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Disability” is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual; a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such impairment.”¹ However, it is much more than that. People with disabilities are affected just as the average person. They experience, hurt, pain, sorrow, joy, happiness and other emotions. This thesis project will aid in understanding these special people, learn how the church can assist them, know what the governing laws enforce and encourage the church to be open and accepting of such disabilities.

Disabilities affect many types of people and it is not a respecter of persons. It is not limited to specific criteria of people. The young, old and somewhere in between can be found in this spectrum. It can affect any race, both male and female. The limitations of disabilities maybe found in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional problems. It is necessary to examine and discuss these particular limitations to understand the need, of the individual.

The church should be open to meet the needs of all God’s people. The concept of churches making accommodations for the handicapped is not a new concept unique to the

¹ The United States Congress: U.S. Department of Labor, “*The American With Disabilities Act of 1990*” available from www.dol.gov/esa; Internet; accessed Feb. 2006.

twenty-first century. “In the Middle Ages lepers fared no better. When stricken, they were led into church by a priest wearing a stole and carrying a crucifix who would proceed to read the burial service over them. From then on the affected one would be made to wear a black garment and live in a leper house. They were not permitted to attend Mass. Lepers were only allowed to peer through squint holes cut into the church walls for that purpose.”² During this time, “Lepers squints” were also designed so that the Leper could participate in the worship of the service without affecting others.³ This disease not only has physical limitations, it is also contagious.

In today’s society, there are disabilities that can limit their ability to actively participate in the worship services at church. Afflictions and diseases such as Arthritis, Cerebral Palsy, Down’s syndrome, Muscular Dystrophy, hearing limitations and visual impairments affect persons physically. Learning disabilities such as Dyslexia, Developmental Aphasia and Central Processing Dysfunctions affect the person mentally.

All of these disabilities can affect the person spiritually. Spiritual interruptions for a person can be detrimental to their Christian walk. The limitations and burdens that afflict persons with disabilities require these persons to rely more heavily on Christ and His promises. These limitations can leave a person with many negative feelings and attitude. Christ is the opposite of the burdens, troubles and difficulties that these people face. The word of God gives reference to the sufferings in our lives. II Corinthians 1:3-5: “Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of

² St. Bernadette Parish, “Leprosy” available from www.stbernadette.org/homilies/021206.htm; Internet; accessed February 2006.

³ Paul Hayward, “Anchorite Cell at St. Luke’s Church,” available from www.duston.org.uk/anchorit.htm; Internet; accessed March 2006.

all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”⁴

Without the peace and comfort in the spiritual life of a disabled person, the burdens and sufferings can be overwhelming. Other diseases, depression, isolation and anger can occur. God is the comfort and peace for everyone, especially those who suffer with afflictions and who carry their cross of a disability. John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, my peace, I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”⁵

Accommodating these special people of God should be viewed by the church as a top priority. “An important fact that should remain with all who wish to welcome and include people with disabilities is basic: Disabled people have the same wants, desires, aspirations, hopes, frustrations, disappointments, and fears as able-bodied people. People do not cease to have value because trauma or disease deprives them of beauty or mobility.”⁶ It is important to incorporate Jesus’ purpose for the whole church into the local church. “The different elements of Christ’s ministry should be evident in his church today. Whatever he did while here in a physical body, he wants continued in his spiritual body, the church.”⁷ Christ Jesus showed compassion to all people especially to those

⁴ II Corinthians 1:3-5, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

⁵ Jn. 14:27, *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 2002).

⁶ Lewis, Merrick, *And Show Steadfast Love* (Louisville KY: Presb. Pub.1993), 23.

⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 98.

who had disabilities. He healed the sick and diseased, lame, blind and deaf. It is the responsibility of the members of the body of Christ to continue to fulfill his love and compassion to others.

Every person who has handicaps has a purpose and position in society, the church and the Kingdom of God. Larry Crabb wrote “We all need a place safe enough to embrace our brokenness, our failure, our inability to cope, and, in the midst of torment, a place to again discover life.”⁸ The church is a place where everyone, no matter what the diversity or limitation, should be safe and secure. It should be a place of refuge where the people of God may celebrate his grace and mercy. People with disabilities, in particular, need the assurance and security from the harsh world. “In a uniquely Christian way, the group or individual that shares concern for persons of special needs, fills a ministry role. That world of shadow ringed by physical or mental hurt calls for genuine demonstration that a Christian is one who cares.”⁹

Disabilities in the ministry and church are not new to society. Moses had limitations which were a challenge to his ministry. God’s Holy Word refers to his servant Moses as slow of speech. “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue”(Exodus 4:10).¹⁰ This scripture illustrates “A question is raised whether the mere difficulty of finding words

⁸ Larry Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and are Forever Changed* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Company, 1999).

⁹ Janette Harrington, *Who Cares?* (New York, NY: Friendship Press 1961), 12.

¹⁰ Ex. 4:10, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

and giving then utterance—a difficulty felt at first by almost every speaker—is here meant, or something further, as ‘a natural impediment owing to defect in the organs of speech.’”¹¹ His brother Aaron was then sent to be a companion and assistant to his limitations. “Moses’ second objection in the Jewish version is that he is inarticulate and ‘heavy of mouth and tongue,’ an expression that may mean he has a speech impediment.”¹² “... Is not Aaron the Levite brother? And thou shall speak unto him and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what ye shall do” (Exodus 4:14-15).¹³

God also limited Jacob with a physical disability. “When the man (God) saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man” (Genesis 32:25). This physical disability is not seen as a punishment, rather a life and name changing experience.

Samson received a disability when his eyes were removed. Judges 16:21: “Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza.” Because of his disability of blindness he was able to conquer many Philistines. “But Samson is able to complete his vocation, of killing as many Philistines as he can, only because of the disability he is given when his eyes are taken out. This would not have happened if he had not been blinded. A disability is given in order to provide symmetry to something

¹¹ Joseph S. Exell and H. D. M. Spence, *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 86.

¹² James L. Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 136.

¹³ Ex. 4:14-15. *The Holy Bible: Holman Edition-English Version* (Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman and Company, 1906).

else that has happened in the person's life: 'Like Jacob's wounding, Samson's physical disability brings symmetry into the protagonist's life and actually enables him to act potently again.'¹⁴ It was his faith however that restored his strength. "Then Samson prayed to the Lord, 'O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes. Then he pushed with all his might and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it.'¹⁵

Mephibosheth was born with a disability and became the focus of charity through David. "The king asked, 'Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?' Ziba answered the king, 'There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet.'"

By researching these biblical references, it is evident that God uses all people to fulfill his marvelous plan, especially those with disabling limitations. It is important for all God's people to use their gifts, talents and follow his will.

The Statement of Problem and Purpose

The purpose of the dissertation is to examine in detail the many areas of disabilities, law requirements, limitations and how it affects the church, its members and the whole body of believers in Christ. Through this exploration, the author will demonstrate the essential need and commitment of Christ body to fulfill the service to one another.

¹⁴ Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris, *Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disabilities* (Great Britain: Bookmarque Ltd, 2002), 47.

¹⁵ Jdg. 16:28-29. *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible: The New International Version* (Indianapolis, IN: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, 1990).

“Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).

This project will cover the numerous aspects of disabilities including both the positive and negative characteristics. It will also examine the problems and barriers that people face in and outside the church. The information gathered will be from personal situations that reflect emotions and experiences.

Included in this dissertation is a survey. Questionnaires were sent to one hundred and sixty-four churches covering sixteen denominations in fifty-three communities. The size of the congregations ranged from less than one-hundred fifty to more than fifteen-hundred. The questionnaire composed by the author and examines the struggles of churches to accommodate disabled people attending their churches. Through the results of this survey, the reader will be provided with information and an understanding of limitations, questions, proposals and current accommodations at particular churches. It will also reflect the opinions and insights of the churches who participated in the survey. A copy of the survey and the results of the response can be found in appendix A.

Some of the concerns that will be discussed in this dissertation are limitations of church accommodations due to financial situations, historical influence, and/or lack of knowledge pertaining to this subject. “Although many major denominations have issued statements in response to the problems of persons with handicapping conditions, most of the proposed changes remain in the planning stages.”¹⁶ Similar problems will also be discussed regarding the issues of people’s lives in collaborating in the church and its

¹⁶ Bette Ross, *Our Special Child: A Parent’s Guide to Helping Children with Special Needs Reach Their Potential* (Nashville, TN: Oliver-Books, 1993), 85.

activities. It is the intent of the author to examine the church as well as and the individual who face the challenges of being accepted and accommodated in the church.

The Statement of Scope and Limitations

Research of this type has certain limitations. First, it would be impossible for the author to discuss every physical, emotional and mental disability. Second, this project will not insist that the opinion and research of the materials found in this dissertation are the only view or prospects possible. The information is based only on collected materials provided through the research of the author. Third, the dissertation will not recommend that any church update, change, correct or challenge any improvements, advancements or actions, without first prayerfully seeking the will of God, discussing ideas with the Senior Pastor and Church Board Members. Fourth, the author will not exclusively look at the advantages and disadvantage of one particular church.

The information pertaining to the church will focus on research materials and both positive and negative benefits of the churches who have given personal church information on the surveys administered by the author. It is not exclusive to every and all suggestions, improvements or adjustments for structural enhancements or any other physical adjustments.

However, the entire law requirement portion of this paper will be based on the American's with Disabilities Act of 1990, delivered by the United States Congress.

The Statement of Literature Review

The available information for disabilities is plentiful. It includes mental, physical and emotional needs. However, the information for accommodation for the needs of people in a particular private place is limited. Listed throughout the following paragraphs are partial examples and summaries of the research for the select topic. The research foundations for this dissertation are the Holy Words of God and a direct book on Moses life and others in the Bible with disabilities. Through these two important resources, the discovery of other debilitating issues arose for people with special needs.

John Van Seters is the author of *The Life of Moses*.¹⁷ This book focuses on the historical and Biblical events of Moses' life. It offers tremendous insight regarding the struggles of his ministry and how his brother Aaron was able to assist him in the battle of his disability. This book gives great detail to the struggles and also to the faith that helped Moses persevere in the will and direction of the Lord. Moses' life is examined as Deliver, his life in the Wilderness and at Mount Sinai.

Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris¹⁸ are the authors of *Making a World of Difference*. McCloughry has focused twenty years of writing experience toward the Christian attitudes in social issues. Morris is the National Co-ordination for Church Action on Disabilities (CHAD) and has published articles contributing to this topic. Both authors share in numerous years of experience, understanding and acknowledging disabled people. This literature written by both authors grasps Biblical concepts and

¹⁷ John Van Setters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus and Numbers* (Kampen-The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1994).

¹⁸ McCloughry, *Making a World of Difference*..

experiences with disabilities in the Christian realm. “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God” (Leviticus 19:14). Respecting people with disabilities is respectful to God. Also included in this book are biblical reference of others with disabilities, such as Samson and Jacob.

Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, does not deal directly with disabilities or special needs of people in the church, but he does offer examples of potential insight in discovering and developing the purpose of every human being.¹⁹ The pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, which is one of America’s largest churches, Warren provides very useful tools in his book for capitalizing on the intentional purpose of the church. To enhance the full purpose of human existence, the author has contributed to the completeness of every person’s plan from God. Also in this book, the author contributes to a more personal view of self and finding the real truths of how God has planned every incident, positive or negative, with a purpose. Warren also expresses the fullness and necessity of belonging to a church family.

“Your spiritual family is even more important than your physical family because it will last forever. Our families on earth are wonderful gifts from God, but they are temporary and fragile, often broken by divorce, distance, growing old, and inevitably, death. On the other hand, our spiritual family- our relationship to other believers- will continue throughout eternity. It is a much stronger union, a more permanent bond, than blood relationships”.²⁰ This is especially important for persons with disabilities. They

¹⁹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

²⁰ Ibid., 118.

need to feel welcome, secure and accepted. The church should be a comforting and supportive place with the children of God receiving the life and eternal rewards of God's love, peace and grace.

Another extremely helpful book is authored by Gene Newman and Joni Eareckson-Tada entitled *All God's Children: Ministry to the Disabled*.²¹ Newman is a specialist in physical education who has written curriculum to assist and educate people in the church with understanding those with physical disabilities. Eareckson-Tada is the author of several books on helping to educate people on the limitations of physical disabilities. She is also the president of Joni and Friends, located in Agoura Hills, California where she is an active participant in this ministry. Together, in this book, the authors help to answer the questions of disabilities and to give confidence to Christians by providing knowledge and insight into the world of the handicapped. There are tremendous responsibilities that are look upon for the church and for the pastor. The authors offer suggestions for accommodating people with disabilities in the church setting. Areas addressed are classrooms, curriculum, resources, staff training, equipment, transportation, as well as other forms of communication.

The tasks of the shepherd are also demanding. In general, the pastor is caring and shows love for all the people. This book helps to explain the challenges of the pastor for everyone including those with special needs. "This problem is not new of course; it has plagued the church since inception. In Acts six it is recorded that the infant church was increasing in numbers so rapidly that the apostles could not continue to meet the needs of the congregation. Verse two tells us that the apostles summoned the congregation and

²¹ Gene Newman and Joni Eareckson Tada, *All God's Children: Ministry to the Disabled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

said; “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables”²² It is apparent that the followers of Christ understood the needs of the people and delegated people accordingly. Newman and Eareckson-Tada deliver the same message as the apostles on meeting the needs of everyone through sharing information and resources to equip the church and the leaders with guiding information.

Sharon Kutz-Mellem’s book, *Different Members, One Body*,²³ is a resourceful book that encourages diversity of abilities into the family of God. The author has more than twenty years of experience with disabilities, including her own disability, being an advocate of a family member and as a caregiver. This book welcomes the diversity of everyone to complete the glorious family of God. It gives insight to a general description of disabilities and how to interact with these special people. “A disabling condition often imposes isolation and loneliness on the person living with the condition. Therefore, it is particularly important that we not increase this loneliness by our unwillingness to engage in social interaction with persons who have disabilities”²⁴ The author encourages communication, removing architectural barriers, the service to others and the service to the church. This book emphasizes the action and interaction of people as the best tool for improvements and participation for people with disabilities in the church.

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ Sharon Kutz-Mellem, *Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God’s Family* (Louisville, KY: Witherspoon Press, 1998), 6.

²⁴ Ibid., 64.

And Show Steadfast Love,²⁵ edited by Lewis H. Merrick, enhances the positive actions of hospitality and grace towards disabled people and the church. This book is composed of six essays that reflect unity within the church and developed by Christian Education staff in the Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church. It discusses a theological study of Biblical contributions, outlook from ministers with disabilities and others who suffer with limitations in their lives and in the church. Unity is the focus of this well written book. The author delivers the concept of uniting everyone with love and hospitality through the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Jim Pierson is the author of *Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students With Disabilities*, a useful book that describes, explains and offers insight for the church in welcoming and providing intervention techniques for students. He is the president of the Christian Foundation for the Handicapped, coordinator of the Disability Ministry Program at Johnson Bible College and consults in special education for Standard Publishing.²⁶

This book contains powerful information for a basic understanding of disabilities and disorders. It is well written and the layout of this book would make the principles understandable for many audiences. This comprehensive book is a communication tools for volunteers, staff members, teachers, parents and the disabled. Pierson's book ministers to those seeking structure for developing the issues of special needs for students in the classroom of the church.

²⁵ Lewis Merrick, ed. *And Show Steadfast Love: A Theological Look at Grace, Hospitality, Disabilities and the Church* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing, 1993).

²⁶ Jim Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students With Disabilities* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002).

Biblical and Theological Basis

The foundation for understanding disabilities and how they affect people and the church should be examined on a Biblical and theological basis. As previous notes in this paper, particular attention will be given to Moses, Aaron, Jacob, Paul, Mephibosheth and Samson. The following scripture references will examine the lives of people with disabilities, how we should interact with each other in a Godly manner and why God has chosen to use everyone for His purpose.

God chooses opportunities to challenge people to grow in their faith and commitment to others. “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (I Corinthians 1:27, NIV). For everything on earth and in heaven there is a purpose and a reason for life’s obstacles. The scriptures reveal that the truths of God have will, and purpose, for all of mankind. Those who are faithful to his calling will receive the eternal rewards of his heavenly kingdom.

Biblical People with Disabilities

The whole Christian church should not overlook the scriptures that pertain to the struggles and trials of men and women who suffered and accomplished the great works of God. Listed below are some examples of people with various limitations that were selected to fulfill the accomplishments in their lives and the lives of others.

Moses and Aaron:

- 1) Exodus 4:10-Moses speaks to the Lord about his lack of speaking abilities.
- 2) Exodus 4:14-16-Aaron will be speaking for Moses and serve as a mediator.

Jacob:

- 1) Genesis 32:22-32-Jacob wrestles with God and receives a physical disability.

Samson:

- 1) Judges 16:21- Samson suffers physical injury causing blindness.

Mephibosheth:

- 1) II Samuel 9:13- The physical disability of crippled feet.

Paul:

- 1) II Corinthians 12:7-8- Paul's thorn in his side.

Other Sufferers:

- 1) A Hunchbacked Women: Luke 18:11, 16.
- 2) Miriam-Leprous- Numbers 12:10
- 3) Bartimaeus-Blind- Mark 10:46
- 4) A Crippled Man- Acts 14:8

The Advantages of Disabilities

Having a disability, whether it is physical or emotional, can be viewed as a blessing. Every person is, created, is in likeness God. "The human destiny is so to cultivate the divine image implanted by God that men and women will themselves grow in the likeness of God."²⁷ God is full of glory and majesty. It is reflected in everyone including those with disabilities.

- 1) Psalm 84:6-The blessing of a disability.
- 2) Galatians 2:20- Living with limitations in the faith of Jesus Christ.
- 3) Ezekiel 22:30-Strength in every circumstance.
- 4) Titus 2:10- Give thanks in every situation.
- 5) I John 3:16- Give of oneself for the love and sacrifice of others.

Actions Towards Others

The Bible gives many useful and comprehensive stories and situations that guides

²⁷ M.S. Rice, *The Advantage of a Handicap* (New York, NY: Abington Press, 1925), 54.

the reader to serve God by assisting others. Jesus spoke of the greatest commandment which is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37, KJV). This commandment is the foundation for serving and respecting others. With this principle in place, the full potential of love and compassion can be filtered to all God people in and outside the church, especially those with disabilities.

- 1) I Corinthians 12:7- Acceptance for everyone.
- 2) Ephesians 2:19-Every member of the family of God.
- 3) Ephesians 4:3-Share peace and comfort with others.
- 4) Mark 10:43-By serving others, we serve God.
- 5) Galatians 6:2-Doing good to everyone.
- 6) Matthew 22:37-40-The greatest commandment from Christ.
- 7) Micah 6:8- Requirements from the Lord.

God's Purpose for Everyone

God has a plan and a purpose for everyone including those with disabilities. The Bible offers many scriptures that reveal His complete aspirations for His creation. It is important for everyone to examine and fully understand the scriptures as they apply to those who have special needs. To fully understand the scriptures and each other, it is imperative that the church and its followers find a place and service for everyone.

- 1) I Corinthians 12:4-Different gifts for people to assist others.
- 2) I Corinthians 12:14-Many members of the body of Christ.
- 3) Genesis 1:26-All people are created in God's image. His image is reflected in each person.

- 4) Ephesians 2:10-God values all people and are called by Him in service and love.
- 5) Isaiah 44:2-God is the Creator and Lord.
- 6) Isaiah 57:14-15- Preparation
- 7) I Peter 2:4-Living stones.
- 8) Matthew 6:34- Our Worries
- 9) Jeremiah 29:11- God's plans for His people.

Statement of Methodology

This thesis statement will examine the church in relationship with those having disabilities. It will be a reference guide to educate the church.

Chapter One- An overview of the material as well as references that will be used throughout the thesis to develop a strategy for educating the church concerning those with special needs.

Chapter Two will examine the Biblical and Theological foundation for this project. Included in this chapter will be the focus of individual suffering from a disability and how God used them for his purpose.

Chapter Three will describe several disabilities and explore the elements as well as the affect on the individual.

The contents of Chapter Four will reveal the structural and physical limitations that the members of a church face. The resources given from individual churches will reflect the information collected from the survey that was distributed by the author. It will incorporate the church's position, and how churches are limited by architectural barriers. The American With Disabilities Act of 1990 will also be incorporated to provide the

reader with suggestions the church can make for the disabled and review the legal requirements of private organizations. It will suggest what accommodations should be made by the church to meet the regulations.

Church accommodations of those with special needs is the focus of Chapter Five. It will reflect how the church can assist in the lives of the member and visitor through accommodating them in the classroom, sanctuary, social hall, etc. It will suggest programs, educational resources, equipment and other tools necessary to fulfill the requirements of those with special needs.

A Summary

This thesis project will look at the many problems that people with special needs face in the church. The church should be a place for all people to express the gifts and abilities that God has given to each of them. Churches who are willing to make the necessary changes in their structures, hearts and minds will receive the blessing of taking care of the needs of all God's people.

There are also limitations that accompany this thesis paper. It reflects disabilities and disorders, the author's recommendations and offers the advantages and disadvantages for the church and the congregation. The author will not discuss every possible situation.

This thesis paper will examine a large scope of literature that will review and discuss the topic for assisting the church and the people with special needs. The author will also provide resources from Biblical scholars through commentaries.

In this thesis paper, there will be examples of people in the Bible who God used to fulfill His plan and purposes. The Bible records people with disease such as leprosy and

mental illness. Also mentioned are physical impairments like blindness, deafness, or being crippled.

The basis for this thesis paper is to examine how God used people such as Moses and Paul throughout God's word. It will also focus on Jesus' teaching and guidance on the sharing His love for all people.

It is the Author's intent that this paper will be an encouragement to all members of the church, including the disabled. The use of the paper should act as a guide to strengthen and educate the church concerning those with special needs so that they also can enjoy the whole benefit of worship and have fellowship in a Christian atmosphere.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Christ has commanded us to “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Mark 16:15”¹ The world is full of God’s people who need to hear and listen to His words and commandments for the reward of eternal salvation. Who are all God’s people? All God’s people come in different tongues, colors, characteristics, personalities, abilities and talents. Into all of the world is everyone, including those who are limited with certain abilities.

It is essential to recognize that everyone is created in the image of God according to Genesis 1:27, “So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them.”² The creation of humans gives them the ability to participate in the unique distinctions of others. People are created equal in the sight of God. All His creations have different characteristic and abilities that exchange in the full purpose of interaction, reward and direction for God.

People were created by God with a purpose and reason. Ephesians 2:10 explains the value that His creation has to him for His plan. “For we are all God’s workmanship,

¹ Mk. 16:15, *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible: The New International Version* (Indianapolis, IN: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, 1990).

² Gen. 1:17, *The Holy Bible: New Century Version* (Fort Worth, TX: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”³

Each person brings a unique quality to the ministry of Jesus Christ regardless of their disabling limitations.

The body of believers in Christ are many. However, the body, is one made from the believers and Christ is the source. Christian followers have a purpose and a plan for benefiting the kingdom of God. Each member contributes to others in the body. A person who is blind can relate to someone who is blind. Someone who is struggling with a debilitating disease can offer support and encouragement to that person who is in need of assurance and understanding. I Corinthians 12:12-13 explains this purpose. “For as the body is one and hath many members and all members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been all made to drink into one Spirit.”⁴ The body is a collaboration of many parts that contributes to an effective community in the church. McCloughry states “The notion of the body of Christ as a picture of the Church is one that has captured the imagination of the many people with disabilities as they have campaigned for a church that is inclusive of all people, disabled and non-disabled alike.”⁵ The church is a place where all God’s people can

³ Eph. 2:10, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

⁴ I Cor. 12:12-13, *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 2002).

⁵ Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris, *Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disabilities* (Great Britain: Bookmarque, Ltd, 2002), 74.

come, worship, praise and fellowship with each other in a loving Christian atmosphere. People with disabilities are to be included in this experience.

According to I Corinthians 12:7 (NIV), all people are asked to participate in God's ministry. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." This benefits the church and each other. Everyone can participate in the purpose of sharing God with the world.

Throughout the Bible there are several examples of people who suffered with afflictions and God used them right along with those who were perfectly healthy. The difficulties that these particular people face can be challenging. The Bible gives us personal examples and instances of people who suffered, the people who helped them and some reasons for the limitation from God.

Disabilities or imperfections in the Bible and society are often viewed as something that should be rejected. Society views persons who are not perfect or similar to their likeness, to be beneath or below the standard of a normal social crowd or settings. In the book *Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disabilities*, the author gives four main focuses of the Christian and Judaism attitudes toward disabilities. "1) disability as a sign of punishment, evil incarnation and disease; 2) disability as a challenge to divine perfection; 3) disability as an object of pity and charity; and 4) disability as incompetence and exemption from religious practice."⁶ Disabilities in the Bible are often looked at as a sign of judgment. He continues "Human beings will be

⁶ Ibid., 35.

‘blinded’ by God if they are disobedient. Jacob is ‘lamed’ by God. David’s child dies because of David’s adultery. Saul becomes mentally ill.”⁷

Moses was a faithful servant of God. In Moses’ struggle, he found peace knowing that God was leading and using him to fulfill God’s mission. “Moses, a man who had a speech impediment, was used by God despite or, perhaps, because of this.”⁸ The story of his disability begins in the book of Exodus in which God called Moses to perform signs as a witness of His mighty power. Moses was troubled because he was afraid that the people would not listen to him. Assured by God, Moses realized that he would be used by God to minister to others with the assistance of Aaron, Moses’ brother. Exodus 4:10 (NCV) records his concerns. “But Moses said to the Lord, “Please, Lord, I have never been a skilled speaker. Even now, after talking to you, I can not speak well. I speak slowly and can’t find the best words.” It is evident that Moses had a disability. However, scholars have debated the possibilities as to the limitations of this speaking disability. “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue”(Exodus 4:10).⁹ This scripture illustrates “A question is raised whether the mere difficulty of finding words and giving then utterance—a difficulty felt at first by almost every speaker—is here meant, or something further, as ‘a natural impediment owing to defect in the organs of speech.’”¹⁰ “Moses’

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁹ Ex. 4:10, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

¹⁰ Joseph S. Exell and H. D. M. Spence, *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 86.

second objection in the Jewish version is that he is inarticulate and ‘heavy of mouth and tongue,’ an expression that may mean he has a speech impediment.”¹¹

Seters examines two disabling problems. “The first, ‘I am not a man of words,’ seems to correspond to the same problem as Jeremiah’s inability in speaking and is answered by the deity, ‘I will teach you what you are to say’ (4:12). The second complaint, however, ‘I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue,’ suggests a physical defect.”¹² According to Seters, Moses had not one but two disabilities. Moses along with many other special people have multiple limitations within their disabilities. The restrictions of disabilities may seem hard to bear or impossible to be used for the higher benefits of God. But as proven by Moses, anything is possible with God.

The author continues to research the possible elements of this disability. “The notion for this defect comes perhaps from Ezekiel’s call, where a contrast is drawn between the Israelites, who would not listen to Ezekiel, and people of foreign speech, who would listen to him. The Yahwist, has constructed the ‘heavy mouth/tongue’ as a defect to use it as an excuse for the people not listening to Moses. To this the deity responds that he is creator of the mouth and of physical defects and will be with Moses’ mouth. Thus motifs from two prophetic call traditions have been combined to form the unit.”¹³

¹¹ James L. Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 136.

¹² John Van Seters, *The Life of Moses* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 60.

¹³ Ibid.

For Moses, communication was imperative for leading and directing people in the will of God. His mission in God was to share salvation, enforce rules and witness to the unbelieving. The disabilities of Moses was overcome with God's grace and direction. His struggles are a great example of how the faithful believers of Christ can help and uplift others with disabilities in the ministry of Christ Jesus. This biblical example is evidence that God uses all people, including those with disabilities and special needs to work together for sharing the gospel and building up the Kingdom of God. Through his struggles, Moses overcame to be one of the greatest prophets recorded in the Bible. Moses is a wonderful example of those who God used to overcome their disabilities. However, he is not the only example given in the Old Testament who overcame disabilities.

Genesis 32:22-32 records a wrestling match between God and a man named Jacob. Jacob was physically normal man until God gave him a disability. During the night, Jacob wrestled with a "man". The man, who was "called an angel by Hosea and God by Jacob"¹⁴; "a man", according to Genesis 32:25, or "the angel", according to Hosea 12:4; wrestled with Jacob until daybreak and discovered that he could not overpower him. Exodus 32:25 (NIV): "When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man." The Bible confirms his injury in Genesis 32:31 (NIV): ". . . and he was limping because of his hip." Jacob was finally released, but only first after receiving a blessing that changed his name to Israel, which means "may God contend" or "may God rule."¹⁵ Hosea 12:4

¹⁴ Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary*, 394.

¹⁵ Paul Achtemeier, *Harper's Dictionary* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1985), 434.

(NCV) also records his wrestle. “When Jacob wrestled with the angel and won, he cried and asked for his blessing.”

This type of disability is received and not something that he was born with or a type of punishment. It is similar to a person who receives an injury caused by an accident. This type of disability that is unexpected can be delivered to that person quickly. McCloughry states “Disability is not here a sign of punishment. Indeed, though painful, it draws the wrestling to a close. It is a symbol of a transformed life. In the years that followed, a nation was willing to take his new name on the basis that his disability signified one of the greatest experiences of God that any man would ever have.”¹⁶ Through this incident, Jacob was able to continue to work toward the mission and ministry of God. McCloughry reflects: “Jacob shows us that disability can be a gift. It is a strange gift. It is a gift that on many days we would rather be without, but on others we see that we have been transformed by it, and that sometimes people around us have been touched by the lessons that we have learned through it.”¹⁷ This event teaches that we can be renewed or transformed through unexpected disabilities. People who have accidents, who were once perfectly healthily and now disabled may find that their spiritual life, family life and interpersonal lives are strengthened through faith in God.

Samson was a man who delivered Israel from the Philistines. This man was a Nazirite who vowed to be obedient to God. “The Nazirite’s vow was one of abstinence and consecration. The vow was taken in order to concentrate mental, physical and spiritual

¹⁶ McCloughry, *Making a World of Difference*, 46.

¹⁷ Ibid., 46.

energies for a particular task.”¹⁸ The disability of Samson and the disability of Jacob were similar in the fact that they were acquired and not born with them. Samson was a strong and healthy man who fell into the love trap of Delilah. The secret of his strength was found in his hair through his obedience to God. God’s instructions were never to cut his hair because he would lose the gift given to him. Delilah worked with the Philistines to conquer him. Once they overcame him, “The Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison” (Judges 16:21, NIV).

Judges 16:25-30 records the event of his final battle. “. . . And they called for Samson, out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. ‘Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.’ . . . ‘O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.’ Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!”¹⁹ “Samson’s death is not, strictly speaking, a suicide, since God grants his prayer for death, accepting him as an instrument through which to carry out the divine plan. His death is viewed as achieving an important result, killing more Philistines than he had killed in his life time.”²⁰ Through

¹⁸ Dietrich Gruen, *Who’s Who in the Bible* (Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, Ltd., 1995), 263.

¹⁹ McCloughry, *Making a World of Difference*, 47.

²⁰ Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 258.

this restoration and power of God, he was able to conquer his enemies, 3,000 Philistines in total. God restored Samson's strength because of his faith in God.

Without the disability of blindness, Samson would have been a threat to the Philistine people and therefore unable to fulfill the conquering plan. "Samson was able to complete his vocation, of killing as many Philistines as he can, only because of his disability he is given when his eyes are taken out. A disability is given in order to provide symmetry to something else that has happened in the person's life: 'Like Jacob's wounding, Samson's physical disability brings symmetry into protagonist's life actually enables him to act potently again.'"²¹

The Bible also gives reference to a man named Mephibosheth who had a physical disability of crippled feet. This aspect of disability is an example of how people with non-disabilities view people with disabilities, in this case, in a positive direction. In this example, the disabled person was able to achieve social status through his heritage. He gave Mephibosheth social status by returning the lands that had belonged to his grandfather. "David's generosity means restoring to Mephibosheth lands that is in any case Mephibosheth's by right of inheritance."²²

"Mephibosheth had a name and a heritage. His disability was a part of who he was, but not the only part. David gave Mephibosheth's social status by returning the lands that had belonged to his grandfather. By giving him the ability to determine how his

²¹ McCloughry, *Making a World of Difference*, 47.

²² Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, 293.

household were to be run, David restored Mephibosheth's dignity and assured him of the social status of those who had work to do. David's insistence that Mephibosheth always ate at the king's table also reinforced Mephibosheth social status and indicated that he valued Mephibosheth's counsel and advice."²³

It is also interesting to point out the negative self esteem of this disabled person. In II Samuel 9:8 (NIV), Mephibosheth shares his personal outlook of himself. "Mephibosheth bowed down and said, 'What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?'" He was also insecure of the response of the king. "David sent for Mephibosheth who approached the king with real apprehension. He might have thought that being a descendant from Saul was not exactly the best way to guarantee a good reception from David."²⁴

The negative self esteem of Mephibosheth is unfortunately shared with people of disabilities today. Many disabled people suffer from the sense of worthlessness, shamefulness and loneliness. "He calls himself a dead dog. He views his life as a disabled person as a fate worse than death. Most likely he had lived an isolated life until David called for him."²⁵

The life of Mephibosheth through the rewards of David is a good example of how Christianity should be demonstrated through the power of love and compassion. "Both the non-disabled and the disabled have an equal place in society. Disability is a part of

²³ Reformed Worship, "Mephibosheth: II Samuel 9" available from www.reformedworship.org/magazine/article.cfm?article; Internet; accessed December 2006.

²⁴ McCloughry, *Making a World of Difference*, 48.

²⁵ Reformed Worship, "Mephibosheth: II Samuel 9."

life that needs to be addressed by non-disabled as well as disabled people. Finally, the story shows that ministry with persons with disability takes place in the practical everyday details of life.”²⁶

The Bible also gives references to a disabling disease that afflicted people with a contagious skin disease. This disease was called leprosy. Leprosy not only affects the skin of the person, it affects the nerves as well. “Only the peripheral nerves and their cutaneous branches are involved. Rather it does seem to refer to a whole range of disfiguring conditions that resulted in rejection by a society that, in its ignorance, attributed such afflictions to punishment from God.”²⁷ Leviticus chapter thirteen provides a description and regulations about this infectious skin disease.

The priests were given the tasks of deeming people clean and unclean. “An individual priest was ‘off duty’ most of the time and thus among and available to the people. If the person examined was clearly clean or unclean, the priest could rule on the case immediately. In other cases, various periods of confinement or quarantine, second examination, second seven-day quarantine, third examination and bathing if the person had been declared unclean. Scalp and facial diseases could require shaving.”²⁸ Their decision would allow them to return to the group, once again as productive members and socially acceptable to their family and friends. The acts that the priest would oversee and the acts of the potential clean leper would perform, according to Leviticus chapter

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “Leprosy in the Bible-What was it?” available from www.webspawner.com/users/LEPBIBLE/; Internet; accessed November 2006.

²⁸ Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 168.

fourteen are: visitations, animal sacrifice, water sprinkling, body cleansing with water, clean clothes, shaven body, blood of the animal offering placed on the body of the unclean, oil on the body of the unclean, a cleansing before the Lord, and burnt offerings.

However, the Bible also records the requirements of the Israelite priests. These men reflected the perfection through character, daily living and character. They were required to uphold certain physical expectations. The limitations are listed in Leviticus 21:17-23 (NIV). They include: “Blindness, an impaired limb, a marred face, an oversized limb, a broken foot or hand, a hunchback condition, Dwarfism, a defective eye, possibly including imperfect vision, Eczema, a scab, the absence of or possible damaged genitalia.”²⁹ It did not mean that they could not hold the position of priest, but, they were restricted from serving at the altar where the Holy sacrifices were offered to God. This is one place in the Bible where God limits people with disabilities. However, it is important to note that there were other limitations besides disabilities that kept certain people from offering sacrifices. People without disabilities included: “women, children, foreigners, anyone from a tribe other than Levi, even kings.”³⁰ On the contrary to the limitations of disabilities, God commands his people to show fairness and protection on the disabled. Leviticus 19:14 (NCV), “You must not curse a deaf person or put something in front of a blind person to make him fall. But you must respect your God. I am the Lord.”

Even though the priests were to live a life that was truly acceptable to God, they also were sinners who also had to make sacrifices for their sins. The Biblical references are

²⁹ Thomas Nelson, *What Does the Bible Say About... The Ultimate A to Z Resource* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2001), 192.

³⁰ Ibid.

found in Hebrews 5:2-3 and Leviticus 16:11. “The ‘no defects’ policy reminded everyone that God was worthy of their best. It did not mean that only perfect people could gain access to God.”³¹

In the New Testament, Jesus extended compassion to those with leprosy. He healed people of this infectious disease. Matthew 8:2-3 (NIV), “A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.” Luke also provides another example of his compassion, where he heals ten people of leprosy. Luke 17:12-14, “And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.’”³²

There are several accounts given in the Bible who had this terrible disease. Two examples are Naaman and Miriam. II Kings 5:27 (NIV), “Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your decedents forever.” Numbers 12:10 (KJV), “And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam and behold, she was leprous.” During Old Testament times, people who suffered with leprosy were outcasts, isolated and rejected. Other people were afraid that they would also be infected with this disease. Hebrews 13:13 (NCV) refers to Jesus outside the camp. “So let us go to Jesus outside the camp, holding on as he did when we are abused.” “Hebrews 13:13: terminology referring to the place where ‘lepers’

³¹ Ibid., 193.

³² Lk. 17:12-14, *The Holy Bible: Holman Edition-English Version* (Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman and Company, 1906).

were isolated, ‘bearing stigma’ or empathizing with people rejected by society.”³³

Leviticus 13:2 (NIV) states “When any one has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease.” This chapter of Leviticus records different types of leprosy that afflicted the people in the Old Testament. “This, clearly, is not what we call leprosy (Hansen’s Disease) today because Hansen’s Disease does not cause the skin to become white.”³⁴

Hansen’s Disease has similar symptoms but this is one of the distinguishing factors that differentiates its self from the Biblical Leprosy. People who had leprosy mostly acquired it through the contact of another leper. However, the Bible does give reference of God’s punishment because of people’s sinful ways. Some of those lepers include: Uzziah—who was prideful (II Chronicles 26:20-21), Naaman—generational curse (II Kings 5:27), and Jeroboam—King of Israel—his people continued to sacrifice in the high place (II Kings 15:5).

Some of the other people who suffered in the Bible with a disability are: a hunchbacked woman (Luke 18:11, 16), Bartimaeus—who was blind (Mark 10:46) and a crippled man (Acts 14:8). The disabilities that are listed in the Bible are comparable in today’s society. Just as people suffered in biblical times, they also have similar struggles

³³ “*Leprosy in the Bible-What was it?*”

³⁴ Ibid.

today. Fortunately, there is equipment, prescription medicines, materials, education, law and guidelines to assist persons with special needs.

The Apostle Paul reflected on his own disability and sought the help of God to remove his burden. “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me (II Corinthians 12:7, NIV).” Satan used the weakness of the Apostle Paul to discourage him from the will and works of God. The “thorn” in his side has been debated between Biblical scholars with two different opinions of it being a physical limitation. “Paul does not call this ‘thorn’ a sickness. Rather, he specifically identifies it as ‘a messenger of Satan.’ The underlying Greek word for ‘messenger’ is *angellos* which, as you can probably guess, is where we get the word ‘angel.’ This word appears over one hundred and eighty times in the Bible, and in every instance, it refers to a personal being. Not once is it used to refer to a thing, much less to a sickness or disease.”³⁵

The Interpreter’s One volume Commentary gives insight to either a spiritual battle or a physical limitation. “Speculation has persisted about the specific nature of the ‘thorn in the flesh’, malaria, an eye disease, stammering, or epilepsy. It was probably some physical malady, chronic and painful. Yet many ancient fathers of the church, as well as the Protestant Reformers, held that it was a spiritual affliction, that he was never able to feel himself secure from Satan’s wiles and was subject to all the temptations of the flesh in their acute forms.”³⁶

³⁵ Walking Barefoot Ministries, “Pulling Paul’s Thorn: God’s Grace” available from www.walkingbarefoot.com/writings/PaulsThorn.htm; Internet; accessed February, 2006.

³⁶ Charles M. Laymon, *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1974), 822.

The defense for “thorn” as a physical limitation is found in the following statements. “In spite of views that the thorn in the flesh was suffering in persecution, or doubts or temptations to evil, the most natural interpretation is that it was a physical ailment. The messenger of Satan is the thorn in the flesh, not a personal enemy.”³⁷ “Paul nowhere specifies the nature of this satanic impediment, but it was probably some kind of physical ailment, not seriously disabling, but certainly bothersome enough to prompt him to pray for divine healing.”³⁸ After researching this topic, regarding Paul and his “thorn”, The author has concluded that the Biblical evidence points to a physical limitation.

In the ministry today there are also imperfect people serving God. People in wheelchairs, people with walkers and crutches, blindness, speech imperfections and many other disabilities are used to minister to the lost people in the world today. Acts 2:17:18 (NIV) gives a newer approach to allowing all people to be used by God. “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.” This Biblical reference does not restrict people, it does not insist that people be whole or complete. God uses everyone in the ministry no matter what their age, race, disability or social status.

In society, people have categorized other people with disabilities as unequal or inadequate. It is the categorized differences that have labeled the disabled people from

³⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 1411.

³⁸ Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 12011.

what society understands as perfect. The love of God is for everyone. He uses the weak to fulfill the plans for his kingdom and the life course of the disabled. I Corinthians 1:27 (KJV) “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” God does not show partiality to His people. Acts 10:34 (NIV), “Then Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.’” Romans 2:11 (NCV), “For God judges all people in the same way.” It is the responsibility of the church and the congregation members to follow in the true ways and direction of God. Jesus recognized the need in everyone, especially those who were suffering with the limitations of disabilities. Matthew 15:29, 30 (NIV), “Jesus . . . went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, blind, the crippled, the mute and many others and laid them at his feet; and he healed them.”

Christ’s examples of concern, love and compassion should be the foundation of equality for people with special needs within the church. Every accommodation should be made to make the disabled people feel welcome, warm and loved. Sharing the good news and salvation of Christ is the commandment that is given to every believer. This does not exclude those with special needs. God’s perfect plan includes all God’s people.

Through the struggles of the Old and New Testament it gives illustrations of people and their struggle and suffering. It also shows ways that God comforts each of them in their situation according to His will and plan. God show us that He uses people from the beginning of the Old Testament, to the New Testament and even today. The Biblical examples show God’s love for His people even in the mist of struggles, sufferings and

pain.

The testimony in the Gospels ensures to the Christian church, that compassion and love reflections the heart of Christ. Jesus Christ encourages his followers to love each other and give compassion. The same is true for those with disabilities. There are similarities between those in the Bible and those who function in the world today. The struggles are similar and the pain that they experience are similar; isolation, anger, disappointment, and hurt. Through the teachings of Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, the Christian church can extend a hand of hope and love to those who are struggling with disabilities and make them a part of the church family.

CHAPTER THREE

DISABILITY AND DISORDER DESCRIPTIONS

In order to assist people with disabilities, further insight must be given to the diseases and impairments that contribute to these limitations. These disorders must be discussed since these types of afflictions affect people in many walks of life, including those who worship and serve the Lord. With a better understanding of the disorder, disease or symptom, the church and its members can be better informed, educated and equipped to assist those with these special needs. This will also help those afflicted to feel welcome, understood and assured in the love of Christ as He commands us.

These sections will include descriptions of many disorders and disabilities, but the list will not be exhaustive to every associated problem that may arise in conjunction with every disability. This section will examine descriptions of both disabilities and diseases and the possible challenges and limitations that these special people face. A following chapter will advise, educate and direct the church and its members toward the most effective and efficient ways of communicating and accommodating people with disabilities.

According to The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, “An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an

impairment.”¹ This Act gives protection for those who have mental or and physical impairments under the law.

However, the lives of each special person require more than protection. They need encouragement, love, and comfort, to feel welcome and reassured. To gain further knowledge of a deeper understanding of their needs, the following section will discuss not only the medical terminology for the disease and disability, but their psychological and spiritual needs as well.

The main sources of disabilities are mental, emotional, learning, and physical. Mental disabilities include mental retardation, people with mental illness and emotional disorders. Understanding the disease or source of the disability will give insight to helping the disabled person so that the church may serve them successfully.

Mental Disorders

The American Association on Mental Retardation of 1992 defines mental retardation as “. . . substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age eighteen.”²

A person with mental retardation is also classified by their intelligence quotient. “A

¹ The United States Congress: U.S. Department of Labor, “*The American With Disabilities Act of 1990*” available from www.dol.gov/esa; Internet; accessed Feb. 2006.

² Jim Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students with Disabilities* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002), 22.

person has mental retardation when intellectual functioning level (IQ) is below 69: there are significant limitations in at least two adaptive skill areas; and the condition has existed since childhood.”³ There are four IQ classifications of mental retardation. They are mild which is a range between “50-55 to 69, Moderate IQ range of 35-40 to 50-55, Severe with an IQ range of 20-25 to 35-40 and Profound when the IQ level is below 20-25 in the IQ range”⁴

The leading causes of mental retardation include circumstances relating to children before birth, during birth and in their childhood. “Mental retardation is caused by genetic defects, prenatal influences (disease, trauma, etc.), perinatal influences (birth injuries, premature birth, etc.), and postnatal factors (disease, environmental, deprivation, trauma and poisoning).”⁵

Before pregnancy occurs, there are situations that can cause this mental condition. It is composed of genetic disorders which are predetermined by either parent’s genetic make-up. It is also possible that both parents may not have any defect in their genetics but still cause a defect in their child. “Although regarded as genetic disorders, chromosomal disorders are not necessarily inherited. Both parents may have normal genes, with the defect resulting from a random error when chromosomes reproduce.”⁶

³ “*Cardinal McCloskey Services: About Mental Retardation*” available from [www.carinalmccloskeyservices.org/what is mrdd.shtml](http://www.carinalmccloskeyservices.org/what%20is%20mrdd.shtml); Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gene Newman and Joni Eareckson Tada, *All God’s Children: Ministry to the Disabled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 38.

⁶ “*Cardinal McCloskey Services: About Mental Retardation.*”

There are numerous possibilities for mental retardation. The most common genetic condition that leads to mental retardation is Down syndrome. “Down syndrome is a set of mental and physical symptoms that result from having an extra copy of Chromosome 21. Normally, a fertilized egg has 23 pairs of chromosomes. In most people with Down syndrome, there is an extra copy of chromosome 21 (also called trisomy 21 because there are three copies of this chromosome instead of two), which changes the body’s and brain’s normal development.”⁷

People who suffer with Down syndrome have physical and mental signs and symptoms that differ from most healthy people. The symptoms can range from mild to severe and the physical and mental development is usually slower in these special people. Physical signs of Down syndrome include: “flat face with an upward slant to the eye, short neck, abnormally shaped ears, deep crease in the palm of the hand, white spots on the iris of the eye, poor muscle tone, loose ligaments, and small hands and feet.”⁸ In addition to physical and mental/developmental weakness, they also suffer from health conditions including: “hearing problems, congenital heart disease, intestinal problems, celiac disease, eye problems, thyroid dysfunctions, and skeletal problems, dementia-similar to Alzheimer’s.”⁹ Adults who suffer from Down syndrome usually suffer from Alzheimer’s disease later on in life and most commonly do not live by themselves.

⁷ The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, “*What is Down Syndrome?*” available from www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/down_syndrome.cfm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

There is no cure for Down syndrome. However, there are many avenues that can be taken to ensure that these people benefit from all that the medical field has to offer. These benefits can include: “occupational therapy, speech therapy and exercise for gross and fine motor skills.”¹⁰ In most cases children who have Down syndrome can be taught in a structured classroom along with their peers.

The spiritual needs for their growth in the church, are simple and plain to understand. Their knowledge is basic and therefore the information given to them needs to be basic as well. It is important to realize that these special needs people are child-like, even if they are adults. As productive members of the church, they can be taught about Jesus, have simple faith, love, and understand simple stories of God’s greatness. Through patience, guidance, and directions, they can be loving and loyal members of the body of Christ.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome “is a set of mental and physical disorders that can include retardation, brain dysfunction, physical abnormalities, learning disabilities and psychological disorder. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome occurs as a result of prenatal exposure to alcohol.”¹¹ These people suffer from: “smaller heads, deformed facial features, abnormal joints and limbs, poor coordination, problems with learning, and short memories.”¹² This syndrome is completely avoidable. The foundation for this syndrome is alcohol abuse. In the absence of alcohol, Fetal Alcohol syndrome would not exist.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 35.

¹² Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, “*What is Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?*” available from www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/fetalalcoholsyndromehtml; Internet; accessed February 2007.

There are also developmental delays and central nervous system interruptions that people with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome have. They have developmental delays in motor skills and learning disabilities. The central nervous system is affected in “sensory integration problems, too little or too much muscle tone, irritability, poor eating, and poor sleeping.”¹³ Other characteristics that are often not seen but are shown are “attention defects, memory problems, hyperactivity, difficulty with abstract concepts, poor problem solving, poor judgment, difficult learning from consequences, and immature behavior.”¹⁴

These features are different from behavior problems. They are the result of permanent brain damages that lead to the effects of this syndrome. It is imperative to understand that great patience be exercised when teaching and sharing with these special people.

Other mental disorders that have similar symptoms to mental retardation are: “Fragile-X-syndrome: is the most commonly inherited genetic disorder resulting in mental retardation. It is second only to Down syndrome among the genetic cause of mental retardation. The condition results when the long arm of the X chromosome is broken or weak; Prader-Willi Syndrome and Angelman Syndrome: Occurs when there is a problem with the fifteenth chromosome; Cri-Du-Chat Syndrome: Occurs when the short arm of the fifth chromosome is partially deleted.”¹⁵

¹³ Jim Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students with Disabilities* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002), 36.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 33-39.

The symptoms of these syndromes have physical similarities. The Fragile-X syndrome affects the person physically with a long face, large ears, flat feet, along with internal health problems such as heart murmurs and hearing problems. People who suffer from Prader-Willi syndrome experience obesity and low muscle tone and typically have moderate retardation. The symptoms of Angelman syndrome are: “delay or mental retardation, severe speech impairment, seizures, small head size and problems with movement and balance. They typically have a happy, excitable demeanor with frequent smiling and laughter, a short attention span and hand flapping movements.”¹⁶ People with Cri-Du-Chat Syndrome experience “heart defects, kidney abnormalities, minor skeletal problems, bowel problems, epilepsy, swallowing and sucking problems and cleft palate. Major identifying characteristic include small head, monotone-cat-like-cry, high palate, round face, low set ears, low broad nasal ridge, folds of skin over the upper eyelid and creases in the palms of the hands.”¹⁷

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Emotional and behavioral disorders create barriers that can cause disturbances in the lives of those who are afflicted with this disorder, the people who care for them and in social settings such as a church or school. Jesus commands love to all and give respect. “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must

¹⁶ The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, “*What is Angelman Syndrome?*” available from www.ghr.nim.nih.gov/condition=angelmansyndrome; Internet; accessed February 2007.

¹⁷ “*So What is Cri Du Chat Syndrome*” available from www.criduchat.asn.au/criduchat/what.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

love one another.”¹⁸ “And the second commandment is like the first: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’”¹⁹ People who suffer with an emotional disorder need love, patience, understanding and compassion.

Behavioral and emotional disorders affect both genders of children, adolescents and adults. The cause of these disorders were at one time thought to be traceable to one or both parent. According to the Pacer Center “The question of who or what is responsible for a child’s problems has given way to an understanding that the combinations of factors affecting development—biological, environmental, psychological—are limitless. Research on the cause of emotional and behavioral disorders has shown that the way the brain receives and processes information is different for children with some types of disorders than for those who do not have those problems.”²⁰

Emotional Disorders

First, to understand emotional disturbances, it is important to realize that emotional problems are not temporary and that the success of the person will rely on different techniques, behavior modifications, medication and most of all respect, love and compassion. The following types of these disorders are the most common types that may

¹⁸ Jn. 13:34, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

¹⁹ Mt. 22:39, *The Holy Bible: New Century Version* (Fort Worth, TX: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

²⁰ The Pacer Center, “What is an Emotional or Behavioral Disorder?” available from www.pacer.org; Internet; accessed February 2007.

be found, however, these disorders listed are not a complete list. The behavior and emotional disorders that will be discussed throughout the following paragraphs include: anxiety, bipolar, major depression, conduct, schizophrenia and tourette syndrome.

Anxiety disorder affects children, adolescents and adults. This disorder afflicts the person with characteristics of basic worries and fears. Under the umbrella of anxiety disorders are: “obsessive-compulsive disorder—obsessed with repetitive thoughts of being sick, dying; compulsive in repetitive behaviors such as counting, repeating phrases and washing hands; phobias—unfounded fear toward an object, situation, event; panic disorder-physical symptoms like sweating that result in dizziness, racing heart; generalized anxiety disorder- excessive fears unrelated to any prior event; posttraumatic stress disorder-the recalling of a distressing occurrence such as violence, abuse, severe weather, etc.;eating disorder—include anorexia nervosa (the person does not take in enough food to maintain appropriate body weight) and bulimia nervosa—when a person binge eats and then vomits.”²¹

Bipolar disorder is a mental disorder that affects the emotions of the person afflicted. The emotional symptoms range from high to low depression. “The essential feature of Bipolar 1 Disorder is a clinical course that is characterized by the occurrence of one or more Manic Episodes (a distinct period of time lasting at least one week in which the criteria are met both for a Manic Episode and a Depressive Episode nearly every day).”²² This disorder is not limited to children, it is also found in adults. The symptoms of this disorder include: “poor concentration, lacking energy, feelings of sadness, anxiousness,

²¹ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 64.

²² The Pacer Center, “What is an Emotional or Behavioral Disorder?”

worthlessness, guilt and hopelessness, loss of interest in regular activities, ravenous or lost appetite.”²³

Major Depression is an emotional disorder that also may affect children and adults. Symptoms of this disorder are: “feeling sad and useless, crying a lot, losing interest in friends, activities and school, not eating or sleeping well, lacking basic hygiene, an overwhelming sense of hopelessness.”²⁴ The symptoms of major depression are difficult to discover in children. However, watching for changes in their behavior, attitudes and activities can assist in the diagnosis of this mental disorder.

Conduct disorder is easily recognized. It is defined by the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center as “a behavioral and emotional disorder in children and adolescents that is characterized by a pattern of aggressive, antisocial behavior.”²⁵ People with this disorder show disruptive activities. “They hit, throw, tease, fight and act defiant. They are uncooperative, rude, quarrelsome, inattentive and irresponsible.”²⁶ Children who have a mild version of this emotional disorder can be effectively treated by positive stimulation and reinforcement. However in severe cases of conduct disorder, the child may carry it into their adulthood.

Schizophrenia is emotional disorder that can be seen in adolescents, but mainly affects adults and is rarely diagnosed in young children. It is “characterized by loss of contact

²³ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 65.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, “Conduct Disorder” available from www.hmc.psu.edu/childrens/healthinfo/c/conductdisorder.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

²⁶ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 66.

with environment and personality changes. Hallucinations and delusions, disorganized speech, or catatonic behavior often exists as symptoms of this disorder, which is frequently manifested in young adulthood.”²⁷ Treatments for this disorder depend on the individual person because of the symptoms of each person may have. The treatments include, education, hospitalization, medication, therapy, support groups, residential and vocational programs. The current treatments available according to Johns Hopkins Medicine are recommended in the following.

Education: The person with schizophrenia and his or her family members can benefit from learning about this disorder, including how to diminish stress and conflict, which can sometimes help spark a relapse. It is also important to learn what resources are available in the community for treating mental illness.

Hospitalization: This is required during some acute phases of the illness or sometimes in order to make changes in medication in a well-controlled, monitored environment.

Medication: Finding the right medication can be difficult. It is important to be open with the psychiatrist, reporting what symptoms and side-effects are occurring, so the doctor can help to fine the best medication to meet the individual needs of each patient. It is also important to learn the contraindications of certain medications, such as the effects of alcohol or sunlight on the effectiveness of the medication.

Therapy: This can help with problems that arise day to day, as well as setting realistic goals and defining strategies for reaching those goals.

Support Groups: These can be very important for the person with schizophrenia and for their family members and friends.

²⁷ The Pacer Center, “What is an Emotional or Behavioral Disorder?”

Residential and Vocational Programs: These programs can help the person with schizophrenia reach his or her highest potential and greatest level of independence. Staff in these programs become well-acquainted with their clients and can help find living arrangements, work and recreational activities that are well-suited to each client's needs.²⁸

Another disorder classified as emotional is Tourette syndrome. This syndrome affects both children and adults. However, as the child ages, medication may be discontinued during adulthood and the syndrome may disappear. Tourette syndrome is described by Jim Pierson as “an inherited, neurological disorder characterized by repeated involuntary movements and uncontrollable vocal sounds called tics. Boys are affected more than girls. An estimated one hundred thousand Americans have TS. Symptoms range from mild to severe.”²⁹ The symptoms of this disorder expands from vocal and motor tics. Motor tics: “include eye blinking, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, fast extensions of the arms, sticking the tongue out, stretching movement, and the like; Vocal tics: may include clearing the throat, grunting, snoring, sniffing, coughing, humming, barking, and spitting; other problems: the full range of emotional disorders, especially obsessive-compulsive disorder, learning disabilities, problems with reading and math, attention deficit disorder and stuttering.”³⁰

²⁸ Johns Hopkins Medicine, “Schizophrenia” available from www.hopkinsmedicine.org/epigen/szwhatitis.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

²⁹ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 67.

³⁰ Ibid.

It is important to nurture and show compassion for those with behavioral and emotional disorders. There are internal and external problems that reveal symptoms that contribute to understand symptoms of these disorders. Internally the person can feel worthless and ashamed. They may experience sadness, withdrawal and loss of interest in activities. Externally that may experience: “temper tantrums, lying or stealing, inability to control himself and aggression.”³¹ These people, especially children, need special attention, consideration and love. Understanding these challenges that these people face can often be difficult and frustrating. Every person wants respect, love and compassion, but it is especially sought by people with disabilities. Luke 6:30 gives insight and understanding to this treatment. “Give to every man that asketh of thee.”³² This is the focus of Christ’s love for all, including those with disabilities.

Visual Impairments

Visual impairments are a difficult and challenging disability. These diseases do not respect age, race, or gender. The two main visual impairments are blindness and albinism. Blindness is a disability that is not new to society. The Bible records several examples of blindness and how Jesus had mercy on them and were healed. Listed are a few examples of His compassion. Matthew 20:30, 34 (NIV), “Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they hear that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Lk. 6:30, *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 2002).

Immediately they received their sight and followed him.” A blind man named Bartimaeus. Mark 10:46, 51-52 (NIV), “...a blind man, Bartimaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging. “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” “Go,” said Jesus, “Your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.” Matthew 21:14 “The blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.”³³

Even though Jesus is the ultimate healer of all things, in today’s society, there are medications, technology and education that can aide in the relief of these challenging disabilities associated with visual impairments. For Christians, the greatest assistance along with the modern advances is faith.

The description of visual impairments is “the consequence of a functional loss of vision, rather than the eye disorder itself.”³⁴ Blindness is a term that consists of four categories including partially sighted, low vision, legally blind and totally blind. According to the NICHCY³⁵ organization, each of the terms are defined as “Partially sighted: indicated some type of visual problem has resulted in a need for special education; Low vision: generally refers to severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or

³³ Mt. 21:14, *The Holy Bible: Holman Edition-English Version* (Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman and Company, 1906).

³⁴ “Visual Impairments” available from www.napcse.org/exceptionalchildren/visualimpairments.php?id; Internet; accessed February 2007.

³⁵ NICHCY: The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities.

contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting, the size of print, and, sometimes braille; Legally blind: indicated that a person has a less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision; Totally blind: students who learn braille or other non-visual media.”³⁶

The disability of blindness can occur through an accident, disease, or birth defects. Blindness is difficult for those in this situation. However, it is most challenging for those who have seen and then lost their sight to a disease or an accident. The eye disorders that may contribute to visual impairments are: “retinal degeneration, albinism, cataracts, glaucoma, muscular problems that result in visual disturbances, corneal disorders, diabetic retinopathy, congenital disorders and infection.”³⁷ Many of these visual impairments are possible in children, adolescents and adults. However, “over two-thirds of those with visual impairments are over the age of sixty-five... and more boys than girls are visually impaired.”³⁸

Albinism is a form of a visual impairment. It is an inherited disability that does not make enough levels of pigment and effects the person’s hair, eyes and skin. “The results are impairments in visual acuity, nystagmus, phobophobia, problems with hearing and mild problems with blood clotting.”³⁹ In general, there are two types of albinism;

³⁶ National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities “Visual Impairments” available from www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs13txt.htm; Internet, accessed February 2007.

³⁷ “Visual Impairments.”

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 135.

oculocutaneous albinism—that effects the hair, eyes and skin and ocular albinism—that effects mainly the eyes with a small light discoloration of the hair and skin. People who suffer from albinism have problems with vision. “Many are legally blind, but most use their vision for reading and do not use braille. Some have vision good enough to drive a car.”⁴⁰ The life span of a person with this disability is normal. However, people with this condition often feel isolated because of the misunderstood representation and lack of education toward this disability and its characteristics.

Deaf and Hearing Impaired

Hearing imperfections can be very challenging, not only for the person dealing with the disability, but also those who communicate with them. Like visually impaired people, these hearing disabilities are more difficult for those who have lost their hearing due to a disease or accident as supposed to those who were born with this limitation.

A hearing impairment can be classified from mild to profound. The two main categories of impairments are hearing impaired and deafness. People who are hard of hearing “may hear only specific frequency sounds with a certain volume range. They may rely heavily upon hearing aids and lip reading. Some students who are hard of hearing may never learn, or only occasionally use, sign language. Students who are hard of hearing may have speech impairments due to their inability to hear their own voices

⁴⁰ National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation (NOAH), “Information About Albinism” available from www.albinism.org/publications/whatisalbinism.html; Internet; accessed Feb. 2007.

clearly.”⁴¹ These people are highly functional, requiring only minimal technology, such as a hearing aid. However, understanding and compassion should be exercised because of their possible speech imperfections that comes from this mild hearing loss. It may be difficult to understand their speech communication with others. Jesus himself was aware of this disability and shared compassion with them. Mark 9:25 (NIV), “When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

For a person who is deaf, language communication is the most challenging. They are unable to use hearing to execute speech. This hearing disability falls into the most profound classification of hearing impairments. People who suffer from deafness use sign language both to interpret and communicate with others in the world. They also communicate by lip reading or writing their thoughts and expressions on paper or the use of a computer. Children and adolescents are sometimes placed into special schools for the deaf to assist them in understanding and communication so that they will be able to function more easily in society. This does not completely relieve them of their obstacles, but assists them in coping with this disability.⁴²

There are also people with both the disability of being blind and deaf. These people share in both the communication challenges of each classification of their disability. However, this is more challenging because they are suffering from two senses that humans rely upon heavily. Sight and hearing deficits are major obstacles to overcome,

⁴¹ University of Washington, “Deaf and Hard of Hearing” available from www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Disability/Hearing; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁴² Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 121-125.

but not impossible. Children and adolescents may also be enrolled in schools for the deaf and blind.

Developmental Disabilities

Autism is a developmental disability that appears in the beginning three years of life. It is “a result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain, impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Both children and adults with autism typically show difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions and leisure or play activities.”⁴³ It is not limited to a particular race, gender or ethnic background. The communication of people with autism can be challenging. They are affected in seven characteristics including: “communication deficits—people are unable to speak or limited to the use of language and use may repetitive phrases; relational deficits—they are not able to relate to people, events or objects and avoids eye contact; ritualistic activities—focus on one particular object such as a book or a ball can keep their attention for hours; ridged adherence to routine—this includes any change in scheduling; atypical reactions to the sensory data—loud noises, bright lights, textures of food or clothing will receives attention; repetitive movements and behaviors—the person will flap their hands, flip fingers in front of their eyes or other

⁴³ Autism society, “Autism Society of America” available from www.autism-society.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_whatishome; Internet; accessed February 2007.

similar movements; lack of creativity—a person with autism is not creative, imaginative or capable of initiating games.”⁴⁴

Other diagnoses associated with autism are Asperger’s syndrome and Rett syndrome. These two developmental disabilities share common characteristics of autism. Asperger’s syndrome affects the person’s behaviors, social abilities through development. The characteristics associated with this syndrome are: “difficulty interacting with the same age people, having eccentric behaviors, being alone, clumsy and otherwise uncoordinated, preoccupied with an activity, frozen stare, good at music, limited interests, few facial expressions, lack of or few gestures, in their own world or uses pedantic language.”⁴⁵ The symptoms can range from mild to severe.

Another association with autism is a neurological disease called Rett syndrome. Once believed to only affect boys, the syndrome is now found in girls. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes, the symptoms are described as the “loss of muscle tone is usually the first symptom. Other early symptoms may include problems crawling or walking and diminished eye contact. As the syndrome progresses, a child will lose purposeful use of her hands and the ability to speak. Compulsive hand movements such as writing and washing follow the loss of functional use of the hands. The inability to perform motor function is perhaps the most severely disabling feature of rett syndrome, interfering with every body movement, including eye gaze and speech.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 135.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴⁶ The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), “What is Rett Syndrome?” available from www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/rett/rett/htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

There is no cure for this syndrome. However there are techniques and medications that can assist in the ease of the symptoms. They include medication for breathing and seizure problems, occupational therapy for mobility and a support interjection of social interaction skills. The long term effects of this syndrome are not certain because of the rarity of this neurological disorder.

Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities can be difficult for individuals to get around in the church and also can be embarrassing or humiliating when accommodations are not made to provide the best possible situation for these persons. Just like a mental disability, a physical disability can also limit these individuals from being active within the life of the church. Understanding these disabilities will help the church to become better aware of the effects of their disability and help to give compassion to their needs. The causes of these physical limitations are derived from disease, accidents and/or genetic situations. People who suffer with physical disabilities are limited in a number of ways. They are often isolated, rejected and misunderstood because of their lack of mobility.

Some physical disabilities that the church may encounter with people having special needs are cerebral palsy, spina bifida, brittle bone disease, dwarfism, and muscular dystrophy. Other physical limitations may include neuromuscular, cardiovascular, orthopedic or pulmonary disorders. These types of disabilities may not be visible on the outside. However, the symptoms and characteristics are not describable by the appearance of wheelchairs, canes, or other physical obstacles. Their suffering is more of

an inward limitation that penetrates to physical disabilities. Whether their sufferings are inward or outward, the church should exercise patience and compassion.

Cerebral palsy is described as “a number of neurological disorders that appear in infancy or early childhood and permanently affect body movement and muscle coordination but doesn’t worsen over time. Even though cerebral palsy affects muscle movement, it isn’t caused by problems in the muscle or nerves. It is caused by abnormalities in parts of the brain that control muscle movements.”⁴⁷ This disability can also occur through brain damage, infections or an accident. The treatment for cerebral palsy can include physical and occupational therapy, medication, surgery, braces, wheelchairs and computer communications that assist the person with typing. However, there is no cure for this disease, just treatments to alleviate pain and discomfort. Most people with this disability as children live very productive lives as adults.

Spina bifida or myelomeningocele is a condition that affects the spinal cord.⁴⁸ The disability comes from improper formation of the spinal cord. “. . . the bones of the spine and the skin which surrounds the spinal cord do not form either. This defect is evident at birth, but is often diagnosed by ultrasound during pregnancy.”⁴⁹ The spinal cord controls very important functions of the body including the bladder, bowel and the legs for movement, Spina Bifida makes it difficult for the person to control these functions.

⁴⁷ The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), “What is Cerebral Palsy?” available from www.ninds.nih.gov/health_and_medical/disorders/cerebral_palsy.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁴⁸ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 110.

⁴⁹ University of Wisconsin Department of Neurological Surgery, “What is Spina Bifida (Myelomeningocele)?” available from www.neurosurg.wisc.edu/spinabif.htm; Internet; accessed from February 2007.

Brittle bone disease or osteogenesis imperfecta “is a genetic disorder that results in abnormal, fragile bones. It is caused when the body makes either too little or poor quality type one collagen.”⁵⁰ This disability affect both male and female. It is most apparent in children. During the adolescent years the effect tends to decrease and during the person’s adult life, the effects are very limited and possibly diminish altogether. However, there are four different types of brittle bones disease with type three has a expectancy for life is shortened. The most common effects of this disability are broken and fractured bones. “The joints may be lax, the whites of the eyes may be blue or gray, the teeth may be discolored and fragile and there may be an increased liability to bruising. Deafness may occur. Hernias are more common than in people without osteogenesis imperfecta. Excessive sweating or intolerance of heat are common complaints.”⁵¹ Planning for social physical activities should be considered, especially sports related, in or outdoor games and general physical playing. It is also important that others are aware of the ramifications of this disease so that children and adults alike can be prepared and educated toward the caution and physical concern for these special people.

Muscular dystrophy is a genetic disease that affects the controlling muscles involved with the skeletal system. “People with muscular dystrophy have incorrect or missing information in their genes, which prevents them from making the proteins they need for

⁵⁰ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 115.

⁵¹ University of Dundee: Tayside University Hospital, “What is Osteogenesis Imperfecta?” available from [www.dundee.ac.uk/medther/tayendoweb/images/brittle bone disease.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/medther/tayendoweb/images/brittle%20bone%20disease.htm); Internet; accessed February 2007.

healthy muscles.”⁵² It is a progressive muscle disorder that begins in the feet. “It occurs when the fat cells and connective tissue replace the good muscle tissue.”⁵³ Most people who suffer with this disorder are confined to a wheelchair. It is also possible that muscles can deteriorate in correlation with the diaphragm and the heart that can cause them to encounter respiratory problems. The treatment for muscular dystrophy involves physical therapy, braces, medication-especially for any respiratory problems and surgery.

Dwarfism is another physical disability. It is defined by the Little People of America as “dwarfism is an adult height of four feet, ten inches or shorter. It is the result of the disproportionate growth of the skeleton.”⁵⁴ The American With Disabilities Act describes “dwarfism” as a disability.⁵⁵ In most cases, it is a disability that is caused by genetics. However, some children who are born with this disability have normal height structured parents. People who have this disability are often supported through medical devices such as braces, crutches or wheelchairs. Other treatment possibilities include surgery and physical therapy.⁵⁶ These people can function well in society. However, there are special accommodations that need to be made to ensure their comfort with regard to their height.

⁵² The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), “What is Muscular Dystrophy?” available from www.ninds.nih.gov/health_and_medical/disorders/md.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁵³ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 113.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 114.

⁵⁵ The United States Congress, “The American With Disabilities Act of 1990.”

⁵⁶ Little People’s Research Fund, Inc., “Dwarfism” available from www.lprf.org/dwarfism.html; Internet; accessed February 2007.

Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities are an inward challenge that can expand to the everyday challenges of life. The author of this thesis can relate and sympathize with the many difficulties and struggles pertaining to this disability. Today's society views learning disabilities as a weakness. Most people with learning disabilities can hide behind the hurt of the reactions from others who do not understand these limitations. In the author's struggle, there have been many obstacles to overcome in accomplishing the success of education and the workplace.

Learning disabilities are “disorders that affect people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or what to link the information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways—as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, coordination, self-control or attention.”⁵⁷ The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, which protects the education of these people, defines learning disabilities as “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural

⁵⁷ Medicine Net: Psychology Today, “Mental Health: Learning Disability” available from www.medicinenet.com/learning_disability/article.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

or economic disadvantage.”⁵⁸ These terms and definitions are complexed and cover a variety of learning disabilities. However, the needs of the people are sensitive and require understanding and patience. The church should be prepared to accommodate these people just as they would make provisions for others with different disabilities.

A common and well known learning disability is dyslexia. Dyslexia is inherited and is a “neurological-based, often familial, disorder which interferes with the acquisition and processing of language. Varying in degrees of severity, it is manifested by difficulties in receptive and expressive language, including phonological processing, in reading and expressive language, including phonological processing, writing, spelling, handwriting and sometimes in arithmetic.”⁵⁹ Commonly people with dyslexia read, write and do mathematical calculations backwards. Other difficulties with this disability include pronouncing words, problems with reading comprehension and pronouncing different or similar sounding words. It is possible that people who struggle with this disability are affected from childhood throughout their adult life. Caution should be exercised when preparing and including people with this disability. They are sensitive to their inabilities and require respect and compassion.

Dysgraphia is a writing disability that affects the way the person writes and communicates with written words. There are different types of this disability. “Some people with dysgraphia have handwriting that is often illegible and shows irregular and inconsistent letter formations. Others write legibly, but very slow and/or very small.

⁵⁸ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 14.

⁵⁹ Bright Solutions for Dyslexia, LLC, “What is Dyslexia?” available from www.dys-add.com/define.hym1; Internet; accessed February 2007.

When these individuals revert to printing, as they often do, their writing is often a random mixture of upper and lowercase letters. In all cases of dysgraphia, writing requires inordinate amounts of energy, stamina and time.”⁶⁰ It is difficult for these people to express their words and feelings in writing. For children in a church Sunday school setting, they may find it challenging to complete any written work or storytelling experience. Once again patience and understanding should be exercised.

“Dyscalculia is a disability that involves difficulty and problems with math. These people may also lack the skills pertaining to music, lack athletic coordination, retrieval of memory and mistake and recollect names.”⁶¹ People with dyscalculia have normal intelligence levels and often will excel in other academic areas. The treatment for this disability is to identify their weakness and strengths in these areas. “Repeated reinforced and specific practice of straight forward ideas can make understanding easier.”⁶² Practicing mathematical problems and incorporating new skills will ease their challenges and obstacles.

Attention-deficit disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder is not classified as a learning disability. However, there are similar characteristics between this disorder and learning disabilities that link them as very similar. It is a “neurobiologically-based

⁶⁰ Wrights Law, “What is Dysgraphia?” available from www.wrightslaw.com/info/read.dysgraphia.facts.htm; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁶¹ Dyscalculia Support Services of Shiawassee County, “Dyscalculia Symptoms” available from www.dyscalculia.org; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁶² Dr. Bjorn Adler, “Dyscalculia Symptoms” available from www.orgsites.com/wa/ourkidswithdyslexia/pgg5.php3; Internet; accessed February 2007.

developmental disability,”⁶³ The symptoms of this disorder include short attention spans, easy distractions, and poor organizational skills. Children with ADD or ADHD may have difficulties with classroom procedures. They may have trouble sitting still, following directions, distracting others and may be immature for their age. To ease the symptoms of this disorder, medication, personal one on one attention and structured setting are effective.

Health and Chronic Disorders

This next section will briefly discuss health and chronic disorders. Even though they may not necessarily be labeled as a disability, these disorders can cause limitations for the special people with their involvement in the church and their every day activities in life.

Some of these disorders include: asthma, AIDS, diabetes, allergies, types of cancer, seizure disorders, and juvenile or adult arthritis. People who suffer with chronic health disorders are constantly uncomfortable and struggle to participate in a normal life. Asthma is a respiratory disorder that causes “wheezing attacks by a specific allergy-respiratory, infection, exercise, cold air, smoke stress, anxiety, and food or drug allergies.”⁶⁴ People with this disorder are extremely sensitive to scents, including aerosols, so caution should be used when working closely with these special people. Limiting perfumes, sprays, regulating activities for children can assist in the success of control of their medical condition.

⁶³ The Optometrists Network, “What is Attention-Deficit Disorder?” available from www.add-adhd.org/ADHD_attention-deficit.html; Internet; accessed February 2007.

⁶⁴ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 89.

AIDS(Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is a virus caused by HIV(Human immunodeficiency virus). This disorder is a condition that requires special attention. This virus can be transmitted through blood contact and other body secretions. Caution should be exercised when interacting with people with AIDS. Other people are not in risk of contacting this disease unless they contact these fluids. Education of this disorder, with permission from the parents if it involves a child, is recommended. Other physical precautions include gloves, sterilization of toys and reminding others not to touch other fluids-especially blood.⁶⁵

Cancer is a chronic disorder that affects people in all age categories. It can affect children and adults alike. People with cancer are mostly treated with strong medications such as chemotherapy and radiation. These medications are administered in a hospital environment and may cause the patient to be very fatigued, sick and weak. Their symptoms can last for several days, weeks or months.⁶⁶ Some of types of cancer specifically affects the bones, such as osteosarcoma. Through the negative affects of cancer, a prosthesis may replace a diseased part of the body. It is especially important to be respectful and considerate to those with cancer. The person and the people who take care of them during this trial in their lives are undergoing an extreme sense of isolation and hardship. Consideration should be given to both parties. A caring attitude and a considerate compassionate ear may help to ease their ongoing struggle.

⁶⁵ Wikipedia, "AIDS" available from en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AIDS/; Internet; accessed April 2007.

⁶⁶ Mayo Clinic, "Cancer Survivors: Late effects of cancer treatment" Available from www.mayoclinic.com/health/cancer-survivor; Internet; accessed April 2007.

Diabetes is a “disease of the pancreas that affects the body’s ability to produce and utilize insulin. Insulin is the hormone used to convert food into energy.”⁶⁷ People with this disease are often aware of their symptoms. However, smaller children may neglect to express their need for attention and a may lapse into the negative symptoms of this disease. The negative affects of diabetes include symptoms of confusion, irritability, headache, hunger, thirst, shaking or weakness. Their symptoms can be appeased by giving them a high sugar drink or candy. After this immediate treatment, a more substantial snack such as milk, cheese or crackers should be given administered. Because of the inability to heal properly, immediate attention should be given to scraps or cuts in order to avoid infection.⁶⁸

Seizure disorders may also affect children and adults alike and are acquired by a brain injury or inherited through the parent. It is “caused by unusual electrical activity in the brain. When brain cells send too many impulses to the muscle at the same time, a seizure occurs. The muscles tighten and relax rapidly or stop moving.”⁶⁹ Unfortunately, no one can predict when a seizure will occur. The best way to treat and assist the person having an attack is to be prepared for an event. Educating people in the classroom and the church is very important. The symptoms that the person may experience is a “...loss of consciousness, shaking or a person may stop normal activity and get a glaze look and be

⁶⁷ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 97.

⁶⁸ American Diabetes Association, “All About Diabetes” available from www.diabetes.org; Internet; accessed April 2007.

⁶⁹ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 99.

unaware of their surroundings.”⁷⁰ The treatment for this disease is mostly medication. It is very effective if taken properly. Education and care for a person having a seizure is important for the success of the outcome of their needs.

The previous descriptions and examples illustrate behavioral, physical, mental educational forms of disabilities. It is important as a church to be aware of the various disabilities and disorders that people deal with. The author can relate to the misrepresentation of the disability and experienced situations throughout the church life that was extremely difficult and unwelcoming. Through this research, it is the intent of the author that the church will become more educated and informed of disabilities and disorders so that everyone, including those with special needs, will feel welcomed.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHURCH ACCOMMODATIONS AND OBSTACLES

Accommodations for disabled people can be challenging for both the disabled and the church. As a source of Christian ministry, the church is responsible for the care and consideration of others. Micah 6 shows us what God expects from his followers. “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”¹ God expects His followers to care for, serve and give justice to all.

It is the “moral” obligation of the churches to bring God’s message to those with special needs. Through improvements, the disabled people will feel more at home, have enhanced self esteem and become more involved with the church’s activities. The church leaders are called to be protectors of all the flock. Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”² Through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, church leaders can guide their congregation to accept and assist all, especially those with special needs.

During the Middle ages, accommodations were made to assist those with this very

¹ Mic. 6:8, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1990).

² Ac. 20:28, *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 2002).

contagious disease. Architectural history shows that an accommodation was made by the churches, between ancient and modern times. This accommodation was known as a “leper’s squint.” A leper’s squint was a small opening in the wall of the church. A well documented example is at Lunna Kirk in Scotland.

Lunna Kirk from the South East which houses a Leper’s squint.



Photograph courtesy of Ken Lussey: Lunna Kirk

“Lunna Kirk is a lovely church which probably dated back at in the part of the 1100s and is by far the oldest building in use for Christian worship in Shetland. The church has an unusual structure, with both of the side walls supported by a series of massive buttresses. An unusual feature on the east side of the church, which is likely to date back to a major rebuild of the structure in the 1300s or 1400s, is a leper’s squint, designed to allow lepers to hear the service and see the altar without physically coming into contact with the congregation.”³

This feature was necessary because of their illness, lepers were not allowed into the building. Because of medical advances, this is no longer one of the features which we

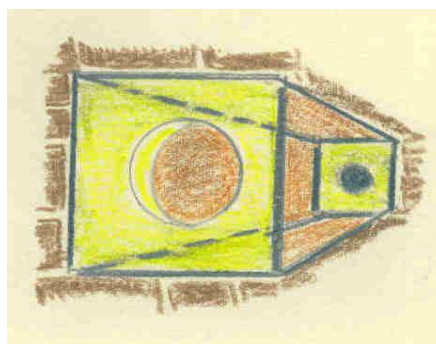
³ “Discovering Lunna Kirk” available from www.undiscoverscotland.co.uk/shetland/lunnakirk/; Internet; accessed March 2006.

must consider in this century. It illustrates that making accommodations for the disabled is not a new idea.

At the St. Luke's Church in the United Kingdom and the Thurne in Norfolk in the United Kingdom, there are past evidences dating back to around the thirteenth century that reflect the hospitality of the church.⁴ These were also known as “anchorite cells.” There were internal squints that offered a view of the altar and an external separate opening would also distribute food to the lepers.⁵

A picture below illustrates an actual picture of the Leper's squint at St. Luke's Church along with a drawn picture that shows how it appears through the wall so that the lepers were able to see inside the church.

Anchorite Cell at St Luke's Church
Leper's squint and Leper's squint design



Photograph courtesy of Paul Hayward: Duston Directory

This chapter will also look into the church obstacles and offer possible solutions for the church, the congregation members and the disabled parties involved including

⁴ “Anchorite Cell at St. Luke's Church” available from www.duston.org.uk/anchorit.htm; Internet; accessed March 2006.

⁵ Ibid.

financial, structural, personal disputes and education.

This chapter includes a survey, compiled by the author giving insight into areas of the churches abilities and struggles for the disabled person. A copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix. The author sent these mailings to churches in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Michigan, Ohio, Texas, California and Kentucky. It expresses barriers the church is attempting to overcome and personal reflections and suggestions from their church situation. There were one-hundred and sixty four surveys sent to churches. The general information for this survey included fifteen denominations, forty communities, sizes of congregations ranging from less than one-hundred fifty and over one-thousand five hundred members and single floor structures. Replies were received from one-hundred three churches. The details of the denominations and sizes are as follows:

Breakdown by Denomination

Assemblies of God	3
Baptist	13
Bible Churches	7
Brethren in Christ	3
Church of the Brethren	4
Church of God	2
Episcopal	7
Grace Brethren	2
Greek Orthodox	1
Lutheran	17
Nazarene	1
Presbyterian	11
United Church of Christ	13
United Methodist	15
Other	<u>4</u>
Total	103

Breakdown by Size

Less than 150	27
151-250	16
251-300	13

351-450	11
451-650	12
651-950	6
951-1,100	4
1,101-1,300	3
1,301-1,500	5
1,500 Plus	4
Did not report size	<u>2</u>
Total	103 ⁶

To begin the process of understanding what adjustments must be made, it is essential to discuss what the law requires for accommodating people with special needs.

According to the American With Disabilities Act of 1990, under Title III, there are businesses that are exempt from accommodation law. “Title III; private clubs, religious organizations, residential housing, state and local governments (subject of Title II of the ADA) and the Federal Government.”⁷ However, the church is under restriction of this law if they house a leased child care facility. “Churches and other religious entitles are exempt from having to comply with the ADA. If a child care program is operated by the church itself, the church is not required to comply with the ADA. However, if the church leases space to a privately operated day care center, the private child care would have to comply with ADA provisions.”⁸

If the church employs more than fifteen people, there are certain requirements outlines in Title I of the American With Disabilities Act that they must follow. Title I of

⁶ See Appendix A.

⁷ The United States Congress: U.S. Department of Labor, “The American With Disabilities Act of 1990” available from www.dol.gov/esa; Internet; accessed February 2006.

⁸ The Pacer Center, “ADA Q & A: Child Care Providers” available from www.pacer.org; Internet; accessed March 2007.

the act describes

the provisions as stipulations and serves as a guide for employment. The National Organization on Disability offers an overview of Title I.

-During the employment process, the employer can not discriminate in any aspect of the employment process, including the hiring or promotion.

- The employer may ask about the potential employee's ability to perform, but questioning of the person's disability or medical examination is not allowed.

- If requested, the employer must provide the employee with reasonable accommodations.

- The church may give preference to a person with a particular religion.

- Ministers, Priests and Rabbis, etc., are not covered by Title I.⁹

The survey of accommodations made by churches for the benefit of handicapped members and visitors included current or future plans of accommodations. The accommodations included the following:

- Reserved parking spaces
- Enlarged doorways
- Exterior/interior ramps
- Elevator
- Chairlifts/wheelchair lifts
- Enlarged stall/grab rails/lowered sinks in bathrooms
- Enhanced lighting
- Railings
- Enhanced amplification systems/hearing devices/interpreter of sign language
- Provisions for wheel-chair bound persons
- Large print hymnals/service leaflets/bulletins
- A responsible party for assisting those in need
- Volunteers for transportation needs
- Other accommodations for assisting those with special needs

⁹ National Organization on Disability, *Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community* (Washington, DC:1996), 3.

Church planning stages Additional accommodations for the future

These do not address all of the accommodation obstacles faced by the church. As noted previously, churches face problems and adversities in different ways. Some churches may have all listed, others may only struggle with one. It is also important to note that the four suggested obstacles of financial, structural, education, personal disputes, given by the author is not a complete list of problems with accommodating special needs people. The four are listed as what the author deems as priority from experience and what is expressed through opinions of the survey contributors.

The first obstacle that must be overcome in preparing to accommodate disabled persons is personal discrimination. Often, people are uncertain of the unfamiliar or what they do not fully comprehend. Personal discrimination can be evolved around many different opinions, rumors, gossip, fear and personal insecurity. To resolve the issues of personal barriers, there are suggestions from the author that can aid in the solution.

Discovering what the personal discrimination is will begin the process of building a positive relationship for everyone involved. This can be done by selecting a few respected member of the church board, or a committee that has been prepared for changes in the church, along with the pastor, to listen to the issues and concerns of the troubled party. This person should be approached with dignity and respect. One of the most important focuses of this meeting is to listen with concern to what the person or persons are sharing with the committee.¹⁰

The second is to discover their reasons and approach their understanding with

¹⁰ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People With Disabilities* (Washington, DC:1996), 11-12.

listening ears, love and concern for their reasons. At this point in their personal discrimination, it may be appropriate to discover whether or not the persons have prayed and sought out the guidance and assurance about their obstacle by the Holy Spirit. A positive interjection can be given by a group prayer for the Holy Spirit to come and minister to all parties involved.¹¹ Scriptures pertaining to unity in the church and each other. Some of those helpful Scripture verses include:

Mark 10:45 “In the same way, the Son of Man did not come to be served. He came to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many people.”¹²

Romans 12:2 (NIV) “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:13 (KJV) “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality”

Acts 10:34-35 (NIV) “Then Peter began to speak; “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and so what is right.”

John 13:34 (NCV) “I give you another command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you.”

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”¹³

The church and all members are important to the Kingdom of God. Each and every member is responsible for the other. I Corinthians 12:24-26 (NIV) reflects on the unity of each member. “But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater

¹¹ Gene Newman and Joni Eareckson Tada, *All God’s Children: Ministry to the Disabled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 107.

¹² Mk. 10:45, *The Holy Bible: New Century Version* (Fort Worth, TX.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

¹³ Ro. 8:28, *The Holy Bible: Holman Edition-English Version* (Philadelphia, PA: A. J. Holman and Company, 1906).

honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that it's parts should have equal concerns for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; of one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." The true blessings of God will occur when all the members of the body of Christ work, love and support each person together.

The third purpose is to explain the advantages the church changes for all people. They need to come to the understanding that many people will benefit from these changes, not only the disabled people. These advantages can be shared in the Sunday worship services, funerals, weddings, baptisms and special community services. It is through these types of services that someone outside the life of the congregation will also benefit from the welcoming advantages of the church, keeping the community informed of the churches facilities so that the disabled are welcomed.¹⁴ Explaining the advantages and benefits should assist to ease their personal discrimination of uneasiness and fear.

Educating the members of the church is another positive direction towards a welcoming attitude for all people. Often, people are unaware of, or may not understand the needs of special people. Informing people is one of the most direct ways of accomplishing the needs of disabled and bringing awareness to the general church community.

To share in the education of the church members, Sunday school teachers and volunteers, a seminar about disabilities in general or perhaps the particular disabled person's struggles and limitations would be helpful. However, when using the specific person or person's disability, seek their permission in regards to what they would like to

¹⁴ Newman, *All God's Children*, 116.

discuss. They may even want to participate in the proactive advantages of their struggles. This should be a well sought out and planned event.¹⁵

A program committee may be formed to insure the success of the seminar or a one-day conference. The committee's responsibilities are to choose a date and time, recruit speakers, plan for breaks and lunch, compile a brochure, mail invitations and brochures and other details pertaining to the day's events. The day's activities should consist of registration, welcoming, prayer and music, lectures, breaks, lunch, workshops and a worship closing. This is only a suggestion by the author and each church should consider what is appropriate for structuring the day's exciting events.¹⁶

Another event that would be useful in educating people with disabilities is to host or use as a follow up to the conference, as a Sunday worship event. This event can focus on many Biblical references towards disabilities. The service can include disabled people assisting in the service, having a guest speaker, singing songs of God's love/unity and using the collected offering to benefit the current planning of changes in the church. Awareness for the church members is one of the most important tools for assuring the success of the planning and executing of changes within the church to assist the people with special needs.

An obstacle within the church that may hinder the involvement of people with special needs are barriers of the church's structure. The people with physical disabilities face challenges and struggles both in and outside the church. The ADA gives security to most

¹⁵ Jim Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students with Disabilities* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002), 177-180.

¹⁶ National Organization on Disability, *"From Barriers to Bridges: A Community Action Guide for Congregations and People With Disabilities,"* (Washington , DC: 2001), 13.

facilities that they come in contact with every day, however the church, as mentioned previously, do not fall under the requirements of the act.

Even though the church does not have to comply with the general laws of the ADA, they should make every effort to accommodate others. There are Biblical obligations found throughout God's Holy Word that beckons his followers to share in Christ's humility for the benefit of others. Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV), "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in the spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest but also to the interest of others."

The physical changes in the church could include any or all of the following:

- Parking lots
- Elevator/chairlift
- Ramps
- Lighting
- Railings
- Bathroom accommodations
- Hallway/doorway accommodations
- Drinking Fountains
- Spaced pews
- Access to the Altar

Many churches are not able to make physical property changes for various reasons. The designation as a national historic structure precludes the owners permission from making the desired changes. Other churches do not have the space to provide ramps. Churches that are located in the center of a city without place for a private parking lot, do

not have the ability to provide reserved spaces for parishioners.¹⁷ The author has experienced that some small churches, because of their size and budget constraints, simply can not afford to make the costly changes. It is also reflected in the responses of the author's survey.

Some of the churches from the survey reported their difficulties. "Our church was built in 1909 and unfortunately its design makes it impossible to meet the new handicap accessibility building codes. We will keep trying."¹⁸ Often local building codes have restricted improvements.¹⁹ "We are designed as an historic building so some highly desirable accommodations (elevators and additional ramps) are difficult to achieve and nearly impossible to afford."²⁰

In the response to the author's survey, churches have replied to the planning stages considering physical accommodations. Some are given in the following statements. The question in the survey is entitled "If you were in the planning stage for accommodations which you have now completed, what would you change or reconsider?"

The Reverend Kenneth O'Neal from the Glossbrenner United Methodist Church stated that "I would have not put in a chair lift, rather I would have installed an elevator. I find that people are embarrassed using an open chair lift."²¹ Many people would

¹⁷ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship*, 2.

¹⁸ The Rev. Mark E. Brophy, *Alsace Lutheran Church*, Reading PA.

¹⁹ Pastor Jack Tomkinson, *Faith Baptist Church*, Phoenixville, PA.

²⁰ The Rev. Dr. Nathan D. Baxter, *St. James Episcopal Church*, Lancaster, PA.

²¹ The Rev. Kenneth O'Neal, *Glossbrenner United Methodist Church*, Mount Joy, PA.

believe that the installation of a chair lift would be an excellent idea when considering the space requirements and cost of installation of an elevator. “We would begin by putting an elevator large enough to carry a coffin between the basement and second floor in addition to a staircase.”²² The elevator will make is more accessible for those in the church and community for special events.

Other responses from the survey include:

“Automatic door openers”²³

“Moved communion rail to the chancel floor for easier access for all and a carport for more convenient drop off for worship”²⁴

“We have moved our choir location to accommodate someone in a wheelchair who wants to sing.”²⁵

“Choir and chancel is being rebuilt for accessibility”²⁶

“We are looking at replacing our heavy doors with lighter ones”²⁷

“Perhaps more wheelchair seating in the sanctuary”²⁸

“Increased or enhanced lighting”²⁹

“Power-assisted interior doors and braille lettering throughout the building”³⁰

²² Pastor Roland E. Langford, Jr., *St. John’s Lutheran Church*, Lancaster, PA.

²³ The Rev. Richard E. Geib, *St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Columbia, PA.

²⁴ The Rev. Craig A. Ross, *St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Lancaster, PA.

²⁵ Pastor Roland E. Langford, Jr., *St. John’s Lutheran Church*, Lancaster, PA.

²⁶ The Rev. Jayne E. Hubbard, *Grace United Church of Christ*, Lancaster, PA.

²⁷ The Rev. Dr. J. Max Crewell, *Pennside Presbyterian Church*, Reading, PA.

²⁸ Pastor Chandler Cutting, *Mt. Calvary Church of Elizabethtown*, Elizabethtown, PA.

²⁹ The Rev. David C. Powers, *Columbia Presbyterian Church*, Columbia, PA.

“Need for a unisex bathroom so family can help a loved one.”³¹

The author has provided below universal pictures of the handicapped signs that are enforced and regulated by the ADA. These are available through many special needs retail stores. There are may be different signs for parking according to the regulations of each state. The eternal signs come with or without the braille option.



There are stipulations toward what qualifications each of the structural changes may require. If the church wishes to follow the ADA for assessable structural changes, a complete list of requirements can be found in the American With Disabilities Act and

³⁰ The Rev. William P. Worley, *First Reformed United Church of Christ*, Lancaster, PA.

³¹ The Rev. David E. Klepper, *Trinity Lutheran Church*, New Holland, PA.

also on their website “www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/reg3a.html” or simply follow the links from the official website.

It may also be beneficial to seek the guidance of an architect or a contractor for advice on the church’s structural advantages and disadvantages. These professionals are mostly likely familiar with the requirements for the ADA. Another direction that a church can seek is guidance from the church’s local government.

Financial restrictions are another obstacle that churches face when they attempt to enhance structurally the church for the benefit of the disabled. Major structural changes to the church can be extremely costly. Additions, remodeled bathrooms, widened hallways, ramps, elevators, parking and chairlifts are large projects that require much thought, time, dedication and money. The two most center concerns for structural changes are a lack of finances or the prejudice for the use of it. Many churches have large buildings, but may have small congregations with restricted financial security. The church leaders should assess the financial stability and aid in fundraising activities for the churches projects.³²

The second problem is not the lack of finances, but the discrimination of why to use the funds for accommodating others. The Author has experienced how people can be harsh or cruel when they are asked to distribute money. Sometimes people think that the money of the church belongs to them and not to God as he entrusts it to them for the benefit His Kingdom.

There are some solutions to the problems of financial difficulties that the church may take into consideration. If the church has the funds, overcome the prejudices with

³² Newman, *All God’s Children*, 116.

positive confrontations and reinforcement of the Scriptures. Another possibility is to raise the money from donations and church supported fundraisers.³³ There may also be local government grants that may assist in the structural renovation for accommodating people with special needs. Once again, check with the local or state government for any offers, guidelines or assistance.

Listed on the following pages are churches that were successful at achieving accommodations for disabled people. It includes bathrooms, ramps, elevators and waterfountains.

³³ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship*, 12.

The structure listed below is an example of a church that built on to their existing building for the accommodation of the disabled. The “Education Wing” was added to accommodate the growing population of the Sunday School Department. The center structure is the elevator that assists the disabled person, along with a volunteer to help them into the Sanctuary.



Trinity United Church of Christ
Photograph by the author

Below is an external picture of the elevator. It has a protective gate that closes to ensure the safety of the passengers. There is also a telephone incase of an emergency. This elevator does not accommodate more than two people at a time and is always operated with a trained volunteer. It does not give the disabled an opportunity for participating in the upper class room because of steps that lead to the class. However, there are classrooms on the lower level. This does allow access to the sanctuary for Sunday worship and other events that the church may offer.



Trinity United Church of Christ
Photograph by the author

An alternative to the elevator, for those who are able to get out of a wheelchair, is a chair lift. This lift requires assistance to the person getting on and off the chair and the work of operating the chair itself. The stairs are still functional for those without special needs. Therefore, no major renovation for this project is required.



First United Methodist Church
Photograph by the author

This church has also accommodated the special needs person with a family restroom for those who are in need of additional assistance from their care giver. It is large enough to have capacity for a wheelchair along with an assistant. As seen below, there are grab railings for support for assist those with a need, a lowered sink and an air blow dryer for to make it easier for drying hands.



Trinity United Church of Christ
Photograph by the author

This water fountain was installed for accommodation all members and visitors in the church. However, it was put into use at a level that is acceptable to the American with Disabilities Act. It is located in the hallway between many avenues of the church such as Sunday school rooms, social hall and the bathrooms. It is easily assessable for everyone.



Trinity United Church of Christ
Photograph by the author

This is an example of an external ramp that gives access for people with special needs. The rails serves as two purposes. It provides security for those in walkers and wheelchair and gives strength for those who are in need of balance or strength. It is also a covered ramp which makes it more accommodating because it may take a longer time for someone to get to the door of the church. This is especially important in inclement weather.



Grace United Church of Christ
Photograph by the author

This newly constructed church is accessible to the disabled. As you will see in the following pictures, on the outside, there are sloped ramps with straight sidewalks and accommodating handicapped accessible parking. There is also a ramp with railings that is accessible by the handicapped parking spaces.



Community Presbyterian Church
Photograph by the author



Community Presbyterian Church
Photograph by the author

The church should be a welcoming place for all people. It should follow the laws of the government, state and local government to ensure that the standards are met.

“Religious organizations and the entities they control are exempt from such sections of the law, they, as institutions of faith, have always been governed by the moral mandates of love and justice. It is under this higher authority that many congregations and other religious entities are creating accessible and welcoming environments for people with disabilities. Beyond the legal mandate of the ADA stands a moral mandate that the house of God should welcome everyone.”³⁴

It is the hope of the author that the church and its members make every effort to accommodate persons with special needs. The church has a wonderful opportunity to minister to these people and their friends and families through a handicapped accessible building.

³⁴ National Organization on Disability, *Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community* (Washington, DC 1996), 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVERYONE WELCOME:

WHAT THE CHURCH CAN DO TO WELCOME THE DISABLED.

This chapter will focus on what the church and congregation can do to welcome the disabled. While it will focus on a variety of issues aimed at assisting this process. It is not limited to every and all options for the church. The author is simply providing the interested reader with options that may apply to their situation and may be expounded upon to meet their particular interests and needs.

To begin this process, it is important to acknowledge the struggles of the disabled. This includes their feelings, disappointments and contentment. They want to feel welcomed and assured. Joni Eareckson Tada was unsure of what the response would be in her church after she became disabled in a car accident.

She reminisces: “Would they stare? Would I know what to say? Would I have to sit next to my family in the pew, half blocking the middle isle? And what if I had to wheel into the rest room-would I fit? What I discovered that Sunday morning, after my family lifted me out of the car and into my wheelchair, changed my entire outlook on church. Someone had hammered together a few pieces of plywood to make a ramp. People smiled and asked me how I was doing at college. Old friends asked me to sit with them and held my Bible and hymnal. The feeling was warm and friendly. I felt welcomed. I belonged.”¹

¹ Gene Newman and Joni Eareckson Tada, *All God's Children: Ministry to the Disabled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 9.

Everyone, disabled or not, wants to be accepted, loved and assured. The church is a place to come for all of these things. It is a place where love and fellowships are enhanced. Psalm 55:13-14 says “But it is you, a person like me, my companion and good friend. We had a good friendship and walked together to God’s temple.”² Showing hospitality will be well received for someone who is unsure of their reception and surroundings. Worldly disappointments are common to people with special needs. The church should be a place where everyone can come together and share in the warm fellowship and worship of God.

The body of Christ is responsible for lifting others up. It is a place where His children come together to be enriched in the worship and fellowship of His love. Romans 12:3-5 gives an example of how the members of the church should react to each other in accordance to God’s purpose. “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function.”³

Every person has a purpose in life. It may seem at times impossible to understand or to find the reasoning behind the plan that God has set for these special people. However, Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 (NIV) explains that a plan is in place for everyone and everything. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven... He has

² Psalm 55:13-14, *The Holy Bible: New Century Version* (Fort Worth, TX: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

³ Romans 12:3-5, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990).

made everything beautiful in its time.” Embracing their needs and struggles will help to ensure the success of their inner strength and faith.

The pastor plays a significant role in the ministry of the church, especially when meeting the demands of the congregation and people with disabilities. It is possible that members of the congregation may not understand or realize the needs of the challenged. Therefore, the minister plays a very important role in the execution of a church’s plan. Paul noted in Acts chapter 6 verses 1-7 (NCV), the administration of the role of the minister. “. . . Their widows were not getting their share of the food and was overlooked . . . So the twelve gathered all the disciples and said ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. . . .’” The priority of the care and leadership of the church is the responsibility of the pastor. Other Christian men were delegated to take on the responsibilities for assisting the needs of the women, while the twelve focused on the words of God. This can pertain to the other delegated members of the church team such as volunteers, committee members, “buddies”, etc., in assisting with the needs of the disabled.⁴

The minister must be able to recognize the needs of the flock are and to deliver an effective plan for the success of all the people involved. “Because of the spiritual dimension to pastoral care, it cannot be restricted to one area of an individual’s life but is concerned with physical, emotional, environmental, social, economic and political factors. So it is not possible to detach one element of a person’s existence and focus on

⁴ Jim Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students with Disabilities* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002), 180.

that to exclusion of everything else.”⁵ This certainly requires a lot of time in prayer asking God to minister to their hearts and minds so that His plan will be fulfilled.

The role of the minister is to prepare the congregation to receive all people. By welcoming people with special needs, a great example is shown of sharing Christ’s love. It also helps the congregation to feel assured if the minister is taking a positive affective role in participating in the concerns of their lives. “If the pastor is not completely committed, and if he isn’t modeling his concern, it is going to be very difficult to get the people to minister to this population . . . if a pastor isn’t committed to obeying the Lord, then the pressure may become overwhelming. The pastor has to care about special populations because it is right to care. Then all of a sudden, you care because you care.”⁶

A dedicated minister will produce a positive outcome for both the disabled person and the entire congregation. Seeking God and asking for guidance from the Holy Spirit, is the most effective tool for the foundation of this important task. The role of the pastor should be to equip the congregation with God’s word, inform the congregation if there is a need for a ministry for disabled persons, pray, wait for God’s will for the ministry of the disability community to be undertaken so that the proper person will be appointed to be the leader from within the congregation.⁷

The minister may also include members of the disabled community to assist in the

⁵ Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris, *Making a World of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disabilities* (Great Britain: Bookmarque, Ltd, 2002.), 84.

⁶ Newman, *All God’s Children*, 31.

⁷ Ibid., 29.

worship services. This can include many elements of the service including reading the Holy Scriptures, prayer, Communion, singing, etc. If this is not done on a regular basis, it can be done on a planned worship service that celebrates the disabled in the church and community.⁸ The theme for the service should involve the disabled as much as possible. The liturgical aspects should have the same theme of welcoming everyone, God's love and mercy, the positive differences in everyone and the struggles of the disabled people in the Bible.⁹

A concern for the disabled person that is mainly incorporated by the minister and all people is Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a time when all God's people come together to worship and rejoice in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As previously noted in the survey, there are structural limitations that may make it difficult for all people to participate. However, churches are taking extra steps to ensure that everyone is able to participate in the sharing of the elements. The following are responses from the survey which shows what some pastors and churches are doing so that the elements can be distributed to everyone.

When we changed to using the Lord's supper, we no longer required people to use the small glasses which had been our custom. Now some of our older folks 'intinct' or dip the wafer's edge into the wine in the chalice held by the communion assistant. Also, we no longer expect people to kneel to receive Holy Communion.¹⁰

"Moved communion rail to the chancel floor for easier access for all."¹¹

⁸ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 76.

⁹ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome To People With Disabilities* (Washington, DC. 2005), 12-13.

¹⁰ Pastor Roland E. Langford, Jr., *St. John's Lutheran Church*, Lancaster, PA.

¹¹ The Rev. Craig A. Ross, *St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Lancaster, PA.

“We provide gluten-free communion wafers for people with wheat allergies.”¹²

“We offer Holy Communion in pews to those who are unable to come forward to chancel and altar.”¹³

Other considerations should be made for people who have trouble holding the communion cup or wafers/bread because of their arthritis, dexterity, blindness, Parkinson disease, amputation, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy or weakness, etc. People with these limitations, if not accompanied by someone, will need assistance. The minister should make an effective plan for such a situation. Suggestions from the author of this thesis paper are as follows:

- 1) Appoint a representative from the communion team to assist the person.
- 2) Provide larger and/or deeper cups.
- 3) Distribute larger sizes of bread.
- 4) Guide a blind person toward the location of their elements.
- 5) Spoons for the weak and straws for those who have issues with holding the communion cup and straws for amputee or people who have difficulties holding cups.

An effective minister will research the special needs of particular disabilities to develop a better understanding of what the disability requires. The special needs of their disability can be researched in a number of ways including books and the internet. If the minister is informed of the disability, it will be easier for a plan to develop so that the information can be shared with the disability team and the congregation.¹⁴

Education is the first step toward opening the lines of communication. As noted previously in other sections, ignorance is one of the most negative elements that affect

¹² Pastor Jennifer B. Clark, *First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg*, Strasburg, PA.

¹³ The Rev. Lyn Reith, *St. Luke's United Church of Christ*, Litiz, Pa.

¹⁴ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship*, 12.

the attitude of the congregation. If people are aware of the special needs, they are more likely to show compassion and be understanding to their disabled members.

Developing a plan is the most effective way to inform and equip people of changes which may need to be made. The first step in this process is to gather a team for working with the disability needs of the church. Each member of this team should be open to suggestions and be willing to learn about new possibilities for the church, always allowing them to be guided by the Holy Spirit. As the team develops, pray that the needs of the special person through the church will be met. A pastor's insight can be particularly important to the team. They can offer words of encouragement, direction and scriptural understanding and references for this task.¹⁵

According to the book, *That All May Worship*, the members of the disability team should have the following:

- various types of disabilities
- a family member with a disability
- responsibility to plan and lead worship
- influence in making policy
- responsibility for managing the building
- skills in carpentry, contracting or architecture
- experience in fund-raising
- responsibility for educational curricula, especially special education skills
- responsibility for community outreach
- skills in writing and communicating¹⁶

The second step of the team should be to determine the immediate special needs and then to develop future plans for accommodating other limitations. This plan should not be limited to just structural changes within the church. Structural changes are the beginning steps to allow the person to worship with the fellowship of others, however,

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶ Ibid.

there are other accommodations that will also assist in the welcoming process such as having a Christian attitude, spending time in prayer and being committed to the needs of these special. A seminar will educate people of the disabilities affecting the particular church. As noted in a previous section, seminars are an effective tool for ignorance.¹⁷

Churches have responded to the author's survey regarding accommodations for the disabled.

"Mostly in the area of in room support and respite care for our families and getting our disabled people more involved in ministry, affirming their value and spiritual gifts."¹⁸

"Teaching positions and usable equipment for handicapped teachers."¹⁹

"We have special classes for teenagers and adults with disabilities and are in the process of expanding our disability ministry."²⁰

We have a disabilities ministry whereby we provide "buddies" or helpers for disabled children so they can take part in children's ministries and their parents can be freed up to participate in main worship services. We also have various classes and supports for families of persons who are disabled.²¹

Once a general understanding has been delivered to the congregation, the team can also enhance the areas of the church by exploring each particular area of the church life that may have an interaction with the disabled person. This can include Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, church and social functions. It may also be helpful for the church

¹⁷ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 201.

¹⁸ The Rev. Dr. Johnny V. Miller, Sr., *Calvary Church*, Lancaster, PA.

¹⁹ The Rev. William R. Chapman, *Bible Baptist Church*, Leslie, MI.

²⁰ The Rev. Dr. Johnny V. Miller, Sr., *Calvary Church*, Lancaster, PA.

²¹ Pastor, David Ashcraft, Sr., *Lancaster County Bible Church*, Manheim, PA.

to advertise to the community what disability services are available in their church through the newspapers, radio, television and posted signs outside the church.²²

The Sunday School Department is one of the most important divisions of the church that ministers to others in all age levels. It is an opportunity for the church to utilize the Christian role for developing and encouraging everyone. An effective beginning step is to make a goal and process for ministering to people with special needs. A general special needs form for the parents to complete will assist the volunteers and teachers with the appropriate instruments that they need so that the child's need will be met. It may also be helpful to include some of the following information on the form.

- general information: name date of birth, address, phone numbers, etc.
- dislikes and likes
- particular interests
- strengths and weakness
- information regarding their disability
- any information that they would like to share: limitations, concerns, structure, etc.
- medication
- behavioral problems
- food habits
- communication²³

An additional survey can be completed regarding what the family or the friend of the disabled person would like to have accomplished for them. The achievement of their goals is an important process of welcoming them into the congregation and making them feel apart of the church. With this accomplishment they will be more relaxed, open to people, feel loved and most of all welcomed. Some of the helpful items on the list can include: Christianity and a plan for salvation,

²² National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship*, 41.

²³ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 191.

- understanding of God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, etc.
- music
- crafts
- play time
- participation or limited participation
- shown and receive love from and for others
- accommodations
- information²⁴

Jim Pierson offers a twelve step process to assist the teachers so that a better plan can be enforced to benefit the disabled students. The steps are:

- 1) Determine what approach the church wishes to take.
- 2) Involve the congregation and leadership.
- 3) Inform the congregation and community of the plan.
- 4) Train the staff and volunteers.
- 5) Organize a welcoming classroom.
- 6) Adapt teaching material that are well planned for everyone.
- 7) Prepare the students for the inclusion experience.
- 8) Learn about the student to be included.
- 9) Interview the family.
- 10) Prepare the individual Christian Education plan.
- 11) Anticipate the person's future in the congregation.
- 12) Enjoy knowing that you are making an eternal difference in the life of the person with a disability and his family.²⁵

Communication with the teachers and volunteers is an essential part of assuring that the person with special needs is receiving the fullest potential for being enriched by what Christianity has to offer. Sharing with the parents and others in leadership in the church will help to ensure that the plan that has been placed into effect is working correctly. However, if the current plan is not successful, the team may want to develop another plan. The input should be given by the teacher, volunteer, family member or friend and possibly the student. The stories of the Bible, creativity, prayer and dedication are all important elements for a successful ministry of the Sunday School Department.

²⁴ Ibid., 192-198.

²⁵ Ibid., 173.

Love and patience must be exercised in order for the class to be successful. It is imperative to realize that everyone is created for a great and wonderful purpose. James 1:17-18 (NIV): “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.” Joni Eareckson-Tada said: “By praising human goodness I’m actually praising God’s goodness. All of the love, kindness, sharing and forgiveness that one person has ever shown to another comes ultimately from Him. We are made in his image- even those of us who don’t acknowledge Him.”²⁶ By acting with kindness and love, the church demonstrates God’s goodness through the positive reactions that each person gives to others.

Sunday School department can also prepare the staff and other students for the acceptance of a disabled student. Bible stories that will help and encourage the student should reflect God’s love and compassion.

Some of which include:

John 5:1-8- The paralyzed man healed at the Pool in Bethesda
 John 9:1-41- A blind man sees
 Luke 7:18-23- Reports of Jesus’ miracles
 Luke 4:40-41- Jesus heals the disabled

Vacation Bible School is another area where additional planning needs to be exercised for the disabled children. “Prayer should be the common factor for every church as it prepares to present the gospel. But every church is unique in its resources, leadership and potential for attendance. One of the keys to a successful church or community event

²⁶ Joni Eareckson-Tada and Steve Estes, *A Step Further: Growing Closer to God Through Hurt and Hardship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.), 53.

is to look realistically at how God is working within your own church.”²⁷ Much of the planning for Vacation Bible School should be thought out extensively by the planning committee to adapt and secure the needs of the disabled children. “Vacation Bible School can be adapted to meet each one of these needs Churches can follow a traditional schedule. Some churches, especially those offering community events, may elect to offer everything in one day.”²⁸ Special attention should be given to every area of the special needs child’s participation. These areas include food, activities and crafts. Volunteers can play an important role for these children, offering assistance throughout the day’s events.

Parents of the disabled children should be included in the planning for their child’s needs. They and the child are the best resource for understanding and implementing a successful Vacation Bible School to meet their needs.

Accommodations for gathering together and sharing in the fellowship of God in the sanctuary or place of worship is essential. Disabled people will feel welcomed and share in a sense of ownership if they are able to function in the church in every realm. This also includes social areas, bathrooms, kitchen and other gathering places. Communication is everywhere: socialization, feelings, thoughts and participation. To help ease any uncertain feelings and encourage communication, the church should make accommodations that send out the message of God’s love.

Communication and welcoming others:

-Have a good attitude.

²⁷ “*Cracking the Code for Special Education VBS Potential*” available from www.lifeway.com; Internet; accessed on April 2007.

²⁸ Ibid.

- Welcome people with a warm and friendly smile.
- Communicate with people at eye level, especially if they are in a wheelchair.
- People should be spoken to directly. Just because they are in a wheelchair or use braces, etc. does not mean that they are unable to communicate.
- Be respectful and accommodating.²⁹
- Remember that objects that make it possible for people to move about are personally theirs. It may be offensive to move someone in a wheelchair or to move a walker, crutches, canes, braces, etc. out of others way without permission. This also includes dogs that assist the blind. It should be explained to children that these dogs are “working” and are not for their playful enjoyment.³⁰
- Invite them to become part of groups in the church.
- Introduce them to the minister.
- If you are an usher or designated volunteer, make sure that they feel comfortable and are able to access the needed information for the service or event.³¹

The use of words is another tool that can be either positive or negative. Words that are used in a derogative manner can hurt people’s feelings. People with disabilities usually struggle with issues of self-esteem. Therefore, avoid saying words that would worsen their situation. Negative words such as crippled, crazy, nuts, deaf, dummy, invalid, retard, etc., are not acceptable. The words that are used should be politically correct. “Use the word ‘disability’ rather than ‘handicap’. Avoid expressions like ‘a victim of’ which lead to pity and sympathy, not respect and acceptance. Use people-first language. Don’t say, ‘the disabled’, ‘the retarded,’ ‘the cerebral palsied,’ ‘a paraplegic.’

²⁹ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship*, 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

Rather say, 'Jim has cerebral palsy.' When conveying that a student in the class does not have a disability, stay away from the word 'normal'.”³²

“People with disabilities should acknowledge sincere efforts to change old language habits. ‘Politically’ correct disability language is often presented in an overly oppressive way. As a result, people without disabilities, but with good intentions, may decide that trying to affirm and include people with disabilities isn’t worth the effort.”³³

To give a positive advantage to these special needs people, give them encouragement and respect. Only offer words that are sincere and helpful. Greet them warmly with kind words and treat them with the same respect that should be returned to others.

The worship in the church offers refuge from the world. This is true for everyone, no matter what the situation. Assistance is always welcome and encouraged.

Helpful possibilities for the worship area can include:

- Worship services on tape, both audio and visual.
- Printed sermons to follow along or to take home for further study.
- Brailled materials for those who have sight restrictions.
- Physical accommodations for people with limited physical abilities.
- Amplified sound systems for those with limited hearing.
- An interpreter for sign language during the service.
- Good lighting so that people will not struggle to see the material and for those who have limited physical limitations that they can successfully move in the place of worship.
- Large print materials such as hymnals, bulletins, Bibles and other materials.
- Stands to assist people with holding hymnals, Bibles, etc.
- Closed or real-time captioning if televisions are used.
- Trained volunteers, ushers or “buddies” to accommodate the general needs of the disabled.

³² Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 51.

³³ National Organization on Disability, *That All May Worship*, 11.

-Always have something printed in the bulletin or verbally announced that if anyone is in need of special assistance to please contact the ushers, or the appropriate people, for help.³⁴

Outside accommodation include:

- The proper parking areas designated for the disabled.
- Sloped sidewalks that provide easy inclines for canes, walkers, wheelchairs or other devices.
- Well marked guides giving directions to the entrances.
- Paved pathways. Pathways that are constructed of gravel or other rough materials may make is very challenging for mobility.
- Areas for resting outside the church. Benches along the walkways can be a welcoming place for someone who is struggling with balance or strength.
- Ramps with non-skid surfaces. If possible, covered ramps make the journey into the church more pleasant for the disabled. It provides shelter from the elements. This is particularly important for those who are not able to move quickly and require more time.
- Handrails on at least on one side of the ramp. They should also be installed anywhere steps are present, inside and out. Steps should also have non-skid surfaces.
- Doors that open with ease.³⁵

Internal accommodations: bathrooms, worship and gathering places and elevators and lifts.

Bathrooms:

- Door openings of a minimum of 32 inches wide.
- Family bathrooms to assist family and friends.
- Handrails.
- Handicapped accessible bathroom stall. If possible, one handicapped stall on each level. If it is not structurally possible for a handicapped stall to be created, other measures can be made such as a material separator, like a shower curtain, to create this accommodation.
- Raised toilet seat.
- Lowered sink not higher than twenty-nine inches from the sink to the floor and easy to operate faucets.
- Air hand dryers or towel dispensers that are lowered to forty inches.
- Lowered water fountains that are accommodating for wheelchairs as well as people who are able to stand to drink. A cup dispenser may

³⁴ Ibid., 31.

³⁵ Ibid., 46.

also be helpful for those who require assistance from family or friends.³⁶

Other gathering areas:

- Braille signs throughout the church.
- Wide doorways and halls that can be accessed by wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, etc.
- Appropriate seating with tables that accommodate wheelchairs.
- Volunteers to assist removal of chairs or tables.
- Hearing devices or sign interpreters.
- If food is served, offer a volunteer to carry items to the table or offer to get their food for them.³⁷
- Provide baby-sitting services for the parents of children with special needs so that they are able to attend church functions.³⁸

Ministering to the family or friend of a person with special needs can be both challenging and rewarding. The rewards of helping members understand, deal, and cope with their situation can be a positive life altering experience. Often the friends and family members feel alone in their situation.

Jim Pierson stated: “The family of a child with a disability needs the ministry of the church. The ministry starts with understanding. Understand that the family is forever changed, that they questioned why this happened, that they often deal with a negative, staring society, that educational services are not always easy to get, that their other children have difficulty with the disability, that the information they get is not always clear, that disability is expensive, that the medical community can be confusing, and that their friends often leave. The key is understanding.”³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., 47.

³⁷ Ibid., 21.

³⁸ Pierson, *Exceptional Teaching*, 228.

³⁹ Ibid., 215.

The family may be facing many challenges such as acceptance of the disability, death of their loved one and financial difficulties from medical expenses. The team that represents the interest of disabilities for their church may also be able to assist in their financial hardships. They may be able to gather financial resources from the church for unexpected expenses. It is the experience of the author, that family and friends may need financial support for hotels, food, gas, phone cards, co-pays at the doctor's offices and other bills not paid by health insurances. Even the simplest of gestures such as a card or phone call can let these people know that the church is supporting them. There are several scriptures located in the New Testament, relating to the people of the church and the faithfulness of God, that refer to helping those who are in need.

Some include: Matthew 5:42- "Give to the one who asks you..."

Luke 6:30- "Give to everyone who asks you..."

Matthew 6:8- "Know what thing you have need of..."

Acts 4:35- "... and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

Philippians 4:19- "All my God will meet all your needs..."

The rewards that follow these commendable acts of kindness are felt in the heart and shared among the believers of Christ and to others who are non-believers. Christ promises to His faithful followers that he will give them rewards for sowing generously in II Corinthians 9:10-12 (NIV). "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so the you can be generous on every occasion and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."

In Matthew 6:3-4, Christ also explains the benefits of God's people giving to the needy. "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."⁴⁰ Humble acts of generosity will be rewarded in the hearts of those people that are helped and in the church for obeying the words and directions of Christ.

Volunteers can have an effective role in the church. They are especially needed to work with the disabled. People who volunteer to assist the disabled should be well informed of the particular disabilities and needs. The types of volunteers can include teacher assistants, "buddies" for children, service assists and physical assists who are able to help with physical demands. The ages of the volunteers can range from children to senior adults because there are special needs in all age areas.⁴¹ Isaiah 6:8 (NIV), "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I, send me!'" Isaiah encourages God's people to minister to the needs of others.

Special social activities at the church will require more intense care giving from the volunteers. These events would include outside activities—Easter Egg Hunts, summer events, picnics, Vacation Bible School, etc.; inside activities—Christmas events, fall festivities, parties, Vacation Bible School, family night, etc.

⁴⁰ Matthew 6:3-4, *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 2002).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

It will also be effective to have the volunteers participate in training sessions. This can be planned by the team that addresses disabilities in the church. A questionnaire should be administered to the potential volunteer to determine if they are the appropriate volunteer for the disabled. This questionnaire will help to establish within the volunteer, whether or not they feel that they can meet the requirements of this position.

The author of this thesis paper offers insight for the questionnaire. It can include:

- How do I believe that God wants to use me in the church?
- Have I prayed that God will use me to minister to the disabled?
- Do I have or know someone with a disability?
- Can I contribute in a positive Christian way to the life of a child or adult who is disabled?
- Do I have time restraints, limitations or obligations that would hinder me from providing quality attention to my position?
- Am I compassionate, patient, and understanding?
- What can my church do to help those with disabilities? Explain.
- How will my life be changed by serving those with special needs?

In addition to providing information through educational seminars in the church, there are also outside sources that can further educate and skill volunteers. These can include college courses at a local college. Colleges offer classes in CPR, sign language, caring for special needs people, etc. It may be possible for the disability team at the church to arrange for volunteers to participate in these courses. Hospitals are also a good source of education. They often arrange for people to take seminars or classes that pertain to people with special needs or those who are dealing with death. This would especially apply to those who are visiting people with terminal illnesses at home, nursing home or at the hospital.

Throughout this thesis there have been many examples of struggles and adversities that people with disabilities face. "Suffering strengthens and allows us to comfort others

who are weak.”⁴² II Corinthians 1:3-5 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all merciful Father, the God whose consolation never fails us! He comforts us in all our troubles, so that we in turn may be able to comfort of theirs in any trouble of theirs and to share with them the consolation we ourselves receive from God.”⁴³ It is the author’s prayer that the church and community will be open to accept and welcome all of God’s people and to share in their struggles.

There are promises that come from God in time of struggles and sufferings. Joni Eareckson-Tada reflects on the steadfast promises of God. “Jesus gave wonderful promises to His disciples; whatever they needed to get God’s work done on earth, He would give. But Jesus’ own words and the rest of the scripture make it clear that there were at least two conditions to any prayer they made- they must be remaining in him and their requests must be in line with God’s will. As we grow in our faith, our way of looking at things changes. Once it seemed as if the only way God could glorify Himself would be to remove our sufferings. Now it becomes clear that He can glorify Himself through our sufferings.”⁴⁴ God wants to be glorified in every situation, both good and bad. The most important factor is to have faith in Him, to glorify His will for all people and to embrace the tasks set before each person.

Many denominations are participating within the alliance for the disabled. The National Council of Churches’ Committee on disabilities “is composed of national

⁴² Joni-Eareckson-Tada and Steve Estes, *When God Weeps: Why Our Suffering Matter to the Almighty* (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 239.

⁴³ 2 Co.1:3-5, *The New English Bible with Apocrypha* (The United States of America, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press 1970).

⁴⁴ Joni Eareckson-Tada, *A Step Further*, 156.

leaders in the field who are appointed by their denominations and organizations. The committee represents the top leadership in North America among main line churches.”⁴⁵

The following is a list of denominations that are among the growing church communities that help to represent people with disabilities.

- American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- Christian Reformed Church
- Church of the Brethren
- The Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Covenant Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Mennonite Churches
- Presbyterian Church
- Seventh- Day Adventist Church
- Society of Friends-Quaker
- Unitarian Universalist Association
- The United Church of Canada
- The United Church of Christ
- The United Methodist Church

The greatest news that God promises to His faithful followers is newness in Him. One day all His people will be changed and created new. “Individuals in this world, who are mentally and physically challenged, will no longer have to deal with their disabilities. The blind and lame will see, hear and run like deer on the new earth. There will be no more sorrow, death or pain.”⁴⁶ Revelation 21:4 (KJV) “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” The author is expressing the importance of relying on God for all things. The hope is found in the personal

⁴⁵ “Churches and Disabilities” available from www.nccusa.org; Internet; accessed September 2006.

⁴⁶ “New Earth” available from www.bibleresearch.org/page1.htm; Internet: accessed February 2007.

relationship with Jesus Christ that will be rewarded in His heavenly realm. Through the many struggles of this life, God will be waiting to complete and make whole the faithful who have struggled with their limitations. The Gospel of Matthew gives encouragement to the afflicted. Matthew 19:26 (NIV) "...but with God all things are possible." In the weakness of the human nature, God makes those with special needs perfect in His image. Disabilities can create long lasting effects of suffering. The church can provide great comfort to those who struggle, as a reminder of God's promises and love.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF ACCOMMODATIONS MADE BY CHURCHES FOR THE BENEFIT OF HANDICAPPED MEMBERS AND VISITORS

RESPONDENT: _____
(Church Name and Location)

APPROXIMATE SIZE OF CONGREGATION:

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 150	<input type="checkbox"/> 151 - 250	<input type="checkbox"/> 251 - 350	<input type="checkbox"/> 351 - 450
<input type="checkbox"/> 451 - 550	<input type="checkbox"/> 551 - 650	<input type="checkbox"/> 651 - 800	<input type="checkbox"/> 801 - 950
<input type="checkbox"/> 951 - 1,100	<input type="checkbox"/> 1,101 - 1,300	<input type="checkbox"/> 1,301 - 1,500	<input type="checkbox"/> 1,500 Plus

	YES	NO	FUTURE PLANS
	[]	[]	[]
Reserved parking spaces	[]	[]	[]
Enlarged doorways	[]	[]	[]
Exterior ramps	[]	[]	[]
Interior ramps	[]	[]	[]
Elevator	[]	[]	[]
Chairlifts in stairwells	[]	[]	[]
Wheelchair lifts in stairwells	[]	[]	[]
Enlarged stall in bathrooms	[]	[]	[]
Grab rails installed in bathrooms	[]	[]	[]
Lowered sink in bathrooms	[]	[]	[]
Enhanced lighting in hallways and stairwells	[]	[]	[]
Railings on the walls of hallways	[]	[]	[]
Enhanced amplification system in sanctuary	[]	[]	[]
Hearing devices installed at certain seats in sanctuary	[]	[]	[]
Interpreter using sign language	[]	[]	[]
Provision made especially for wheelchair-bound in the sanctuary and meeting rooms	[]	[]	[]
Large print hymnals	[]	[]	[]
Large print service leaflets/bulletins	[]	[]	[]
 Other:			
Is someone in the sanctuary responsible for assisting the elderly or handicapped to a seat without undue attention by others?	[]	[]	[]
Are volunteers available to provide transportation for the elderly or others unable to drive or use public transportation?	[]	[]	[]

PLEASE SEE REVERSE SIDE

Have you made any other accommodations benefitting the handicapped or elderly other than those listed on the front of this survey? Please list _____

If you were in the planning stage for the accommodations which you have now completed, what would you change or reconsider? _____

If you were considering additional accommodations in the future, what would you consider other than those itemized on the front of this survey? _____

Other comments or suggestions: _____

Completed by (Signature and date) _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE AND REPLY
WHICH, I ASSURE YOU, IS GREATLY APPRECIATED.

There were one-hundred and sixty four surveys sent to churches. The general information for this survey included fifteen denominations, forty communities, sizes of congregations ranging from less than one-hundred fifty and over one-thousand five hundred members and single floor structures. Replies were received from one-hundred three churches. The details of the denominations and sizes are as follows:

Breakdown by Denomination


Assemblies of God	3
Baptist	13
Bible Churches	7
Brethren in Christ	3
Church of the Brethren	4
Church of God	2
Episcopal	7
Grace Brethren	2
Greek Orthodox	1
Lutheran	17
Nazarene	1
Presbyterian	11
United Church of Christ	13
United Methodist	15
Other	<u>4</u>
Total	103

Breakdown by Size

Less than 150	27
151-250	16
251-300	13
351-450	11
451-650	12
651-950	6
951-1,100	4
1,101-1,300	3
1,301-1,500	5
1,500 Plus	4
Did not report size	<u>2</u>
Total	103

APPENDIX B
Permission for Picture Use

Lunna Kirk

From: Ken Lussey <info@undiscoveredscotland.co.uk> 
Date: 2007/02/06 Tue AM 04:16:31 EST
To: revbillshrout@epix.net
Subject: Re: Permission

>Hello!

> My name is William Shrout and I am currently working on my
>thesis statement for college. I am doing my paper on disabilities and
>found "Lunna Kirk" with a Leper's squint. I would like to use the
>picture of Lunna Kirk in my paper to show the church that houses this.
>Is it possible to get permission to use this picture? Please let me
>know what I need to do. Thanks!
>

Hello William

We'd be happy for you to use this image as you describe, so long as its
origin was credited. Is the image on the site large enough for your
needs?


Regards

Ken Lussey

Undiscovered Scotland: The Ultimate Online Guide

info@undiscoveredscotland.co.uk <http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/>

Leper's Squint

From: Paul Hayward <paul@duston.org.uk> 
Date: 2007/02/05 Mon PM 04:54:29 EST
To: william shrout <revbillshrout@epix.net>
Subject: Re: Duston Directory

Paul Hayward

Duston Directory

> Hello! I am doing my thesis statement on Disabilities and found your
information on the Leper's squint. I would like to include the 2 pictures of the Leper's
squint in my paper. How can I get permission to use your pictures? It would be a great
addition to the description. Thanks

Grace United Church of Christ

Hi Bill:

I hope this helps you with your project.

This is an image of Grace UCC's ramp for ADA Compliance accessibility.

Please use it as you need.

Bernd Weishaupt, Pastor
 Grace United Church of Christ
 Rt. 715 & Sullivan Trail
 P.O. Box 133
 Tannersville, PA
 Office (570) 629-3889
 Home (908) 362-7992
www.uccgrace.org



THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
55 NORTH THIRD STREET
BANGOR, PENNSYLVANIA 18013
610- 588-HOPE (4673)
610-588-0480 (Fax)

March 13, 2007

The Rev. William Shrout
 Trinity United Church of Christ
 612 South Delaware Drive
 Mt Bethel, PA 18343

Dear Mr. Shrout,

You are hereby granted permission to use the pictures of the chair lift taken on March 12 in the fellowship hall of the First United Methodist Church in your thesis and any subsequent publication thereof.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Nicholson
 Senior Pastor

Community Presbyterian Church

Yes, you have my permission to take pictures of the parking lot and handicap parking spaces at the Community Presbyterian Church, 1755 S. Delaware Drive, Mt. Bethel, PA 18343.

Rev. Matilda Chase
Pastor

To whom it may concern:

We hereby grant permission to Reverend Bill ShROUT to use photographs of Trinity United Church of Christ's building and grounds for use in an academic paper.

Sincerely,

Taryn C. Jory
President, Trinity United Church of Christ Consistory
632 South Delaware Drive
Mount Bethel, PA 18343

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VITA

William B. Shrout, Jr.

PERSONAL

Born: May 2, 1976

Married: Carla J. DeShong, May 15, 1999.

Children: William Blake, born January 24, 2001.

Christian Alden, born July 13, 2004.

EDUCATIONAL

B.A. Pastoral Ministry, Southeastern University, 1999.

M.A.R., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2002.

M.Div., Liberty Theological Seminary, 2004.

MINISTERIAL

License: May 1999, Zion Reformed United Church of Christ, Cumberland, Maryland.

Ordained: May 2004, Zion reformed united Church of Christ, Cumberland, Maryland.