



DisAbility Ministries
The United Methodist Church



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OHIO DISABILITY AND MINISTRY COLLABORATIVE

Autumn 2021



Welcome to our newsletter! Here you will find important dates, ideas for ministry, personal stories, and other resources.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month with the 2021 theme of: "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion," reflects the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to employment and community involvement during the national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic." Churches may become involved by encouraging business owners and managers within the church to hire persons with disabilities.

Business owners and managers in churches are encouraged to [National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2021 | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)

Ravenna, Ohio UMC Ramp Ministry

An accident or illness may bring about an urgent need for an at-home accessibility ramp. A volunteer group at Ravenna UMC builds ramps for anyone in the community with a verifiable need. Dave Stewart of the church explained that none of the team is a professional builder, but they work together to install ramps that meet the needs of the individual. With the rising costs of lumber and other building supplies, it is helpful, but not essential, that the family or individual help with costs of materials. When the recipient is finished with the ramp, the group asks for it to be returned so that the materials may be used for another project. This ministry and others, such as the Magnolia Market and Loaves and Fishes food distribution (under the leadership of Pastor Norma Bates), help meet the needs of the Ravenna community!

We would love to share what your church is doing to minister in your community! Please email Rose Darling at rdarling@flatrockhomes.org

Something to think about...

I recently read this article [I am a lifelong wheelchair user and I don't feel welcome in the church | National Catholic Reporter \(ncronline.org\)](#) by Erin Murphy. You may read the entire article by following the link. Please prayerfully consider her experiences and thoughts. After you read it, please read my personal story. Both accounts remind churches to be aware of accessibility and attitudes.

'In the months prior to my knee replacement surgery in 2017, it was incredibly painful to bend my knee, and we had a trip planned to Ireland for a special occasion. We decided to add a trip to London and Canterbury while in the neighborhood. When we made the plans some months before, my knee was responding to cortisone treatments, but by the time we left, nothing was helping.

So, there we were in beautiful Kent, UK at Canterbury Cathedral with its imposing towers and long history. And there I was in a wheelchair from the Red Cross because I could not tolerate walking. Have you ever been pushed in a wheelchair over cobblestone roads? What a buh-buh-bumpy ride!

As we approached the Cathedral, we wondered how we would get around the huge building. We expected lots of stairs, and long hallways leading to even more stairs! Our fears were quickly put to rest, though, as staff members and volunteers came to our aid. We were taken to an elevator that took us to the magnificent quire. Another staff member, after hearing that I was a church musician, found two hymnals for me to bring home, and gave us a private guided tour of that area. He found us easy-to-reach seats where we could see and hear perfectly during the evening choral service.

Another memorable moment was when the Dean (head pastor) of the Cathedral made sure I was seated where I could see everything and easily come forward for the eucharist during the Sunday service.

They, and others understand that many individuals have needs – whether temporary or permanent – and they were trained and ready to jump into action to make this traveler feel more comfortable and accepted.”

Rose M Darling

Do you have a story to share of how a church was especially good at making worship accessible? We would love you to share it and inspire others on how to make everyone feel accepted as they come to worship.

Resources

Now that you have read two true stories about welcoming and non-welcoming experiences, please follow this link for additional information on how you may create a welcoming church!

[Ways to Welcome All – Disability Ministries of the United Methodist Church \(umcdmc.org\)](https://umcdmc.org)

Questions for you

- Where are the people of your congregation with disabilities?
- Are they in church during the month or are they “invisible” because they are not there?
- Do they have access to your in-person and/or internet services?
- Does your building offer easy-to-find signage and entryways?
- Are your people welcoming and friendly?

Speakers Bureau

Our speakers welcome the opportunity to speak at your church on a variety of topics about disability awareness. Visit [Disability Ministries | West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church \(westohioumc.org\)](https://westohioumc.org) or email RDarling@flatrockhomes.org for more information. Flat Rock Homes Church Engagement Coordinators, Sherri Buehl and Rose Darling speak at churches on a regular basis, and are currently scheduling for late 2021, and into next year. www.flatrockhomes.org

We look forward to working with you to increase Disability Awareness within your congregation!

The Ohio Disability and Ministry Collaborative: Co-Directors Rev. Zach Holler and Rev. Mimi Luebbers
Please contact Rose Darling at Rdarling@flatrockhomes.org for additional information.