



Disability Ministries
The United Methodist Church



OHIO DISABILITY & MINISTRY COLLABORATIVE NEWSLETTER
March 2023

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Meet Julia Jones of Crosswood UMC, Marion, OH



“Many years ago, Crosswood UMC in Marion installed a wheelchair lift to our altar area because our pastor at that time needed it. Our altar area where I lead music every Sunday was accessible only by steps in five different locations. About ten years ago, the lift stopped functioning due to faulty original installation and the altar area was back to being accessible only by steps. Church leadership determined it wasn’t worth repairing since they didn’t perceive a need for it. The rest of the church was totally accessible: doors, bathrooms, parking, sanctuary, fellowship hall, etc. Unless you are disabled, either temporarily or permanently, you probably don’t think anything about walking up and down seven or eight steps, and neither did the leadership. Now the congregation is ten years older, and things have changed for

many of us.

I am a disabled worship music leader at the church and my disability makes navigating steps painful and unsafe. Other congregants and students in our preschool have similar difficulties. Some in our church family are amputees, have breathing problems, are wheelchair-users or have the same kind of issues I have with steps. Many in our congregation cannot easily participate in standard parts of church life and worship like scripture reading, decorating the altar area, contributing to the music ministry, preparing communion, etc. One of our pianists quit playing because steps took her breath away. We even had one preschooler who had to be carried up the steps in his wheelchair so he could take part in his graduation ceremony.

For those of us with disabilities, we plan ahead when we know there are barriers. I used to plan my music leadership so that I walked up and down the steps the fewest number of times possible. If I didn’t, I paid for it for several days with increased pain and immobility. This was a very real barrier in our church, and only some of

us could fully participate and approach the altar. In working on this project, I realized our disabilities are not the barriers...building designs are the barriers.

That's how it was until we applied for an accessibility grant and completed our wheelchair lift repair project in December 2022. I say prayers of thanks to the West Ohio Conference for the grant and every other person who worked to make the project happen. It took most of the year, but our trustees and the elevator company finally got all the repairs completed. In the final step, the State of Ohio certified the lift, and we began using it. I admit I was a bit giddy the first few times. Now I use the lift every Sunday and any other day I am there and need to be in the altar area. Anyone who wants to take part in activities and worship in the altar area now has a safe and painless way to do that. It's thrilling to know there are now no building barriers in Crosswood UMC between the people and God's altar. That's how it should always be."

RECENTLY AWARDED GRANTS

We are pleased to announce the following accessibility grants, totaling nearly \$100,000 awarded by the West Ohio Conference to United Methodist Churches in the Conference. Watch future newsletters for project updates! Congratulations to all!

Clifton, Cincinnati -inclined platform lift

Lewistown -accessible rest room

Kirkersburg - ramp

Ohmer Park, Dayton - chair stair lift

Belpre Heights, Belpre -ramp

St. Paul, Tupper-Plains -entrance ramp

Crosswood, Marion -platform lift

Ginghamsburg, Tipp City - automatic door openers

Powell -accessible rest room

Oakwood - chair stair lift

Clair, Columbus - Handrail, chair lift

Jerome, Plain City-automatic door openers

St. Paul Community, Cincinnati-automatic door opener

"This is my story, this is my song"



This new disability awareness music program presented by Geoffrey and Rose Darling, features music and stories from the lives of composers and musicians with disabilities, including Beethoven, Joni Tada, Stevie Wonder, and more! Rose is a musician and Flat Rock Homes Church & Community Engagement Coordinator, and Geoffrey, an acclaimed stage actor originally from New Zealand. This adaptable program may be presented during Sunday worship services, or as a special program. Contact Rose at rdarling@flatrockhomes.org for scheduling information! www.flatrockhomes.org

Deaconess Sherri Buehl, also with Flat Rock, is the guest program speaker for the United Women in Faith Day Apart, April 29th at Christ UMC, Zetler Rd. in Columbus. Contact Sbuehl@flatrockhomes.org for more information. Sherri and Rose are available for special services, programs, and Sunday pulpit supply. Email: engagement@flatrockhomes.org



Is your **Disability Awareness Sunday** scheduled? The West Ohio Conference invites you to designate the **first Sunday in May, which is May 7 this year**, for this important service. The ODMC can help find a speaker, share ideas, and/or resources.

How is your **Accessibility Audit** going? Follow this link for information on this important assessment of the individual church and its accessibility. Watch the next ODMC newsletter for information on the accessibility Badge program. Your Badge may help persons with disabilities find and attend your church!

Per Paragraph 2533.6 of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016, "The board of trustees shall conduct or cause to be conducted an annual accessibility audit of their buildings, grounds, and facilities to discover and identify what physical, architectural, and communication barriers exist that impede the full participation of persons with disabilities and shall make plans and determine priorities of the elimination of all such barriers.

Follow this link for a training video *and information about the Badge program*

[Accessibility Audit Training - YouTube](#)

RESOURCES

MARCH 21, ROCK YOUR SOCKS DAY

It's a fun way to participate in and bring awareness to World Down Syndrome Day!. Celebrate by wearing mismatched, colorful, or other zany, fun socks!

Learn the history of this day by clicking here: [Lots Of Socks campaign website – Down Syndrome International \(worlddownsyndromeday.org\)](#)
<https://johnscrazysocks.com/>



NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH - MARCH 2023

"The National Developmental Disabilities Awareness campaign seeks to increase understanding about including people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. It also creates awareness of the difficulties that people with disabilities still face in fitting into the communities in which they live. To learn more: <https://nacdd.org/ddam1/>

- [Disability Ministries of the United Methodist Church – Accessible ministries with resources for people with disabilities, families and churches \(umcdmc.org\)](#)
- [United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities \(umdisabledministers.org\)](#)
- <http://theologydisability.org/> lists numerous events, studies, and gatherings

Ohio Disabilities & Ministries Collaborative co-chairs: Rev. Zach Holler and Rev. Mimi Luebbers

Questions? Comments? Contact Rose Darling at Rdarling@flatrockhomes.org