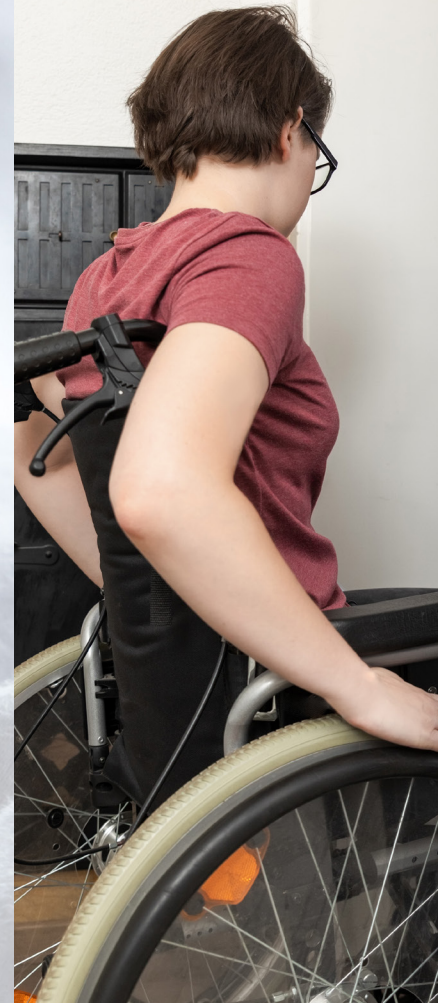




## Congregational Support for People with Disabilities



*Discussion questions for ministry teams*

- Do we have members who are willing to attend class with those with intellectual and developmental disabilities as mentors and/or classroom companions?
- Are there teachers certified in first aid?
- Is there a plan for a medical emergency?
- Is there a plan for an emergency evacuation? (considering wheelchairs, sensory issues, anxiety)

### Supporting Members/Families with Disabilities in Your Congregation

- How can our congregation learn more about the specific disabilities of our members? Are there professionals who could educate us? Are there family members who could enhance our understanding so we could be more supportive?
- If we have learned about specific needs, have we responded in a loving, mindful, and timely manner? Is there a plan for continued support?
- Do we have a support system for families with disabilities? Those who call, check in, send cards, pray, ask questions, bring snacks, visit?
- Do we offer intentional worship support for the entire family?
- Do we offer counseling? If not, do we have Christian counseling information?
- Do we provide respite care or babysitting services? If the child needs very specific support, are there funds to support a professional babysitter?
- Do we budget for or find grants for assistive equipment needs? Do we check with the family to see if new equipment is needed?

- Do we have resources and information readily available regarding disabilities and the faith?
- Do we have other community support information for those with disabilities?
- Is there a section in our church library dedicated to disability ministry? Is it updated?

**Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**

*Romans 12:9-13*

*Dear Father in Heaven,  
Open our eyes to those around us who need to know Your peace.  
Open our hearts to those around us who need to know Your love.  
Open our souls to those around us who need to know Your grace.  
Grant us wisdom and humility as we do our best to tackle some difficult questions.  
Go before us, behind us, beside us and within us as we welcome all of Your people into this family.  
In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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To dig deeper, check out “Understanding and Communicating with People with Disabilities” at [lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org).

“Disability awareness and disability ministry should not begin once there is an immediate need. It should begin today!”



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*Uniquely and intricately designed by God in order to bring Him glory. He claims us as His own. We are His.*

**“I have called you by name. You are mine.”**  
(Isaiah 43:1b)

## Supporting the Entire Family

The Bible says ...

**So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

*Galatians 6:10*

**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.**

*1 Peter 4:10*

**Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

*Philippians 2:4*

Research tells us families with disabilities, like all families, need the support of their church. At Lutherans For Life, we celebrate families! We believe God created us in His image and with purpose. We also believe you love your congregation members and want to support them in every way possible.

Disability awareness and disability ministry should not begin once there is an immediate need. It should begin today!

We are hoping this resource helps you recognize the need to examine specific situations and leads you to make intentional efforts to be a welcoming and supportive community of believers. We know blueprints and programs cannot happen overnight, but the questions in this pamphlet are intended to get your ministry team started on the right path. It is our hope this will guide you to creative solutions and help you formulate intentional plans for your church and its families.

## Social Media

Families with disabilities are searching for welcoming, supportive, and active congregations to call home, and they often begin their search online.

- Is our website informative and user friendly?
- Does it answer basic accessibility questions?
- Does it mention support for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities?
- Do we use respectful language and appropriate terminology with regard to disabilities?
- Looking at our website through the eyes of a possible visitor, would we feel welcomed? Loved? Accepted? Supported?
- Do we offer resources on our website? Are they for all ages and abilities?
- How diverse are our photos?
- Other than our website, how else do we reach out to our community about opportunities to worship?
- Do we stream or video/audio tape our services for those who are unable to attend?
- Do we offer short videos such as devotions or prayers online? How often?
- Do we offer children's devotions online? How often?

## Accessibility

- Do we have accessible restrooms? On each floor?
- Are our doorways wide enough for those who use a wheelchair?
- Can people enter our building independently if they cannot use steps?
- Can people attend Bible class independently if they cannot use steps? Other events?

- Can people who use a wheelchair worship with others, or are they relegated to the back?
- Do we consider the needs of those with hearing or vision impairments? How?
- Is our bulletin user-friendly for those who need to follow an order of worship? For those unfamiliar with our traditional responses or phrases? For those who are unable to memorize? For those who need visuals to understand?
- Do we consider ways to support those in worship who cannot read?
- How do we communicate with our members? The public? Is it in a variety of ways?
- Do we help those who can't drive attend worship? If so, do we advertise this service?
- Do we offer free valet parking?

## Disability Awareness

- Do we intentionally promote disability awareness with our congregation? How? How often?
- Are disability awareness resources and other information easily available? Where?
- Are there people in the congregation who are readily available to answer specific questions about special needs for visiting families?
- Do sub-committees and event committees have guidelines for considering accessibility and other special needs? (such as sensory concerns, food allergies, other safety issues)
- Will a visitor with disabilities feel as if they belong?
- Are we prepared for an immediate need?

## When There Is an Immediate Need at Worship

- Do we have front door greeters readily available to answer questions?
- Do we have assistive listening equipment?
- Do we have members who know how to set up/use assistive listening equipment?
- Do we have large print bulletins readily available?
- Do we have Braille hymnals/songbooks available?
- Do we have any members who know sign language?
- Do we offer gluten free communion wafers?
- Do we have a parish ministry nurse or someone on hand for medical emergencies?
- Do we have members who are willing to sit with those with intellectual and developmental disabilities as mentors and/or worship companions?
- Do our bulletins or other printed materials include basic information for visitors who may have an immediate need?

## When There Is an Immediate Need at Sunday School

- Do we have front door greeters readily available at the Sunday school hour?
- Do we have a welcome pamphlet or information sheet about Sunday school for parents?
- Do we have registration forms for Sunday school readily available? If so, does the form include questions regarding disabilities? Photo releases? Food allergies?