

# [other resources]

•**Disabled Peoples International** <http://www.dpi.org/>  
Headquartered in Ottawa, DPI's goal is to achieve full participation of ALL persons with disabilities in the mainstream of life, through promotion and protection of their human rights- particularly those in developing countries who form 80 percent of the world's one billion people with disabilities ...

•**Disability Rights International:**  
<http://www.disabilityrightsintl.org/>  
Disability Rights International is dedicated to promoting the human rights and full participation in society of people with disabilities worldwide....(and) to end the institutionalization of children ...with disabilities.

•**International Disability Alliance:**  
<http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/en>  
To advance the human rights of persons with disabilities **as a united voice of organizations of persons with disabilities** utilizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other human rights instruments.

•**Disability World:**  
<http://www.disabilityworld.org/index.htm>  
...a unique international online magazine (e-zine), dedicated to advancing an exchange of information and expertise about the international independent living movement of people with disabilities.

•**Inclusion International:**  
<http://inclusion-international.org/>  
Inclusion International is a global federation of family-based organizations advocating for the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities worldwide

From the desk of Lorna MacQueen  
MINISTER-FAITH FORMATOR FOR  
DISCIPLESHIP



## Equal Access

....towards accessibility  
for those of differing  
abilities.

Reflection and drama inside this TDD are drawn from:

**Story After Story: Canadians bend bound theology** (2003) edited by Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd - "Reprinted with permission of On Edge Publishing for the sole purpose of promoting social justice work."

## DISABILITY MINISTRIES - intercultural ministries

<http://www.united-church.ca/intercultural/disability>

The United Church of Canada has made a commitment to being an open, accessible, and barrier-free church, where there is full participation of people with disabilities in the church's ministry and mission, and to make this commitment known in the church.

Disability involves restricted movements, senses, or actions that limit participation in activities considered routine and "normal" by society. A disability may be visible, or invisible. A disability might be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, medical, health-based, or some combination of these.

People with disabilities can include people who are blind, who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs or canes, who have mental health challenges, who have been born with congenital conditions such as cerebral palsy, or who are living with conditions such as severe arthritis or dementia.

**Disability is about difference.** People with disabilities may move, see, hear, speak, and think differently from one another. The United Nations has developed a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=14&pid=150>

One of the Convention's guiding principles is "respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity."

The World Health Organization states that "disabilities" is "an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions." In other words, a disability could involve difficulties in bodily structure or function, difficulty in carrying out a task or action, or difficulty getting involved in various life situations.

Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and the features of the society in which they live.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) releases an annual report about the world's children. The 2013 State of the World's Children report <http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/report.html> is dedicated to the situation of children with disabilities, and focuses on barriers that prevent children from fully participating in society.

Notably, in the Canadian context, as the United Church's Deaf Ministries Working Group has identified, members of the Deaf community are considered to be a cultural-linguistic group who use sign language to communicate, rather than people with a disability.

The United Church of Canada  
Disabilities Ministries FaceBook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/346363425470269/>

## Differing physical abilities

### Biblical Reflection on Leviticus 21:16-23

Justine Kiwanuka

*People with disabilities have been isolated for too long. Their right to development has been ignored and their potential contribution to society neglected. Traditional attitudes have always regarded disabled people as recipients of pity, charity, and as dependent invalids, in need of protection. This has been a tradition even in the Holy Bible. We are working on an ingrained, complex issue that has been a “tradition” for so many years, leaving out certain groups of people that are seen as objects in our society. Disabled people are understood as people who have nothing to contribute, and as recipients of what we think they can have or what we choose to give them. We choose what they can do and how they can do it...*

*The disability movement felt that the following definition by Christine Kania captures the social barriers facing disabled people: “Disability is the disadvantage or restriction in the organization of society that prevents an individual with a functional limitation or impairment from full participation in society.”...*

*Society is still very uptight about the rights and equality of disabled people. Churches have failed to openly embrace the equality and participation of disabled people, or openly work together to address the rights of disabled people within their communities...*

*People with disabilities are asking for equality, respect and equal opportunities in our own communities...the freedom to make choices... and to be able to contribute equally based on our own abilities, limitations, and strengths. As a community of faith we can work together to promote the rights of disabled people.*

## **A Drama** to help Congregations/Boards think about issues of accessibility for people of differing abilities - Justine Kiwanuka

**Introduction:** This drama involves three fictitious characters, two ministers, Frank and Louise, and a new member of the church, Teresa. Teresa has just moved into the neighbourhood... She's been very active in her previous church... she approaches the church to find out how she can contribute to her new community and new church.

**Scene:** Teresa climbs up and down stairs (a step ladder can be used) with crutches in one hand, and a straight, splinted leg. She finally reaches the church office and meets the two ministers...

### Dialogue:

Frank: *Hi good to meet you. I don't remember seeing you around.*

Teresa: *I'm just new to the community. I was trying to find a church, and this one seemed to be the closest. I've heard a lot of good things about this church, so I thought I would check it out. In my other community I was really involved in my church, and I would like to be as involved here.*

Frank: *Oh good!*

Teresa: *I would like to offer whatever I can to this faith community as well.*

Frank: *Well we can always use some help, right?*

Louise: *Yes, but you've had difficulty getting in here haven't you?*

Teresa: *Well yes. I'm really concerned about accessibility in this building. Have you ever thought about making this into a more accessible church?*

Frank: *No one has ever complained before. We've never had a problem.*

Louise: *Well I've thought of that before.*

Frank: *When!?!*

Louise: *Last year, and the year before that, and the year before that...*

Frank: *I don't remember.*

Teresa: *I gotta tell you, those are a heck of a set of stairs to get up.*

Frank: *Are you going to be on crutches long?*

Teresa: *The rest of my life.*

Frank: *Oh. Well we can arrange things for you I'm sure. If you're on a committee, we can arrange for transportation.*

Teresa: *Yes but what about all those other people in the community who are in wheelchairs and might want to come to church? There's absolutely no way they can get in here in a wheelchair. And what about seniors who have difficulty walking? Where do they go? How are they welcomed here?*

Louise: *We just don't see them.*

Teresa: *No wonder.*

Frank: *I beg your pardon?*

Teresa: *Well no wonder. There's no way for them to come into this building.*

Frank: *But if they wanted to, they'd find a way—you did.*

Teresa: *Yes I did, with difficulty.*

Louise: *You are aware of the law in our society: public buildings have to be accessible. The church needs to do some work to make this place accessible, so that all members of the community, disabled or non-disabled, can choose to come in.*

Frank: *Well we can make it accessible. Like I said, when they get to the stairs, we carry them up the stairs, and help them back in their chairs. They can get into the building like everybody else.*

Louise: *Carrying them up the stairs is not accessible.*

Teresa: *It took me so much energy to get in here just to meet with you—just climbing up those stairs.*

Frank: *But if there are people to help carry you in and out?*

Teresa: *But I consider myself an independent woman. I don't want people to carry me up and down the stairs. I want to be able to come and go freely, and feel that this is part of my community.*

Louise: *We would love to have you as part of our community. I don't want to put you on the spot, but would you allow us to bring your example to the board so that we can try to make some changes?*

Teresa: *Certainly. And I would be one of the first to come and work on that committee that would be struck.*

Frank: *But we can't make any promises. Just leave your name and number with our secretary...*

**Comment:** This church thought that they were a very open church. They welcome everybody who comes in, but they never realized that there was an accessibility problem in the church. It never occurred to some of them that there is a group of people that they leave out, and that would like to be part of the church, even though one of the ministers has repeatedly reminded them of this. The other minister sees nothing unusual or demeaning in his suggestion that a disabled person can be carried in and out. This drama demonstrates some of the difficulties, barriers, and social limitations that disabled people face in their efforts to integrate into our communities, churches, and society at large. The problem is one of accessibility relative to choice of involvement and community gratification.

### Questions for a walk through your church building:

1. What is visible or not visible from chair height?
2. What makes parts of your building inaccessible? Who might have trouble getting around your church? Where?
3. Is worship/music leadership possible for those of differing physical abilities?
4. What is the height of signs in your building? Notice boards? Light switches? Door handles?
5. How readable are the signs?
6. How is your building accessible / inaccessible for visual impairment? Hearing impairment?
7. How is your worship accessible / inaccessible for visual or hearing impairment?
8. If you have an elevator is it open for use or locked up? How difficult is it to get the key?
9. Can a person with physical limitations participate without difficulty in the sacraments?
10. How accessible are the bathrooms? Parking?
11. Are your Sunday School facilities accessible for a child (or parent) of differing abilities?
12. What are the physical limitations of your building/ church activities and what would you change if you could?
13. What can you address now and what do you hope to address later?
14. What Provincial or Federal grants are available to help you make your building more accessible?