

## Ableism and Disability Glossary

1. **Able bodied, able-minded:** Non-disabled persons, also referred to as temporarily-able-bodied since anyone could acquire a disability at any time.
2. **Ableism:** A system of attitudes, beliefs, and actions that communicates that persons with disabilities have less value than non-disabled persons. Ableism assumes that “normal” is a valid social construct. See also systemic ableism.
3. **Accessible/ accessibility:** Environments and activities in which architectural and communication barriers to participation have been eliminated.
4. **Accommodations:** Measures that allow full participation in an activity or service and provide equitable access specific to a person’s needs, e.g. providing a sign language interpreter, offering materials in large print, digital or Braille formats, describing visual elements, offering alternative foods, or avoiding flashing lights.
5. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** Signed into law in 1990 and amended since then, this Act stipulates the minimum accessibility standards for covered programs and buildings. Most sections do not apply to religious entities.
6. **Agency:** The acknowledgement that persons with disabilities have voices and will make independent decisions as actors in charge of their own lives.
7. **Ally:** A non-disabled person, or a person with a different disability (e.g. a Deaf person who advocates on behalf of persons who are blind), who under the guidance of and alongside persons with disabilities works for a just and accessible church and society.
8. **Audism:** A variation of ableism which presumes that speaking and hearing are preferred options and excludes persons who communicate using sign language.
9. **Barriers:** Aspects of society and the church which exclude or prevent full active participation of persons with disabilities. These include architectural (stairs), communication (verbal messages) and attitudinal (“we don’t have any here”) barriers.
10. **Belonging:** Beyond inclusion which implies that one group has the power to decide who to include, this term recognizes that God’s kingdom is for all of us and that all who wish to join in Christian fellowship are welcome participants with full rights.
11. **Bias:** Stigma due to a specific characteristic, in this case prejudice or discrimination against a person because they have a disability.
12. **Disability:** Having a physical or mental impairment that affects daily functioning within society. Disability is considered a social construct that is defined by society which exacerbates the impairment through structures and systems that are not accessible or accommodating.

13. **Etiquette:** Practices for interacting politely with persons of a different background, especially engaging with people who have specific disabilities. This material should be included in hospitality training for church ushers.
14. **Eugenics:** A pseudoscientific approach that assumes that some bodies and minds are superior and often favors abortion, sterilization, non-treatment, or euthanasia of persons who do not meet a given standard.
15. **Explicit bias:** Overt stereotyping and discrimination in which a person willfully treats persons with disabilities differently and more negatively than non-disabled persons.
16. **Hearing loop:** A wire loop that surrounds the seating area, this is one of several types of assisted listening systems that allows the sound system to be accessed directly through a hearing aid or individual receiver.
17. **Hidden/ invisible disabilities:** Disabilities not physically evident to others but that still impact one's life and may require accommodations for full participation. This may include persons with mental health needs, back injuries, severe allergies, chronic fatigue or pain, and autism.
18. **Identity-first language:** Different than person-first language, specific groups such as culturally Deaf people and autistic people prefer language that includes their disability as an important part of their identity.
19. **Impairment:** The physiologic or psychological portion of a disability due to an organ or body part that does not work in the typical fashion, e.g. poor vision, a paralyzed extremity, or a learning disability.
20. **Implicit bias:** Unconscious attitudes and prejudice against people with disabilities.
21. **Inclusion/ inclusive:** Efforts to make programs or ministries open to persons of all abilities, and to facilitate integration of children or adults with and without disabilities.
22. **Infantilization:** Treating adults with disabilities as children, shown in tone of voice, use of words like "girl" or "boy," and a belief that people with disabilities are non-sexual.
23. **Internalized ableism:** Negative societal messages about disability that are believed by people with disabilities, which leads to low self-esteem and self-regard.
24. **Intersectionality:** Added disadvantages faced by people who are part of more than one stigmatized group, e.g. non-Caucasian, female, LGBTQ+, poor, or immigrants.
25. **Marginalized:** Groups including people with disabilities who are outside the societal power structures, whose voices are not consulted, and for whom current structures are not designed.
26. **Microaggressions:** Casual insults and offensive actions experienced daily by people in an oppressed category including people with disabilities.
27. **Normal/ normate/ normalcy:** Exhibiting species-typical behavior and characteristics – a social construct that lacks substance and is abused to mislabel and harm many people with disabilities and differences.

The DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church is a partner ministry  
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28. **Othering:** Dismissing people who fit into a labeled category such as disability as not belonging, being of less worth or importance, or even as being sub-human.
29. **Pass:** Hiding one's disability to fit in or avoid other negative consequences.
30. **Patronization:** A non-disabled person assuming to know what is best for a person with a disability.
31. **Person-first language:** A written or speech convention which places the person as the subject and the disability as one attribute, e.g. person with a disability, child who uses a wheelchair, woman who is blind, etc. Person-first syntax is preferable unless an individual requests identity-first language.
32. **Pew cuts:** Similar in concept to curb cuts, the ends of two pews are cut off and both pews shortened so that there is room for a person using a wheelchair to sit within the congregation, next to friends or family.
33. **Privilege, able:** The unearned advantages that non-disabled people encounter daily without awareness, including buildings, programs, and communication systems that are designed for non-disabled people.
34. **Speaking center:** Placing the perspectives and voices of people with disabilities in the forefront of the conversation and using the viewpoint of and impact on people with disabilities when discussing issues relating to disabilities.
35. **Systemic ableism:** Practices embedded into the power structure that discriminate against people with disabilities and create an unlevel playing field in education, housing, justice, healthcare, employment, and more. Also called institutionalized ableism.
36. **Trauma-informed practices:** Looking beyond behavior to understand the impact of accumulated experiences of oppression and adversities common to people with disabilities and other marginalized groups, and providing the support needed to heal from these.
37. **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** A human rights document adopted in 2006 which aims to improve the status of and opportunities for people with disabilities around the world.
38. **Universal design:** A set of principles to enable the built environment to be flexible and adaptive enough without specific accommodations to meet the needs of nearly all users.

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