

## **FAQ#15: I've just been elected chair of my conference Disability Concerns team! What do I need to know and do?**

### **Groundwork**

- Read Paragraph 653, *The Book of Discipline (BOD)* to learn your committee's responsibilities.
- Check your conference website to see what information and resources are currently in place.
- If possible, interview the outgoing chair to learn about their activities, successes, and insights.
- Contact your conference staff liaison to find out if there is a budget and what other support is available, e.g., Zoom hosting.
- Connect with persons elected to your team. Individual phone or video conversations will help you discern their strengths, skills, passions, experience, and connections. Assign them homework, i.e., reading the information linked below. If you need more members, be sure to include people with differing disabilities as well as family members and professionals. You may want a representative from each district.
- If you are not already on the DisAbility Ministries Committee (DMC) mailing list, sign up for the newsletter and read back issues in the [Newsletter & Articles Archive](#). Supporting and working through you is a high priority for the DMC and we want to be in touch with you!
- Explore the DMC website to learn about the [Annual Accessibility Audit](#) for Churches and about [Disability Awareness Sunday](#) resources.
- Find nearby conferences with active committees by consulting the [Disability Committees directory](#). Contact us at [information@umcdmc.org](mailto:information@umcdmc.org) to be introduced to other chairpersons in your jurisdiction.
- Reach out to the UM [Association of Ministers with Disabilities](#) and [Committee on Ministry with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries](#) – members in your region are potential resources.
- Review the relevant articles in the [May/June 2014](#) issue of *New World Outlook*.

### **Getting started**

- Schedule a virtual team meeting to get acquainted, set goals priorities, and develop an action plan. Prayer and a Bible study on [disability theology](#) are good places to start to ensure a shared focus on the ministry to which you are called.
- Don't try to do everything at once. Start where there is passion and commitment.
  - Agree on how to become visible in your conference so churches know about your resources: web page on the conference site? Facebook page? display at annual conference?
  - Decide if you want promote [Disability Awareness Sunday](#) (Paragraph 265, *BOD*) and offer resource materials. If so, prior to the annual conference submission deadline you need to write a petition setting the date, using the form and process from your conference website.
  - Determine how you will help your annual conference session be as accessible as possible. Start with the Events Accessibility Checklist and other materials at [Conference Accessibility](#).
  - Decide if you are ready to participate in the badge project, which is designed to be run by the Disability Concerns committee. Refer to the "[Disability-friendly and Accessible Church Badge Project Process](#) for Annual Conference Disability Ministry Committees" for details.
  - Establish a regular meeting schedule to support each other and keep moving forward.