

A Service of Worship for Disability Awareness Sunday

Entrance

Quiet Meditation: “God has made us.” *Psalm 100:3b*

Opening Hymn: Blessed Assurance
[Fanny Crosby](#), a blind hymn writer, composed the hymn.

Litany of Thanksgiving:

One: We are all reflections of the divine image.

In every life we catch a glimpse of the presence of God.

All: Thank you for creating us in challenging and amazing ways.

One: Our disabilities and our abilities are all gifts to the body of Christ,
each necessary and irreplaceable.

All: Thank you for creating us in challenging and amazing ways.

One: Our disabilities invite us to join with the divine in acts of creation and imagination
assisting the world in finding new ways to live and move and have being.

All: Thank you for creating us in challenging and amazing ways.

One: Our disabilities expand sacred space in order to enable humanity to better experience the
presence of God.

All: Thank you for creating us in challenging and amazing ways.

One: Our disabilities strengthen the bonds of community.

All: Thank you for creating us in challenging and amazing ways.

One: Our disabilities can give those who struggle hope through our unique witnesses of faith.

All: Thank you for creating us in challenging and amazing ways. Amen.

Anthem: Sweet Hour of Prayer #496 UMH
[William Walford](#) was a blind hymn composer.

Proclamation and Response

Prayer for Illumination:

As we use our senses in differing ways, reveal Your holy word to us in transformative ways. Communicate with us intimately so that our communal faith might be strengthened and we might live more inclusively as the Church of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture Lessons: Select one or more lessons

Old Testament Reading: 2 Samuel 9:1-13

David’s kindness, along with his act of equality, is shown toward Jonathon’s son who has a disability (ref: 2 Sam 4:4).

Psalm Reading: Psalm 88

The writer of Psalm 88 has a strong resemblance of a person experiencing depression.

Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:3-4

These verses encourage humility, both personal and cultural humility, and advocacy for others.

Children's Sermon

Consider a message about advocacy. Another idea is teaching the children how to sign the [passing of the peace](#) in ASL.

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:57-66

John the Baptist's infant naming ceremony includes an accommodation provided to his (deaf) mute father, Zechariah, where persons signed / gestured to him, even giving him a writing tablet to communicate the infant's name. It even foreshadows God's accommodation (Christ) for humanity.

Hymn: It is Well with My Soul

[Horatio Spafford](#), a hymn composer, suffered with a mental disorder.

Sermon: The [Disability Ministries Committee](#) of The United Methodist Church offers sermons and illustrations.

Affirmation of Faith:

We believe in a God who created everyone and called them very good. No one is created broken, defective, or unnecessary. Every life is created with sacred worth and everyone is a wondrous gift from God to the world.

We believe in Jesus Christ who is found most clearly in the lives of those who seem to be the least important to society. Jesus invites all to live their lives fully, teaching that it is our faith that makes us whole.

We believe in the Holy Spirit who calls us all to serve and not to be served and who gives to all, holy gifts for the edification of the body. The Holy Spirit cultivates the fruits of a productive life in every believer, enabling them to share with others: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control.

We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ and every one of us has an essential part to play in the salvation of the world through its ministries of grace. Every life radiates the glory of God, and every life is a blessed gift to the world. Amen.

Prayers and Concerns:

Prayer of Confession:

You are the potter and we are the clay shaped by Your hands, glazed and fired in your kiln. You look upon us with delight and You perceive that which makes us irreplaceable to Your life. Forgive us for seeing others as broken. Forgive us for our

ableism that treats their lives as unimportant. Forgive us for our lack of imagination, our lack of affirmation, and our outright denigration of Your beloved children. Give us awareness of the barriers we create for others. We have been uncaring. Open our hearts to Your desire for the inclusion of all. This is our humble cry to Jesus. Amen.

Words of Pardon:

One: You are precious to God. Your life has meaning and purpose to the One who is able to use all for good. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

All: You too are precious to God. Your life also carries meaning and purpose. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

One: Now change your perspective and share God's grace!

Offering:

Consider the offering, partially (tithing) or wholly, to support an accessibility project or program to support the church's effort toward improved accessibility and inclusion.

Doxology:

Consider projecting a [signed video](#) of the Doxology.

THANKSGIVING

Invitation:

The table of the Lord is accessible to all. None is to be denied the saving grace of God poured out upon us all. Come and receive the unmerited favor of the God who adores you.

The Great Thanksgiving:

One: The Lord's creativity is beautiful in you.

All: It sparkles in your life too.

One: Embrace God's delight.

All: We are exploring with awe why our God loves us.

One: Rejoice in being accepted just as you are.

All: We do rejoice and our praise overflows.

One: Wow! Just wow!

You are the Creative One, who makes a way out of the impossible.

You call for the tearing down of barriers.

You are the One who calls for the smoothing out the way, so that all have access to You.

You want no one turned away.

We thank you for technology that expands our perceptions.

We thank you for access to language, spoken, manual, ASL, tactile, and electronic.

You are our greatest support service provider who guides and never leaves nor forsakes us.

You want no one to be left out of Your choir.
You want all of us to participate in our own unique ways.
You want us to join with the trees in the wind,
the insects that buzz in the grass,
the fish who splash in the sea,
the birds who cry out Your praise from the clouds,
even with all the people who dwell upon the earth,
and all those who dwell in heaven declaring the greatness of Your love, saying:

**All: I lift up my soul,
From where shall my help come?
My help comes from You;**

**Maker of everything.
You keep my foot or cane from stumbling.
You never are asleep.**

**No, You never sleep.
You're the shade on my right.
You're my faithful guard.**

**My guard from evil,
All my comings and goings,
You watch o'er my soul. (Psalm 121)**

One: You are faithful and so is Jesus who came and dwelt among us.
To Jesus no one was invisible.
To Jesus everyone was important, especially the neglected.
To Jesus the last were first and the first were sent to the end of the line.
We want to be like Jesus.

With Jesus no need was unimportant.
With Jesus no one was untouchable.
Jesus always made the way accessible.
We want to be like Jesus.

When others were filled with self-importance
Jesus humbled himself and became the servant of all,
washing the feet of those who betray,
the feet of those who deny,
and those who run away.
We want to be like Jesus.

When Jesus took the bread with thanksgiving on his lips,
He broke the bread and gave the first piece of bread to Judas, his betrayer,

then to all present saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken and given for you."
We want to be like Jesus.

When Jesus took the cup with thanksgiving on his lips,
He shared the cup first with Judas his betrayer, then to all present saying,
"Please drink with me, this is the cup of my blood,
poured out in honor of God's eternal covenant of grace,
a promise of forgiveness to you and to all the creation."
We want to be like Jesus.

With all of our hearts we desire to be like Jesus.
We want to make his grace accessible to everyone.
This is why we boldly make this declaration of faith:

**All: Christ died so that all might be whole.
Christ lives so that all might share in hope.
Christ will come again, so that we will all become like Jesus.**

One: Fully Accessible, Intentional Inclusion
infuse these gifts of bread and wine with Your presence,
making them for us, the very body and blood of Christ
given for all.

Fully Accessible, Intentional Inclusion
infuse the gift of our lives, our abilities and inabilities,
making them for the world, Your church,
the complete body and bride of Christ given for all.

Fully Accessible, Intentional Inclusion
create a fresh desire in the heart of Your church for inclusion.
Give us an awareness of changes that need to be made
internally and externally, so that all are granted access
to Your worship, Your good news, so that all might join together in praise.

For your grace is accessible through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
by the power and fruit of the Holy Spirit,
and through the creative imagination of the Holy who Created us all
for the honor and glory of the God who is the lover of us all. Amen.

Now let us join as one to pray the prayer Jesus taught us saying:
**All: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Thank you for inviting us to share in this Your holy mystery found in Jesus Christ. We have been acknowledged by You, loved and accepted by You. In Your grace we have become whole again. Now send us out to make You more accessible, to remove barriers and to share Your inclusion with every soul. We want all to join in our celebration of Your accessibility in Jesus' name. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

Hymn: When We All Get to Heaven

Written by [Eliza Hewitt](#), the composer had a severe spinal condition with chronic pain.

Going Forth:

**All: We go forth to be the blessing that God has created out of our lives:
Encouraging those who are struggling,
Coming along side those who need a friend,
Being the family of God to one another today and in the days to come.**

One: Now may the only one who can make all things work together for good,
the Creator, Word and the Spirit of Wonder,
be with you now and always. Amen.

Notes:

- The BWC has declared Disability Awareness Sunday is to be held on the first Sunday of February or any other Sunday that is convenient. Consider having quarterly awareness Sundays that have a particular focus (e.g., blindness, deaf and hard of hearing, medical conditions, Autism, mobility issues, a person related to your congregation, and the such).
- Children's Sermon resources include: [Reformed Worship](#) and a [list of books](#).
- Sermon helps: [Christian Reformed Church](#) and the [Inclusive Church](#)
- Literature to read can include:
 - [Disability and the Gospel](#)
 - [Black Liberation Theology of Disability](#)
- Prayers of Joys and Concerns can include praying for persons waiting to receive diagnoses, persons who have struggles due to their disability, and for those who are living with mental illness. Prayers can be lifted up for treatment providers and support persons as well.
- If persons with disabilities are asked to help lead worship on this day, it is important that they continue to help lead on other Sundays as well as it will appear disingenuous. They can serve as ushers, greeters, and in other ways to help lead. They can sing in a choir, play an instrument, sing a solo, or according to their gifts.
- The Lord's Prayer in [sign language](#).

- Additional Scriptures for considerations:
 - Genesis 32:25-32 references Jacob’s wrestling with God and having an injured hip socket which rendered Jacob with a limp (a permanent disability).
 - Exodus 4:10-12 references Moses had a speech impediment (and/or is also possibly deaf as Moses relied on Aaron to speak for him) and God chose Moses to lead the Hebrews.
 - Psalm 8 reminds readers God values ALL people and honors them.
 - Psalm 103:13-16 is an example of how people are temporarily-abled as we are all fragile; moreover, at some point with longevity we will develop a disability.
 - Acts 9:1-19 describes Saul’s (Paul) conversion, which he was temporarily blind. Yet, from other “thorn in the flesh” references he continued to have visual impairment (see Gal 6:11 and Paul’s need to write in large letters).
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 is where Paul explains how everyone is needed in the body of Christ and we are incomplete without full representation.
 - Luke 13:10-17 describes Jesus healing a woman with a [disability](#) that not only shows the [intersectionality](#) of gender and disabilities, but reminds us that everyone has dignity before the Lord.
 - Matthew 9:20-22 includes the healing of the woman with years of bleeding (hemorrhages), showing Christ’s mercy toward her medical problem.

The Commission on Disability Concerns is grateful to Rev. Mary Johnson who wrote most of this liturgy, along with Rev. Leo Yates, the Accessibility and Inclusion Coordinator of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Rev. Nancy Webb (retired elder BWC) who reviewed and added additional notes.