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## **MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS**

- Wheelchair use provides freedom. Don't assume that using a wheelchair is in itself a tragedy. It is a means of freedom, which allows the user to move about independently.
- A person who uses a wheelchair may be able to walk, but that person still needs the wheelchair. Try not to move the wheelchair or crutches out of reach of the person who uses them.
- Be respectful. A person's wheelchair is part of their body space and should be treated with respect. Don't hold onto or lean on it unless you have the person's permission.
- Always ask the wheelchair user if they would like assistance before you help. It may be necessary for the person to give you some instructions. An unexpected push could throw the wheelchair off balance.
- If lifting a wheelchair, be sure to follow the person's instructions implicitly. If there are any questions of your ability, look for stronger, more able hosts/helpers.
- Offer their choice of locations for seating (left or right – front or back - of the auditorium).



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

- To demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ by sharing in His acceptance, His respect, His comfort, and His purpose towards all people affected by disabilities because of who they are - made in His image, and not based on their appearance, abilities or social position.
- To encourage and equip the church to minister to people with disabilities.
- To encourage each person with disabilities to identify and minister their gifts to the body of Christ and to their community.

## **INTRODUCTION**

- Disabled people need to be welcomed into the church community, recognizing all they have to share and recognizing their special needs.
- Meeting someone with a disability need not be an awkward situation; however, many people are unsure of how to act, which can create some embarrassing moments. This guide has been developed to help prepare church members for encounters they may have with disabled persons.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Don't ignore disabled people. Acknowledge their presence normally as you would anyone else's, and attempt to include them in whatever activity you are doing. A warm smile and a friendly conversation are very welcoming.
- Always speak directly to the person who has a disability. (Don't consider a companion to be a conversational go-between.)
- "Ask First"...Don't hesitate to ask the person who has a disability if you can help them in any way. Don't hesitate to use words like "see", "walk", "listen", etc. with disabled people.
- Whenever possible, seat disabled people with their families or friends. Special seating is available.
- Appropriate touch is often a very effective communicator of love, concern and understanding.
- Use positive language when referring to disabilities, rather than using negative terms such as "crippled", "stricken". "afflicted, or "victims".

### **VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

- When greeting a person who has a visual impairment, be sure to identify yourself and ask them what kind of assistance you can provide.
- Explain to a person with a visual problem where things are located.
- If a blind person has a guide dog, ask how much room is needed. Do not pet, feed, speak or distract a "working dog" unless given permission by the user. It is important for these two to work as a team without distractions.
- Always offer them your arm by asking them which arm they prefer. Use directional words when guiding a blind person to their seat. Describe their surroundings, seating choices, order of service and give clear simple instructions. That is: "Go up the aisle for prayer".
- If you are seated by a blind person, offer assistance during the alter call, communion or in exiting the sanctuary. Offer your arm to guide; never grab or push.

### **HEARING IMPAIRMENTS**

- Speak clearly and slowly, but don't exaggerate or shout. (Sometimes it may be necessary to communicate in writing.)
- Look directly at the person and speak expressively; remember your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements' help in understanding.
- Remember to address the person with the disability and not someone who may be serving as an interpreter for that person. Speak as you would normally.
- Try to seat a hearing impaired/Deaf person in an appropriate position in front of the pastor/speaker (especially if no signer is present.)

### **SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS**

- Try to give whole, unhurried attention to the person who has difficulty speaking. If you do not understand them, do not hesitate to ask them again.
- Remember the person with a speech impairment may have their own means of communication other than by speech. - writing, pointing, keyboard, voice box etc.