

Disability Inclusion Sunday

September 8, 2024



Worship Material

Preface

Grace and peace to you from PDC!

Thank you for interest in the PDC Disability Inclusion Sunday Worship Material for 2024. Presbyterians for Disabilities Concerns (PDC) in network with Presbyterian Health Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) welcomes those who affirm, support and advocate for the gifts, rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities in the total life of the church.

We are honored to have the wonderful contributors of this packet share their time and talent to compile this packet. We pray that it will spark the inclusion of all abilities within your groups, committees, and congregations to live out the true meaning of the “Body of Christ.”

PDC has created this Disability Inclusion Sunday Worship Material for congregations to use as they celebrate Inclusion Sunday on September 8. Please use it and edit as you see fit for your worship setting. We pray that your celebration will be joyful and spirit-filled.

Blessings,
The PDC Leadership Team 2024

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Worship Scripture

Scripture is from the *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)*

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

22A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
favor is better than silver or gold.

²The rich and the poor have this in common:
the LORD is the maker of them all.

⁸Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.

⁹Those who are generous are blessed,
they share their bread with the poor.

²²Do not rob the poor because they are poor
or crush the afflicted at the gate,

²³for the LORD their cause
despoils of life those who despoil them.

Reflections on *Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23*

Prepared by Marijo Hockley, B.S.; M.Div.

PDC Clerk

As a person with a very visible mobility disability, I have had to self-advocate many times for physical access and on a less apparent scale, inclusion. Yes, unfortunately, sometimes this in a faith setting. It can be daunting and exhausting to do what is seems like over and over again, proving myself worthy and capable. I am not proving myself to God. I am proving myself to others. Yet, I only need to read *Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23*, to know I have the best and most loving advocate that walks with me daily. It is the Lord our God. My worth is not judged by my leg's ability to walk or my hand's ability to grasp objects. God looks into my heart to see how I treat others. Do I show them the love and compassion I too desire? I pray that I do and ask for forgiveness when I do not. The bottom line is that God's mercy is given to the rich and the poor, the able and those that are not. What matter is the person, created in the image of God and how they serve God and one another. May the grace of God be with you always. Amen.

Psalm 125:1-5

A Song of Ascents

¹Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
cannot be moved but abides forever.

²As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
the LORD his people
this time on and forevermore.

³For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest
the land allotted to the righteous,
so that the righteous might not stretch out
their hands to do wrong.

⁴Do good, O LORD, to those who are good
to those who are upright in their hearts.

⁵But those who turn aside to their own crooked ways,
LORD lead away with evildoers.
be upon Israel!

Reflections on *Psalm 125:1-5*

Prepared by Rev. Dr. Karen R. Moritz

PCUSA Disability Consultant in Blindness and Low Vision

Although not directly related to Disability Inclusion Sunday, the Psalm for today lays a foundation for the theme of the day. Psalm 125 is classified by the NRSV as a “Prayer for Deliverance from national enemies.” More generally, it can be categorized as a prayer of Lament. As the notes in the NRSV go on to point out, verses 1-3 express confidence in God. In this prayer the author expresses the believe that all people will be protected by God. The author uses the image of the steadfast mountains that surround the holy city of Jerusalem. Just as these mountains have, and always will, provide protection for this city, God will eternally provide protection for God’s people. On this Disability Inclusion Sunday, we can also share in this prayer of confidence that God has, and always will care for all of God’s people. The promises of protection and help were offered to the ancient Israelites. Now all of us who have been welcomed into the family of God can share in the hope offered in the words of this Psalm. Like the great mountains God will continue to surround and protect all people.

James 2:1-17

2My brothers and sisters, do not claim the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory while showing partiality.²For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in,³and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Have a seat here in a good place, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “Stand there,” or, “Sit by my footstool,”⁴have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?⁵Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?⁶But you have dishonored the poor person. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into the courts?⁷Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well.⁹But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.¹¹For the one who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery but you murder, you have become a transgressor of law.¹²So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.¹³For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it?¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?¹⁷So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Reflections on *James 2:1-17*
Prepared by Sarah VanderZee McKenney D. Min., M.Div.
Spiritual Support and Volunteer Coordinator
Stone Belt Arc Inc.

This message in James reminds me of many different ways in which our biases become assumptions and then judgments against others. We all have biases, because we primarily only know what we are most familiar with and based on our own experiences. So biases are not something we can necessarily escape. However, it's what we do with those biases that may lead to assumptions and judgments. This is when we get into dangerous territory that James is talking about. It's when we start treating people differently because those biases have led to assumptions, and we then treat others differently based on those differences.

Many of us with disabilities, visible or invisible, experience this judgment. When people's biases (because of the limited information and experience of disability) lead to assumptions, which lead to judgment and a difference in how people treat us. A person may have a physical disability and therefore people talk to them in a cutesy tone (as if they were a small child), or a person with an intellectual disability is treated like they don't have opinions and preferences. The sin that James is talking about here is the sin of assumptions, judgment, and shifting people into a power structure that puts some people ahead of others. We do this a lot in society. I think its because as humans we feel the need to push others down in order to give us power (to help feed the ego). James is saying that this is not at all Christ-like, in Christ, there is no power ranking system where some have higher priority or are more important than others. We are all in need of Christ's love and forgiveness like the next person.

I really like that James starts this argument by stressing that we can not, and should not, put others down, especially to lift our own selves up. That those assumptions, those judgments, and that act of placing people into various positions of priority and power is where it starts. If we see each other, disabled | non-disabled, rich | poor, tall | short, male | female, etc. as equally as "beloved brothers and sisters" and

“heirs of the kingdom”, then we are reminded that we are equal and just as loved by God as anyone else; only then can we really see why we must treat our neighbors as ourselves.

This text is a big reason I try to lean in with curiosity and love to learn and embrace anyone who is particularly different from me. I carry my biases because I carry with me my own unique perspective and experience of the world, but this text reminds me to step into those biases with love and to lead with curiosity, compassion, and understanding. There is no power ranking system when it comes to God’s love, and I want to try to live into that as much as possible. What is truly magical and holy, is when these moments of honest connection reveal something new about the other person and of God.

Mark 7:24-37

²⁴From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre, entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice,²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.²⁶ Now the woman was a gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.²⁷ He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.”²⁸ But she answered him, “Sir, the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”²⁹ Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.”³⁰ And when she went home, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

³¹Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue.³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”³⁵ And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly.³⁶ Then Jesus them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

Reflections on Mark 7:24-37 **Prepared by Hunter Steinitz, M.Div.** **PDC Moderator**

There are two characters in this passage who live with disability, the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and the deaf man. While neither one is named or speaks, both of these people have an encounter with God that reconnects them with their community. It is important to note that the ancient worldview of disability is very different from the modern understanding. We know that physical and mental illnesses are not demonic, nor are they the product of evil forces. It is important to remember that people with disabilities, both then and now, are living and breathing people, not objects of inspiration or sympathy. Jesus opens access to the Kingdom for all, disabled people included.

**Reflections on Disability Inclusion Sunday (September 8, 2024)
and Mark 7:24–37**

**From the PC(USA) Office of Theology & Worship
Presbyterians for Disability Concerns
Written by David Gambrell**

September 8, 2024, is observed as Disability Inclusion Sunday in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As it happens, the Gospel reading for this Sunday in the Revised Common Lectionary is Mark 7:24–37, in which Jesus casts out a demon from the daughter of a Syrophenician woman and heals a man who is deaf and has a speech impairment. While the scripture passages of the ecumenical lectionary were not chosen with denominational emphases in mind, this convergence presents certain challenges and opportunities for worship leaders seeking to promote disability inclusion. Here are some points to consider.

First, the Syrophenician woman boldly challenges Jesus to extend his ministry to the gentiles; Jesus praises her faith and heals her daughter. How might we expand our own ministries with people who have been outcast, excluded, or considered unclean?

Second, in approaching the first part of this text, leaders should be mindful of the ways in which mental illness or other invisible disability have been attributed to demonic influence. There is a long history of telling people struggling with invisible disability that they just don't believe hard enough for God to heal them. Naming that and pointing to presence of God in the midst of the turmoil would go a long way toward lessening stigma.

Third, Jesus goes on to minister to “a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech” (Mark 7:32, NRSVue). Jesus' prayer is “Ephphatha,” an Aramaic word meaning, “Be opened.” How might we adopt a posture of openness in our own ministries with people with disabilities?

Fourth, in preaching and prayer, worship leaders should be careful (on this day and always!) to avoid language that uses disability as a metaphor for sin. For instance, we can say that we are insensitive to suffering and ignore the needs of our neighbors instead of using the images of blindness or deafness.

Finally, in *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* (Abingdon Press, 1996; see pp. 92–103), Kathy Black notes that, while it follows a passage on demonic possession, this story in no way connects the man's disability to forces of

sin or evil. Black also relates some of the history of interpretation around this passage. At one time, Mark 7 was used to promote “oralism,” a policy that forced deaf people to speak verbally and read lips, forbidding them from using sign language; this is but one example of how people without disabilities have sought to fit others into a “normal” and “able” box. In recent years, some deaf communities have reclaimed passage as a story of liberation, one that demonstrates Jesus’ compassion for those who are isolated and excluded in society.



Speaking Words that Welcome

Language, Messages, and Communications (with Visual Cues)

Our words matter. When we are teaching, preaching, and leading our words matter. Language around ability and disability should be positive and affirming, or *ability positive*. In addition to the language we choose, we need to exercise intentionality about the messages we share about differing abilities as we approach scripture, employ curriculum, and select or create music and liturgy. Finally, to welcome all, we should look to expand our methods of communication, especially enhancing our words with visual cues.

Welcoming Language

Our positive view and language around disability helps our whole congregation have a more positive view of people of all abilities.

- Part of being ability positive is to be mindful about using [person first or identity first language](#). Here are some other resources:
 - [This video](#) from Special Olympics is accessible and memorable.
 - For the use of language in formal writing, check [this resource](#).
 - Forbes has a helpful article on [the dos and don'ts of identity language](#).
 - The National Youth Leadership Network offers [this youth-focused resource](#).
 - For writers and those who prepare written materials, check out the [Guidelines for Writing](#) sheet from the ADA National Network.
- When in doubt about when to use person first or identity first language, pay attention to how a disabled person speaks of themselves and model your language after theirs.
- Be careful to talk about mobility supports as gifts from God that help people engage fully. Stay away from “wheelchair bound,” instead talk about “using a wheelchair,” or “wheelchair users.”

Welcoming Messages

Many of us have come to recognize the gender-biased or racially-biased messages we encounter in Bible stories, lesson plans, and hymnody, whether they be intentional or unintentional, and we have learned ways of mitigating the exclusion they create. We may not be as versed in identifying and addressing unwelcoming messages about ability diversity.

Messages in Scripture

The portrayal of disability in the Bible can be a challenge for us, with disability sometimes being used to highlight healing, weakness, or someone being unfit for religious service. As preachers, teachers, and leaders, we need to engage with these texts and do the hard work of understanding them with a more positive portrayal of disability—remembering that disability and differing abilities are a part of the amazing diversity of how God created each of us.

Helpful scriptures on diversity and inclusion include Genesis 1:27a, Matthew 28: 19, and 1 Corinthians 12.

It can also be helpful to think about Christ's healing and wholeness as going beyond our bodies. Christ's healing helps us to be more inclusive, whole, and healed communities. Christ's wholeness includes the miracle of wheelchairs, walkers, assistive technology, ramps, hearing loops, sign language, and other tools for inclusion. Doctors and nurses do amazing things in our communities—but the church has something different to offer. Allowing that story to come through in our lessons and sermons can help people see the church as a place of belonging and welcome.

Especially in preaching, we have the sacred and daunting task of interpreting and sharing the word of God. When we approach preaching and disability we have the responsibility of helping people to understand disability as part of the full diversity of God's creation (J. Swinton, [*From Inclusion to Belonging: A Practical Theology of Community, Disability, and Humanness*](#)).

Some considerations for preaching or teaching are:

- Emphasize the strengths of characters who are healed in the Bible—highlight their tenacity and grit, their amazing friendships, etc. All of these characters have strong, admirable, and powerful attributes. Focus on those while you stay clear of stereotypes—especially those that equate disability with weakness or sin.
- When reading healing stories in the Bible, think about the healing that comes through assistive devices, technology, and inclusive communities.
- When dealing with a healing story, you may want to name the text as out of keeping with our current understanding of disability. Phyllis Tribble has helped us learn to read “[texts of terror](#)” by lifting up the misogyny that is revealed in certain narratives. It can be valuable and powerful to name texts that portray disability in a negative light with this same lens.
- Consider using a disability positive passage, like Matthew 25, to interpret the passage that you are preaching or teaching on.

Messages in Curriculum

Curriculum should be chosen with an eye for good theology and a commitment to inclusion.

Adults

- Consider using a disability awareness lens and eye to inclusion to examine the topics that you choose and the curriculum that you use.
- Adult Christian Education is a wonderful place to address disability directly. Consider a series on disability theology, or faith and disability. Check out [the study guide for the PCUSA statement on disability](#), and see the Resource Roadmap in this toolkit for suggested specific resources.
- In addition to specific materials that connect faith and disability, be sure that disability is included in topics for discussion. If you are looking at race and equity, be sure to include disability as the largest minority group in our country. If you are addressing parenting, look for resources that discuss common disabilities and the ways that parents can support their children.
- In Bible study be sure to name the stereotypes that can emerge in the Bible and be intentional about showing how what may be a disability has strengths.
- Look for curricula that include disability in discussions of equity, parenting, Bible study, etc. Examples are [Follow Me](#)—a new curriculum designed for the whole church—from the PCUSA, [Life with God](#) from Rivers of Grace, and [The FYI on Youth Ministry Podcast](#) from the Fuller Youth Institute.
- When you are considering a curriculum, be on the lookout for stereotypes and language around disability—call it out when you see it—and look for materials that avoid this kind of language and imagery.
- When you are leading a class, be aware of outdated terms and language—when you see it, point it out, and give the correct term. See "Welcoming Language" above and the Resources Roadmap in this toolkit for guidelines.

Children & Youth

- Look for curricula that is written with good writing guides around disability, that portrays disability in a positive light, and that includes suggestions of modifications and supports which promote inclusion and belonging. Three suggestions are the PCUSA's [Big God Big Questions](#), [Follow Me](#), and [Growing in Grace and Gratitude](#).
- Modify the curriculum that you have—change the words, change the phrases, adapt the activity—so that it supports and cares for every child under your care. See "Welcoming Language" above and the Resources Roadmap in this toolkit for guidelines.
- Communicate concerns and needs to publishers. We are all a part of nurturing the faith of our children, and when you find things that need to be changed or are missing, please advocate for children all throughout the church by saying something.
- Consider sometimes using a disability awareness curriculum, but be mindful of how inclusion and disability are portrayed. Here are [Three Tips for Success](#). And here is a [sample lesson](#).
- When planning camp and summer programming, be sure to plan for kids of all abilities. See [8 Tips to make Camp more Inclusive](#).

Messages in Music and Liturgy

- When looking at lyrics/texts, notice and acknowledge that many of our favorite hymns portray disability as equivalent to sin, distance from God, or weakness. Be mindful of this when choosing. Look for outdated language in hymns, and consider skipping hymns, leaving out verses, or substituting a word. Work with music leaders in your midst to identify new songs or alternative texts. See the resource [Inclusive Hymns, Exclusive Language](#).
- People who use wheelchairs to support mobility have asked worship leaders to use the phrase “You may rise in Body or Spirit” in bulletins when the congregation is to rise. Many people have expressed that using the phrase “Please stand” or “Please stand as you are able” highlights a separation from people whose bodies function differently.
- Proofread sermons, prayers, and liturgy for person first or identity first language.

Welcoming Communication

In our ministry settings, we have lots of ways to connect with people and to communicate. From stained glass windows to websites, newsletters, word of mouth, signs, and pew racks, we think about the work of connecting with people as essential to sharing God’s message of love and grace. Using these same platforms and resources to communicate about disability and inclusion can be as easy as thinking about established communication routes in new ways.

- The language used in ministry can engage all the senses. For example, as we prepare for communion and baptism, we can allow people see and hear the water and juice by lifting the pitcher high to let them splash. Let people see and hear the bread break. We can also use descriptive words to support the sensory experiences.
- Design slides and websites with accessibility in mind. See these [PowerPoint best practices](#) and [guidelines for web design](#).
- Take a look at digital ministries—are they inclusive? See more [here](#).
- Use the microphone! When you upgrade your sound system, be sure that you are compatible with hearing assistance devices and consider installing a [hearing loop](#). (See more about auditory supports in the Creating Sacred Space for All Quicksheet in this toolkit.)

- Support printed words with icons and images, or *visual cues*. This is helpful for those of all ages and abilities, including nonreaders, across your ministry settings. For example, consider creating an [illustrated worship bulletin](#) that will give people an orientation to what happens in worship. Visual schedules based upon the icons used in your worship bulletin may then be created for all of your church's activities as a great support not only for people who might struggle with processing, but for children, and any newcomer to your church. See a complete discussion of this type of support, including the creation of illustrated worship bulletins, below.

Using Visual Cues for Communication

Visual schedules and infographics have been used as a support to people of all abilities for years. Speech-language pathologists developed the use of icons to enhance communication, to support behavior, and to encourage engagement. For people with limited English or English literacy, for young children, for people with high visual intelligence, and for some people living with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), a visual format is an easier way to take in information.

One strength of inclusion in faith settings is that so many worshipping communities use a predictable format. Making that format more explicit is a valuable support. You can use a simple, consistent set of icons to create a visual schedule that may be incorporated into your worship bulletin and then used across your media platforms and in all your other ministries.

Creating an Illustrated Worship Bulletin and Icon Template for all ministries

- Step 1 - Identify the parts of your worship service (prelude, opening hymn, prayer, etc.)
- Step 2 - Choose icons for each part of worship—pair these with the titles used in worship.
- Step 3 - Use your icon template to create illustrated worship materials.
- Step 4 - Integrate the same icons in your template to create visual schedules for your other ministry settings. Add them to your slide templates for online worship, use them on screens for in-person worship, post them at your fellowship events, pull them into curriculum, employ them in your small group leader and participant guides, use them on youth retreats and mission trips, etc.

Here are some sources of icons and examples of visual schedules:

- [Worship Guide](#)
- [Visual Schedule](#) and [Disability Support Map](#) from *Growing in Grace and Gratitude*
- [Picture Guide](#) with Pull down windows
- [Pinterest Visual Support Page](#)
- [Christian Worship Icons](#)
- [Boardmaker](#) and [SymbolStix](#) are two systems of icons for creating [visual schedules](#), curriculum, websites, slides, bulletins, and other media. Or go more low tech with some adaptation of [this](#).

Employing simple, consistent icons used as visual cues, as well as improving the accessibility of all our media platforms, can be powerful supports for welcoming communication any time we gather together. Likewise, carefully examining scripture, curricula, and music and liturgy for negative messages about disability can help us prevent excluding those we wish to welcome. Finally, committing to language that is ability positive, by attending to our use of person first or identity first phrasing and to our characterization of assistive devices, not only ensures that our words are welcoming, but also undergirds a positive view of ability diversity for all in our faith communities.

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Office of Christian Formation: www.pcusa.org/formation

March 2022



Prayers on Disability Inclusion

Written by Hunter Steinitz and Marijo Hockley

CALL TO WORSHIP (from 1 Corinthians 12)

One: Praise the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth!

All: Praise God who is Love, who made us in their Image.

One: We give thanks that just as the body is one and has many parts, so too is the Body of Christ.

All: For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, disabled or nondisabled-- we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

One: The Body of Christ is not complete without all of its members. Guide us, Holy Maker, to embrace the complex diversities of the one Body you call us to be. To the Glory of God, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, the three in one, now and forever.

All: Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All: Holy and Loving God, you show no favoritism to your children. All are beloved in your sight. Sadly, we do not always act as you beloved people. We exclude, when we need to include. We turn away from those longing to belong. Forgive us, truly merciful God. Teach us to embrace all your children without exception. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: Friends, this is the Good News of Jesus Christ. We have been made flawless through His Cross. We rejoice that when we ask for forgiveness, we are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God, we are forgiven.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy Incarnate One, Word made flesh, we thank you for the gifts of all people made in the Image of God. We thank you for loving us so completely that you took on the joys and sorrows, pains and pleasures of this world. We know that you lived and walked among us, touching our pain and feeling our hurt. We praise you, that in your reconciling love you restored lives and communities through your healing acts, and in doing so proclaimed the belovedness of all abilities.

We come to you with hearts and minds weighed down with worries and sorrows. And we lift up your beloved children whom this world considers disabled. We praise you for the [1 in 4 Americans](#) who identify as disabled, and we pray that as the conversation around disability continues to grow, you would pour out your compassion and mercy.

The lives of disabled people are obscured by popular stereotypes and misunderstandings. Give us the clarity and awareness to move past our judgements to notice the living breathing people in our midst. Soften our hearts and open our minds to the challenges and triumphs that disabled people experience. You remind us that while people with disabilities may or may not want to be healed, they are already whole.

The types of disabilities may vary, and it can be hard to recognize it, even when it's right in front of us. Many disabilities are not visible, give us grace to learn about and accept what is before us, in all shapes and sizes. Many living with disabilities are isolated from their communities, both in the Scriptures and still today. We pray for all those wrestling with their bodies and minds, Help them to know that they do not wrestle alone. Like Jacob, their persistence in the face of adversity will be rewarded. We pray for those still struggling with Covid and Long Covid. The pandemic was the largest mass disabling event in living memory. Grant us the grace to be kind to ourselves and our neighbors as we all adjust to life in a post-Covid world.

We give thanks for all those who help support people with disabilities. Those who work with folks with intellectual disabilities on the job, and those who care for people with complex needs. We give thanks for those blessed to receive services that allow them independence and security. And we pray for those who don't qualify, and for those struggling to achieve services. We pray for those seeking medical coverage for life sustaining medicine and equipment, that they may find what they seek. And we pray for those who live in areas that lack the medical infrastructure to treat their disability.

And even with all these challenges, these are still members of the Body of Christ, bestowed with gifts of the Spirit for the common good. We give thanks for these gifts and we pray that we, as the Church, might grow into the accessible and inclusive Kin-dom that welcomes the talents and leadership of people with disabilities. We pray that you would hasten the day when all will live as they are meant to, as those who bear the Image of God who is love into the world. We pray all this and more in the name of the Incarnate One, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray by saying, **“Our Father, who art in heaven...”**

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION/BLESSING

One: Let us bow our heads and pray for God's blessings.

God of infinite grace and wisdom, guide us on our way. In love and openness, bring us in union with those of our faith family that have been excluded. Help us to rejoice in the uniqueness of the Body of Christ, with its many beautiful parts.

Now let us go with the love and mercy of God our Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymns

“We Believe” (Apostle's Creed) Keith & Kristyn Getty - ASL by Listening Eyes

<https://youtu.be/v537xQ3--pI?si=8kgOykfWWNU8-Nml>

“I'll Walk with You” By Carol Lynn Pearson & Reid N. Nibley

<https://youtu.be/fK7NaQDtcOg?si=bSW5X7iHB93N4IIU>

“Help Us Accept Each Other”

<https://youtu.be/ckq9Qr-PT28?si=szUjbc5sCFQBT7If>

“For Everyone Born”

<https://youtu.be/F7c6BM4WuC4?si=y465DqZRvgGVDUxJ>

Hymns by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

<https://www.carolynshymns.com/index.html>

WORSHIP – HYMN

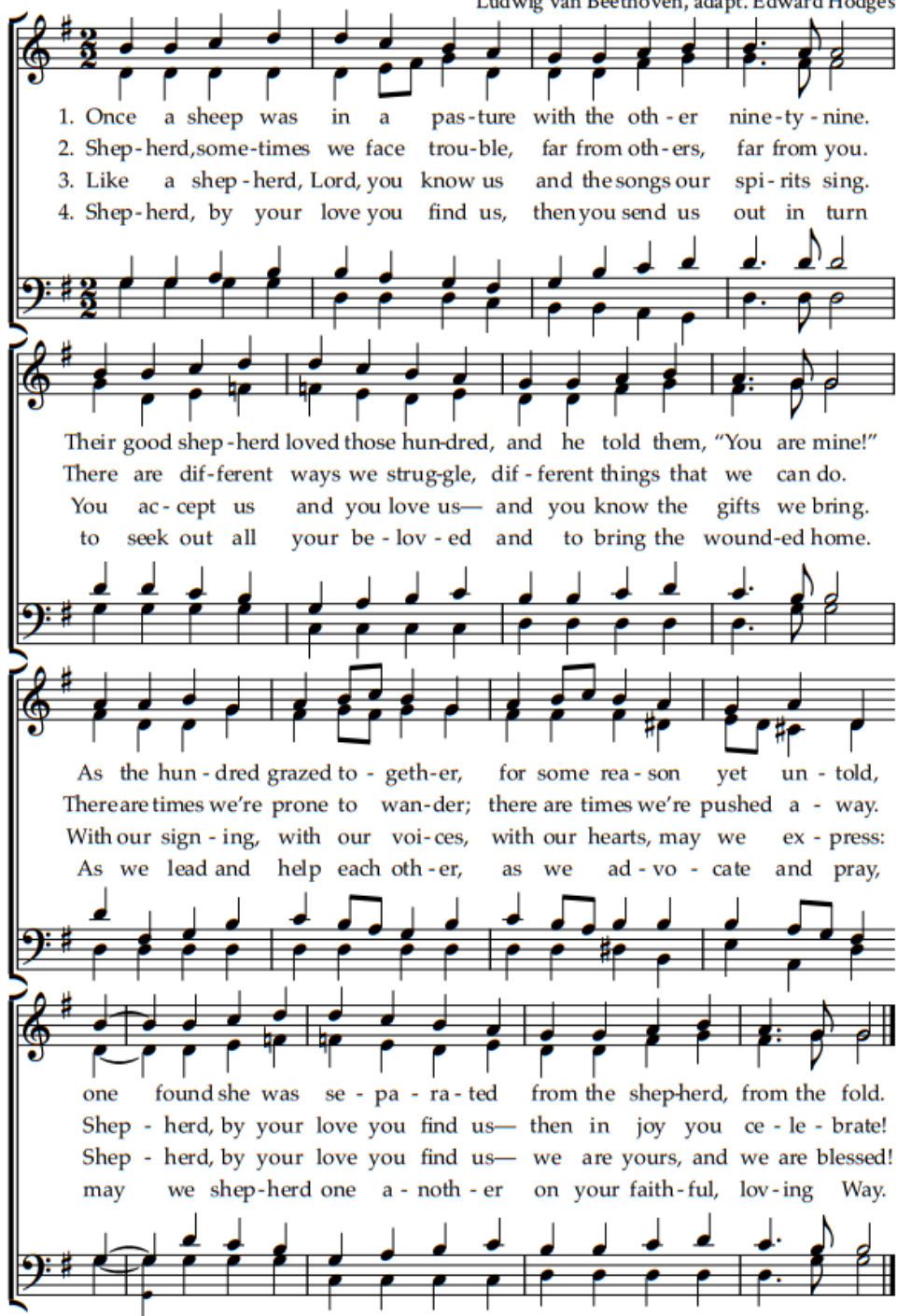
Lyrics and music score (in image format) – [accessible PDF here](#)

Once a Sheep Was in a Pasture

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2022

Hymn to Joy

Ludwig van Beethoven, adapt. Edward Hodges



1. Once a sheep was in a pas-ture with the oth - er nine-ty - nine.
 2. Shep-herd, some-times we face trou-ble, far from oth-ers, far from you.
 3. Like a shep-herd, Lord, you know us and the songs our spi-rits sing.
 4. Shep-herd, by your love you find us, then you send us out in turn

Their good shep-herd loved those hun-dred, and he told them, "You are mine!"
 There are dif-ferent ways we strug-gle, dif-ferent things that we can do.
 You ac-cept us and you love us— and you know the gifts we bring.
 to seek out all your be-lov-ed and to bring the wound-ed home.

As the hun-dred grazed to-gether, for some rea-son yet un-told,
 There are times we're prone to wan-der; there are times we're pushed a-way.
 With our sign-ing, with our voi-ces, with our hearts, may we ex-press:
 As we lead and help each oth-er, as we ad-vo-cate and pray,

one found she was se-pa-ra-ted from the shep-herd, from the fold.
 Shep-herd, by your love you find us— then in joy you ce-le-brate!
 Shep-herd, by your love you find us— we are yours, and we are blessed!
 may we shep-herd one a-noth-er on your faith-ful, lov-ing Way.

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Just lyrics:

Once a Sheep Was in a Pasture

HYMN TO JOY 8.7.8.7 D ("Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee")

Once a sheep was in a pasture with the other ninety-nine.
Their good shepherd loved those hundred, and he told them, "You
are mine!"

As the hundred grazed together, for some reason yet untold,
one found she was separated from the shepherd, from the fold.

Shepherd, sometimes we face trouble, far from others, far from you.
There are different ways we struggle, different things that we can do.
There are times we're prone to wander; there are times we're
pushed away.

Shepherd, by your love you find us— then in joy you celebrate!

Like a shepherd, Lord, you know us and the songs our spirits sing.
You accept us and you love us-- and you know the gifts we bring.
With our signing, with our voices, with our hearts, may we express:
Shepherd, by your love you find us— we are yours, and we are
blessed!

Shepherd, by your love you find us, then you send us out in turn
to seek out all your beloved and to bring the wounded home.
As we lead and help each other, as we advocate and pray,
may we shepherd one another on your faithful, loving Way.

Biblical Text: Luke 15:1-10

Tune: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824 ("Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee")

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Children's Ministry

“Who Counts?” Written Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. Illustrated by Margaux Meganck. Read by Dave Carver.

“Who Counts?” Provides a modern understanding of the parables that Jesus told in Luke chapter 15: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son.

https://youtu.be/-UHo5Ju0uIY?si=aubI_qT1UfU8P8HX

Resources

Christian Reformed Church in North America

<https://network.crcna.org/topic/justice-inclusion/disability-concerns>

THRIVE

<https://network.crcna.org/user/163411>

<https://www.crcna.org/disability>

Worship as One: Disability in Community

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0iumi_CxLI

An outstanding 12-minute video about worship communities embracing people with disabilities - 3 churches, 3 different circumstances.