

2016 RESOLUTION ON CONCERN FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

It is good and pleasing to our Lord when we are a people who heed the call of mercy and justice (Micah 6:8). A crucial way we do so is by seeking to transform our community into one which can be welcoming to all without barriers. God has created all human beings as image bearers of Himself (Genesis 1:27); disability does not diminish this image. We repent of the all too prevalent sin in our society which sees those with disabling conditions as people of lesser value. We also humbly acknowledge that as we each face unknowns in our futures, we ourselves may become the beneficiaries of the inclusive, barrier free environment we hope to inspire.

We continue to recognize our obligations and opportunities to speak and act in areas of awareness, advocacy, employment and social justice, in cooperation with and on behalf of persons with disabilities.

We recognize that each member of the Body of Christ has unique gifting, and to exclude any one member, regardless of deficits, diminishes the full priesthood of believers affirmed by Scripture (1 Peter 2:9). We also recognize and celebrate the full inclusion in worship of those with disabilities, since as the Apostle Paul instructs us: every one of us has something unique to contribute in worship (1 Corinthians 14:26).

We affirm and commend congregations, organizations and institutions throughout the Covenant that are already pace-setters for us in matters of justice and inclusion for persons with disabling conditions. Such commendation includes, but is not limited to: the work of Covenant Women Ministries who created Covenant Enabling Residences; the policy in recent years enabling youth with disabilities to attend CHIC, the new emphasis on compassion, mercy and justice through the Love Mercy Do and Justice mission priority; those congregations with educational, recreational and social programs for persons with special needs; local churches that have elected persons to boards and committees who in past years might have been overlooked or unable to enter the building; all who have gone to the effort and expense of installing elevators, ramps and assistive listening systems, constructing pew cuts, giving platform access, remodeling bathrooms, etc. We look forward to the endless opportunities that are possible as more take up this concern and lend their creativity to solutions not yet realized.

Our goal is not merely to minister *to* those with disabilities; rather to realize a shared ministry *with* those with disabilities. With this in mind, we continue to recognize our obligation and opportunity to speak and act in areas of awareness, advocacy, employment and social justice,

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on behalf of, and alongside of, persons with disabilities, and to continue to work toward inclusion of those with disabilities in our worship and fellowship. Therefore, as the 1987 Annual Meeting Resolutions on Disabilities affirmed, and as we, the Committee on Disabilities reaffirm, “We pledge ourselves to continue to be the caring community according to 1 Corinthians 12, loving every part of the body as we would love ourselves, paying special attention to the needs and gifts of people with physical, sensory, mental and emotional impairments.” Our Lord Himself has said, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these...you did for Me” (Matthew 25:40).

So, in the name and Spirit of Christ, Who values us all, even with our limitations, we pledge ourselves to leadership in these concerns by the example of our common life, employment practices, attitudes, worship, fellowship, responsibility, discipline and efforts to support one another on the spiritual journey with an attentiveness to the Spirit who transforms us into Christ's image, a reflection of God's glory.

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES MAY BE FOUND AT: Covchurch.org/justice/disability

Under the disability link are further links: Resources from the M!X (an idea exchange), Ministry Tools (including Resources for Disability Ministry, Websites for Disability Ministry and Accessibility).