**Disability Awareness Sunday Worship Resources**

The Virginia Conference encourages congregations to celebrate Disability Awareness Sunday on July 27, 2025. The Commission on Disabilities shares these resources for worship planning and additional links for more resources. The Book of Discipline states “Disability Awareness Sunday calls the Church to celebrate the gifts and graces of persons with disabilities and calls the Church and society to full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community.”

Call to Worship

Leader: Make a joyful noise to the Lord. Praise to the One who made all things!

**People: How awesome are God’s deeds! We are all the children of God with unique gifts and graces.**

Leader: On this Disability Awareness Sunday, we thank you for the varied gifts of all people, regardless of ability. May we learn from one another.

**People: Holy Spirit, enter our hearts in this time of worship. Help us to be a welcoming and truly inclusive place for all God’s children. Let all the earth worship the Lord in unity with love!**

Opening Prayer

Holy One, you are the King of all Creation. Your praise endures forever. The works of your hands are faithful, just, glorious and beautiful. Help us to welcome the diverse gifts and abilities you have given to all your people. May we welcome everyone into the body of Christ. Help us show mercy to those who are in need and not cast judgement. Give us a thirst for righteousness when we see the marginalized being mistreated. May your house be an accessible and inclusive home for all. Amen.

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.

Prayer of Confession

Father God, you have created every individual to reflect your image. But sometimes we struggle to embrace the gifts in people with disabilities and needs. We complain about the cost and trouble of adapting buildings to provide access. We park by ramps and use parking spaces designated for others. We criticize people for not looking “disabled enough.” We exclude people with disabilities because we do not appreciate the challenges they face. Yet even when we fail to be the people you call us to be, you are present in the lives of those who we would push to the margins. Forgive us, God, for failing to love the people you love. Help us to be the church that fully embraces those with disabilities, both seen and unseen. Through Christ, we pray, Amen.

Liturgy

*God created all living things good: a litany for Disability Awareness Sunday (by Deaconess Lynn Swedberg 2023)*

Leader: God created all living things. God created humans in God’s image, and God said that God’s creation was good!

**People: So we, too, believe that people of all ages, shapes, and abilities are created in the image of God.**

Leader: God called leaders like Jacob who limped from a hip injury and Moses who had a speech disability to lead God’s people!

**People: So we, too, welcome pastors and leaders with disabilities alongside pastors and leaders without disabilities.**

Leader: The Psalms celebrate that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made, and that God has loved

us since before our birth!

**People: So we, too, celebrate each child, with and without disabilities, as a unique and wonderfully made gift from God.**

Leader: Jesus welcomed children and said that His followers were to come to God like children!

**People: So we, too, are to be open and childlike in our praise of God and love of neighbor.**

Leader: Jesus reached out to people with mental and physical disabilities and helped them be

welcomed members of their communities!

**People: So we, too, welcome all people into our congregations, worship, and fellowship.**

Leader: Paul taught that the Church needs people of all gifts and abilities in order to be the whole

Body of Christ!

**People: So we, too, look for the gifts that each of us brings to the church and our communities, and we help each person find ways to serve God.**

Leader: Paul preached and spread the gospel throughout much of the known world despite his poor

vision and thorn in the flesh that kept him humble!

**People: So we, too, are witnesses for God, offering our whole selves without excuses.**

Leader: Only God our Creator, Savior, and Spirit is perfect!

**All: We are all human, called, not to be perfect, but only to do our best as loving followers of Jesus who help build God’s reign on earth and bring hope and justice for all. AMEN.**

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.**

Offertory Prayer

**God, help us to know the truth of your love in our lives; Enable us to grow in the grace we need to be agents of change for a better world. We dedicate ourselves and our gifts to your service. Amen.**

Benediction/Sending Forth

For the God who walks on wounded feet and heals with wounded hands,

For the God who stands beside us wounded, all knowing and all loving,

For the God of imperfections,

**We go into our wonderful and imperfect world to reflect God’s perfect love,**

**and in so doing, claim what it is to be truly human. Be with us we pray, Amen.**

Songs / Hymns (more suggestions and explanations can be found at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TND67JcOxVF4WLtqqodIWNmxUAnAA0Hu/view>)

#89 “Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee”: an inclusive hymn, with a joyful tune from Ludwig van

Beethoven’s 9th symphony, written when he was totally deaf.

#98 “ To God Be the Glory” by prolific hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, who was also blind

#114 “Many Gifts, One Spirit”: use as a springboard to discuss including the gifts of all, whatever they are, and extend our ideas beyond the typical thinking of gifts.

#261 “Lord of the Dance”: refers to stories of Jesus healing on the sabbath, and responds “the holy people said it was a shame.” Disability awareness work may be counter-cultural in the religious sphere, where the healing works of Jesus were often the subject of controversy.

#351 “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior”: Frances Jane “Fanny” Crosby Van Alstyne wrote poetry, secular songs, magazine articles, and hymns. Often described as blind, improper medical treatment permanently damaged her eyesight during infancy. In 1864, she claimed conversion at a Methodist service and sensed a call to hymn-writing. A prolific writer, she published several articles and about 8000 hymns. The publisher, Biglow and Main, purchased 5,959 from her. This hymn’s images come from Luke 18.35, and seem to be autobiographical. They express hope for a miraculous cure, doubts when there is none, and resolution to trust and seek only Christ. Christ, not a cure, brings ultimate relief and comfort.

#369 “Blessed Assurance”: Most of Crosby’s hymns are personal, which is typical of her time. They reflect testimony, and understanding when approached as a person expanding the roles allowed for people with disabilities (and for women).

#560 “Help Us Accept Each Other”: This hymn presents a useful reflection on mutual acceptance, hinting at the “forgive as we are forgiven” petition of the Lord’s Prayer.

#593 “Here I Am, Lord” All people, including people with disabilities, are called to serve God.

Scripture / Sermons helps (from Rev. Kendra Moore)

Lectionary: Proper 12 (17) - July 27, 2025 - Hosea 1:2-10 (Hosea and Gomer’s children) and Psalm 85 - Genesis 18:20-32 (Sodom & Gommorah) and Psalm 138 - Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19) - Luke 11:1-13

Linkfest

Virginia Conference Commission on Disabilities website: <https://vaumc.org/disabilities/>

United Methodist Disabilities Ministry: <https://www.umcdmc.org/>

Bulletin inserts for Disability Awareness: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/account-media/19721/uploaded/b/0e15368237_1675177416_bulletin-inserts-for-disability-awareness-sunday.pdf>

Western Ohio Conference DAS resources: <https://www.westohioumc.org/ministries/disability-awareness-sunday>