

# Disability Access/Inclusion Sunday 2009



Artwork by Kirsten Malcolm Berry

*“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit;  
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord ...”*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-5*

The high, clear voice of a young child startled the people gathered after worship for the punch, cookies, and fellowship. “Why do you push that thing in front of you?” The child was pointing to the walker Lois Hietala was using.

“Shhh ....,” whispered her mother, trying not to be rude as she pulled the child away.



But Lois assured the embarrassed mother.  
“It’s all right. Your daughter and I will have a little talk.” So Lois explained, “This is my walker. It goes everywhere with me because it helps me walk.”

“Does your walker make you sad?”

“Not at all. My walker is my friend. I can come to church. I can visit my friends. I have a granddaughter who might be just about as big as you. She and I can go on walks together.”

After this conversation Lois said that she hoped the child had helped her mother to be more comfortable with people with disabilities. The child helped to break the silence about disabilities. Maybe someday she will help break the barriers that bar people with disabilities from the full life of the church.

Lois has worked for many years, in her Presbytery and in her church, to break the silence and barriers. Her gifts for advocacy have moved her church, Westminster Presbyterian in Minneapolis, to install ramps, elevators, electric doors, wheelchair spaces in the sanctuary, and wheelchair access for choir members. Recently she worked with a committee planning for emergency evacuation of persons with disabilities.

Did you know that nearly 20% of people in the U.S. live with some level of disability? Yet, 90% of people with disabilities do not attend church! How about your church? Can persons with disabilities enter, worship, learn and lead? Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) produces resources that challenge congregations to include persons with disabilities in the full life of the church, to advocate with us and for us, and to celebrate the gifts we offer to the church and to our communities.

Go to [www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc](http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc) for Access/Inclusion Sunday resources that can be used every day of the year and for the *Congregational Audit of Disability Accessibility and Inclusion*.

“The Spirit gives us courage ... to hear the voices of people long silenced ...” (*Brief Statement of Faith*, 66,70)

