

Faith & Facts: Affecting Change for Persons With Disabilities

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

- **Genesis 1:27** – So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
- **I Corinthians 12:14-26** – Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.
- **Galatians 3:28, 29** – There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?

Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2005-2008

The Social Community – We urge the Church and society to recognize and receive the gifts of persons with disabilities to enable them to be full participants in the community of faith. (Paragraph 162.III)

Book of Resolutions

- **Accessibility Grants for Churches** – In 2000, the General Conference adopted this resolution to provide accessibility grants or loans to churches in each of the annual conferences. The resolution was readopted in 2008. (#3001, 2008 BOR)
- **Annual Accessibility Audit** – The General Conference required all United Methodist Churches to conduct annual accessibility checks of their facilities, noting barriers that might limit participation of persons with disabilities. (#43, 2004 BOR)
- **Assisting Personal Mobility** – In this resolution, the General Conference committed in the next quadrennium to, “focus on the need for providing personal mobility as an act of justice and compassion.” (#3004, 2008 BOR)
- **Care for People Who are Hard-of-Hearing** – This resolution helped create a budget to fund Professional American Sign Language Interpretation for delegates and nondelegates at General Conference. (#3006, 2008 BOR)
- **The Church and Deaf Ministries** – “As The United Methodist Church prepares to enter into a new century, one of our most pressing concerns is to strengthen our connection with one another and with our world. Methodism has a long history from its origins with John Wesley of commitment to its connection with the forgotten communities of our world. The United Methodist Church’s connection with the greater deaf community is a history of forgotten stories and forgotten people. Never has there been a more important

time to act as God’s people and strengthen our connection with the greater deaf community for the next century.” (#3009, 2008 BOR)

- **Closed Captioning** – The General Conference encouraged the general church to include closed captioning in all video productions. (#3007, 2008 BOR)
- **Communications Access for People Who Have Hearing and Sight Impairment** – To provide communication access for all people, the General Conference called the church to, “increase its awareness and use appropriate technologies to make essential communications accessible to people who are deaf and hearing impaired.” (#3008, 2008 BOR)
- **Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for Employers** – Beginning at the 1992 General Conference, the United Methodist Church resolved to comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act by not discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities, but “reasonably accommodate the disabilities of qualified applicants or employees, unless undue hardship would result.” (#3002, 2008 BOR)
- **United Methodist Implementation of Americans with Disabilities Act** – The General Conference further resolved to put into effect American with Disabilities Act and all disability-related programs in all areas of congregations. (#3003, 2008 BOR)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- National Organization on Disability - www.nod.org
- National Council of Churches USA: Committee on Disability - www.ncccusa.org/nmu/mce/dis

Books

- Burns, Nancy L. *Once Upon a Challenge: Hearing is Believing*. New York: iUniverse, 2009.
- Wilkinson, Mary. *Defying Disability: The Lives and Legacies of Nine Disabled Leaders*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009.

Movies

- *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. (French: *Le scaphandre et le papillon*). DVD. Directed by Julian Schnabel. Lanham: Charlie Rose, Inc., 2007.

Plot Summary: A 2007 French/American biopic/drama film based on the memoir of the same name by Jean-Dominique Bauby. The film depicts Bauby's life after suffering a massive stroke on December 8, 1995, at the age of 42, which left him with a condition known as locked-in syndrome. The condition paralyzed him from the neck down. Although both eyes work, doctors decide to sew up his right eye as it is not irrigating correctly and they fear it will become infected. He is left with only his left eye, and thereafter communicates only by blinking his left eyelid. The film was directed by Julian Schnabel, written by Ronald Harwood, and stars Mathieu Amalric as Bauby. It won awards at the Cannes Film Festival, the Golden Globes and the BAFTA Awards, as well as four Academy Award nominations.

- *Music Within*. DVD. Directed by Steven Sawalich. MGM (Video & DVD), 2007.

Plot Summary: After losing his hearing as a soldier during the Vietnam War, Richard Pimentel (Ron Livingston) returns to America, where he falls in with an unlikely circle of friends and finds a new calling as a spokesman for the disabled. His activist efforts eventually lead to the creation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This inspiring and entertaining true story won the Audience Award at the 2007 AFI Dallas International Film Festival.