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2 Suggested Title: Replace 3002 and 3302: The Church and Disability

3 General Church Budget Implications: None

4 Global Implications: Applies Globally

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6 We call United Methodists around the world to a new birth of awareness of the need to accept,
7 include, receive the gifts of, and respond to the concerns of persons with intellectual,
8 developmental, physical, mental, and/or neurological disabilities, including their families. All
9 communities, including faith communities, have persons with disabilities; moreover, the World
10 Health Organization estimates there are over 1 billion persons, approximately 15% of the world
11 population, with some form of disability.*

12 Because the experience of disabilities is universal, common to every family and at some time in
13 every life;

14 And because a large part of the ministry of Jesus focused on persons with conditions such as
15 intellectual, developmental, physical, mental, and/or neurological disabilities;

16 And because the body of Christ is not complete without people of all areas of life, including
17 persons with all types of disabilities;

18 And because there exist inadequacies both in our church and in global society with regard to
19 concerns for the rights of persons with disabilities, utilization of talents, and their full
20 participation within the life of the church and society;

21 And believing that the church is most faithful to the teachings and example of Jesus when it
22 expresses love in concrete ways in a mutual ministry with those who are marginalized, neglected,
23 avoided, or persecuted by society;

24 And believing in the legacy of John Wesley, Phillip Otterbein, and Jacob Albright, who held that
25 vital piety flows into a ministry of compassion and justice;

26 And knowing that prevailing societal norms often unduly glorify the conditions of youthful
27 beauty, mental alertness, and material affluence to the exclusion and avoidance of those whose
28 disabilities put them outside these norms,

29 Therefore, we The United Methodist Church pledge:

30 Accessibility:

31 1. We renew and increase our commitments as a church throughout the world to the
32 development of a barrier-free society, especially in the many physical facilities of the church,
33 including parsonages.

34 2. To indicate the seriousness of our intent, time limit shall be set by appropriate entities to
35 ensure the greatest physical accessibility in the shortest feasible period.

36 3. We further commit that funding shall be provided or approved by United Methodist
37 agencies only when minimum guidelines are met, for example:

38 a. providing adequate access to sanctuary pews, altars, chancel areas and pulpit, classrooms,
39 and restrooms;

40 b. providing facilities with equipment and supplies to meet the needs of persons with visible
41 and invisible disabilities, including persons with vision and/or hearing loss; and

42 c. providing curb cuts, ramps with at least a 1:12 inclination or platform lifts.

43 4. We commit that all meetings of The United Methodist Church shall be welcoming and
44 accessible to people with disabilities. In that regard, all levels of the church, including general
45 church agencies, central conferences, jurisdictions, annual conferences, and districts, shall
46 nominate and elect people with disabilities to boards and committees and enable their full
47 participation.

48 5. We commit that all United Methodist churches shall conduct an audit of their facilities to
49 discover barriers that impede the full participation of people with disabilities. (See ¶ 2533.6,
50 2012 Book of Discipline.) Steps shall then be taken to remove those barriers. The Accessibility
51 Audit for Churches is a recommended resource available from the DisAbility Ministries
52 Committee of the United Methodist Church.

53 6. We commit to continued efforts to adhere to United Nations' Standard Rules on the
54 Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), and the expansion of those
55 Standard Rules in the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("CRPD") in 2006
56 (which has been signed by 172 nations as of 2017), both with the whose primary goal is to
57 promote of promoting access to all aspects of social interaction including education,
58 employment, commerce, recreation, government, and transportation; and the United States'
59 Americans with Disabilities Act, including Title I, which states that employers "may not
60 discriminate against qualified persons with disabilities" and will "reasonably accommodate the
61 disabilities of qualified applicants or employees unless undue hardship would result."

62 7. The General Conference of The United Methodist Church shall adhere to the United
63 Nations Standard Rules and/or the Americans with Disabilities Act, as applicable, by meeting in
64 an accessible location and budgeting for accommodations needed by delegates and non-
65 delegates, including but not limited to: providing large print and alternative format materials for
66 visually impaired delegates and non-delegates; and providing professional sign language
67 interpretation and real-time captioning for delegates and non-delegates to General Conference,
68 including remote viewers.

69 Awareness:

70 1. Our Annual Conferences shall educate clergy and laity to about the needs and
71 opportunities for ministry with and by persons with disabilities and their families.

72 2. Our Annual Conferences shall lead the local churches in attitudinal change, to the end
73 that the people called United Methodists are sensitized to the gifts, needs, and interests of people
74 with disabilities, as well as the needs of including their families.

75 3. We shall take advantage of the great opportunities for our church to work cooperatively
76 and ecumenically with others who are addressing these issues and extend an active invitation to
77 work jointly where possible.

78 4. We commit to continued efforts to increase awareness of human-created causes of
79 disability, such as environmental contamination, land mines, war, disasters, as well as
80 transportation and medical accidents.

81 5. Annual Conferences shall identify Suggest one Sunday each year as Disability
82 Awareness Sunday (§262) to sensitize people to our accessibility concerns and to receive an
83 offering as described in to promote accessibility in local churches. (See ¶ 265.4, 2016 *Book of*
84 *Discipline*)

85 Adequate Resources:

86 1. The General Board of Discipleship shall provide resources through the church at all
87 levels, including curricula, for persons individuals persons with various disabilities, so that each
88 individual has a full opportunity for growth and self-realization with the community of faith and
89 the society at large.

90 2. The General Board of Discipleship, including but not limited to the United Methodist
91 Publishing House and Cokesbury shall design all curriculum material be so designed that it can
92 be adapted to meet the needs of persons individuals with disabilities and portray persons with
93 disabilities in leadership roles within church and society.

94 Affirmative Action:

95 1. Our affirmative action efforts shall include the concerns and interests of persons with
96 disabilities, particularly in the active recruitment and encouragement of persons with disabilities
97 for leadership roles, both clergy and lay, within the church and its agencies, in hiring practices,
98 job security, housing, and transportation.

99 2. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall monitor annual conference
100 boards of ordained ministry to ensure that persons with disabilities are given equal treatment in
101 the steps to ordained ministry.

102 3. Our schools of higher education and theological training shall provide specialized courses
103 for faculty and students in the awareness and appreciation of gifts, needs, and interests of people
104 with disabilities. This includes the emphasis of accessibility and equal employment in these
105 institutions, as well as those in the larger society. Accreditation by the University Senate should
106 be withdrawn from institutions where persons who have a disability are excluded, either from
107 attendance, services, or employment.

108 4. Our local churches shall conduct needs-assessment surveys which can suggest what
109 particular actions must be taken to fully include people with disabilities within the life of the
110 church.

111 Advocacy Within the Church:

112 Each Annual Conference throughout the connection shall implement conference methods of
113 recruiting, sensitizing, and training persons as advocates to work with and on behalf of people
114 with disabilities on a one-to-one basis and to enable them to achieve their human and civil rights
115 as well as to assume their rightful place in the life of the church and community. Each annual
116 conference shall should also develop the larger concern of advocacy for people with disabilities
117 to enable them to achieve appropriate housing, employment, transportation, education, and
118 leisure-time development.

119 Our congregations and agencies around the world will implement disability-related legislation
120 appropriate to their location, such as the United Nations Standard Rules and Americans with
121 Disabilities Act, with the same vigor and interest as they would any other law affecting their
122 able-bodied constituency. This includes but is not limited to the provision of accessible
123 buildings, toilets, and parking; telephone access; hymnals and literature in large print and other
124 alternative formats; closed captioning of all audiovisual media; amplification, assistive listening
125 devices, and/or professional sign language interpretation and real-time captioning when needed.

126 Advocacy Within the Society:

127 Encouraged and informed by the General Board of Church and Society, we shall come alongside
128 people with disabilities and speak out for their rights in society. These rights include access to
129 jobs, public transportation and other reliable forms of transportation, adequate housing, and
130 education. We are people under orders to minister to and with all God's children. We are all a
131 people in pilgrimage! We have too often overlooked those of God's children who experience life
132 in different ways from ourselves. We pledge ourselves to an inclusive, compassionate, and
133 creative response to the needs and gifts of people with disabilities.

134 Barrier-Free Construction for People with Disabilities:

135 Church monies from agencies and other institutions of The United Methodist Church beyond the
136 local church shall not be granted, loaned, or otherwise provided unless the construction of church
137 sanctuaries, educational buildings, parsonages, camps, colleges, or other church-related agencies
138 or facilities meets minimum guidelines in their plans for barrier-free construction;

139 Local churches utilizing their own funds or funds secured through lending agencies and
140 institutions beyond The United Methodist Church shall be urged to make adequate provision in
141 their plans to ensure that all new and remodeled church buildings are of barrier-free construction;

142 Local churches are urged to adapt existing facilities through such programs as widening
143 doorways, installing ramps and elevators, eliminating stairs where possible, providing handrails,
144 as well as ensuring adequate parking facilities and restrooms so that people with disabilities may
145 take their appropriate place in the fellowship of the church; and

146 Appropriate international agencies of The United Methodist Church shall provide technical
147 information for local churches to assist in providing barrier-free facilities that meet or exceed
148 local building codes.

149 * Source: World Health Organization at [www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health-access)
150 [sheets/detail/disability-and-health access,](http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health-access)