

*But now, O Lord,  
you are our Father;  
we are the clay,  
and you are our potter;  
we are the  
work of your hand.  
~Isaiah 64:8 (ESV)*

## Issue 9

March 2007

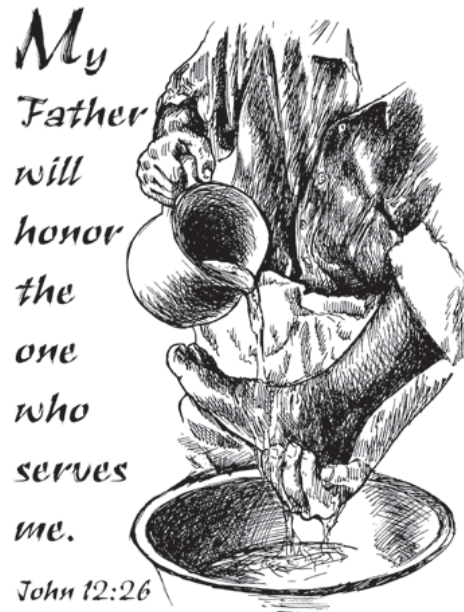
Theme:

### *People with Special Needs*

*A newsletter for church leaders  
and church members who live  
with and without disability and  
chronic illness.*

#### What's Inside?

- ◆ *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made:*  
Definitions and Statistics
- ◆ *One Body...Many Members:*  
Reaching Out to People with Special Needs
- ◆ *Equipping the Saints:*  
Current Accessibility at Tenth Church



*Note from the Editor:*

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(ESV) refers to:

*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (2001),*

Wheaton: Good News Publishers.

Footnote numbers refer to resources in the *End Notes* section.

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## A Grace Note

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

~ 2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)

I have struggled with this edition for most part of a year. My health is doing considerably better than it has for a number of years, and I have been in the process of recuperating my strength and stamina.

*Grace Ministry* has changed considerably the past few months. I started the ministry in 1995 with a support group and stepped down as the ministry’s leader in 2000. I left the leadership in the hands of three of Grace’s members, and over time Tina Simon graciously became the only leader. At the end of last year, Tina began attending a church closer to where she lives. The changes in *Grace Ministry* are noted in our annual report but I thought I would summarize them for you:

- ◆ *Grace Support Group* has been discontinued for now. If needed, the support group can always be restarted.
- ◆ *Leadership of Grace Ministry* is back in my limited hands, so I will continue my role as an advocate, representing the needs of people who live with disability and chronic illness within Tenth’s congregation.
- ◆ *Jars of Clay* will continue, as often as I can do the research and writing.

With my recuperation, I am taking on other advocacy roles both inside and outside of Tenth church:

- ◆ *MercyNet*: I will be briefly speaking at their May meeting about reaching out to people with special needs.
- ◆ *Discipleship Commission*: Marion Clark wrote a wonderful Tenth Press article about the reshuffling of the oversight of ministries inside and outside of the church. My advocacy role will continue in the Discipleship Commission.
- ◆ *Mission to North America (MNA) Special Needs Ministry*: I am part of the “Start-up Team” for this newly approved ministry to encourage equal concern for people with disabilities and their

A Grace Note (continued)

families. During the next two years, this team—with regard to inclusion of/outreach to people with disabilities and their families—will help 1) informally assessing the current state of the denomination, 2) identifying and implementing simple short-term changes, and 3) proposing practical, effective ideas for long-term constructive change across the denomination.

From 1983 to 1989 I helped to start and lead a parachurch disability ministry in Alabama. Since 1995 I have been involved in disability ministry here at Tenth church. My experience both inside and outside the church will come to good use with all that I'm doing. I also covet your prayers for my role as an advocate for people with special needs as it expands to include our denomination. Ask for wisdom, a servant heart, and discernment of my own limitations, that I not overextend them. May our loving Savior be glorified in this important work.

#### *What's Inside?*

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My original plan was to do this issue of *Jars of Clay* about chronic pain, but after looking at all of the research, I determined it to be too much for me to tackle at that point in time. So I started this issue which is based on my input on access issues for Strategic Planning. I've added more information, especially concerning chronic illness and caregivers. After living with this information for so long it has become second nature to me.

As responsible disciples in the kingdom of God we have some things to think through concerning our care for people who live with disability and chronic illness (herein referred to as people with special needs), and those people who care for them.

◆ First, in *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, I will discuss definitions and statistics concerning people with special needs, a group of people who are frequently forgotten and left alone. I also include information on those people who care for people with special needs.

◆ Second, in *One Body...Many Members*, I will look at ways we can reach out and get to know people who live with special needs and the people who care for them.

- ◆ Third, in the *Equipping the Saints* section, I will review all that we have done at Tenth church to become more accessible and ways we have enabled people with various types of limitations to participate in worship. I will also cover some issues we need to think through concerning our planned elevator installation.
- ◆ Finally I will cite the resources used in this edition under a section called *End Notes*. ~lad

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## *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*

*"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."*

~ Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

### *A Hidden and Forgotten People*

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#### 1. *Definitions*

*F*irst we need to consider the way in which the U.S. Census Bureau defines disability. A person is considered to have a *disability* if he or she has:

- ◆ difficulty performing certain functions (seeing, hearing, talking, walking, climbing stairs, lifting and carrying), or
- ◆ difficulty performing activities of daily living (ADLs), or
- ◆ difficulty with certain social roles (doing school work for children, working at a job and around the house for adults). <sup>1</sup>

A person is classified as *severely disabled* if he or she:

- ◆ is unable to perform one or more activities,
- ◆ uses an assistive device to get around, or
- ◆ needs assistance from another person to perform basic activities. <sup>2</sup>

*Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* (continued)

Next, we need to consider the definition of *chronic illness*:

- ◆ A chronic illness is any illness that lasts 3 months or longer.
- ◆ “Having a temporary condition that is destined to resolve is one thing. A chronic illness, however, has a completely different impact on the lives of patients and their family members. ‘Chronic’ means that the patient’s health is affected by the illness, either intermittently or daily, over an extended and often indefinite period of time.”<sup>3</sup>

*Note:* I will cover chronic illness more thoroughly in another edition, but it helps to know that people who live with chronic illnesses struggle with daily problems similar to people who live with disabilities. And although a person may not be classified as disabled, many people live with life altering problems as the result of chronic illness.

## 2. *Some Statistics Concerning People with Special Needs*

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Next, we will look at some important statistics. Remember that they do not consider people who live in institutions in any of the studies that give us these statistics:

- ◆ In 2001, approximately 125 million Americans lived with one or more chronic illness (almost 50% of the U. S. population).<sup>4</sup>

*Note:* This is a difficult statistic to put together because it is a conglomeration of those who have been diagnosed and treated for certain diagnoses. It does not consider those who may have a chronic illness but are not diagnosed as yet, nor does it consider those who are not receiving regular treatment for their chronic illness.<sup>5</sup>

- ◆ In 1996, approximately 54 million reported a disability (20.6% of the U. S. population).<sup>6</sup>

It is not uncommon to have both a disability and a chronic illness or even several of each.

Local statistics, from the 2000 Census, are more interesting:

- ◆ In PA the disability rate is broken up by age range:<sup>7</sup>

Ages 5 to 20 years – 7.5%

Ages 21 to 64 years – 17.5%

Ages 65 years and over – 39.4%

- ◆ In Philadelphia the disability rate is also broken down by age range: <sup>8</sup>

Ages 5 to 20 years – 9.6%

Ages 21 to 64 years – 26.7%

Ages 65 years and over – 47.4%

The incidence of disability and chronic illness increase with age, and we need to remember that we have a substantial aging baby boomer population. And we can never forget our disabled veterans.

### 3. *Statistics Concerning Disability and American Families*

In 2000, in the U. S. there were 72,261,780 families where: <sup>9</sup>

- ◆ Twenty-eight percent (28%) of families had a member who had a disability.
- ◆ Eighteen percent (18%) of families had a householder with a disability.
- ◆ Three point nine percent (3.9%) of families had children with a disability.

### 4. *Statistics Concerning Caregivers*

Another group of people we need to keep in mind are those who are caregivers — those who care for loved ones who have special needs. The majority of people caring for people with special needs are family and friends, usually called family caregivers in the statistics.

- ◆ In 1998, an estimated 50 million people were family caregivers. <sup>10</sup>
- ◆ In 2005, 1.4 million children ages 8 to 18 provided care for an adult relative; 72% cared for a parent or grandparent. Fortunately, most were not the sole caregiver. <sup>11</sup>
- ◆ In 2001, 30% of family caregivers who cared for seniors are

themselves aged 65 or over; another 15% were between the ages of 45 to 54. <sup>12</sup>

◆ More family caregivers will be needed in years to come. In 2001, it was estimated that people over 65 would increase at a rate of 2.3%, but the number of family members available to care for them would only increase at the rate of 0.8%. <sup>13</sup>

◆ In 1999, elderly spousal caregivers with a history of chronic illness themselves who were experiencing caregiving-related stress had a 63% higher mortality rate than their non-caregiving peers. <sup>14</sup>

◆ In 2002, among couples where someone in the family has a chronic illness there was a 75% divorce rate. <sup>15</sup>

### 5. *Evangelism*

In 1996, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism declared people who are disabled world-wide, including those in the United States, an unreached, hidden and forgotten people group. <sup>16</sup> In the United States, in 2000, a survey found fewer people with disabilities attending worship services than people who were not disabled. <sup>17</sup>

We have a unique opportunity to reach out to this population of forgotten people. As with any unknown cultural community we wish to reach, we will have to catch up on the varied and complex reasons why people with disabilities are not attending worship services nor are they involved in church life. Not all are physically unable to get to church for worship. <sup>18</sup>

### 6. *Pastoral Care*

The 1998, the National Health Survey noted that people with disabilities are twice as likely to seek out pastoral care: “8.1% disabled compared with 4% able-bodied.” That percentage will increase as the church population ages. <sup>19</sup> ~lad

*“Expressing our wants, feelings, thoughts and opinions clearly and effectively is only half of the communication process needed for interpersonal effectiveness. The other half is listening and understanding what others communicate to us.” <sup>30</sup>*

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## One Body...Many Members

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

~ 1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV)

### *How Do We Reach Out To People With Special Needs?*

#### The Response of the Church...

##### 1. *Inclusion — Architectural and Attitudinal*

“According to the N.O.D.,” (National Organization on Disability) “many of America’s congregations are not accessible to people with disabilities and their families. Barriers of architecture, communications and attitude prevent America’s 54 million men, women and children with disabilities from participating in a full life of faith namely, worship, study, service or leadership.”<sup>20</sup>

Physical access is not the only way we need to include people with special needs. A church may build a ramp and provide physical access to all of its facilities, but if the people in the church do not make people who live with special needs feel welcome, as equal participants and not as projects, they will not stay.<sup>21</sup>

The cure for these problems starts with learning how God sees people with special needs, and how we can communicate with and learn from them. People with special needs, and especially those with severe disabilities, remind us of how broken we are in our broken world.

Justin Taylor in his introduction to the book, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, points out our need for “applied theology” which “has been forged in the furnace of affliction.”<sup>22</sup> Reformed theology has a perspective on suffering that can hold out hope to God’s people who have been chosen to suffer. Unless we see our suffering from the viewpoint of God’s sovereignty we not only fall short of all that God has for us but more importantly our picture of who He is also suffers.

Some churches may find it necessary to put together educational

programs to prepare their people to talk with and work alongside people with special needs. There are a number of different types of educational tools for both individuals and churches. I have indicated most of them in previous issues of this newsletter, which can be located at Tenth's website under Grace Ministry at: <http://www.tenth.org/index.php?id=35>.

One of the ways we can help people with special needs to feel more comfortable in church life is to see them as spiritual equals. They are not spiritually inferior to other Christians. They are not second-class citizens in God's Kingdom because they suffer.

Scripture tells us that the local Christian community is responsible for its weaker members.<sup>23</sup> We need to remember that we will be judged on how we treat these weaker members.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. *Equal Access*

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To reach out to people with special needs we need to enable them to have access to those areas of our church that are normally used by other people. Sometimes it may not be reasonable or practical to provide access to some areas, but we must be very careful from which areas we exclude them, and the reasons why they are excluded.

As we look at access issues within any church and make critical decisions, we must remember some things:

- ◆ When we talk about making accommodations for people with special needs, we are talking about making changes that will enable previously excluded people to participate. For example, when we add a ramp for access into a building it is an accommodation for people who cannot use the steps that are the "normal" way of gaining access.
- ◆ When we talk about handicapped access it is usually the least amount of access given, at the least expense, to a special interest group.
- ◆ When we talk about equal access we speak of using a means of access that anyone can use. We often speak of equal rights with respect to providing all people, no matter what race or religion, access to the same things in the same manner. The

same applies to people with special needs, where equal access enables them to have access to the same areas that others use, in a manner that anyone can use. For example, for a ramp to qualify as equal access it would have to be in the same area as the usual entrance. To have the ramp in the rear of a building or similar area makes it access but not equal access. Of course, we may not be able to give equal access to every place but it would be important to provide equal access to as many areas as is *reasonable* and access wherever possible.

◆ Equal access is based on the fact that all men and women have been created in the image of God. As image bearers, people with special needs should be treated as equal members of the church, and giving them equal access will help them to be able to act as co-contributors to church life. Providing equal access will enable people with special needs to use their gifts and talents within the church environment.

◆ Equal access isn't a matter of deciding what areas are most important and then providing access to only those places. Equal access is a matter of looking at all areas that need to be made accessible and planning on how access will be achieved. Of course, financial constraints would mean that high traffic places get access first, but the other areas are not to be left without access, but are to be made accessible with time.

### The Response as Individuals...

#### 1. *Some Lessons from Job*

When confronted with someone who is suffering we automatically try to alleviate their suffering. Job's friends did well by sitting silently with him for 7 days, but then they tried to alleviate his suffering, by telling him that he was suffering because of some sin he had committed. In the end Job's friends did little to help him. More importantly, at the end of the book, God reprimands them for not speaking what is right about Him.

In his introduction to his paraphrase of the book of Job in *The Message*, Eugene Peterson provides some wonderful insights into the problem of suffering.<sup>25</sup>

One of my favorite quotations from Peterson reminds me of my

own response to people who are suffering: “Sufferers attract fixers the way roadkills attract vultures.”<sup>26</sup> That sums up our immediate response to suffering, doesn’t it? We have a feeling that we somehow must relieve it, take it away, remove it, heal it — fix it.

Job’s friends thought they were fixing Job, putting God into a nice neat box. Peterson goes on to explain, “Real faith cannot be reduced to spiritual bromides and merchandised in success stories. It is refined in the fires and storms of pain.”<sup>27</sup>

Peterson reminds us that when we are tempted to try to fix those who are suffering, remember:

- ◆ We may never fully understand the nature of their problems.
- ◆ They may not want to be fixed.
- ◆ When we become committed to following God, Scripture tells us that we will suffer more, not less.

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◆ “When these people go through suffering, their lives are often transformed, deepened, marked with beauty and holiness, in remarkable ways that could never have been anticipated before the suffering.”<sup>28</sup>

Finally, Peterson gives us a better way to think about and respond to the suffering of others:

- ◆ We will never be able to successfully prevent suffering.
- ◆ Instead of focusing on preventing suffering, we should try to enter into it, as far as we are able.
- ◆ By entering into the suffering of another person, we must remember that we are entering mystery and we should look around for what God is doing.
- ◆ It may be hard but we need to work at not feeling sorry for people who suffer.
- ◆ As we try to minister to someone who is suffering “look up to them, learn from them, and — if they will let us — join them in protest and prayer.”
- ◆ Pity can be nearsighted and condescending toward people who are suffering.

- ◆ “Shared suffering can be dignifying and life-changing.”<sup>29</sup>

## 2. *Levels of Suffering, Levels of Response*

We often respond to suffering based on its longevity. When we know that a person’s suffering has a specific beginning and ending we can plan ahead and know that there will be a point in which our service will no longer be needed.

Ministering to someone who has had surgery or an accident is different from when a person is terminal. In either case we know there will be an ending, sooner rather than later. When a person’s suffering is limited in time we find it more tolerable to stick it out with them.

We find it difficult to relate to people when their suffering and limitations are life-long or for the remainder of a long life. We don’t know how to talk to people who are so different from ourselves.

Remember, if we make the mistake of saying something wrong, and the person we are talking to feels belittled or pitied, an apology can go a long way. It would be better to begin with, to explain that we are uneasy and that we don’t know how to relate to him or her as the result of his or her disability or chronic illness. Remember not everyone will want to participate in educating us, so we need to respect the boundary they set.

## 3. *Getting to Know You — Active Listening*

Are you interested in getting to know someone who has special needs? Maybe you are acquainted with someone from church who lives with special needs, and you would like to get to know them better?

More often than not, people with special needs feel isolated and misunderstood. Sometimes this is because they are not allowed to tell their story, or to share their experience with suffering. It may be difficult to get to know people with special needs because their level of suffering may be considerably more than what most people can tolerate. But it is well worth the effort.

To begin, ask your parish elder (or pastor in smaller churches) to introduce you to someone with whom you can be a listener.

Remember some key points:

- ◆ You can effectively listen to someone by face-to-face visits or by telephone calls, whichever is more convenient. You can use this period of time to allow the person with special needs to tell his or her story.
- ◆ If you are to get to know a person with special needs more closely, you need to take a special effort. This is where effective listening comes in. Remember that you are giving this person a great gift by giving your time and energy. As you get to know this person, his or her world is opening to include you.
- ◆ Listening is the hardest thing to do without trying to fix the person. Let the other person do all the talking. One of the best ways you can help is to silently pray for his or her needs as you listen.
- ◆ With things that may be new to you, repeat back what you just heard, to avoid misunderstanding. It also lets the person know that you are listening and trying to understand.
- ◆ Keep everything he or she says as confidential. If he or she says something you think the parish elder or pastor needs to know, first ask if you can share it with him.
- ◆ Don't overload the person you are listening to — especially when he or she starts talking about things that can be stressful. To avoid this you may limit the time you visit or telephone.
- ◆ If he or she starts to cry, do not try to stop them. Crying allows the release of certain chemicals that will actually help him or her deal with their feelings.
- ◆ Don't bombard him or her with a bunch of questions, but let the conversation flow naturally.
- ◆ Over time you may be able to find out some things such as:
  - living conditions.
  - work? at home? how is his or her time spent?
  - spiritual life? church life and participation?
  - limitations?

- support system? family? Live alone?
- ◆ Don't be surprised if he or she does not want to answer some of your questions. Respect whatever boundaries they may place on you.

You don't have to feel like you have to reach out to a large number of people. All it takes is just one person to reach out to one person with special needs. With time that person can train someone else to effectively listen and to reach out to another person with special needs. Over time, every person with special needs in your church will have someone they can talk to on a regular basis.

With time your church can better understand how to reach out to people with special needs and how to enable them to become participants in church life and ministry. ~lad

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## *Equipping the Saints*

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*"For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God."*

~ 2 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)

## *Current Accessibility at Tenth Church*

*Y*ears ago people who were disabled did not go out in public. Living with a disability was too shameful a thing to be seen by other people. Medical science has helped to change the way we view disabilities. In addition, diseases that resulted in death are now chronic illnesses. In those years when Tenth Church was built, people who could not climb stairs were not planned for because they just weren't among the congregation.

Times have changed and people with all levels and types of disabilities and chronic illnesses are now out and among us. And as people came to Tenth church, changes have been made. Some of these are areas in which the church could use some help in managing:

◆ **FM Receivers:** If you cannot understand what the speakers are saying through the amplifier system, the next time you come, before the service starts, check with the deacons in the Narthex and ask for an *FM receiver*. If you wear a hearing aide, remove it before using the *FM receiver*.

◆ **ASL:** When we proposed a Deaf Ministry several years ago, we also requested the funds to hire a professional interpreter in *American Sign Language (ASL)* for the evening service. Also several of our special events are being interpreted into *ASL*. If you are interested in this unique ministry to people who are part of the deaf cultural community, contact Jodi Clark at [jclark1986@gmail.com](mailto:jclark1986@gmail.com).

◆ **Large Print:** If you have trouble reading the bulletin or hymnal, ask the deacons in the Narthex for the *Large Print notebook*. It will contain that day's hymns in large print, plus enlarged copies of that day's bulletin and Tenth Press, and enlarged prayer calendars for that month.

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◆ **Braille Bible:** After Grace Ministry started in 1995, we learned about the Lutheran Braille Workers who supplied us with one *Braille NIV Bible* for the church and one for each of our members who were blind. Tenth has since switched from the NIV to the ESV Bible. The NIV Braille Bible is still located over the mailboxes in Delancey 1st floor East. If you would like to use the *Braille Bible* during worship, ask a deacon in the Narthex, or at the Delancey desk for the specific sections you are interested in reading. If you are interested in working to obtain an ESV Braille Bible contact Lois Denier at [ladenier@comcast.net](mailto:ladenier@comcast.net).

◆ **Ramp to the Sanctuary Level:** In 1993, with the help of architect Darv Dombach, Maranatha built a temporary *ramp* in the alleyway between the Sanctuary and the brownstone legal offices next door. A black iron gate at the opening to the alley is usually locked. For Sunday services and other scheduled events, the sextons unlock and open it. I would suggest that you find someone to go with you since the doors cannot be handled by a single person and both doors need to be opened for anyone using a wheelchair or scooter. Prayerfully a more permanent

ramp will be added to the 17th Street side of Tenth's building and greeters will be added.

◆ *Access to the 315 Building:* Prior to the purchase of this building there were no Adult Bible School Classes that were accessible. The *315 Building's first floor* has *ramp access* through the back door, and has two accessible restrooms located on the first floor. No other floors are accessible. The only two accessible Adult Bible School Classes are in the 315 building, first floor rear each Sunday, at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM.

◆ *Other Architectural Changes:* In 1996 Darv Dombach evaluated Tenth's physical plant against the requirements of the ADA. (Churches are not required to comply with these regulations, but they are good guidelines to go by if you want your church's buildings to become more accessible.) Darv created a 15+ page shopping list for the Building Committee. They immediately started on those things that could be done easily and inexpensively. Some of these changes you may have already noticed, such as handrails.

### *Elevator*

One of the things Darv included in his "shopping list" for the Building Committee was an elevator. This was not the first mention of installing an elevator. The congregation voted to install one about 35 years ago.

I don't know where it was supposed to be installed originally, but Darv suggested a single elevator that would provide access to the Sanctuary/Reception Hall level, down to the catacomb level for classrooms, Tenth Book Store and the Tenth Library, up to Fellowship Hall level, and provide access to all four levels of the Delancey Building.

Often in churches where the facilities are old, elevator installation gets placed on the back burner, for when they have time and funding. Sometimes an elevator is not seen as important; it may be seen as a nice thing to do but certainly not as a necessary. As we have learned, the elevator is an *absolute requirement* for those people who find stairs difficult to impossible to use. These are people who long to be able to participate in church life.

As you look at installing an elevator in your church, there are various questions that would need to be answered:

- ◆ How are you going to treat those who cannot climb stairs? Do you provide typical handicapped access or do you provide equal access?
- ◆ Do you use single elevators for each area that requires access or do you try to have elevators that provide as much access on several levels?
- ◆ Do you provide some or whole access to church offices, enabling you to hire people who cannot climb stairs?
- ◆ If your church has several buildings, which floors are to be made accessible in each building?
- ◆ Funding such an expensive job will always be difficult. Grants from your denomination and other Christian foundations may help. At Tenth the current estimate is 2 million dollars for a single elevator that will provide access on several levels in two buildings.

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When it comes to large projects such as an elevator, it is important to remember the quality of life you are providing to people who have previously been excluded from church life.  
~lad

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ... whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

~ 1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV)

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## End Notes

Whenever a note of a file of some type is cited below the endnote, the file is available via email upon request.

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End Notes (continued)

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23 Pertinent Scriptures concerning weakness: Romans 8:26; 1 Corinthians 12:21-26; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 2 Corinthians 11:30; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; 2 Corinthians 13:4; Hebrews 11:34 (ESV).

24 "You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the

*End Notes* (continued)

sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.” ~Exodus 22:22-24 (ESV)

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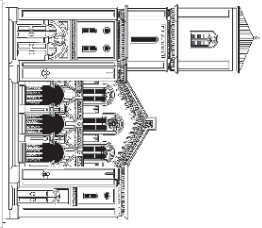
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**Grace grows best in winter**

~ Samuel Rutherford

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