

November/December 2025



**Serving the East and West Ohio Conferences of the
United Methodist Church**

Enlighten. Educate. Engage.



***From the gratitude of Thanksgiving to the wonder of Christmas
and the hope of a brighter tomorrow—May God's blessings be
upon you, your family, your church, and your community
throughout this holiday season.***

An invitation

On December 9 at 2 PM or 7 PM ET, you are invited to a roundtable discussion on creative ways to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The book, *Worship for the Whole Body, Creative Ideas for Multi-Sensory Worship Practices*, is the main resource for the discussion and is filled with great suggestions!

[Worship-for-the-Whole-Body-Final-Interactive-copy.pdf](#)

To join the Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/3661619539?omn=99990189780>

(Meeting ID: 366 161 9539)

Reverend Mimi Luebbers

UMC Disability Ministries Committee, Chair

Ohio Disability & Ministry Collaborative, Co-Chair

Cityview Church, Columbus, Ohio's Disability Ministry https://youtu.be/v_2a0owg9n8

New Life in a Legacy Ministry: Cityview's Growing Ministry with Adults with Disabilities

Every Sunday, like clockwork, Laurie, a member of our church, sees me, yells my name—and I naturally echo back hers—and then we high five. The energy and excitement are unmatched and are a highlight of my week. It's one of the many reasons I love serving at Cityview. The members of our ministry to adults with disabilities are a constant reminder of what church is all about: the joy of connection, the beauty of relationships, and the image of God revealed in each of us, in diverse, beautiful ways.

Cityview UMC inherited a beautiful ministry when Central City Church (a new church start) and St. Luke's (an established congregation) merged. For decades, St. Luke's had been a spiritual home for adults with disabilities,

and their commitment to this ministry remained nonnegotiable throughout the merger. Central City was eager to meet this requirement, so after the merger, we began dreaming how we might revitalize this ministry.

Over the years, this Sunday school class had grown smaller as members aged or moved away. We knew we wanted to remain committed to this essential ministry—we just weren't yet sure how to revitalize it. How do we reimagine a legacy ministry, simultaneously preserving what was and dreaming up what could be? It's a challenge many churches face.

That's when our Associate Pastor suggested we invite Delanie Ray to become the new director of what would soon be known as *City Friends*. Delanie had already developed genuine friendships within the class and a natural connection, and our Associate Pastor believed they would do well leading the ministry.

That's when I sat down with Delanie.

"Would you consider leading our ministry to adults with disabilities?" I asked them.

Delanie remembers that conversation, saying later, "I never imagined myself leading a ministry for adults with disabilities, but at that moment, I didn't need to pray about it. God told me right then and there that this was my calling."

After they started, we began dreaming about how we might revitalize the ministry. One of Cityview's core values is collaboration, and Delanie took that to heart. They met with local organizations working with adults with disabilities—from a local art studio to the Friends and Family Network (FFN), which now uses our facility weekly for classes and community events.

Then we met with Goodwill's day program through a connection they had with the FFN. They were excited about the idea of having their members come to the church during the week for programming. As Delanie would later explain,

"It gives the folks a third space to hang out and feel safe that isn't at the Goodwill hub. It gives them a chance to meet new people that come and volunteer from Cityview and from the community at large."

Thanks to Delanie's leadership, Goodwill now brings groups to Cityview every Wednesday afternoon. Dozens of adults come through our doors each week to enjoy programming, a hot meal, music, drum circles, a caring community, and more. Some Goodwill staff have even found a home at Cityview as a result.

As Delanie's passion grew, so did their calling, and Goodwill eventually hired them part-time, then full-time. Thankfully, Delanie continued to serve part-time at Cityview, overseeing our disability ministry and Sunday morning program. Delanie describes their calling this way:

"I've always known my calling has a lot to do with helping others... but I've learned that more than just doing things for others, this call is about instilling agency and self-advocacy. This population has often been infantilized and treated like they don't matter. I believe God has called me into this ministry to show others what folks with disabilities can teach us—and to show them that they belong.

“‘Being’ is much more important than ‘doing.’ It really changes our perspective in a society that always needs us to be accomplishing something. A lot of the time, just sitting and chatting is the most important thing.”

Disability ministry, like any ministry, thrives when a calling is given room to thrive, and where collaboration and possibilities are louder than scarcity and discouragement. Sometimes people discover their passion only after someone else notices their gifts and extends an invitation. Delanie didn’t seek out disability ministry—it found them through relationship, affirmation, and the simple power of someone saying, “You’d be great at this.”

I’m glad we have someone to provide space not only for Laurie but also for all those looking for connection. I know my Sundays and Wednesdays wouldn’t be the same without the excitement and energy of our ministry to adults with disabilities. Joe Graves, Lead Pastor

We would love to share your stories of how your congregation prepares for and welcomes individuals with disabilities. Do you have resources you would like to share? We appreciate your comments! Email Rose at rdarling@flatrockhomes.org

Additional Resources:

[The Arc of the United States | Disability Rights, Advocacy & Inclusion](#): Important reading!

[Grants - Deaf & Hard of Hearing Ministries Committee](#): Check the website for deadlines for 2026 grant opportunities.

[Resources | Disability Ministry Network](#): Check out this site for a vast amount of vital resources for disability ministries!

Connections with Community Organizations

A true story of a long-term community connection

In 1921, the newly formed Bellevue Kiwanis Club hosted its very first service project — a Christmas party for the



children of Flat Rock Homes. Each young resident received a gift, along with delicious candy and fruit treats that made the season extra special.

Now, 104 years later, this cherished tradition continues. It stands as Kiwanis International’s longest-running continuous service project — a testament to enduring compassion and community spirit.

On December 2, Bellevue Kiwanians will once again bring holiday cheer to the Care Center that serves individuals with developmental disabilities, with festive caroling, thoughtful gifts, and sweet treats. Their dedication to enhancing the lives of children and communities worldwide remains as strong as ever.

Note: These kinds of community connections are important and can benefit your church, and you may be a blessing to them as you get involved and develop new relationships.

(Photo is from the 2024 Kiwanis Flat Rock Homes Christmas party)

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!