

Accessibility Task Force

Final Report

September 7, 2005

To be presented to Session on September 20, 2005

INTRODUCTION

The Accessibility Task Force (ATF) was established by the Session of Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church (BHPC) to determine ways that BHPC might change to become more accessible to persons with disabilities. Specifically, the ATF was asked to:

- Perform an audit of barriers to accessibility, both structural and attitudinal
- Identify structural improvements that might be made to the facility, as well as the costs and relative benefits of those improvements
- Recommend a timeline to Session for accomplishing recommended improvements

The Book of Order (G-4.0403) includes persons with disabilities among those who “shall be guaranteed full participation and access to representation in the decision making of the church.” That pledge was more hope than description when it was adopted more than two decades ago. A survey performed by Research Services of PCUSA shows that “a third of pastors reported knowing of one or more persons in their congregations who do not attend church activities because the facilities are not accessible or are not easily accessible.” The survey results show that most congregations have taken steps to become more inclusive. (From April 2005 edition of *Presbyterians Today*) BHPC is proud of the progress it has already achieved but realizes the continuing challenge to enhance its inclusiveness for people of varying abilities.

Therefore, with energy, dedication and enthusiasm, the ATF began its work in May of 2004 to fulfill Session’s charge. Meeting twice a month, this task force included members with varying disabilities and members who have a great deal of experience in helping those with disabilities. We also went to great lengths to seek opinions from others in the congregation with varying abilities who were not able to serve on the task force by contacting those who have experienced special needs either directly or through family members. Other building users were also consulted regarding needs of which they were aware. All members of the task force believe that each of the items on the attachments is important, and should be done. Nonetheless, we have prioritized according to the urgency of the need.

Physical barriers that handicapped individuals encounter convey the idea that those persons are not welcome. That feeling of being unwelcome may also be conveyed when members of the congregation are unaware of the appropriate way to respond to persons with physical impairments, creating unintentional attitudinal barriers. Educational efforts are needed to address this second type of barrier. Some changes that will help address this need are listed in Attachment A, Education/Awareness.

The structural improvements were placed in three categories to indicate the perceived need, Category A being the improvements that are most urgently needed, Categories B and C having lesser urgency. These are facility improvements, so they would require additional funds allocated by Session and action by the Property Management Lay Ministry. These improvements, their costs, funding source, a recommended time frame, and their perceived priorities are listed in Attachment B, **Plant/Facility Needs**. Some items are also grouped together by location, to indicate that they should be considered part of one “improvement.” These locations are:

- The entrance near the North Transept
- The entrance to the Gathering Space
- The entrance near the Lounge and Memorial Hall

We are pleased to report that some improvements are already in place, including:

- An elevator fund that contains \$73,500 has already been established in 2001.
- Additional handicapped spaces that are temporarily marked on Sundays and on other special occasions. This improvement, which has proved successful, has not yet been approved as a permanent solution, but we are hopeful that it will be.
- Lever type handles have been installed on the bathroom door of the bathroom in the hall near the church offices.
- Cups and a trash can have been made available at the water fountain next to the Sexton’s office.
- A handrail was added to improve access to the chancel. This was done before the ATF existed, but reflects the Property Management Lay Ministry’s commitment to improving accessibility.
- Inserts for the church bulletins are now available in large type.
- Hollies at the North Transept entrance have been trimmed.

Attachment C, **Grant Possibilities**, identifies potential sources of additional funds for making improvements that increase accessibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The ATF makes the following recommendations to the Session for **immediate action**:

1. Fund \$5000.00 out of operations for the 1st quarter 2006 use by the Accessibility Task Force to employ:

Mr. John Salmen, AIA
Universal Designers and Consultants, Inc
6 Grant Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912-4324
301-270-2470
jsalmen@UniversalDesign.com

to develop a plan utilizing universal design concepts to regrade the Memorial Hall road and redesign the Memorial Hall Entrance for the purpose of creating a

natural grade to serve as an accessible entrance into the Memorial Hall/Lounge door. The basic principles of universal design are: maximum accessibility for all people, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Members of the task force have met with Mr. Salmen and other members of the Montgomery County Commission on Persons with Disabilities who toured Bradley Hills and gave their recommendations for our facility. Mr. Salmen provided input used in the preparation of the BHPC ATF report and has assisted numerous local congregations with accessibility studies. As a part of the plan, it is recommended that two additional handicapped parking spaces be located at that entrance.

2. Obtain funds, either through grants and/or a special campaign, to implement the Memorial Hall/Lounge entrance plan recommended by Mr. Salmen concerning regrading, additional parking spaces, automatic door openers, doorbell with speakers, etc. to make that entrance accessible.
3. Modify the charter of the ATF to continue in the **oversight of its recommendations and responsibility of implementation** until the changes approved by Session are completed. Design all future physical improvements to BHPC facilities with persons with special needs in mind.
4. Establish a standing committee as a sub-committee of the Board of Deacons that would serve as an advocate for accessibility issues and concerns. It is recommended that this sub-committee consist of at least one Deacon Member, one Property Management Lay Ministry Member, and one Education & Nurture Lay Ministry Member as well as other interested members. This committee would:
 - Have continuing oversight of accessibility matters: awareness, sensitivity and attitudinal concerns, as well as physical improvements to make our church more accessible and welcoming
 - Review all physical improvements to BHPC facilities, exterior and interior to ensure that accessibility concerns are being met
 - Assist the Property Management Lay Ministry with the implementation of universal design concepts in all facility improvements
 - Develop a guide to improving awareness, sensitivity, and inclusion
5. Identify appropriate individuals to further investigate grant/funding sources to complete the money needed to install a LULA (Limited Use/Limited Applications) lift. We already have \$73,500 contributed to an “elevator” fund. It is estimated that we will need \$100,000: approximately \$45,000 for the LULA lift and the remainder for construction costs.

CONCLUSION:

We at Bradley Hills can be proud of the progress and especially the awareness of the need for improvement in facilitating the participation of persons with sight, hearing, and mobility impairments. Joanie Friend, Parish Nurse, served on a similar task force in 1992 and has seen a vast change for the better in the awareness of our congregation about the importance of being a welcoming place for all. In October of 2001, Bradley Hills joined the Accessible Congregations Campaign of the National Organization on Disability. "An Accessible Congregation acknowledges that it has barriers to the full participation of people with disabilities and makes a commitment to begin removing them." During our recent 50th Anniversary Celebration, it was truly heartwarming to hear several members mention issues of accessibility in their dreams of what Bradley Hills will be like in 20 years. **We are convinced that the BHPC Session will also feel a similar need to appropriate funds for the suggested improvements contained in this document.**

*Prayerfully Submitted by the Members of the Accessibility Task Force:
Sarah Allan, Mel Bamel, Carol Butcher, Amy deCourt, Herb Dorsey, Martha Fouchard,
Joanie Friend, and James Scroggs*

Attachment A
Education/Awareness

Action	Responsible Group	Time Frame
Accessibility Sunday (Open Doors, Open Hearts) where Church school, sermon, etc. will focus on the topic of differing abilities	ATF/Evan./Worship & Arts	Sept. 18, 2005
Education – bring awareness to congregation (for example, avoid placing Christmas trees where they block access for wheelchairs)	Education	Ongoing
Elders ensure that communion is available in a location that is accessible to all present	Communion Leaders	Ongoing
The church has 6 permanently designated handicapped parking spaces. The ATF recommends making permanent the use of signs to temporarily reserve additional places on Sunday mornings and on other special occasions, as deemed appropriate by the Deacons.	Deacons will develop specific usage proposal	June 2005
Ensure that all doors are unlocked before all meetings and services, especially the few that are designated for handicap access	Sextons	Ongoing
Advertise in the bulletin that special hearing devices are available for use during the worship	BHPC Staff	Spring 2005 +
Ensure that cups and trashcans are available next to all water fountains	Sextons	Ongoing
Consider how to include seating for those who need it at the early service when others stand on the chancel	BHPC Staff	Spring 2005 +
Move wooden ramp for chancel to the east side of the north transept (on the left side looking at the chancel)	Prop. Mgmt./Sextons	Ongoing
Develop and offer pamphlets to address needs of people with differing abilities	Evangelism/Deacons	Fall 2005
Publicize existence of manual lift for access to chancel (for example, disabled persons could be lay readers)	Worship & Arts	Ongoing

Attachment B
Plant/Facility Needs

Improvement	Priority	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Time Frame
Limited Use/Limited Applications elevator is considerably less expensive. Quote is from Tony Inscoe of Bedco Mobility. Fund balance is currently \$73,500, \$26,500 needed.	A	\$100,000	Grant/Existing Fund	6 mos. After funds approved
<i>North Transept entrance:</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic door openers 	A	\$3,360	50th Ann Off	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doorbell with speakers & video 	A	\$3,700	50th Ann Off	2005
<i>Gathering Space entrance:</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic door openers 	A	\$2,350	50th Ann Off	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doorbell with speakers 	A	\$1,700	50th Ann Off	2006
<i>Memorial Hall entrance:</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design contract with architect/landscape architect to create a plan to regrade Memorial Hall road for purpose of building a natural grade to serve as an accessible entrance into Memorial Hall/Lounge door. Also, to create 2 additional handicap parking spaces at that entrance. 	A	\$5000	Property Management Operations	1 st Quarter 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-grading of Memorial Hall entrance as suggested by a landscape architect to provide a natural accessible entrance • Additional handicapped parking and space to drop off persons as suggested by landscape architect 	A	\$50,000	Grant/Fund Raiser	To be determined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automatic door openers 	A	\$3,500	Grant/Fund Raiser	To be determined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doorbell with speakers 	A	\$4,000	Grant/Fund Raiser	To be determined
Improved lighting for sidewalks on South side of building	A		Grant/Fund Raiser	2006
Replace doorknobs with lever handles (10 doors @ \$5/door)	C	\$100	ATF Operating	2005
Outdoor bench/seating with arms on the walkway in front of the church	A	\$1100	50th Ann Off	Completed
Armchair seating near North Transept and Ed. Wing entrances for those who need to stop and rest. (4 total)	B	\$262 ea. \$1,048 tot.	50th Ann Off	2005

Attachment B
Plant/Facility Needs, cont.

Improvement	Priority	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Time Frame
Armchairs for Gathering Space (4) to match existing Covenant hall armchairs.	A	\$262 ea. \$1,048 tot.	50th Ann Off	2005
Choir loft accessibility – chair lift	C	\$3,600		To be determined
Improved signs for family/handicapped bathroom	A	\$400	ATF Operating	2005
Correct the 2 existing wheelchair cut out spaces in the Sanctuary by removing sections of the pew directly behind each wheelchair cut out	A	\$800	ATF Operating	2005
Create 2 new cut out spaces for wheelchairs in the North Transept on the right side (facing the chancel) in rows 1 and 2 and in rows 5 and 6	B	\$1000	PM Operating	To be determined
Improved signage so persons entering the parking lot can find the handicap parking spaces and then locate accessible entrances to the building	A	\$100	PM Operating	2005
Place a centered sign at each permanent handicapped parking space	A	\$250	50th Ann Off	2005
In the women's Education Wing bathroom, increase the walk space between the stall doors and the sink counter by reducing the counter depth	A	\$1000	ATF Operating	2005
Install grab bars in Education wing first floor bathroom stalls (5 W + 3 M @ \$100 ea.)	A	\$800	ATF Operating	2005

Attachment C
Grant Possibilities

The following information was gathered from several sources.

The Rev. Sue Montgomery

Pastor, Nickleville Presbyterian Church, Emlenton, PA

P.O. Box 16

Knox, PA 16232

suemontgomery@penn.comm

Consultant for Mobility/Accessibility for the PHEWA (Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association) with PCUSA

Sue Montgomery's suggestions can be found in a 1998 book published by the PCUSA Commission on Enabling Ministries. The book, entitled *Different Members, One Body, Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God's Family*, ed. By Sharon Kutz-Mellem, lists the following resources for churches to begin their grant writing process. Can be ordered from Presbyterian Distribution Services 1-800-524-2612 ISBN-1-57153-014-2 or on loan from the PHEWA, Presbyterians For Disability Concerns 1-888-728-7228, Ext. 8100, Terri Gilmore.

- Directory of Grants for Organizations Serving People with Disabilities, Richard M. Eckstein, ed 1995. Research Grant Guides, P.O. Box 1214, Loxahatchee, FL 33470
- Fund Raiser's Guide to Human Service Funding, S. David Hicks, ed. 1993. The Taft Group, 12300 Twinbrook Parkway, Ste. 520, Rockville, MD 20852
- Fund Raiser's Guide to Religious Philanthropy, Bernard Jankowski, ed. 1994. The Taft Group, 12300 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville, MD 20852.

Susie Wellman

- Susie has a close friend who may know the CEO of a foundation in Bethesda that supports disabled and Protestant churches/agencies. The foundation makes significant grants.

The Kresge Foundation

- www.kresge.org
- Also, do a Google search to learn more about the foundation.