

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Association of Ministers with Disabilities (AMD) Announces New Board Leadership, Reaffirming Commitment to Disability Justice and Inclusive Ministry in The United Methodist Church

July 20, 2026

The United Methodist **Association of Ministers with Disabilities (AMD)**, a recognized United Methodist caucus dedicated to advocating for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in ministry and throughout the life of the Church, is pleased to announce its newly elected Board of Directors.

Founded in 1990 as the **Association of Physically Challenged Ministers (APCM)**, the organization emerged from the faithful work of pioneering disability justice advocates who challenged barriers preventing people with disabilities from responding to God's call to ministry. In 2009, the organization adopted the name **Association of Ministers with Disabilities (AMD)** to reflect its expanded mission of supporting people with all disabilities and recognizing the vital ministries of both clergy and laity.

AMD's mission is to encourage, support, and advocate for people with disabilities who discern a call to ministry and demonstrate the gifts and graces for leadership within The United Methodist Church. The organization also works to educate the Church about the attitudinal, institutional, and systemic barriers that continue to limit opportunities for people with disabilities in ordained and lay ministry. With a new board also includes a new website: www.amd-umc.org

Despite an increasing number of people living with disabilities, AMD remains deeply concerned that the number of persons with disabilities pursuing or serving in professional ministry within The United Methodist Church continues to decline. Through advocacy, education, mentoring, and partnership, AMD seeks to help create a Church where all people are welcomed, empowered, and called into leadership according to their gifts.

2026–2028 AMD Board of Directors

Executive Committee

- **Co-Chair:** Leo Yates, Elder
- **Co-Chair:** Russell Ewell, Deacon
- **Secretary:** Sarah Hassmer, Layperson and Seminarian for the Diaconate
- **Treasurer:** Greg Edwards, Elder
- **Communications Director:** Sunny Ahn, Elder
- **Episcopal Liaison:** Bishop Williamston
- **At-Large Member – Disability Ministries Committee (DMC):** Mimi Luebbbers, Deacon

"The ministry of AMD is rooted in the conviction that every person is created in the image of God and that disability is not a barrier to faithful leadership," said the newly elected co-chairs. "As we look toward the future, we remain committed to removing barriers, nurturing leaders, and helping The United Methodist Church become a more fully inclusive community where the gifts of people with disabilities are recognized, celebrated, and empowered."

AMD invites clergy, laity, seminarians, annual conferences, local churches, and allies to partner in its mission by advocating for accessibility, mentoring emerging leaders, and promoting disability justice throughout the denomination.

For more information about the Association of Ministers with Disabilities, membership opportunities, or available resources, visit the new website at www.amd-umc.org and where you can also learn about the September Disability Summit in New Orleans.

About the Association of Ministers with Disabilities

The Association of Ministers with Disabilities (AMD) is a United Methodist caucus that advocates for the full participation of persons with disabilities in the life and leadership of The United Methodist Church. Through education, advocacy, networking, and support, AMD works to ensure that people with disabilities are empowered to answer God's call to ministry and that the Church reflects the inclusive love of Christ for all people.

A Note from the Co-Chairs

We are glad to be co- leading the AMD together, both a Deacon and an Elder with disabilities. We bring commitment, experience and a passion for disability equality and justice. We are to be accessible to our caucus members and our ministry partners. We

remember the words of Micah 6:8 “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.” Good words to live by.

Respectfully,
Rev. Leo Yates and Rev. Russell Ewing

A Note from the Bishop

The church needs AMD just like AMD needs the church. We continue to live into a beloved community where people with disabilities and non-disabled people live into the kin-dom of God. As the assigned Bishop to AMD, I am committed to supporting the work of the caucus, offering prayers and guidance so its leadership can support the wider church.

With Appreciation,
Bishop Delores Williamston

A Note from GCORR

As the General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), we extend our blessings to the new AMD board. Our partnership with the DMC is a peer of our commitment to equality and inclusion of people with disabilities. My prayers are with you.

Blessings,
Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo

A Note from UMCD (Deaf caucus)

The United Methodist Congress of the Deaf (UMCD) welcomes the new board. We extend our thanks and prayers for you and your work in supporting the denomination. We at UMCD share your commitment towards disability inclusion while we as a Deaf caucus support the DeafDisabled community. May God bless you all.

Mary Ann Deters
President of UMC

A Note from DMC

The Disability Ministries Committee (DMC) looks forward to partnering with the new AMD board. This new chapter of AMD offers new beginnings and will be blessed by God.

Rev. Mimi Luebbers
Chair of the DMC

[New Board Press Release](#)