



At Grace-Westminster we try to make our place of worship open to all who wish to attend.



However, when our church was first planned and built, consideration was not given to those who needed special accommodation to get in to this building. Even in 1966 when the auditorium and offices were added, it was not a priority to consider special needs.



As awareness of varying needs grew, it was decided in 1973 to raise funds to build a ramp so folks in wheelchairs could attend services. The ramp was on the east side of the church with access through a door to the auditorium. The ramp cost \$918.00 – the money being raised by Anniversary Day offerings. In 1974, there was a special “Service for the Handicapped” when some 20 people in wheelchairs were in attendance. For over forty years the ramp served many individuals who could not use stairs at all or who had some degree of difficulty climbing stairs. It also helped the congregation bring many heavy items into the church because they could be ‘rolled’ in rather than carried.

In 1984, a concrete pad was laid at the base of the ramp so that it was easier to move to a waiting car or special needs vehicle.

Two years earlier in 1982, at a cost of \$1,444.00, washrooms on the upper level were renovated to be wheelchair accessible. The entire cost of this work was covered by a donation from Jim and Marguerite Alexander.



Now consideration turned to the downstairs, which was not accessible. An 'Elevator Committee' was struck and they reported in 1985. A chair-lift, while only costing thirty-three thousand dollars, had many drawbacks. An elevator on the other hand was cost prohibitive with expenses estimated at from eighty thousand to two hundred thousand dollars. Interest turned instead to something called a "Graventor Stair-Trac and Ambulatory Chair Unit". This device ran on caterpillar treads and actually brought the wheelchair up or down an existing flight of stairs. It cost only \$3,500.00 and was purchased. However, it required an experienced operator to run and was, we believe, somewhat stressful for the person in the chair riding the device. It was used only for a short time.



Accessibility to the church remained dependent on the ramp and was limited to the upper level for many years. In

2006, a Hydraulic Lift was purchased for the sum of fifty-seven thousand, nine hundred dollars. It was dedicated on January 14, 2017. The Lift provides access through the ground level entrance and gives folks in wheelchairs or with limited mobility the opportunity to go down to the basement or upstairs to the sanctuary and auditorium. Many of us refer to this device as an elevator. It is not. It is an Hydraulic Lift . So if you say you are going up in the Lift – you are not being “British” – you are being accurate. The Lift ‘works’ when an hydraulic cylinder pushes the Lift up and pressure is released for it to come down. In order for the pump that ‘powers’ the Lift to keep working, one must press and keep pushing a button. If one doesn’t hold the button, the pump will stop and the motion will stop. This Lift has been a huge benefit to members of the congregation and to the wider community.



Not everyone who uses our lift is in a wheelchair. Each Sunday, folks with walkers are able to come to church without the worry of dealing with stairs.

To further help folks be independent, washroom toilets were replaced in May of 2012 - taking into consideration not only environmental factors but height - to help with transfer from wheelchairs.

We continue to make accommodations so that our church is accessible to those who have physical challenges. The Mission Statement for our church is that we are a loving community of Christian faith. We endeavor to put God's word into action.

To that statement we can add the words – for all.

Minute for Grace  
May 5, 2018