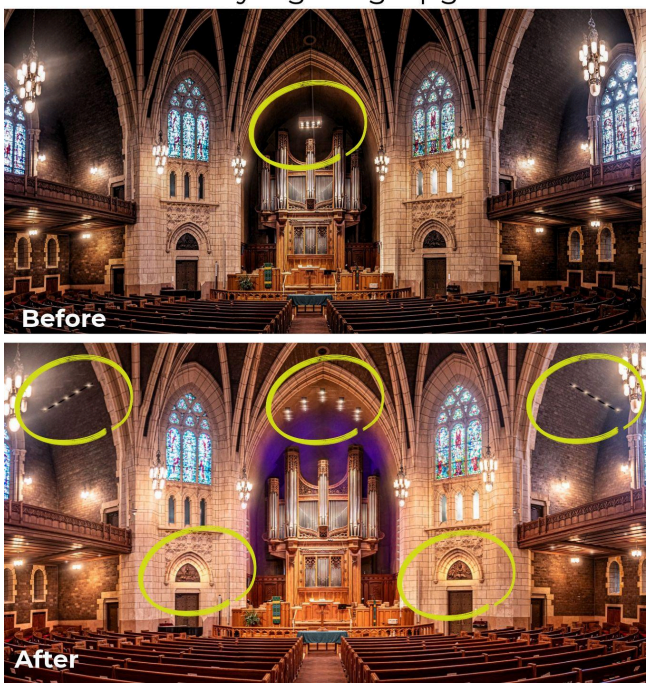
Recently, our church has been envisioning how to proactively respond to the anticipated needs of Hennepin's future congregation. **While it may not be possible to fully anticipate what those needs might be, what is already known is that our church has not been fully accessible to members of our current congregation for decades.** The Disability Action Team (DAT) formed in 2022 to help guide our congregation forward in response to the needs of a church that is experiencing increasing pressures to accommodate diverse bodies and needs. Disability is a function of human difference, equal to similar functions such as race and gender identity. Yet, while our congregation has justly voted to become an antiracist and affirming church, Disabled members of our congregation continue to face yet-unresolved accessibility challenges.

Sanctuary Lighting Upgrades:



Fortunately, after coordinated advocacy efforts over the preceding four years, leaders of our church have decided to include in the current capital campaign the following funding priorities:

- Refreshing the lift between Carlson Hall and the Sanctuary; and,
- Improving lighting in the Sanctuary

Additionally, Hennepin leaders are actively planning further accessibility improvements, including:

- Installing button openers on more interior doors, including bathrooms; and,
- Purchasing fidget toys and ear plugs for availability on demand during worship services.

These investments will address many of the greatest challenges to the full participation in all activities of our church for many Disabled members of our congregation. We as members of the DAT, in representation of members of our church with disabilities, are grateful for the inclusion of these funding priorities in the capital campaign by our congregational leaders.

Universal design is defined as a radical approach to accommodating people with disabilities. Many things people now take for granted in modern society are actually

elements of universal design for people with disabilities; these include curb cuts, PBX systems at crosswalks, chimes in elevators to indicate the floors, and actually every kitchen product manufactured by the OXO company. **By removing structural barriers to accessibility, we together help ensure that our church remains a place of radical hospitality for all individuals, regardless of bodily differences.** These changes are an important step in that evolutionary process.



While these improvements may create short-term inconvenience as they are implemented, or otherwise foster change to our church, they are collectively the just thing to do. Disability is the one form of social difference that affects all people, regardless of gender identity, race, or any other factors. Continual advances in medical science establish a virtual certainty that some form of disability will eventually impact every person, either directly or familiarly. Disability has already happened to your neighbors, some of them longtime members of our church; a church which has been inaccessible to them, in some cases for decades. It is a practical and moral imperative that our church become more accommodating for all congregants. We as the DAT are grateful to the leaders of Hennepin for including these funding priorities in the capital campaign, and for continuing to strive to make this church welcome, open, and accessible to all, now and in the future!

Ryan Machtmes, Chair of the Disability Action Team3