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THE LEVEL OF ACCESSIBILITY OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN OF CHRISTIAN TEMPLES AND CHURCHES IN UKRAINE

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Abstract

The article explores the issues of accessibility of inclusive design of Christian churches in Ukraine. The principle of accessibility as the main element of inclusive design often causes a conflict of interests in modern Ukrainian society, as it requires changes in the existing state of affairs. To make the subject-spatial environment accessible not only in everyday life, production, but also in the Christian sacred environment is one of the primary tasks of inclusive design. Many Christian churches in Ukraine are not ready to accept people with inclusion since the conditions of accessibility are not met. One of the reasons is that many Christian churches in Ukraine are the spiritual and historical heritage of the state, so changing their architecture is not encouraged. At the same time, modern church buildings and temples that were built after 1991 are also not prepared to receive people with disabilities. Since spirituality is one of the key values for the Ukrainian sociocultural system, which is genetically determined for the national tradition it is important to establish the level of accessibility for all believers. Spirituality is one of the pearls of the historical heritage of the people. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to assess the level of accessibility and general aspects that prevent people with disabilities from visiting Christian churches. In the study of this topic, we will allow ourselves to express our own points of view and try to draw the attention of religious leaders so to resolve the problem with disabled inaccessibility to temples and churches in Ukraine.

Keywords: inclusive design, Christian churches, accessibility, people with disabilities, negative aspects.

Introduction

Ukraine belongs to countries with a longstanding religious tradition. As a result, Orthodoxy dominates among confessions, about two-thirds of the population identifies with it, but in recent years this figure has begun to gradually decline from 67.3% in 2018 to 62.3% in 2020. In second place are Greek Catholics. Almost every tenth person belongs to this denomination. And this group is gradually growing—from 5.7% in 2013 to 9.6% in 2020. In addition, polls, within the margin of error, record representatives of the Roman Catholic Church—1.2%, Protestantism—1.5%, Islam—0.5%, and Judaism—0.1%. Sociologists also distinguish a separate and fairly large group—“just Christians”—8-9%, and about 15% of respondents do not consider themselves to be any of the religious traditions.¹

As of 01/01/2021, the population of Ukraine is 41,588,400 people. For such a population, according to statistics for 2019, 36,649 temples and churches are officially registered throughout Ukraine. Also, in Ukraine, there are “more than 2.8 million people who have the status of a disabled person. This is 6.1% of the total population.”² Based on the foregoing, in this study we want to pay attention to the problem of accessibility of people with disabilities to perform religious rites. We observe this tendency from the oldest churches in Ukraine to modern church buildings.

Survey of Scientific Research

The organization of the processes of forming the principles of inclusive design of Christian churches in Ukraine began not so long ago and, unfortunately, is developing very slowly, depriving people with disabilities to have equal access to the sources of the spiritual and historical heritage of Ukraine. Scientists S. Olbrich, E. M. Trauth, F. Niedermann, and S. Gregor, noted that, after many years of research and implementation of various ambitious programs, we still observe a problem in relation to people with disabilities.³ Researcher Erik W. Carter, defining the main directions of Christianity, singled out the special purpose of modern congregations to become communities of open belonging.⁴ Sue A. Rozeboom, in her article, proposed a theological basis for the practical integration of Christian worship and

¹ TRT на русском. “Украина религиозная. Государственная статистика и независимая социология,” 2020. <https://www.trtrussian.com/mnenie/ukraina-religioznaya-gosudarstvennaya-statistika-i-nezavisimaya-sociologiya-3986968>. [TRT in Russian. “Ukraine is religious. State Statistics and Independent Sociology,” 2020.]

² Благодійний фонд “Допомога інвалідам України.” “Статистика інвалідизації в Україні,” n.d. <http://ukrhelp.net/ua/statistika-invalidizatsii-v-ukraine.html>. [Charitable Foundation “Assistance to the Disabled of Ukraine.” “Statistics of disability in Ukraine.”]

³ Olbrich, S., E. M. Trauth, F. Niedermann, and S. Gregor. “Inclusive Design in IS: Why Diversity Matters.” *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, no. 37 (2015): 767–82.

⁴ Carter, Erik W. “The Absence of Asterisks: The Inclusive Church and Children with Disabilities.” *Journal of Catholic Education* 23, no. 2 (2020): 168–88.

people with disabilities.⁵ The authors E. Steinfeld, R. Smith, and H. De Preester analyzed the interactions of the inclusive concept in the formation of figurative design solutions, drawing attention to the contradictions between the new design thinking of accessibility and routine, archaic design methods.⁶ O. I. Ptashnik-Seredyuk conducted a sociological analysis of the religious identification of modern youth in the Carpathian region. Her work revealed a special predisposition of children to religiosity, which is an integral part of their daily practices.⁷ Scientists Jill L. Cunningham Beverly A. Mulvihill, and Patricia M. Speck presented the faith of Christian communities as one of the assets and means to provide, guide, support people with disabilities.⁸ Authors D. J. Poston, and A. P. Turnbull, explore the topics of religion and spirituality in families of children with disabilities. In their work they emphasized the special importance in participation in religious communities, as well as in the formation of spiritual principles in the family.⁹ Scientist L. L. Treloar conducted research that showed how people with disabilities and their families with spiritual principles respond to the challenges that are encountered in inclusive community and how religious experience shapes their concept of disability.¹⁰ Researcher E. Pridmore, showed how to use the inclusion of people with disabilities in the religious life of the community, their joint worship, using the model of the Christian Reformed Church.¹¹ Authors B.K. Collins, A. Epstein, T. Reiss, and W. Lowe presented perspectives on the inclusion of children with mental retardation in the religious life of the Christian community.¹² The scientific work of K. Roy Chen, Noreen M. Glover-Graf, and Irmo Marini studied the attitudes and beliefs of people with disabilities to spirituality and

⁵ Rozeboom, Sue A. "From Universal Design for Learning to Universal Design for Communion with the Living God." *Journal of Disability & Religion* 25, no. 3 (2021): 329–46.

⁶ McRuer, R. *The Creep Theory: Cultural Signs of Homosexuality and Disability*. Cultural Front. New York and London: New York University Press, 2006; Steinfeld, E., and R. Smith. "Universal Design for Quality of Life Technologies." In *Quality of Life Technology Handbook*, edited by R. Schulz, 107–30. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2012.

⁷ Пташник-Середюк, О.І. "Регіональні особливості релігійної ідентифікації студентської молоді." *Методологія, теорія та практика соціологічного аналізу сучасного суспільства*, no. 20 (2014): 357–61. [Ptashnyk-Seredyuk, OI "Regional features of religious identification of student youth." *Methodology, theory and practice of sociological analysis of modern society*.]

⁸ Cunningham, Jill L., Beverly A. Mulvihill, and Patricia M. Speck. "Disability and the Church: How Wide Is Your Door?" *Journal of Christian Nursing* 26, no. 3 (2009): 140–47.

⁹ Poston, D.J., and A.P. Turnbull. "The Role of Spirituality and Religion in the Family the Quality of Life for Families of Children with Disabilities." *Spirituality and Religion* 39, no. 2 (2004): 95–108.

¹⁰ Treloar, L.L. "Disability, Spiritual Beliefs, and the Church: Experiences from Adults with Disabilities and Family Members." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 40, no. 5 (2002): 594–603.

¹¹ Pridmore, E. "The Christian Reformed Church as a Model for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities." *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 10, no. 1 (2006): 93–107.

¹² Collins, B.K., A. Epstein, T. Reiss, and W. Lowe. "The Involvement of Children with Mental Retardation in the Religious Community." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 33, no. 5 (2001): 52–58.

religion, as well as their positive impact on the adaptation processes of living with a disease.¹³ Scientists Patricia J. Baldwin, Janette McDougall, Jan Evans presented the basic aspects of a rehabilitation center related to spirituality, which affects the formation of holistic care for people with disabilities.¹⁴ The author of the article, Susan Speraw, notes the special positive impact of the spirituality of children with disabilities on the faith of their parents, as well as those adults who care for them.¹⁵

In a study headed by scientists Jacqueline A. Specht, Gillian A. King, Colleen Willoughby, Elizabeth G. Brown, and Linda Smith, the spirituality of a person with attention deficit disorder helped him overcome his illness in critical life circumstances.¹⁶ The authors James D. Campbell, Dong Phil Yoon, and Brick Johnstone, in their scientific work, determined the relationship between spiritual faith and physical health, the promotion of the Christian community and religious practices, and concluded that spirituality increases the level of human recovery.¹⁷ Researchers Thomas L. Boehm and Erik W. Carter analyzed the spiritual and religious life of more than 500 families in which there were family members with disabilities, namely mental retardation. The authors noted that for most parents and caregivers of their family members, faith was central to life and was expressed in their participation in community meetings, service to others, and beliefs.¹⁸ So, completing the review of the results of research by many scientists on this topic, we identify a significant problem today in the overwhelming inavailability of inclusive design within Christian temples and churches in Ukraine. This is relevant and promising news in the formation of a new generation of inclusive equality. Attention should be paid to the similarity of opinions in the submitted articles of the authors, who agree on making the subject-spatial environment of the religious community accessible.

¹³ Chen, Roy K., Noreen M. Glover-Graf, and Irmo Marini. "Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of People with Multiple Sclerosis." *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 15, no. 3 (2011): 254–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228967.2011.590632>.

¹⁴ Baldwin, Patricia J., Janette McDougall, and Jan Evans. "An Exploration of Spirituality, Spiritual Beliefs and Paediatric Rehabilitation." *Spirituality and Health International* 9, no. 4 (2008): 249–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/shi.357>.

¹⁵ Speraw, Susan. "Spiritual Experiences of Parents and Caregivers Who Have Children with Disabilities or Special Needs." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27, no. 2 (2009): 213–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840500436974>.

¹⁶ Specht, Jacqueline A., Gillian A. King, Colleen Willoughby, Elizabeth G. Brown, and Linda Smith. "Spirituality: A Coping Mechanism in the Lives of Adults with Congenital Disabilities." *Counseling and Values* 50, no. 1 (2011): 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2005.tb00040.x>.

¹⁷ Campbell, James D., Dong Phil Yoon, and Brick Johnstone. "Determining Relationships between Physical Health and Spiritual Experience, Religious Practices, and Congregational Support in a Heterogeneous Medical Sample." *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, no. 1 (2008): 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-008-9227-5>.

¹⁸ Boehm, Thomas L., and Erik W. Carter. "Facets of Faith: Spirituality, Religiosity, and Parents of Individuals with Intellectual Disability." *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 57, no. 6 (2019): 512–26. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-57.6.512>.

Presentation of the Main Material of the Study

The materials of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in Ukraine on December 16, 2009, determined the social status of people with inclusion and outlined their rights in modern society. This document stated that every person in Ukraine has all freedoms and rights given by law without any distinction. Moreover, the developed and adopted general principles of the Convention provided a definition for the development of the rights of people with disabilities and their freedoms, excluding any discrimination based on disability. One of the principles of the Convention proclaims accessibility for inclusive people. And this literally means that a person with a disability has the right, given by the Law of Ukraine, to take part in all aspects of the life of the state, to have equal access to information technology, transport, communications, and other services that are openly presented to the population both in cities and districts.¹⁹ The requirements of the principles of accessibility, proclaimed by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, have become a big problem for many religious communities related to the organization of the object-spatial environment of equality in Christian temples and churches in Ukraine (Fig. 1, 2, 3).

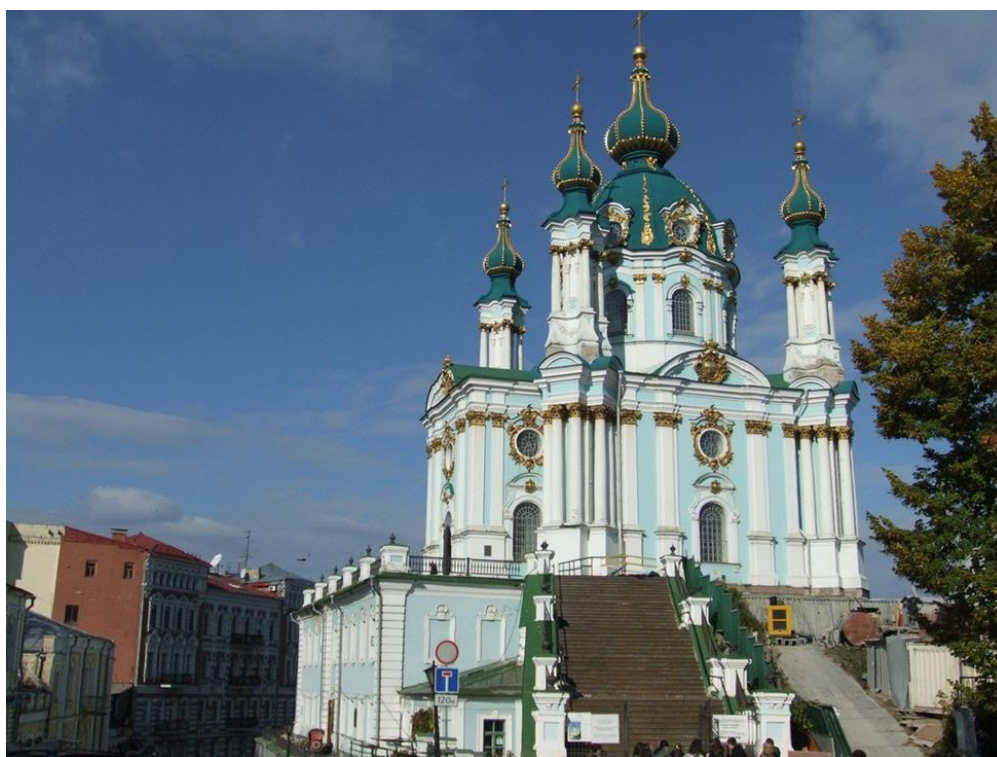


Fig. 1 Orthodox St. Andrew's Church, Kyiv city²⁰

¹⁹ Boehm, Thomas L., and Erik W. Carter. "Facets of Faith: Spirituality, Religiosity, and Parents of Individuals with Intellectual Disability." *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 57, no. 6 (2019): 512–26. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-57.6.512>.

²⁰ Depositphotos. "Киев андреевская церковь: Стоковые фотографии, картинки, лицензионные изображения высокого разрешения," n.d. <https://ru.depositphotos.com/stock->

The opportunity to attend worship for a group of people with limited mobility is virtually absent due to the lack of a ramp, although making a ramp is, from an engineering point of view, not difficult and not expensive, and this will not affect the overall beauty of the building. Unfortunately, there are also no means of accessibility for people with disabilities in modern church buildings (Fig. 2, 3), although many studies have shown that the processes of improving the physical health of this category of the population are directly related to the frequency of attending religious services. Additionally, such changes stimulate the desire further visits to Christian services, to have fellowship with the Christian community, and to participate in the life of the church.²¹ The opportunity to be included in the community of faith and to participate in the life of the church gives people with disabilities new perspectives of communication, awareness of the importance and necessity of their participation in church events, their significance as individuals belonging to a Christian family.



Fig.2. Main Catholic Church of St. Alexander, Kyiv

photos/%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%B2-%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B5%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F-%D1%86%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8C.html.

[Depositphotos. "Kyiv andreevskaya church stock photos, pictures, high resolution royalty-free images,"]

²¹ Campbell, James D., Dong Phil Yoon, and Brick Johnstone. "Determining Relationships between Physical Health and Spiritual Experience, Religious Practices, and Congregational Support in a Heterogeneous Medical Sample." *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, no. 1 (2008): 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-008-9227-5..>



Fig. 3 Baptist Church “Hope” the city of Poltava²²

How are the needs of the soul of a person with disabilities satisfied, when such a soul strives for fellowship in a Christian environment, solitary prayer in the church, service, and communion with the Divine? The doors of Christian churches in Ukraine are open to everyone, but not everyone can enter them: ramps, special toilets, places for services, drinking points are not organized for people with disabilities, therefore, many today still stand at the doors of the church and are not able to enter (Fig. 4). Once Jesus Christ said: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden...” (Matthew 11:28), and people come, but remain at the gates of the house of God.

²² Wikimapia. “Баптистская церковь Надежда,” n.d.
<https://wikimapia.org/12651038/ru/%D0%91%D0%B0%D0%BF%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F-%D1%86%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8C-%D0%9D%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B4%D0%B0>. [Wikimapia. “Hope Baptist Church.”]



Fig. 4 Author's photo: "Behold, I am standing at the door"

Unfortunately, even those few Christian churches in Ukraine that have ramps installed at the entrances of churches are most often made in violation of building codes and are not suitable for inclusive people (Fig. 5).

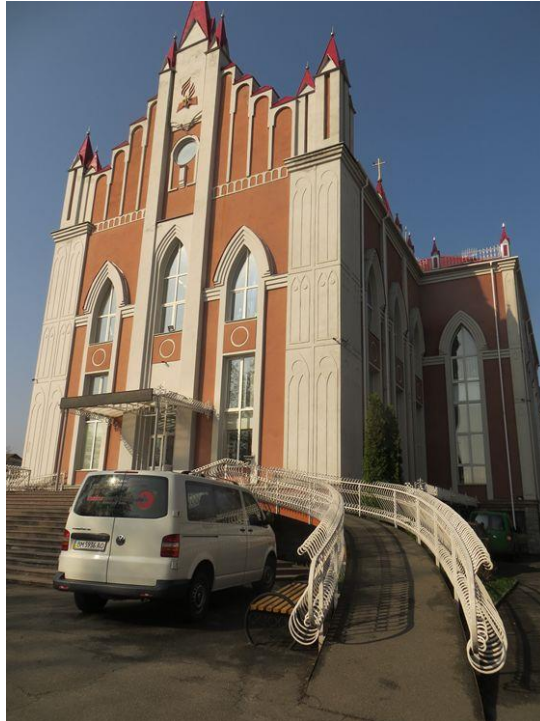


Fig. 5 Seventh Day Adventist Church or Left Bank Spiritual Center, Kyiv²³

²³ Очарованный странник. "Киев, Церковь Адвентистов Седьмого Дня или Левобережный духовный центр," 2016. <https://ocharovanny-strannik.com/izyuminki/adventistov-sedmogo-dnya-church/>. [The Enchanted Wanderer. "Kyiv, Seventh Day Adventist Church or Left Bank Spiritual Center," 2016.]

Describing the state of organization of the accessibility of buildings in Ukraine in his speech, Deputy Minister of Regional Development, Construction, Housing and Communal Services, Lev Partskhaladze, noted that about 90% of ramps in the country were made in violation of building codes and were not able to meet the needs of people with disabilities.²⁴ In accordance with the State Building Regulations of Ukraine “Inclusiveness of buildings and structures. DBN V.2.2-40: 2018” the angle of inclination of external ramps on the path of movement, as well as near the entrance to the building, should be no more than 8% or (1/12). The maximum allowable height of the ramp during one rise should not exceed 0.8 m. After each rise of the ramp, it is necessary to organize a platform with a depth of at least 1.5 m. If there is no such construction possibility, it is allowed to install spiral ramps. In short sections, where the height difference reaches 0.2 m, as well as at the exit from the sidewalk to the carriageway, the slope is taken at the rate of (1/10), or 10%. A prerequisite is the width of the ramp, which must be at least 1.2 meters for one-way traffic and 1.8 for two-way. Ramps exceeding a height of more than 3 meters are allowed to be replaced with special lifting devices (Fig. 6). A prerequisite is the formation of the surface of the ramp, which must be rough, have the necessary surface heating and a canopy over it. The requirements of the standards provide for two-sided ramp fencing, which is standardized with the following dimensions: the height of the ramp handrails is 0.7 m. and 0.9 m.²⁵

²⁴ Верховна Рада України. Законодавство України. “Конвенція про права осіб з інвалідністю. Ратифіковано в Україні Законом № 1767-ві від 16.12.2009.” 2009. https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_g71#Text. [The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Legislation of Ukraine. “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ratified in Ukraine by Law № 1767-vi of December 16, 2009.”]

²⁵ Фокус. “90 % пандусов в Україні побудовані неправильно, – Кабмін,” 2019. <https://focus.ua/ukraine/425217-90--pandusov-v-ukraine-postroeny-nepravilno--kabmin>. [Focus. “90% of ramps in Ukraine are built incorrectly, - the Cabinet of Ministers.”]

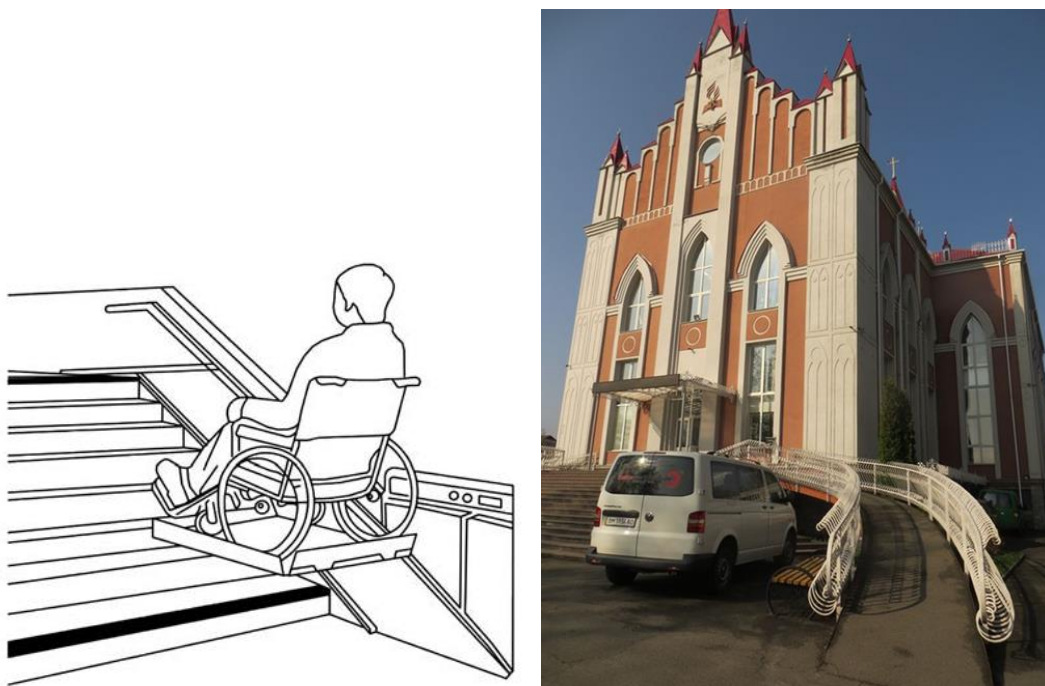


Fig. 6 As it should be according to the documents: a special lifting device²⁶

If you pay attention to the common halls of worship (Fig. 7, 8), it is noticeable that they lack the availability of inclusive design, because there are no special places for people with limited mobility with disabilities, and the aisles between the rows not wide enough. The norms of Ukraine on the inclusiveness of buildings and structures prescribe that all public buildings and structures must be accessible to the entire population, including for people with limited mobility. A mandatory norm for all public buildings is that for people with disabilities it is necessary to create a three-dimensional environment of at least 5% of the total area for their comfortable stay.

²⁶ Інклюзивність будівель і споруд. Основні положення. Київ: Мінрегіон України, 2018. <http://dreamdim.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DBN-V2240-2018.pdf>. [Inclusive buildings and structures. Substantive provisions. Kyiv: Ministry of Regional Development of Ukraine, 2018].



Fig. 7. Lutsk Church of the “Salvation” of the Christian Church of the Evangelical Faith



Fig. 8 Seventh Day Adventist Church or Left Bank Spiritual Center, Kyiv²⁷

²⁷ Mapio.net. “Церковь Адвентистов Седьмого Дня. Левобережный духовный центр. Интерьер. “Є Надія!,”” n.d. <https://mapio.net/pic/p-85237294/>. [Mapio.net. Seventh-day Adventist Church. Left Bank Spiritual Center. Terrier. "There is Hope!"]

Moreover, in the halls for worship, it is necessary to provide places for people with limited mobility, who would be in different parts of the hall, at the rate of no more than 3 in a row, not far from the emergency exit. Such places should be organized in a way that ensures escape routes are not blocked for other people present in the hall. The space near such a place should be such that a person in a wheelchair can maneuver (Fig. 9), the norms determine 1,5m x 1,5m.²⁸

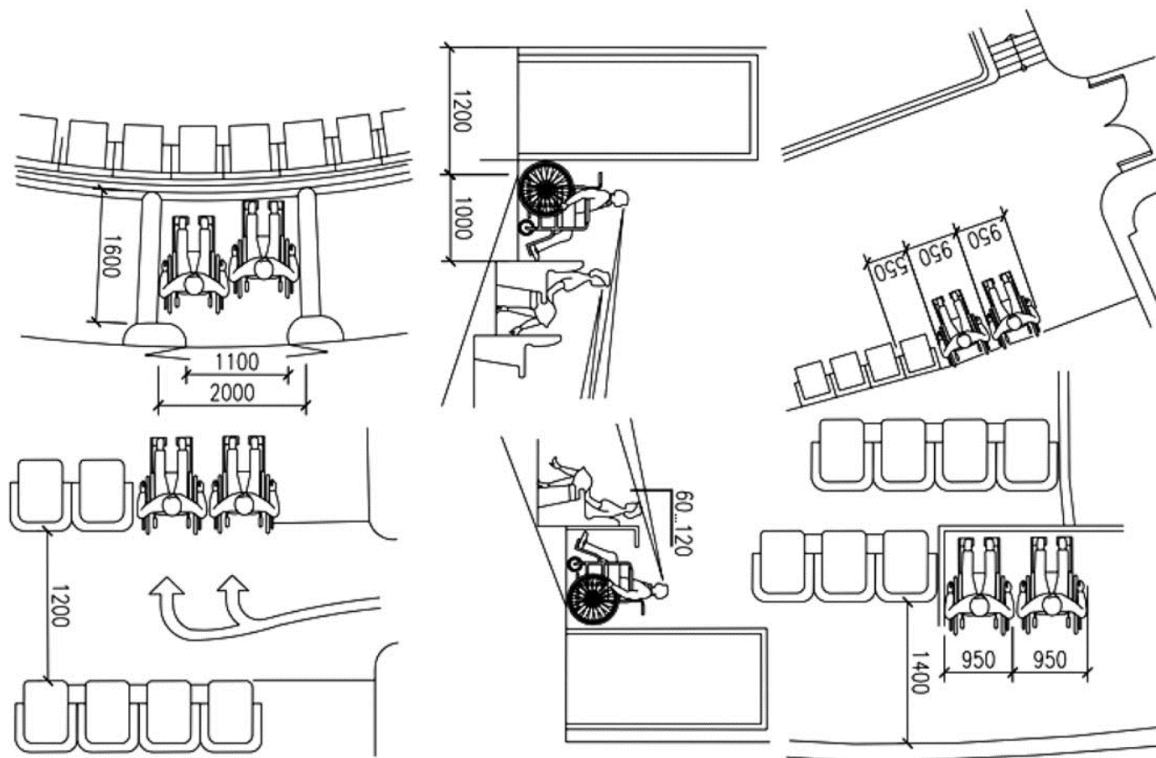


Fig. 9 Equipping seats in the halls for spectators: how it should be

²⁸ Фокус. “90 % пандусов в Украине построены неправильно, – Кабмин,” 2019. <https://focus.ua/ukraine/425217-90--pandusov-v-ukraine-postroeny-nepravilno--kabmin>. [Focus. “90% of ramps in Ukraine are built incorrectly, - the Cabinet of Ministers,”]



Fig. 9 Roman Catholic Church Virgin Mary Mother of God

The organization of the accessibility environment in Christian churches involves the organization of sanitary facilities that would be designed for a wide range of visitors, including people with limited mobility. If this is a public toilet, then it is necessary, in accordance with accepted standards, to arrange a universal cabin with the ability to maneuver and drive into it. Its dimensions in depth - 1.8 m, in width - not less than 1.65 m, next to the toilet, it is necessary to provide space for placing a wheelchair, crutches, hooks for clothes. The cabin must be equipped with the necessary sliding support turnstiles and other equipment. Near the common toilet, it is imperative to organize a universal sanitary and hygienic room that could be used by visitors with disabilities of different sexes, parents with disabled children in wheelchairs, parents with disabled children of different sexes, etc. Such premises must have an area of at least 6m².

In addition, toilets with a separate entrance should be equipped with a warning system and a fire safety system, considering people with disabilities with hearing and vision impairments. Door openers, faucets, levers, handrails should be located no lower than 0.8 m and no higher than 1.1 m from the floor (Fig. 10).²⁹ But in reality, we have something else. Before us is a reprint of the toilet of one of the most famous churches in Ukraine - St. Andrew's Church, where the toilet absolutely does not meet the needs of people with disabilities, including a sanitary unit inside the church building.

²⁹ Фокус. “90 % пандусов в Украине построены неправильно, – Кабмин,” 2019. <https://focus.ua/ukraine/425217-90--pandusov-v-ukraine-postroeny-nepravilno--kabmin>. [Focus. “90% of ramps in Ukraine are built incorrectly, - the Cabinet of Ministers,”]



Fig. 10 Sanitary and hygienic cabins in the churches of Ukraine, the city of Kyiv

Modern society is developing at a tremendous speed. New technologies, replacing one another, provide a person with new opportunities, but they are not able to meet the spiritual needs of human nature. Believing Christians of different denominations in Ukraine during the years of militant atheism dreamed of freedom of religion, strove for it, longed to open the doors of their churches to everyone. But when the time of freedom came and their dreams became a reality, the doors were not opened for everyone. Why? This is a question for the leaders of religious communities in Ukraine. When we talk about inclusive design, we are talking not only about technical issues, but first, about a heart filled with compassion and mercy towards one's neighbor. The desire to ease the hardships of a weak person, to fill his/her life with warmth and friendship, as well as sincere care, revealing our faith to him/her in this action. This is how inclusive design began, and it continues to live by these principles today. Many spiritual aspects help a person with a disability overcome a health problem.

Conclusion

Having conducted a study on the topic of accessibility of inclusive design in Christian churches in Ukraine, it can be said with confidence that the processes of forming the object-spatial environment in Christian churches in Ukraine for people with disabilities are very slow, and in most cases, are handled unprofessionally. To summarize, it is more for the sake of appearance than for real practical application that any attempts are made to assist the disabled. As a result, this deprives many believers who are disabled of the opportunity to participate in corporate worship of God. Therefore, on the one hand, this study aims to draw attention to

solving the problem of accessibility of people with disabilities to churches. On the other hand, it states the real state of affairs of inclusive design in the Christian environment of Ukraine.

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