

## **Service Animals**

### **Accompanying Individuals With Disabilities**

According to the American disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is considered a working animal, not a pet. They are defined as an animal that has been individually trained to provide assistance or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits one or more of their major life functions.

Since service animals are a significant means of independence for those who use them, they must be an integral part of such persons' welcome into any and all phases of church life.

Under the ADA, businesses and organizations that serve the public must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of their facilities where customers are normally allowed to go. The brief summary below will allow for proper handling of an encounter with a service animal.

#### Service Dog Etiquette:

- Do not touch the service animal, or the person it assists, without the owner's permission.
- Do not make noises at the service animal; this action could distract the animal from performing its job.
- Do not feed the service animal; this could disrupt the dog's schedule
- Do not ask a person with a service animal to discuss his/her disability or the assistance their service animal provides.

For further information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) please call the U.S. Department of Justice's toll-free ADA information Line at 800-514-0301.