

# Presbyterians for Disability Concerns

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Resources for Worship and Inclusion



2014 Disability Inclusion Resource Packet  
Artwork by Craig Wood

Student of FAR Conservatory and participant in the Rejoicing Spirits Community at  
First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan

## *The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith Resources for Worship and Inclusion*

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Questions or comments about *The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith*  
may be sent to [phewainfo@gmail.com](mailto:phewainfo@gmail.com)

## **Circles Through the Seasons of Life: An Introduction**

Rev. Bebe Baldwin

Please join us in imagining that we are watching a group of children. They are playing a circle game – laughing, singing, holding hands. But look again. Who do you see in the circle? Is anyone outside, waiting to be welcomed in?

Circles can embrace, empower, include. Or they can shun, shut out, “tolerate.” What kind of circles are in your church?

Every time we baptize a child, we affirm our belief that she or he is created in the image of God and is loved by God. We promise to nurture the child in the faith and to support his family as he grows in discipleship. We encircle the family with our presence as the body of Christ.

If the child has a disability, is she included in the circle through all the seasons of life? As others in the congregation face the loss of abilities, do they know God’s all-embracing, all-inclusive love? Are they included in worship, education, fellowship, service, and leadership? Is anyone missing from the Lord’s table?

The 2014 resources developed by PHEWA’s Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) were designed to challenge churches to become circles of inclusion for persons with disabilities at all stages of life. Sometimes it takes courage to invite others into our circles, or we may not know how to be more welcoming. The PDC resources will help you think through the challenges and even take the risk of being more inclusive.

### Resources for Worship

These resources have been prepared by experienced worship leaders who are committed to including all persons in worship. Choose, mix, and match what fits your own setting. Use them all year long, not only on Disability Inclusion Sunday. Use them in a variety of settings: Sunday worship, church meetings, fellowship gatherings, worship at Presbytery.

### The Seasons of Life: Children and Youth

When parents receive a devastating diagnosis for a beloved child, they may ask, “Where is God?” In “Held by the Presence,” by Cathy Smith and “God Is With Us,” by Carol Brown, two mothers share moving personal stories of pain and faith. In “My Faith Journey,” by Cameron Scott, a teenager tells how his faith has changed and grown because of the simple but profound faith of Clayton, his twin brother, who lives with multiple disabilities. In “Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind: Inclusion and Belonging in a Summer Camp,” A.J. Pratt describes her church’s Creative Arts and Nature Camp where all children belong and none are excluded.

### The Seasons of Life: Gen X and Y (20-45 years)

How can the church support young adults with disabilities as they make decisions that will shape their futures? In “My Gen Y Perspective,” Sarah Nettleton issues an honest and direct challenge to church members to take inclusion seriously by doing more than saying a quick “Hi,” on Sunday morning. In “Good Employment as One Important Expression of Self, Vocation, and Contribution,” Milton Tyree explores the assumptions behind the question, “What do you do?” and calls the church to positive action in opening up employment opportunities for people with disabilities. In “Rebuilding the House – Students with Disabilities,” Noah Buchholz and Sarah VanderZee McKenney report on their experiences at Princeton Theological Seminary and Columbia Theological Seminary and tell how they invited people around them to fit into their culture. In “Still Part of the Whole,” the Rev. Dr. Rhonda Myers recounts “advice” that illustrates the barriers well-meaning people erect around people with disabilities – but also the way attitudes can change.

### The Seasons of Life: Baby Boomers (45-62 years)

What personal resources and support can we summon when we face radical life changes? In “Moments of Grace,” by Sara Johnston and the Rev. Bebe Baldwin, Sara shares the rich spiritual resources and the wholeness she has discovered, resources that have empowered her to live creatively on her journey through illness and disability. In “What I’ve Learned So Far,” Karen Casady approaches disability from a different perspective, that of baby-boomer parents who have faced the realities of life-long planning for adult children with disabilities.

### The Seasons of Life: Retired and Redirected (63 and older)

Can we make peace with aging and disability? In “Celebrate Life,” Steve Dietz tells of his struggle with his mother’s Alzheimer’s disease and the peace he found when his family gathered to celebrate her life. In “A Case of Ignored Identity,” the Rev. Bebe Baldwin introduces readers to a friend who, like many people with disabilities, was seen by a stranger only as disabled and needing to be “fixed,” not as a creative, active, competent person. In “Do You Know the Bells?” Amy Buhaug writes lovingly of her grandparents and the service-oriented, faithful, joyful life they lived even when they faced aging and disability.

### The Seasons of Life: Crossing the Generations

The Rev. Sue Montgomery, Team Leader for the PC(USA) Disability Consultants program, tackles tough issues that cross generational lines. In “Eavesdropping Opens the Door to a New Way of Thinking,” she discusses common concerns of family members who are planning funerals for loved ones with disabilities. In “A Question of Marriage,”

she argues for a new understanding of marriage. In both articles she draws upon her long experience as pastor and chaplain to list practical suggestions for pastoral care.

### Resources for the Family of Faith

In this section, Carol Brown offers a collection of carefully selected resources chosen by PDC members who have a broad understanding of disability issues and ministry with people who live with disabilities.

### A Concluding Note

It is the hope and prayer of the PDC Coordinating Team that you will use these resources, not only on Disability Inclusion Sunday, but every Sunday of the year ... and not only on Sunday. Inclusion happens, or does not happen, every day of every week. May the circles we form embrace, empower, and include all of God's precious children – wherever they are in the seasons of life.

### **PDC Leadership Team**

Carol Brown (Resource Packet Committee)  
Miguel Carlin  
Lynn Cox (Secretary and Resource Packet Coordinator)  
Rev. Ernest Krug, M.D.  
Cindy Merten (Co-moderator and Resource Packet Committee)  
Gary Pratt, Treasurer  
Cindy Ray, G.A. Committee on Representation (GACOR) Liaison  
Rev. David Young, Co-moderator

### **Past PDC Moderator and advisor to the PDC Leadership Team**

Rev. Bebe Baldwin

### **PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns**

Rev. Sue Montgomery (Team Leader and Mobility/Accessibility Issues,  
Resource Packet Committee)  
Rev. Raymond Meester (Hearing Disabilities Issues)  
Rev. Rick Roderick (Visual Disabilities Issues)  
Elder Milton Tyree (Intellectual Disabilities Issues)

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## The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Worship Resources



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## Call to Worship

Rev. Ernest Krug

Genesis 12:1, Psalms 77:1-2a, 12-13a

**One:** As God called Abram, Sarai and Lot to a new place, God calls each of us,

**Many:** So that the world will be blessed through us.

**One:** I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, that he may hear me.

**Many:** In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord.

**One:** I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds.

**Many:** Your way, O God, is holy.

*The Rev. Ernest Krug, M.D. is a professor of Biomedical Sciences and Pediatrics and course director for Medical Humanities and Clinical Bioethics at Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine. He is also Parish Associate at First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan.*





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## Call to Worship

Rev. Mary Austin

In all of life, the grace of God surrounds us.  
Before we speak, the image of God lives in us.

**God is alive  
in playful years, and in work,  
in growth and in limits.**

When we learn the swiftness of life,  
God's wisdom goes with us.

**God surrounds us,  
in health and in sickness,  
in joys, and in pain.**

As breath leaves us, God awaits.  
God's mercy is our home.

**Let us worship the God of all our years.**

*The Rev. Mary Austin is the Pastor of Westminster Church of Detroit, a church for all people in the city of Detroit, Michigan. She has also been a hospice chaplain. She tells stories at <http://stainedglassinthecity.com/>.*

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## **A Prayer for Illumination**

Rev. Bebe Baldwin

Gracious God, we discover your love anew as you call us in a variety of ways. Embrace us now with new understandings that we may rejoice in your presence and use our gifts in faithful service. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

*The Rev. Bebe Baldwin is a retired member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. She is a former moderator of the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA), and the current moderator of the Presbytery Disability Concerns Ministry.*



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## **Prayer for Illumination**

Rev. Ernest Krug

One: The Lord be with you

Many: And also with you.

All: Creator God, create in each of us an open mind that we might hear your Word truthfully; and hearing it, believe; and believing, commit to more faithful living as disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen

*The Rev. Ernest Krug, M.D. is professor of Biomedical Sciences and Pediatrics and course director for Medical Humanities and Clinical Bioethics at the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine. He is also Parish Associate at First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan.*



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## Prayer of Confession

Rev. Rick Roderick

Although we see ourselves as open-minded, we often close ourselves off to many who are in our midst. We don't see the importance of people whom we perceive as different from us. May God help us to see both the needs and gifts that others offer the Church, in general, and our congregations, in particular.

*The Rev. Rick Roderick is a graduate of the University of Illinois and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, with ordination in 1980. He is honorably retired from the Kentucky Office for the Blind, a state rehabilitation agency where he was a rehabilitation counselor and later an assistive technology specialist. He has served on the leadership team of PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) network and is now one of four PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns, specializing in blindness and low vision.*



**PRESBYTERIANS FOR  
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## **Prayer of Confession**

Rev. Jo Taliaferro

**Unison:** Because you created us in your image and sustain us with your all-embracing love, we open our hearts in remorse. We have separated ourselves from you by feasting on homogeneity rather than savoring the healthy ingredients of diversity and uniqueness. We meant to invite people with varying abilities into our circle but fear prevented us from acting on our good intentions. Oh Christ, our center and Sovereign, forgive our wrong-hearted assumptions about disability and the obstacles which turn our communities into squared-off boundaries of apathy, narrow doors and barbed wire fences. Re-shape our attitudes toward those we stare at from a distance, the people whose gifts amaze and those for whom we build thrones or count unworthy of a cherished place in our like-minded circles of work and play and worship. Lord of all the seasons of our lives, healer, wounded by our lack of faith and understanding, we have failed to follow your example. Without you, we have chosen to wander in the wilderness or graze on familiar grass while our neighbors became mal-nourished and isolated because we did not dare to reach, to embrace, to welcome or to recognize by our actions, the need to expand our circles that we might feed on variety, greater wisdom and the eternal building of your kingdom of which you alone, are the alpha and the omega.

The Good News

**Leader:** The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of unmerited favor if only we will hear it with our hearts! We are cleansed, ready to move forward into uncharted courses of action! Let us believe what we declare:

**Unison** In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

*The Rev. Jo Taliaferro is a teaching elder in the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. She serves on the Presbytery Disability Concerns Ministry, Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and the Committee on Representation. She is active at North Como Presbyterian Church in Roseville, Minnesota.*

## Measuring God's Love

Children's sermon by the Rev. Joanne Blair

(Supplies: measuring cup, measuring tape, stopwatch)

This morning I was thinking about how big God's love is, and I was wondering how we can measure it. So I brought some "measuring supplies" with me, and thought we'd give it a try.

Do any of you cook? I use this measuring cup all of the time when I'm making cookies so they'll turn out just right. But the Bible says, "My cup runneth over" (Ps. 23), so I guess we can't measure God's love that way.

Do your parents measure you to see how much you've grown? I know my doctor measures me. But the Bible says, "God's love is higher than the heavens" (Ps. 108), so I guess we can't measure God's love that way.

Do any of you swim on a team, or run races, or try and hold your breath? We use timers and stopwatches to measure time. But the Bible says, "God's love is from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 103), so I guess we can't measure God's love that way either.

So how do we measure God's love?

Well, we can't. And we don't need to. God's love is so big that it is bigger than anything we have to measure it with. So rather than measure it, we just need to trust it and feel it.

*Prayer:*

Dear God,

We thank you for your love.

A love so big, we can never know all of it.

Help us to love others like you love us.

Amen.

*The Rev. Joanne Blair is Assistant Pastor for Inclusion & Pastoral Care at First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan.*

## **Jesus Loves Everyone**

Children's Sermon by the Rev. John Judson

*This is a story about a friend of mine.... just about your age, and his name is Ralphy, and his mother, Mrs. G.*

Ralphy, "Mom, I'm bored!"

Mrs. G., "Well why don't you call your friend Justin?"

Ralphy, "Nah, he and I don't play together anymore."

Mrs. G., "Why not? He was your best friend and you guys had a great time."

Ralphy, "Well you know how Justin is, well, different?"

Mrs. G., "Yes I know that he is different. But you were still good friends."

Ralphy, with a sad sigh, "I know, but the cool kids at school told me that if I wanted to play with them, then I couldn't play with Justin, because he was so different. And they don't like kids who are different. So I can't play with Justin anymore."

Mrs. G. thought about that for a minute or so and then said, "Ralphy let me ask you a question..."

Ralphy, "Mom, I know what you are going to ask me."

Mrs. G., "And what is that?"

Ralphy, "What do you think Jesus would do?"

Mrs. G., "That's right. What do you think that Jesus would do? "

Ralphy considered the question for a moment and then replied, "I think that he would call up Justin and go play because Jesus loves everyone...and nobody is different with Jesus."

Mrs. G., "So what would you like to do?"

Ralphy, thinking, then with a bit of excitement, “Can you call Justin’s mom and see if he can come and play?”

Mrs. G, “I think I can do that.”

Ralphy, “Great, because I really like playing with Justin...(pausing)...and I’m glad that Jesus loves everyone the same so I can, too, even if the cool kids don’t think it is so cool.”

*Will you pray with me (prayer is spoken in small segments in order to be repeated by the children), Dear God...thank you for loving everyone...help us...to love everyone as well...so we can be like Jesus...in Jesus name Amen.*

*The Rev. Dr. John Judson is the head of staff at First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan.*





# PRESBYTERIANS FOR DISABILITY CONCERNS

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## SCRIPTURE SUGGESTIONS

### The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith

#### **For All the Seasons of Life:**

Genesis 1:26-31

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Psalms 1, 139

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

I Corinthians 12:4-13

Galatians 3:27-28

Matthew 22:34-40

James 1:5, 3:13-18

#### **For a Focus on Children and Youth:**

Exodus 2:1-10

I Samuel 3:1-10

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Luke 2:41-52

Mark 10:13-16

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

#### **For a Focus on Older Adults:**

Psalm 71:7-9

Luke 2:25-38

*Compiled by the Rev. Bebe Baldwin and members of PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Network Leadership Team.*

## **What Happens After Inclusion?**

Scripture in Skit Format by Terry Chaney

### **Background**

The following skit was presented at the Rejoicing Spirits service at First Presbyterian Birmingham Michigan ( <http://www.fpcbirmingham.org/rejoicing-spirits.html> ) and is based on Mark 10:48-52. The characters were played by John Judson [Reporter] and Terry Chaney [Joseph], AKA me.

Marcie (my wife) and I are both totally blind and have experienced both the rehabilitation and institutional systems, first hand. Although there is a strong argument that those who are blind are the “darlings” of the rehabilitation system and that this may make us unlike many in the Rejoicing Spirits communities, since our issues are different than those with other intellectual/developmental disabilities, I do believe that we do have more than just empathy going for us in seeking to understand and implement this ministry.

In “A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability,” Kathy Black spends a great deal of time exploring the difference between being “cured” and “fixed.” In the skit, I have attempted to imagine a follower of Jesus who is physically disabled but understands that he is healed and needn’t be fixed. I believe that this is the message that our communities need to hear. Rejoicers need not subject themselves to patronizing behavior because our God is not a God who patronizes, but who passionately loves and treasures all. They are not children of a lesser God, but treasured children of a loving and powerful God.

## **What Happens After Inclusion?**

REPORTER: Excuse me, you with the stick, I’m trying to find out some things about this Jesus, who I understand was here several years ago, and I heard that he made a blind man see, and...

JOSEPH: I see, you think that because I’m blind that I should know every blind person and all about them?

Reporter: Well, no, oh, well, yes, well, don’t all of you, um, handicapped people know each other?

JOSEPH: Actually, no, we don’t, necessarily, but in this case you are correct; you are talking about my friend Bartimaeus. Yes, when Jesus came through here he got his sight back but he isn’t here in Jericho right now, and he probably won’t be back for awhile.

He's gone off to Galilee to learn some more stories about Jesus and what he did and what he taught the people there.

REPORTER: Well, maybe then you could help me. Were you here when, ah, your friend got his sight back?

JOSEPH: Yes, I was. I didn't actually meet Jesus myself, but I've talked with a lot of people who did. We were very busy that day and the crowd that was following Jesus didn't go past the shop so...

REPORTER: The shop? You mean you aren't... ?

JOSEPH: A beggar, no. My brother and sister and I run a pottery shop. My parents didn't want me to be a beggar, so when I was little they worked out how to make pots on the pottery wheel with me. My sister paints them, my brother also makes pots and does all of the talking to customers, since they don't want to talk with my sister or me, at least most of them don't. My brother tries to keep the accounts in his head, but my sister and I have to keep them, kind of behind his back. It works.

REPORTER: Well, that is interesting, but about your friend Bartimaeus and this Jesus...

JOSEPH: I was getting to that. The day after Jesus left to go to Jerusalem, Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus came in, all excited to tell us about Jesus.

REPORTER: You mean Zacchaeus, the tax collector? How did you know him, and why would he have anything to do with Bartimaeus, or you, for that matter?

JOSEPH: Zacchaeus is one of our better customers. He's a very smart man. He used to throw big parties at his house; Roman soldiers and other really important people would come, and he used our pottery a lot. He had us decorate it like he'd imported it from Italy, so they would think it was really expensive, but he knew that many of his guests would get drunk and break things and that he could get them cheaper here. My sister paints pottery very well and his guests never caught on. I know that most of the people around here really hated Zacchaeus, but we never had any real trouble with him. In fact, he was one of the few customers who would talk with me. I think he was very lonely, even with his Roman friends.

REPORTER: I'm really confused. Why were the two of them together, and why would he talk with you? Why didn't he just send a slave to get his stuff for him?

JOSEPH: You mean Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus? Well, they met the day before when Jesus took all of his followers to Zacchaeus's house for a really big party. They became friends and followers of Jesus. Actually, so have I. We meet together at Zacchaeus's house all of the time to be together and to encourage each other as we learn more about

Jesus and try to live in the way he told us about. It is very exciting, and all of us feel more alive and better about ourselves and about God than we ever have.

REPORTER: Let me get this straight, Bartimaeus is your friend, but he didn't try to get Jesus to give you your sight, like he did for him? Doesn't that really make you angry?

JOSEPH: You know, I can understand how it could, but it doesn't, especially now that I've learned more about Jesus and what he was doing and teaching. You see, Jesus was trying to show us how to live, how to treat each other, and how to live with God. For Bartimaeus, being blind meant that he had to be a beggar. To be a good beggar, you have to make people feel very sorry for you; you have to show them that you are helpless and need their help. Bartimaeus knew his way around Jericho at least as well as I do, and he got started late because he lost his sight a couple of years ago. Actually, he could have done very well for himself, even being blind, if he had half a chance, but he didn't get that until Jesus gave him one.

REPORTER: I'm really lost here; how did Jesus give him a chance, other than giving him back his sight?

JOSEPH: What Jesus gave Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus, and the rest of us, is a way to live with each other and with God. Zacchaeus doesn't try to be a cheating tax collector any more. He's actually always been a nice man, at least for people he really knew and trusted. For instance, he must have given his thugs an ear full when they busted up our shop when collecting taxes several years ago. I remember asking Zacchaeus if they had to be so rough, when he was talking with my sister and me, and it never happened again. That was before he met Jesus, and now he makes all of his collectors treat people with respect and not take more than they should, because Jesus taught us that we are all family.

REPORTER: Well, I'm glad that Zacchaeus is being nicer, but what about Bartimaeus?

JOSEPH: I think that he would tell you that becoming a part of a community where he could be cared for and care for others, where he can love others, is even more exciting than getting his sight back.

Well, I've got to get back to work, but if you'd like, we are getting together at Zacchaeus's house tonight, and if you would like, you can join us and learn more about Jesus and the rest of us, then.

*Terry Chaney is a member of First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan and a part of the Rejoicing Spirits Leadership Team there.*



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## **The Imperfect Perfect Solution**

A Sermon Illustration by the Rev. Bebe Baldwin

Bill and Mary worshipped regularly at the church where they had been members for many years. When Bill was diagnosed with Parkinson's, the couple faced many changes but looked to their church family for support and nurture.

Like most of us, Bill and Mary sat in their "chosen" pew every Sunday. One morning after worship, a woman who shared their pew complained to the pastor that Bill's tremor was causing the pew to shake so much that she could not worship.

The pastor offered the "perfect" solution. He told Bill and Mary that they should "attend" worship by sitting in the church library and watching the service online. He reasoned that they could continue to go to church, without Bill's tremor disturbing other worshippers.

Bill never again attended worship. Mary, who is now a widow, has continued to participate in worship and other church activities, but she grieves the fact that when Bill was having to face the loss of abilities, he also lost his relationship with his church family.

Bill and Mary are not the real names of the couple, but the story is true. It was told to this writer during a workshop she led on inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of the church.

*The Rev. Bebe Baldwin is a retired member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, a former moderator of the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA), and the current moderator of the Presbytery Disability Concerns Ministry.*

## **A Story in Anywhere USA that Didn't Have to Happen**

Rev. Sue Montgomery

*As one of the PC(USA) Disability Concerns Consultants, many conversations occur over the phone, via the Internet, in face-to-face meetings, at workshops and worship services. The stories are rich with tales of joyous church participation as doors are opened, the spirit of their home churches is inclusive, and integration into the church family is ongoing. For others, the stories are filled with deep pain. Old understandings of living life with a disability are rampant. People living with disabilities are segregated from the congregation, as it is believed special classes are needed, for they have no abilities to participate in church worship or fellowship events. The story included here reflects what people with disabilities experience when the people around them have no awareness training or sensitivity to the ministry needs of the brother or sister with a disability who sits in their midst," in but still out."*

The names and location in this story aren't being included, not because what happened isn't true, but because it is a story that could be happening anywhere, in any sanctuary in the PC(USA). It starts with a called presbytery meeting. The meeting is to include worship with communion, the examination of two candidates for ordained ministry, and the moving of an inquirer to candidacy. Attending the meeting, for the first time since experiencing a serious health crisis, was a retired Teaching Elder who was now needing to use a wheelchair. This Teaching Elder has been a long time active member of the presbytery, preaching, moderating committees such as the Committee on Ministry (COM) and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), serving as a professor at local colleges, universities, leading worship and training events at synod and presbytery levels. and as pastor emeritus of a larger congregation. This Teaching Elder had always been highly respected, that is, until the day of this presbytery meeting.

What happened is this, the Teaching Elder and other presbytery participants who used wheelchairs for mobility were required to sit in the rear of the sanctuary. When it came time for communion, everyone was invited forward to receive the bread and cup by intinction. The Teaching Elder, who was still learning how to manipulate the chair, thought it would be inconsiderate to ask anyone for help. With some coaxing and assurances that all would be fine, the spouse and two colleagues from presbytery assisted, communion was received. After receiving communion, what was later referred to as the "wheelchair parade," made its way to the back of the sanctuary.

As the worship service moved to the receiving of the offering, several ushers from the host congregation walked by those who used wheelchairs, including the cherished and respected honorably retired Teaching Elder. After watching in disbelief, the Teaching Elder expressed puzzlement and mouthed the word, "Why?" Not one to be ignored, it was a totally new experience. The need to use a wheelchair for mobility had somehow erased all the professional and personal accomplishments and service this Teaching Elder had given to the church. The presence of the wheelchair meant it was time to sit back and be served rather than to serve. The ushers passed by not once, but three and four times.

Each pass elicited a clear message; the wheelchair meant the person sitting in it was not able to share in the offering.

It only got worse. When the CPM called the candidates forward for prayer, all supporting church members, pastors, and families were invited to come forward to join with the candidate. Again, this Teaching Elder did not want to go forward. Despite years of support, encouragement, and nurturing of the candidates, going forward was awkward. Once again, with support from colleagues and the spouse, the Teaching Elder did go forward. However, the entire group moved up the stairs to the chancel area, completely excluding the Teaching Elder. The person in the wheelchair could not climb the stairs, so once again, the message of exclusion—unintentional as it was—was loud and clear. Fortunately, a colleague within the presbytery saw what was happening and intervened asking the simple question, “Why don’t all of you come down to the floor and no one has to climb the stairs.” Everyone moved to the floor, the prayers were held, all was well.

But was it? The Teaching Elder experienced exclusion in ways that should not have happened—especially in the church family. With some awareness, sensitivity, and training none of this would have happened. Communion is often one of the most isolating experiences in worship for people who live with disabilities. Communion needs to be served in a way that is the same for everyone, to be inclusive. Communion bread can all be gluten free; it needn’t be something that makes anyone identified as different. Communion needs to be received by everyone the same way. Communion shouldn’t be something that is requested to be served individually after everyone else is served or in a way that is different from the others in the community, in any way. Participation in worship needs to be as equal as possible for all. No one should be ignored during the offering; all gifts are given from the heart. Even more important, the gifts of people with disabilities, the gifts of prayer, support, and what connects us as the family of God should never be denied to anyone due to stairs, attitudes, perceptions of others, or any other barriers. The most important gift we can give one another is our support and love.

Simple things would have made a difference. The lack of awareness, training, and sensitivity to what happens to our brothers and sisters in faith in the presence of disabling conditions created unnecessary exclusion and its subsequent pain that day. For the Teaching Elder it was an eye-opening experience, one that was never imagined until that day. The disbelief, the raw and painful rejection of all that had once been in the person who once served, being replaced by the person in the wheelchair who could no longer do anything, was worse than all the disability the disease created.

It didn’t have to happen. But it did. Now is the time to prevent it from ever happening again in any place, at any time, and to any one. This is what it means to be the family of God—different gifts, different members, one body, the Body of Christ.

*The Rev. Sue S. Montgomery, Knox, Pennsylvania, is the Pastor of Nickleville Presbyterian Church, Emlenton, PA and Chaplain at the Polk Center, a residential facility for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. She is also the Team Leader for the PC(USA) Disability Concerns Consultants.*



A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## **Affirmation of Faith**

Rev. Rick Roderick

We believe in God who created all of us, regardless of ability, education, and religious background, in the Divine image. God enabled Moses and Aaron to work together in an interdependent relationship, so that each of their strengths could be used in Israel's deliverance.

We believe in Jesus Christ who encouraged all the children to come to him, who broke down social barriers, and who cared about people whom society shunned.

We believe in the Holy Spirit who encourages us to bring the Gospel to all people and who enables Christ's ministry of reconciliation and empowerment.

We believe that all people are equal before God and can be used for the establishment of God's rule on earth.

*The Rev. Rick Roderick is a graduate of the University of Illinois and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, with ordination in 1980. He is honorably retired from the Kentucky Office for the Blind, a state rehabilitation agency where he was a rehabilitation counselor and later an assistive technology specialist. He has served on the leadership team of PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) network and is now one of four PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns, with focus on blindness and low vision.*





A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## **Affirmations of Faith**

Rev. Raymond Meester

### **Based on Isaiah 35:5-6; Luke 7:22**

Christ Jesus,  
though he was in the form of God,  
came among us as one of us,  
in a form vulnerable to brokenness,  
to tear down attitudinal and physical barriers that exclude.  
He brought healing and wholeness to those deprived of dignity and self-respect.  
He came so that the blind shall walk with confidence,  
the deaf shall understand with joy,  
the lame shall have full access everywhere,  
and the mute shall be heard.  
All shall profess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all  
and be enabled to serve in God's kingdom!

### **Based on 1 Corinthians 12**

God created us as diverse people,  
giving each different gifts to complement each other  
as we seek to use our God-given abilities for Christ's body, the church.  
In the one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body,  
and the Spirit activates gifts for all of God's people.  
Such gifts cannot be denied nor neglected,  
no more than the hand can say to the foot, "I have no need of you,"  
nor the eye declare, "Since I am not an ear, I am not needed."  
For all are needed and are to be welcomed in God's kingdom,  
as equal partners in service to God.

*The Rev. Raymond Meester is pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church, Lincoln, Nebraska, that has a ministry with the deaf. Raymond's parents, as well as four uncles and aunts, were deaf. He has served on the board of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and is one of four PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns, with focus on ministries with the deaf and hard-of-hearing.*



A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## **Prayer of the People**

Rev. Dr. Timothy H. Little

Father Mother GOD, we gather in this sacred space to affirm again, together, our commitment to be your faithful servants. Give us courage to truly welcome all of your people, both the old and the young, the rich and the poor, those who believe they have no disability, and those who experience daily the challenge of living creatively with a physical, mental, or spiritual disabling condition. Help all of us to be open to confess our shortcomings and with gratitude, receive your embracing love and acceptance.

As we gather in this INCLUSION Sunday Celebration, help us to renew again our sensitivities to those who are challenged by a disabling condition. Help us to be proactive in planning ways to make the path of life easier for all of your people. Help us especially to remember that we need to befriend our neighbors, not only when it is convenient, but throughout the day and the week. Teach us again and again how to be faithful in being instruments of your redeeming love. It is with gratitude that we place ourselves in your everlasting and powerful hands. Amen

*The Rev. Dr. Timothy H. Little, DMin, BCC, ACPE Supervisor, has served in capacities as a hospital chaplain and CPE supervisor for over 45 years in Iowa, Georgia, and most recently at the University of California Davis Medical Center. Through an interest in end of life planning and 20 years of service on the UCDCMC bioethics committee, he has developed a sensitivity regarding the misrepresentation of justice issues within the current delivery of health care in this country.*

*Having been legally blind for all his life and totally blind for the past 20 years, he is especially concerned regarding the ways in which our churches respond to the inclusion of persons with disabling conditions. He has experience consulting with congregations regarding ways in which to eliminate barriers and providing authentic welcome to persons with disabling conditions.*

## Prayers of the People

Rev. Mary Austin

O God, come to us, we pray,  
and yet we know that you are already here,  
in every season of life.

In the way our very cells come together and give us life,  
in our first, tumbling steps,  
in the “Why? Why? Why?” questions of childhood,  
and the daredevil days of youth,  
your grace surrounds us.

As we find our vocation,  
lose the sureness of youth  
and take on the wisdom of age,  
and the pain of knowledge,  
your wisdom enlightens us.

In seasons of disappointment,  
days of grief,  
when relationships break,  
and our hearts with them,  
your love carries us.

For all of it, we are grateful,  
knowing that we live within your Spirit’s embrace.

For those whose life is a struggle, we pray for your care.  
For the lonely, bring companionship.  
For the lost, the gift of hope.  
For the sick, your power to make whole.  
For the addicted, strength.  
For the abused, freedom.



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And for all the people of the earth,  
who are all your children,  
old and young,  
strong or frail,  
silly and wise,  
gifted or struggling,  
sure of you or full of doubt,  
come with your loving care,  
and give the gifts that only you can give.

We pray in the name of the One who is a friend to us all,  
and who taught us to pray, saying...

*The Rev. Mary Austin is the Pastor of Westminster Church of Detroit, a church for all people in the city of Detroit, Michigan. She has also been a hospice chaplain. She tells stories at <http://stainedglassinthecity.com/>.*

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## Prayers of the People

Rev. Rick Roderick

**Leader:** This morning, we are going to do something a little different. Disability can occur at any time during the life cycle. We will reflect and pray for different times of life, from infancy to aging. Please end each petition you make with “God in your mercy,” and the congregation will respond, “God, hear our prayer.”

**Leader:** Dear God, we pray for parents who learn that a child has developed a disability. Help them to find proper support. Help us to be understanding and good listeners. May we, as a congregation, provide the same level of nurture as we provide for all children.

**Congregation:** *God in your mercy...*

(Silence and pause for petitions)

**Leader:** We pray for young children who become disabled as a result of accident, injury, or disease. We pray for comfort, strength, and adaptability. We pray for acceptance by parents, other family members, teachers, and all of us.

**Congregation:** *God in your mercy...*

(Silence and pause for petitions)

**Leader:** Many people develop disabilities during their working careers. We pray for acceptance by spouses and family members, as well as employers and employees. We pray for people who work in the rehabilitation field that their interventions may, for those whom they serve, have smooth transitions in employment and society.

**Congregation:** *God, in your mercy...*

(Silence and pause for petitions)

**Leader:** Retirement can be a wonderful time for many to reflect on life, to travel, and do things that time at work would not permit them to do. But it can also be a time of vision and hearing



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loss, of decreased physical capacity, and memory problems. We pray for people who develop disabilities in later life. Help them through difficult transitions, and help those who provide care. We pray that we, as a congregation, may be supportive.

**Congregation:** *God, in your mercy...*

(Silence and pause for petitions)

**Leader:** Let us pray for the coming of Christ's rule, for acceptance, for healing, even where cure is impossible or unlikely. Let us pray in the words that Christ taught us.

**Unison:** The Lord's Prayer

*The Rev. Rick Roderick is a graduate of the University of Illinois and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, with ordination in 1980. He is honorably retired from the Kentucky Office for the Blind, a state rehabilitation agency where he was a rehabilitation counselor and later an assistive technology specialist. He has served on the leadership team of PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) network and is now one of four PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns, with focus on blindness and low vision.*

## **Hymn Suggestions from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal***

Published 2013 by Westminster John Knox Press

### #3 Womb of Life and Source of Being

Text: Ruth Duck, 1986, 1990, alt.

Music: Skinner Chavez-Melo, 1983

### #19 God of Great and God of Small

Text: Natalie Sleeth

Music: Natalie Sleeth, 1973

### #27 Sacred the Body

Text: Ruth Duck, 1997

Music: Colin Gibson, 1992

### #297 In Christ Called to Baptize

Text: Ruth Duck, 1995

Music: Welsh folk melody; adapt in *Caniadau y Cyssegr*, 1839

### #302 When Hands Reach Out and Fingers Trace

Text: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2001

Music: English folk melody; harm. John Weaver, 1988

### #372 O for a World

Text: Miriam Therese Winter

Music: Carl Gotthelf Glaser, 1828; arr. Lowell Mason, 1839

### #653 Give Thanks to God Who Hears Our Cries

Text: Ruth Duck, 2007

Music: Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*, 1813; harm. Richard Proulx, 1975



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#692 Spirit, Open My Heart

Text: Ruth Duck, 1994

Music: Irish melody; arr. Alfred V. Fedak, 2011

#754 Help Us Accept Each Other

Text: Fred Kaan, 1974

Music: Doreen Potter, 1974

#769 For Everyone Born

Text: Shirley Erena Murray, 1998

Music: Brian Mann, 2006

#770 I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table

Text: African American spiritual, alt.

Music: African American spiritual; arr. Carl Diton, 1980, alt.

#806 I'll Praise My Maker

Text: Isaac Watts, 1719, adapt, John Wesley, 1736, alt.

Music: Attr. Matthaues Greiter, 1525; harm. V. Earle Copes, 1963

#807 When We Must Bear Persistent Pain

Text: Ruth Duck, 2004

Music: Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835; harm. David N. Johnson, 1968

#808 When Memory Fails

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, 2000

Music: Jean Sibelius, 1899; arr. *The Hymnal*, 1933, alt.

*List compiled by Cindy Merten, who is the Director of Christian Education & All Abilities Inclusion Ministries for First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan. Cindy serves as co-moderator of Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC), one of ten volunteer ministry networks of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA).*



## **Benediction**

Lisa Larges

Now, by the power of the one who formed you from the dust of the stars,  
The source and wellspring of all that is,  
Who set a seal upon you,  
Who called your name from the beginning of time,  
Who knew you and knows you,  
Beautiful, beloved, in your whole embodied self,  
And by the grace of the one who redeems your life,  
The Christ who came to bear a body,  
To share all of life with us,  
Who knows your shame and pride, your pain and courage,  
And who loves you with a love beyond measure,  
And by the hope that is in you,  
Which is the fire of the Holy Spirit  
That burns with an undiminished flame through all the seasons of your life,  
By the power and the love and the hope,  
Go now and be the power of love,  
And share the hope that is in you,  
For you are the beloved of God.  
Amen.

*Lisa Larges works at State Services for the Blind of Minnesota as their Outreach and Marketing Coordinator. She is a part of Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a candidate for Ministry under the Presbytery of San Francisco.*



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## **Benediction**

Rev. Ernest Krug

Friends, life is short, and we have little time to encourage and gladden the hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ. So be quick to recognize Christ in all persons, no matter what challenges they face, and by so doing, build up the body of Christ for faithful service. Go in peace! Amen.

*The Rev. Ernest Krug, M.D. is professor of Biomedical Sciences and Pediatrics and course director for Medical Humanities and Clinical Bioethics at the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, Rochester, Michigan. He also serves as Parish Associate at First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, MI.*



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## **Benedictions**

Rev. Raymond Meester

May the Lord, who gave sight to the blind,  
enabled the lame to walk and the deaf to hear,  
bless you now and always. Amen.

May the God who created us as diverse persons,  
And Jesus Christ who brought sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf,  
and made the lame to walk,  
and the Spirit, who bestows gifts upon each and every one of us,  
and Jesus Christ who came to destroy barriers,  
bless you now and always with wholeness. Amen.

*The Rev. Raymond Meester is pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, which has a ministry with the deaf. Raymond's parents, as well as four uncles and aunts, were deaf. He has served on the board of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and is one of four PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns, with focus on ministries with the deaf and hard-of-hearing.*

# Disability Inclusion Sunday 2014



## The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Inclusion of People of all Abilities.

Artwork by Craig Woods

Student of FAR Conservatory and participant in the Rejoicing Spirits  
Community at First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, MI



Presbyterians for Disability Concerns



**Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC)** celebrates the gifts of all people and is committed to affirmation, support and advocacy for the rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities in the total life of the church.



June 22, 2014 is designated on the Presbyterian Planning Calendar as **Disability Inclusion Sunday**. PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) has developed our annual Resource Packet to help in observing this day- on June 22 or whenever works best in the life of your worshipping community. This year's theme is "The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Inclusion of People of all Abilities."



*Offering Our Gifts* is a PowerPoint presentation with pictures and audio that features the personal experiences of persons with disabilities. Included are "Access Your Heart," by poet Sarah Nettleton, and "Beatitudes for an Inclusive Church," by Bebe Baldwin. The resource celebrates the valuable gifts people with disabilities bring to the Body of Christ and offers practical suggestions for including people with disabilities in the church's life. Originally developed by the PDC Leadership Team for orientation of Commissioners to the 219th General Assembly (2010), the PowerPoint is appropriate and recommended for all church gatherings.

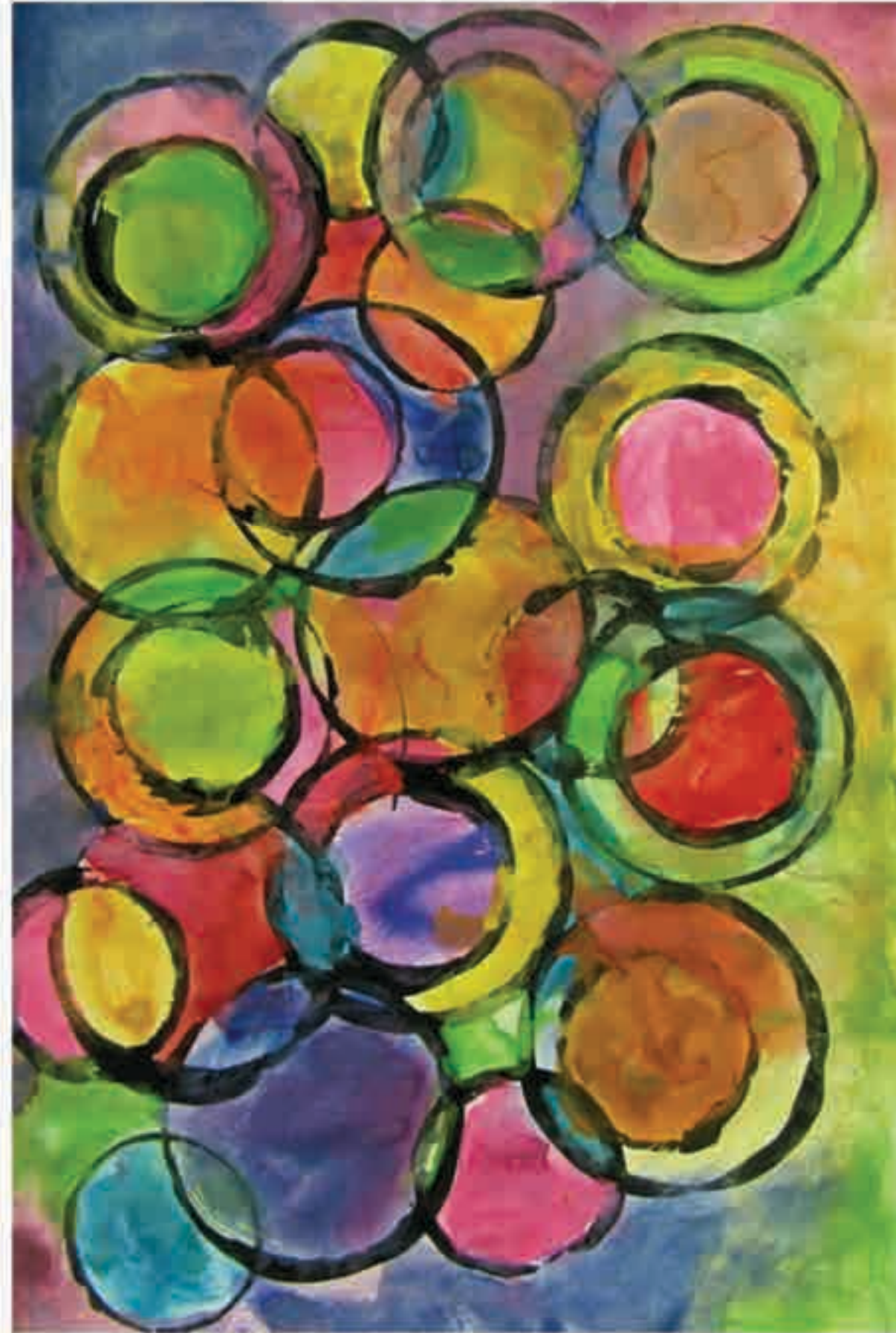


For more information/resources use the qr code.

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/presbyterians-disability-concerns>

<http://www.phewacommunity.org/>

# Disability Inclusion Sunday 2014



**The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Inclusion of people of all abilities.**

Artwork by Craig Woods

Student of FAR Conservatory and participant in the  
Rejoicing Spirits Community at  
First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, MI



Presbyterians for Disability Concerns



For more information/resources use one of the two qr codes

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/presbyterians-disability-concerns>

<http://www.phewacommunity.org/>

# Presbyterians for Disability Concerns

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Stories from the Family of Faith



2014 Disability Inclusion Resource Packet  
Artwork by Craig Wood

Student of FAR Conservatory and participant in the Rejoicing Spirits Community at  
First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan

## **Held by the Presence**

Cathy Smith

In 2004 my husband, Dave, and I decided to grow our family through adoption. We signed on with an adoption agency and shortly thereafter we were matched with a two year old boy in Ulan Ude, Russia. His pictures and medical report showed him to be a healthy, happy little boy. We brought Alek home in October. By December, we knew there was something wrong. He had difficulty running, climbing stairs, getting up off the floor. He just wasn't keeping up with his peers. Many people said, "It's just orphanage delay, he'll catch up." Our parent's intuition told us otherwise. We were finally referred to a neurologist who made the diagnosis of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. DMD is a progressive, degenerative muscle disorder. His muscles will continue to get weaker and weaker, eventually involving his heart and lungs. Most boys with this disease die in their late teens to early twenties.

The day we received the diagnosis we were devastated. All we could do after the doctor's appointment was to drive around crying and trying to console one another. We connected with one of the ministers from our church and he just held us saying, "My kids, my kids." It felt as if God was the one holding us, we could feel his presence with us in that moment. Words were not necessary for us to pray, God knew what was in our hearts and was surrounding us with love.

After that moment, we were faced with going on with our lives. To get through those days I found myself praying constantly. Every step was a prayer. I took the opportunity to intentionally pray, with words, several times a day, but in reality, my whole life was a prayer. I lifted up to God my fear, my helplessness, my grief, as well as gratefulness for my family, friends, church, and most of all a life partner who was on the same path. We prayed for Alek, for our family, for Alek's doctors, for the researchers trying to find a cure, and for the strength to walk through this dark time in our lives. In between these prayer times I would find myself singing hymns and songs to keep my faith alive. One of my favorites was from the Taize community, "Jesus remember me, when I come into your kingdom; Jesus remember me when I come into your kingdom." I was praying without ceasing.

God answers prayers. I have found the strength to move on with my life. I no longer feel consumed with this terrible disease. I still pray for my son and our family, but it is not as intense as it was during the time immediately following his diagnosis. The sadness is still there - when I need to help him up the stairs into the house, when he struggles to stand up from the floor, when he needs to go to the cardiologist, when it is difficult to maneuver his wheelchair. God is with me in all of those moments. I have learned that there are many ways to pray: with song, with breath, with words, with tears, and with hugs. God hears our prayers without ceasing.

*Cathy is a ruling elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, a member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Disability Ministry group, and a student at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.*

## God is With Us

Carol Brown

*James 3:17: But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.*

From time to time, I try to imagine Alex without me, his Mom, around to guide him. I don't get very far with the imagining, thinking nobody can take my place. So on a Sunday morning last year, I was in my Mom role. Alex was excited that his announcement about Special Olympics was printed in the bulletin. I stepped into the church kitchen for a while, and as I came down the hall, Alex was leaving Pastor Rhonda's office, that day's bulletin in hand. I thought, "Oh no, he's pestering Pastor Rhonda about his fundraiser."

We sat in the pew as service was about to start. Alex communicated to me that he was going to make an announcement. I said, "No, let's ask first, let's wait until next week." There were several folks making announcements, each one taking the portable microphone. Then Dave Skiendziel, the Worship Leader that morning, said that Alex had an announcement and handed him the mic. I was flabbergasted!! I was worried.... thinking.... "What is he going to say?".... "Will anyone understand what he says?" Then I realized, he had already communicated to Dave and Pastor Rhonda that he had an announcement....so I just needed to sit back and relax and let it play out. Well, Alex did a great job reading his announcement from the bulletin. It was probably hard for folks to understand all that he said, but they could read the announcement along with him. Then Dave summed it up by asking for support for Alex and Special Olympics.

I was humbled and received some "wisdom from above." Alex will be just fine without his Mom and I need to be "willing to yield."

Alex is the youngest of our four children, with our first one having Trisomy 13 and passing away at age 6. While pregnant with Alex, prenatal testing determined that Alex not only had Down Syndrome, but had the congenital heart defect so common in babies born with Down Syndrome. When the Genetic Counselor and our Family Physician called to say we had important decisions to make, I replied, "The decision has been made....God helped us with our first child and God will surely help us with this child."



And indeed, God has been with us for all of these 20 years. Alex had surgery to repair his Atrial Ventricular Septal Defect at age 5 months, and God was with us. At age 6, Alex had surgery to repair his mitral valve, and again, God was with us. He was expected to have an artificial valve replacement around age 13 to 16, but his repair has held up and he hasn't needed it. Thanks be to God!!

With our first child, we had been on the frontlines in our community for educational inclusion. When Alex was born needing Special Education, we again pursued the inclusion agenda. Our other two children were age 7 and 8 when Alex was born, and we were surprised by the time Alex reached school age how little the educational inclusion had progressed. So once again, we picked ourselves up and headed for the frontlines.

With all of the efforts needed for Alex's medical needs and advocating for his educational inclusion, I was weary and found much needed sustenance in renewing my faith on Sundays at worship. I was already a Sunday school teacher, which I enjoyed and felt God called me to do. However, I was not giving other adults the opportunity to get to know Alex in depth. Many in the congregation knew Alex, as he loved to usher. As he grew into middle school and high school age, though, he didn't connect as well with his peers. For Alex to participate in youth activities, we were asked to accompany Alex or provide someone to accompany Alex. In the educational inclusion, we called this practice the "Island in the Mainstream." Doing so would not help the other youth connect with Alex. It depends on the leadership to provide the opportunities and model the proper relationships. It was very difficult to take on the role of advocate at church, the one place I went to deepen my connection with God.

It was this frustration that led me to the PC(USA) website, to see what resources might be available to our church leadership for better including Alex. I was surprised and pleased to learn about the PC(USA) Disability Concerns Consultants and the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC, a network of PHEWA- Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association). God was indeed with us as we pursued inclusion for Alex within our congregation. Here were faith-filled people who were on the same page and understood what I was saying. It gave me a new freedom.....other people agreed with my frustrations and provided ideas and support. The PDC annual Disability Inclusion Resource Packet arrived and I shared it with our pastor. We began a tradition of disability awareness Sundays, once a year. The Worship Resources, the Sermon illustrations, and the education/awareness articles were very helpful...and once again confirmed that God was with us.

As I read the 2014 Mission Yearbook for Prayer and Study, I see that the theme is Young Adults and the Church. It causes me to reflect on Alex's youth experience with our

congregation and wonder about other congregations. In order to have the youth participate more, incentive programs were developed. Points were given for participation in Sunday school and music, service to the church, memorizing scripture, and other opportunities.

Alex loves to go to church and Sunday school, he loves to usher, he loves to help with coffee hours, VBS and children's activities. He needs no incentive, yet he was not allowed to participate in music or in the rewards unless we attended with him or provided someone.

Is this right? Is this fair? Is this why we are struggling? We have to bribe our youth to come to church. Yet some who **do** come are not able to participate fully. What are we teaching with these actions?

Perhaps young adults will become more engaged with their faith and with the church when ALL are allowed to participate fully and are accepted as God's children "without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy." Perhaps God has called me to advocate within my church, relying on the faith that God has instilled within me, and on the support and affirmation of those also walking this journey. And God will, indeed, be with all of us.

*Carol Brown is a Ruling Elder at Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church in Midland, Michigan, is now an active member of the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Leadership Team and is grateful that there is a PHEWA in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*



# PRESBYTERIANS FOR DISABILITY CONCERNS

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## **My Faith Journey**

Cameron Scott

My twin, Clayton, and I were born May 15<sup>th</sup> 1997, 10 weeks early. We were tiny, frail, undeveloped, but strong, and we were about to enter the fight of our lives. Clayton contracted meningitis pseudomonas from the respirators meant to help us breathe. I had the bug as well, but with antibiotics I never got sick. Six babies before us got sick - Clayton was the only one to survive, from the 7 babies infected. He still wears his battle wounds, his eyes are gone, he has cerebral palsy, and intellectual/developmental disability.

By the grace of God, he survived. Clayton would soon show me his fighting spirit. He actually was first to go home, the first to learn how to eat, swallow, and breathe. Doctors predicted he would never be able to talk, but he proved them wrong. Clayton is the strongest person I know, yet at this point, I hardly knew him. At 6 years of age Clay went to a place called Penrickton Center, a residential home for blind, and multi- disabled children. Penrickton was invaluable for us; they provided Clayton with resources that we could not provide him. Clayton was at Penrickton 5 days a week and would come back home on the weekends. I hardly got to know him in this time. While he was gone, I struggled with guilt and anger that he was sick. How could God have let this happen to my brother? My faith was challenged in ways that I could not name.

When Clay was 13, he left Penrickton and moved home with us. These last 3 years have been when I've really developed a relationship with Clayton, and my faith changed and grew from it. Sharing daily meals and day-to-day rituals helped me to understand who Clayton is and allowed me to see first-hand what faith could be.

We soon started the journey of confirmation. Confirmation taught me a lot about Clay's faith and my own. His confirmation goal was to learn the Lord's Prayer, so that he could participate in the ritual we all share. Not only is Clay the strongest person I know, both physically and mentally, but he also has the strongest faith out of everyone I know. Clayton participated in the class just like me, which I thought was incredibly cool. Clayton freely shared his faith often - one Sunday in the middle of church he started yelling "GOTTA BE PATIENT." This is Clay's faith, simple, no flashiness or style. His faith is blunt, but that's how it *should* be; I have absolutely no doubt that Clay's spirited sermon was in fact that, spirited. Clay always has that spirit, a spirit overflowing with the love of Christ. He still says the Lord's Prayer. I believe Clay is the direct embodiment of the child which Jesus says is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.



A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

Clayton's spirit is more than I can even comprehend. I admire so much about him. Clayton has never felt the pain of unkindness; he's never caught up in the petty stuff; he's never had strife. He's happy with things that are often overlooked..... the presence of being around people, simple conversation, and the two letter greeting. As I've spent time with him and watched him, my own faith has grown and changed. Although I read the Bible and attend church regularly, I understand profoundly that the faith that Jesus taught us is simple – love each other, stick to the basics, trust that you will be provided all that you need, be who you are. Clayton reminds me of this daily. This is why I feel disability inclusion is so important for all of us. People with disabilities need to have a place to practice and share their faith. And in helping to provide that place, we can all learn about and deepen our own.

*Cameron Scott is a junior in high school and an active member of First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan.*

## **Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind: Inclusion and Belonging in a Church Summer Camp**

A.J. Pratt

The summer of 2014, will be the fifth year of the St. Luke Creative Arts and Nature camp in Minnetonka, Minnesota. Through music, art, and nature, we are fostering the development of participants' social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions and deepening their connections to all creation.

Our camp rules are: "Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind!!" The emphasis on compassion and inclusion of all beings creates a culture of belonging. The camp attendees include 25% of children considered to be "on the spectrum." Their choice to come and our inclusion has happened naturally. Actually, we consider such children as being creative, visual-spatial thinkers along with many famous authors, artists, scientists, engineers and inventors; they are a great addition to the camp community.

Inclusion of individuals with "all ways of knowing" has evolved due to the vision and design of the camp. All of the "nature" classes (children are divided into smaller groups by age) begin with a "council" to establish a sense of belonging and for setting norms. The campers establish norms as to how each member wants to be treated in the group and how each will contribute to "being kind" to others. This creates a safe place to be as well as a place to learn how to nurture their social, emotional and spiritual selves with each other.

After reaching consensus, a shield is created by the campers to represent their agreement. Last year, during the "Council of the Wolf Clans" camp, the campers "signed" their agreement by dipping hands in paint and creating their own personal wolf paw print on the shield. This shield was in the center every time they met in council. Every group had their own special "talking piece" that was passed around and recognized as a symbol to remind the group members to honor the one with the stick by listening carefully and respectfully. Also, each group decided on a name that fit the theme that then became their clan identity. All of these elements were woven together to help the children develop ways of bringing action and deepening the meaning of "Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind."

One year, the councils became the place for resolving some misunderstandings that developed between two of the groups. Here, the children experienced authentic empowerment to resolving conflicts in kind ways.

Another important part of the camp that contributes to the climate of inclusion are our volunteer high school youth counselors. A counseling psychologist and wilderness

therapist leads the nature classes and mentors the youth counselors. The youth counselors have been geniuses at staying aware of the children's needs. Often, they devise strategies of how to best work with children presenting challenges. The youth counselors are mentors and models that the children look up to and love.

Besides the professional staff, we have had approximately 25 volunteers who are caring church members, grandparents, and parents helping all children feel that they belong. The church is rich with talented people, so our volunteers add so much to making the camp an exceptional experience. There have been a few children successfully accompanied by their personal care advocates who have helped them through the many transitions of the day.

Much has been written about how important playing outdoors in the natural world is to the development of health and well-being of all children. Our camp integrates outdoor play and cooperative challenges in ways that children naturally do when given the opportunity. Making "hideouts" out of sticks, digging in dirt to make mud lakes and streams and "dressing up" in grasses and leaves with mud-camouflaged faces are a joy-filled part of the camp. These activities have a way of equalizing the playing field for all campers.

Through music, the children further experience the themes woven throughout the camp. Each group has their own music time led by a master Orff music instructor. The language of music engages them in song, dance, drumming, and playing the Orff instruments. Orff instruments are xylophones, glockenspiels and metallophones which can be adapted to the ability level of the children by adding or subtracting the bars of the instruments. The instructor perceives the abilities of each child during exploratory experiences and can then assign a child to the composition that fits their interest and abilities. By the end of the two weeks, each group has worked together to create music, song and dance/movement that brings meaning to the camp themes. The music experience contributes to nurturing the learning styles and abilities that each child brings to the camp and each child then has a way to contribute meaningfully to the whole.

Through art, each group creates three-dimensional puppets or masks representing the creatures in the stories that tell the themes of the camp. The intention is that each child then "becomes" the voice or representative of the particular creature they have made. Here we are teaching that "Be Kind" involves compassion and empathy: walking in another's shoes. Masks have been used for centuries for bringing a community into a deeper level of spiritual connection. To see a child who has a difficult time socially with others to heart-fully become an animal character such as a wolf while wearing his "wolf mask" and to participate through dance and story becomes deeply moving to observe. In this way the child is fully participating in community and able to give a giftedness that may otherwise not be given space.

The experiences and joy of all the children engaging in music, art, and nature creates a sense of belonging to each other and all of creation.



On the last day of camp, all children, counselors, and staff come together to celebrate and share their experience with the larger community of church members, family, and friends. The children act out the stories with their masks and puppets through songs, movement and dance accompanied by drums and Orff instruments. Anyone who comes as audience to experience this celebration is amazed at the seamless flow of what is shared. Amazingly, one can feel deep in their bones, the immensity of how the theme “Be Kind, Be Kind, Be Kind” has been transformed through these children’s hearts and experiences at the camp into a “Mighty Kindness.”

Those who have been part of the creation of the camp and witness to the community of inclusion can feel the wonder of it, all the way through the space of time until the next year’s camp! By Christmas, the children are eager to hear of the theme of the next summer’s camp so that they can begin to dream of it!

*A.J. Pratt is a member of St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Minnetonka, Minnesota. She has 25 years of experience as an educator and volunteers her time to create and direct the camp.*

## **My Gen Y Perspective**

Sarah Nettleton

I was asked to write this as a member of Generation Y. I was born in 1985 with Cri-du-chat Syndrome. I have awful motor skills and can't communicate with my voice. I can walk. I talk by typing using a method called Facilitated Communication. A facilitator supports my arm and I type one letter at a time.

I was the beneficiary of early intervention programs. I started receiving special education services and multiple therapies when I was three months old. When I was in elementary school and middle school, I was included in regular education in my neighborhood schools. I was back in special education class for high school with only one regular education class a year. I graduated in 2006 with an Individual Education Plan diploma. The IEP diploma means nothing. I can't use it to go to community college or anything.

Since high school I have been part of a program called Consolidated Supports and Services, or Self Determination. Basically, I decide what I want to do, write a plan, and hire people to help me do what I want to do. If it were only that easy! I have had a hard time finding people to work with me. I want to do volunteer activities, work out at the Y, participate in community programs, and be a regular citizen.

It is very hard being a person with disabilities who is dependent on others to make things happen. I have great parents who support and advocate for me. I wish I had more people in my life who would just do stuff with me. It is frustrating to always depend on my parents or paid staff.

As a generation Y person with disabilities, I have benefited from inclusion in school and from opportunities to be part of my community. With all that, I still feel on the outside. I don't have any peers in my age group who do not have disabilities and who will do anything with me or who value me.

I wish churches would take a more active role in the lives of people with disabilities. We need real people to become real friends who do not just say, "Hi" on Sundays.

*Sarah is a poet and former member of the Leadership Team of PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) network. She is a regular contributor to the PDC Inclusion Sunday resources.*



## **Good Employment As One Important Expression Of Self, Vocation, and Contribution**

Milton Tyree

“*What do you do?*” It’s a familiar, friendly, although mildly intrusive and vaguely judgmental question directed toward new neighbors, parents attending their kids’ soccer games, and even visitors of our neighborhood Presbyterian churches. Most people reflexively translate and reply to the questions behind the question: “What kind of employment do you have and where do you work?”

Whether or not a person is employed, and *if* employed then the kind of work performed, influences the person’s identity, including his or her sense of belonging and place in the world. In our hypercompetitive society, there’s no doubt that employment and job status have become way too important. For example, stay-at-home moms and dads often experience certain levels of misapprehension because they’re “not working.”

While it’s important to temper the seductiveness of competition and social status, as well as recognizing the virtue of all honest labor, it’s equally necessary to acknowledge historical patterns of socially devalued people being relegated to low paying, low status jobs or chronic unemployment. For people with disabilities, this has traditionally meant few real work options, with estimates hovering around 80% unemployment. When work is offered, it’s often the kind predetermined to be suitable for “people with disabilities.” Others make these decisions prior to knowing anything about an actual person. Or sometimes what’s given is an employment substitution called “work activities,” grouping together people with disabilities, solely on the basis of having a disability. Even when such responses are rooted in good intentions, the results are overwhelmingly limiting, often leading people to wonder: *What can I do? Where do I belong? Do I belong?*

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV) Though captured by low expectations, rather than by the Babylonians, people with disabilities can draw from these words the promise that God knows everyone *personally*, offering hope and a future. ("I know the plans I have for **you**." *Not*, "I know the plans I have for y'all.")

"*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*" (Proverbs 29:18 KJV) Fortunately, over the last several decades there’s been an emerging vision of citizenship, *including* good employment for people with disabilities. Much has been learned about making this vision a reality. Countless books have been written, weeklong seminars delivered.... The following are a few of the principles that have helped move things along in a positive and hopeful way:

*The presumption of employability* - "Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits." (1 Corinthians 12:7 MSG)

It's a radical idea: (a) *Every* person has a God-given purpose, and its expression is good for everyone. (b) And every person's calling may be expressed through employment. The Apostle Paul is responsible for saying the first part, the understanding about the universality of personal vocation. The employment-for-all part came many centuries later. Historically, human service professionals have been granted authority to determine who's in and who's out, who's employable and who's not – effectively shutting down the collective imagination. The presumption of employability defies this deeply rooted historical way, offering a presumed employability firmly based in biblical truth. “Okay. Fine. But *surely* you don't mean Dan. Just look at him!” Yes. We mean Dan, at least until we've exhausted all available ideas. And even if we run out of ideas, then that still doesn't prove Dan can't work. It only means we've run out of ideas. Isn't this a more healthy, honest, and authentic way of thinking about God's people?

*Contribution versus competition* – The inherent need to contribute, doing something that matters, is especially important for those who so often find themselves on the receiving end of help. “From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward.” (Proverbs 12:14 NIV) Mike Callahan, one who's devoted much of his life to the presumption of employability, had the insight that *everyone* can contribute, but *not* everyone can compete. This awareness reframes rules and relationships about the work that needs to be done and the people performing the work. In what ways do personal gifts and talents intersect with employer needs? Often referred to as *customized employment*, competition is replaced with a voluntary negotiation of jobs that pairs employer needs with personal competence and contribution. It opens the door for the dignity of contribution, offering something personal, something that matters. This U.S. Department of Labor link provides additional information about the concept of customized employment: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/CustomizedEmployment/deliverables/index.htm>

*Discovery* – “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10 NIV) Working is a common way of offering personal talents and gifts. However, people with disabilities have often grown up without work expectations, their lives void of the typical childhood questioning, “What do you want to be (when you grow up)?” What should people do when they've never explored their talents, perhaps to the point of being convinced they have nothing to offer? Discovery provides a way of discerning personal gifts and talents previously unrecognized and translating these into characteristics of fitting employment. It's a process of learning with people about fitting conditions for work – when and where people are at their best, finding a spark related to a particular interest, stirring a passion formerly unknown. Discovery offers hope and positive possibility through fitting employment, a way of answering those nagging questions: What can I do? Where do I belong? Do I belong?

***What are ways for a faith community to respond to its members with disabilities needing good employment?***

- 1- *Begin by reframing this question* by deleting two words. What are ways for a faith community to respond to its members ~~with disabilities~~ needing good employment? If any member needs a job, then what are the ordinary ways of responding? Begin with the typical and valued approaches, and then adapt these if needed. For instance, networking is a primary way that everyone finds work. Just think of the networking possibilities within groups, formal and informal, in your faith community, and then expand this to all of the connections and people known outside of the faith community. Jake has a real knack with things mechanical, and he's seeking work where he can contribute by using this talent. Perhaps Jake needs some consideration around job design. Promote ways for Jake to connect with an employer where what Jake has to offer meets the work demands of the employer. If your church already has an employment ministry, then be sure people with disabilities seeking work are involved.
- 2- *Sign-on to "The Statement of Solidarity by the Religious Community Around Employment of People with Disabilities"* drafted by the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC): <http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/interfaith/idac-statement-of-solidarity.html> The name of the statement says it all. Faith communities have an essential role to fill.
- 3- *Learn about things others are doing.* "Putting Faith to Work" is the name of a Kessler Foundation two-year initiative just beginning (at the time of writing this article) involving a partnership of universities in Tennessee, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Texas -- all studying, learning about and exploring ways that faith communities can further good jobs for members with disabilities. (You may contact Milton Tyree, through contact information at the end of this article, if you're interested in learning about the initiative.)

"Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up." (Romans 15:2 NIV) Be an ally. Explore with people their interests and talents. Presume employability. Engage your imagination. It's possible that supporting others to learn and express their God-given vocations through employment turns out to be an important expression of your own vocation.

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Acknowledgement: This article relies on a variety of ideas, insights, and theories related to social integration and employment -- none of which originated with the author.

*Milton Tyree serves as PC(USA) Consultant for Disability Concerns in areas of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities. He is a member of Springdale Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Milton can be reached at: [PDCmtyree@me.com](mailto:PDCmtyree@me.com)*



# Rebuilding the house— students with disabilities

Two seminary students share their experiences.

BY NOAH BUCHHOLZ AND SARAH VANDERZEE MCKENNEY  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION FROM PRESBYTERIANS TODAY EDITOR PATRICK HEERY

**W**hen we talk about people who live with disabilities, we're not talking abstractions. We're talking about our children, our friends, our neighbors—the people who go to our church (or who would if we offered them genuine welcome). Each has a particular, complex story. And each brings a unique way of experiencing the world—a gift to the whole of Christ's body. But the truth is that our education system was not designed for them. Some schools, particularly Presbyterian-related colleges and seminaries, are starting

to talk about this and are conducting accessibility audits. Some thankfully have been making changes for years now. But in many contexts, silence still reigns. Students with disabilities often have to transfer or may not even bother enrolling in the first place. Others feel isolated and unsupported.

There's no single story that will encompass the range of experiences of education in America. All we can do is listen to as many voices as possible. And below are two of those voices. The first, Noah Buchholz, is a student at Princeton Theological

Seminary in New Jersey; the second, Sarah McKenney, is a recent graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary in Georgia.

They both describe a growing recognition among some of our schools that it is no longer enough to improve access and simply invite more people into an existing culture. It is not enough, they say, to make the important but cosmetic changes of building wheelchair ramps and adding Braille to signs. After all, it's one thing to invite more people in; it's another thing entirely to invite them to change the house.

And that's precisely what Sarah and Noah are looking to do: to create an opportunity for the experiences of people with disabilities to shape and transform the culture of our schools and of our church. That means addressing everything from curricula to student events, from housing to philosophies of education, from modes of communication to testing. But ultimately it means that we learn from one another.

## Noah Buchholz on being deaf

“Some people brought to Jesus a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man” (Mark 7:32 NIV). Deaf pastors ask God why this story has to be in the Bible. Deaf Christians want to pretend that this story doesn't exist. Deaf unbelievers look down upon Christianity because of this story.

The story of Jesus healing a deaf man often leads hearing people today to mistakenly think that people in the Deaf community consider themselves incomplete and want to be healed. While there are people who experience hearing loss or become deaf late in life who might find this story inspiring, there are also culturally Deaf people who consider themselves to be not handicapped but part of a cultural and ethnic group.

During Jesus' time, there was likely no Deaf culture or sign language. I am thankful that Jesus healed this man, because without culture or language, this man was very isolated. But Deaf people today don't need to be healed, because they have their own way of speaking. Hearing people speak with their mouths and hear with their ears, but Deaf people speak with their hands and hear with their eyes. Many Deaf people don't want their hearing restored. Deaf couples fervently pray

that they will bear Deaf children. I myself come from a Deaf family where it is indeed good to be deaf. It might be hard for some people to wrap their minds around all of this, but we find abundant joy and awesome beauty in the uniqueness of Deaf culture and do not want to replace it with anything else.

Because Deaf culture is unfamiliar to many, being the only Deaf student at Princeton Theological Seminary is quite challenging. Nevertheless, Princeton, striving to foster a community that emulates Christ, goes out of its way to ensure that optimal communication takes place between me and hearing people on campus and that my voice is heard. As a result, my time at the seminary has proven very fulfilling.

I've heard many sad stories about Deaf students being denied qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters at Christian colleges and seminaries. Princeton has done the opposite. The seminary, in large part due to Catherine Ahmad in Student Life, readily provides qualified interpreters for all classes and on-campus and internship-related events. They even provide real-time captioning services.

The seminary has also established ASL classes for anyone on campus who is interested in learning the language and the culture. The results are apparent. A number of people on campus now know basic ASL, making it easier for us to interact. I would even say that there are now more than 10 people on campus who are conversationally fluent in ASL. I can't imagine trying to survive the MDiv program while having no one on campus with whom I can communicate. Princeton Theological Seminary has made it possible for me to form lifelong friendships and feel genuinely welcomed.

But the changes go deeper. Upon my acceptance into Princeton, the seminary immediately arranged for

me to talk about Deaf culture with the entire faculty during orientation week. This meant I didn't have to worry about educating my teachers during the rest of my three years at seminary. I was able to enter classes with confidence that my teacher was familiar with my own culture.

That orientation week also included a diversity program, which gave me an opportunity to talk about Deaf culture, this time with students. Since then, thanks to the seminary's chaplain, Jan Ammon, I've talked about Deaf culture and Deaf ministry in our chapel on several occasions. Jan has been a blessing. She is an avid ASL student and always wants to make sure that I don't feel out of place at the seminary. When I shared with her my concern that not enough students understood how to approach Scripture with a proper understanding of Deaf culture, Jan immediately took action. She asked the faculty to give me an opportunity to speak with students about reading Scripture through a Deaf lens. Before I knew it, I was speaking with the introductory New Testament class.

Apparently, Princeton Theological Seminary is unique. No question about it. They welcome my perspective as a Deaf individual and accept my culture as one of the many cultures represented on campus. Because of the training and access I have received at the seminary, I feel equipped in my own ministry in the Deaf community as I run the nonprofit organization Deaf International, which serves Deaf communities through advocacy, planting Deaf churches, producing Christian media in American Sign Language, and leadership development for Deaf ministers. I hope that our work can build bridges between the Deaf and hearing worlds in as effective a way as Princeton has done. Looking back on these first two years at the seminary, I realize that it has not simply tried to help me to

fit into their community; they have rather remolded the whole community so that they fit into my culture. Now, on to the third and last year!

## Sarah VanderZee McKenney on having learning disabilities

“My name is Sarah VanderZee McKenney. I am dyslexic and have several learning disabilities.” This became the way I introduced myself every time I stepped into a new class, talked to teachers, or even met new friends. Without this line, I would have had to wait for someone to come to me and offer help. Growing up, I learned to never wait for other people to take the initiative.

As early as the first grade, I was tested and diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Though this diagnosis barely skimmed the surface of my learning difficulties, teachers at the time didn't even know what ADHD meant: they just knew I was a lot slower than everyone else. I didn't know either, because no one described to me what was going on in my brain and why I had such trouble.

I was passed from grade to grade, getting further and further behind, until my fifth-grade teacher saved my life by just stopping and seeing what was happening. Because of her, I got to go to a school specifically for individuals with learning disabilities. For the first time in my life, things made sense and my struggles were not put down to stupidity; I just had to figure out my own way of doing things. That school also taught me a valuable life lesson: the importance of self-advocating, because I can't wait for others to understand me. I need to make them understand.

During college, people often thought I was trying to make things easier. I had to explain to professors that I was just asking them to



Sarah VanderZee McKenney worships God in the chapel at Columbia Theological Seminary.

think of other ways to communicate the same information. My sanctuary during those years was the Presbyterian-related Pyoca Camp Conference and Retreat Center, where I worked summers. I had grown up going to this camp, and it had long ago become a refuge. It was a place I could be myself without my diagnosis being the focal point. That's why it broke my heart when, working as a preschool teacher alongside children with disabilities and as a coach of two adaptive sports, I heard so many stories of how faith communities were not welcoming but pushing away people in one way or another. Buildings weren't accessible; worship had to be quiet; Scripture study was not inclusive.

But to change that, to offer a ministry like the one I had received growing up, meant I had to go back to school, learn Greek and Hebrew, read enormous amounts of literature, and take exams. When visiting seminaries I had one question: "I am dyslexic. How might the seminary work with me?" Three out of four responded, saying something like, "Well you are going to have to study, work hard, and make sure you utilize your time and resources." Notice the "you" statements: basically it was up to me. However, at Columbia Theological Seminary, I got a very different response from John White, dean of students, and Rodger Nishioka, associate professor of Christian education. They said: "You

### Disability Concerns Consultants

The Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association (PHEWA) has four disability concerns consultants at the ready. They provide information about accessibility audits, help identify curriculum for children and adults with developmental disabilities, assist making worship and presbytery meetings fully accessible, and serve as a pastoral presence for families and communities. They also serve as advocates and supporters of seminarians and candidates for ordination. Raymond Meester, pastor of Heritage Presbyterian Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, is, for example, helping Princeton Theological Seminary offer classroom-learning supports for Noah, whose story is told here.

To contact one of these consultants or to learn more about PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns, go to [presbyterianmission.org/phewa](http://presbyterianmission.org/phewa).

Also check out Noah Buchholz's organization at [deafinternational.org](http://deafinternational.org).

were called to seminary. It is not our job to weed you out. It is our job to help provide you the preparation, guidance, and support to follow your call.” This was a space that I could trust would not only work with me and educate me but have a willingness to learn *from* me.

And that’s exactly what I got. Professors told me what readings were most crucial. A group of students with dyslexia met to openly talk about the challenges we were facing and possible solutions. We began to understand that people with learning disabilities are not the only ones who benefit from a variety of teaching styles—and that we could therefore improve the classroom experience for everyone.

Sure, there were rough spots, and Greek certainly posed a great challenge, but overall seminary allowed me to come into my own. The real obstacle was ordination testing:

five exams in total. The first was multiple choice and the other four all essay. They were not created for someone like me, and they were not graded by someone who understood my learning style. After failing a few times, I was not feeling much hope.

That’s when my Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) chair suggested that we talk about alternative testing options. My CPM had been involved in my seminary life every step of the way and had never shied away from talking about these issues openly. My CPM and I decided to ask the Presbytery of Ohio Valley to let me take my exams orally. I am glad to say that the request was unanimously approved, despite the fact that many presbyteries deny requests of this nature.

As a result, I passed my remaining three ordination exams on my first try. I have now been approved by my CPM and am ready to seek a call

to ministry. God is truly amazing, surprising, and reliable. And I feel God is now calling me to a ministry that advocates for people with disabilities in places of worship.

My wish for this denomination is that we look to each other for support and reach out to those we do not understand. I pray that we never assume we know what people need or want but that we ask and have dialogue. I pray that we learn to be in ministry *alongside* individuals with disabilities and provide opportunities for them to minister to us because God is working in all of us.

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*Noah Buchholz, an MDiv student at Princeton Theological Seminary, runs Deaf International, a Christian nonprofit organization serving Deaf communities. Sarah VanderZee McKenney, MDiv, is seeking a call for ordination and works at Stone Belt as a Lifelong Learning instructor of people with disabilities.*



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## Still a Part of the Whole

Rev. Dr. Rhonda Myers

*In her Disability Awareness Sunday (August 18, 2013) sermon, the Rev. Dr. Rhonda Myers shared this short personal story.*

I am grateful, as I'm sure you are too, that parents of children living with serious disabilities are no longer routinely told by society to institutionalize their "handicapped" child and forget that they were born. But even as recently as a year ago I had someone tell me to encourage my son to break up with his boyfriend of six years who had recently been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. My friend's reasoning was that to stay with him could only mean a lifetime of hardship for my son. In an instant, my well-meaning, but misguided, friend had reduced our dear Liam from being a vital member of the family – strong, capable, intelligent, articulate, fun-loving and a part of the whole – to being a less than vital entity whom she perceived as unnecessary, unwanted, and easily forgotten. My friend was effectively saying of Liam, "I have no need of him." And, of course, I countered with the argument that I *did* have need of him and that our family was made much stronger by his presence in it, regardless of any disability that the MS might bring. But, in a heartbeat, I was made aware of just how easily our culture discards or dismisses those persons whom they view as less than perfect.

*Rhonda's friend is a gifted surgeon, who naturally seemed to fall into the "fix-it" mindset that can influence medical personnel when faced with an illness or disorder. She has since made peace with the Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis and has apologized for suggesting it was best for Rhonda's son to break up with the boyfriend. In apologizing, Rhonda's friend told her that she realized her counsel had been in error as she watched the development of her own twin sons (now preschoolers with very different personalities and learning styles). She told Rhonda that while her sons are, to her, perfect little creatures who came to her life as a gift from God (after many childless years), she has come to realize that there is no guarantee they will grow unaffected by disability or disease and that it would utterly break her heart if someone were to stop loving her child or treating her child as an equal simply because they were in some way "different."*

*The Rev. Dr. Rhonda Myers is currently a Teaching Elder at Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, Midland, Michigan. Dr. Myers is a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Ramapo College of New Jersey, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She and her husband, the Rev. David P. Myers, also a Presbyterian pastor, recently moved to the Midland area. Pastor Rhonda loves to teach, preach, serve in mission, and care for God's children.*



## Moments of Grace

Sara Johnston and Rev. Bebe Baldwin

What does the loss of the ability to walk, read, and concentrate mean to a former Peace Corps volunteer, adventurer, and doctoral student? Sara Johnston was a Generation X-er and was preparing for a career as an international educational media consultant. Then, the onset of illness and disability changed her life in ways that were unplanned and unpredictable.

Grief and loss have been companions on her journey, as have been moments of joy. “Things keep being taken away. It’s like being in a boat, having to let things go, and watching the current carry them away.” Yet, she finds moments of grace, “small but filled with grace – feeling grace, experiencing grace, witnessing grace.”

As a Peace Corps volunteer she served in Southern and West Africa. When regional civil unrest broke out in Namibia, she successfully drove other volunteers to safety. She served in another country, despite increasing pain in her feet and legs due to a difficult case of plantar fasciitis. “I learned to say, ‘My feet are giving me pain,’ and we worked around it.” When she returned home, her condition worsened and made it difficult to stand or walk.

Nevertheless, she earned a M.Ed. in Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology and began doctoral studies. But, another disability forced her to drop her studies. A head and neck trauma, compounded by undiagnosed Lyme disease, made it impossible to read, write, or concentrate. Unable to care for herself, she moved in with her parents. Only after years of medical treatments and therapy is she now regaining some ability to read. She still has difficulty concentrating.

Reflecting on her disability, Sara said, “I had considered myself to be a resilient, adventurous, problem solver. Being disabled put the brakes on some of these self-concepts. I have always taken pride in being responsible. I discovered that I could no longer always be the dependable person I wish to be.”

One of Sara’s gifts is intellectual curiosity. “If it (the condition she lives with) weren’t so interesting, I don’t know what I’d do. The human body/brain is amazing. Perhaps marveling in its wonder makes it more bearable and less scary.”

Sara described her world as becoming “smaller.” But she went on to say, “There are gifts that come with disability. It has allowed me time to reflect, to pray, to meditate. I had to take time to care for myself and let myself be cared for. This was a difficult lesson to learn.

“I need to laugh every day, to engage in some sort of exercise, meditation and creative play. I make ‘artist’s dates’ by participating in some art form (sometimes using crayons) or by going to a play or museum.”

For Sara, beauty is healing. She appreciates being able to enjoy nature from her bedroom window but says, “If I didn’t have the view, I could still see the sky.” She recalled gathering a group of church members to hang pictures for a friend going through chemotherapy. “I knew that one must have beauty in order to heal.”

Sara reflected on another aspect of healing. “So much of my journey has been one of forgiveness for myself and others. I’ve had to forgive myself for not more fully responding to my physical symptoms earlier.”

Sara begins and ends each day by writing. “In my daily ‘morning pages’ I write ‘gratitudes’ – usually three – and at the end of every day, I write about the good things that happened that day.” As reasons for being thankful she named her supportive family (“It isn’t just me who is in this.”), her community (“I learned the value of community in Africa.”), and the medical care she has been able to access and that has made it possible for her to regain some abilities.

Another joy for which she is thankful is the Alternative Worship Experience (AWE) at the Market Square Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. “I was drawn to the AWE community because I could not participate in Sunday morning worship. I had difficulty holding up my head, the organ was too loud for me, and the lights too bright. I was on sensory overload.

“In the AWE community we worship in a small space with dimmed lighting and lots of candles. The chairs are more comfortable and the setting is intimate. It is just what I need. I’m not the only community member with needs, and there is a real attempt to welcome everybody and make worship accessible.



Photo by Beth Hager

“One evening not long ago, I was excited about being present in worship even though I had an elevated vertigo level. When I prepared to seat myself, the chair slipped and I dropped to the floor. I had a non-epileptic seizure, complete with shaking, crying, teeth

chattering. The service was postponed for ten minutes until I could be moved and seated. I was able to communicate my needs and two people made themselves available to me while the others, seated in a circle and ready for worship, were present to me in quiet grace and so much love. After worship, a friend drove me home and walked me inside. It was a holy, shared experience.”

Sara’s perspective on vocation has had to change. “I don’t know if I’ll ever get back to life as I once knew it – working in my field and using my creative, physical, cognitive gifts with my social activities and my relationships. I have changed. I am changing and will continue to change.

“Even though life has gotten smaller, I still want to be of use, to be of use where I can be, but mindful enough so that I can be of use to myself.” She spoke of visiting people in crisis and using her limited energy to be a presence. She is often an “extra pair of ears” for a friend who is hard of hearing.

She recalled a visit to a friend who was ill. Her friend’s cat needed its nails clipped. So Sara held the cat while her friend clipped. “I was being of use and it helped me by helping her. That fed me for the rest of the week.” She went on to reflect, “But being of use may simply mean praying for others more intently.

“I am still on the journey but, for today, I commit to staying grounded in the present. I have much to learn but I recognize the gift of getting there. On my journey, I have discovered that I am whole.”

Sara’s wish is to be of use. And surely, the moments of grace she discovers and captures for others will enable her to be faithful to her vocation. Perhaps her greatest gift, however, is her willingness to share her story with others – others who are seeking to be whole.

*Sara Johnson is a member of Market Square Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.*

*The Rev. Bebe Baldwin is a retired member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, and a former moderator of the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA). Bebe serves as the current moderator of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Disability Concerns Ministry.*

## What I've Learned So Far

Karen Casady

Courage. The ability to conquer fear or despair. We all need courage to navigate life's course and no one is in more need of courage than parents and loved ones of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Interesting, also, that the word "courage" comes from the Anglo-French word for heart. So, courage and heart. Starting to sound a bit like characters from "The Wizard of Oz!" Well, my family may not have journeyed to the Emerald City, but we have made a journey which culminated in a place even more magical. No, there was no Yellow Brick Road to lead the way, we did not have a path quite so visible to navigate, but after a couple of encounters with Wicked Witches, and many bumps and curves in the road, as well as a few spectacular high-speed crashes, we have arrived at a wonderful place. The wonderful place we have ended up at is Angels' Place.

Located in southeastern Michigan, and in operation since 1992, Angels' Place operates twenty homes providing people-centered services and support for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Angels' Place homes offer a Christian family environment of love and compassion, coupled with an atmosphere of acceptance, dignity, well-being, and the potential for personal growth and acceptance. Our 34 year old son, Kevin, resides in a typical suburban home along with four other young men who possess similar abilities and talents. These young men spend their days with jobs, activities such as Miracle League softball games, bowling leagues, movie nights, dances, monthly restaurant dinners, water park visits, putting on talent shows, as well as the dreaded house-hold chores, lawn work, and cooking. Just like real life! Just like real life, thanks to the support of Angels' Place staff members, who range from house managers to psychologists.

Having long been cognizant that we would not be able to provide for all of Kevin's life-long needs, my husband and I have tried mightily to foster an environment of independence for Kevin. Fostering this independence has been done so in conjunction with family, friends, community, church, and professional support. No way would we have had the ability to obtain such independence by ourselves! Much of the earliest support was through Kevin's educational journey.

Kevin's education was quite the wild ride. Finding appropriate education for Kevin required us to re-evaluate what was available to him on an almost yearly basis and entailed public schools, moving to a new community to take advantage of an educational opportunity, expensive private schools, (and the selling of our cottage to pay for those private schools), and locating summer camps which catered to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Summer camp: at the time we did not realize the great importance of overnight camp. Having spent ten consecutive summers attending a six-week camp, (coming home every weekend for three days), we unknowingly helped set Kevin up for a growing sense of much-needed independence. When at age eight Kevin first went away to camp, we were concerned about Kevin showering independently without our hovering in the hallway. After the first week of camp I asked Kevin how the showering went. His reply was “Great! I never took one!” The good news was the campers swam daily in a chlorinated pool. Thank God for chlorine bleach! This early and frequent foray in being away from both home as well as Mom and Dad resulted in easier separation when Kevin became an Angels’ Place resident five years ago at the age of 28.

Once his schooling ended Kevin’s world shrank dramatically. At age 21, Kevin was living in an apartment in a neighboring town with a young man who had been in his school program. His roommate, a lovely young man, had no parents and no relatives in Michigan, thus, we became not only Kevin’s support, but his roommate’s, as well. Once the work day ended, both Kevin and his roommate were at loose ends as to how to occupy their time. Kevin began spending more and more time at our home, as more social opportunities presented themselves when he was with us. The apartment experiment ended after three years. The activities sponsored by school were no longer available, his co-workers at a large grocery store, although often kind, were hardly peers, and my husband and I, as well as our terrific extended families, were left as Kevin’s social life. While we have been fortunate enough to have had the ability to travel extensively, and, as a result of taking Kevin with us, have been embarrassed in almost every state in the union as well as in many foreign countries, as Kevin reached his late twenties we realized this avenue would not always be open to Kevin. We could not continue to be his sole font of entertainment and life experiences. We needed a better plan. A life-long plan.

This plan could not be, as his wonderful brother suggested, Kevin’s living with his brother, once my husband and I were gone, and, as we aged, we became overwhelmed with concern about Kevin’s welfare once we were no longer able to care for him. We wanted Kevin’s brother to be his brother, not his keeper. Having Kevin be fortunate enough to be a resident of an Angels’ Place home became the plan! Having a concrete plan for life-long care for your loved one must be a priority. It is the duty of parents to ensure a positive future for our precious children who will be living with intellectual/developmental disabilities for all of their lives. Finding a placement for our children can be very difficult. Organizations such as Angels’ Place do not exist everywhere, and getting started on a plan can be very daunting. Thank God for the internet, family, friends, and your local church.

Little did we know that when Kevin moved to his new home he would also find a new church home. While chatting with the neighbor who lives behind Kevin’s home, Kevin discovered that this family were members of First Presbyterian Church-Birmingham. This lovely neighbor was a bit surprised when Kevin simply declared, did not ask, that he was attending the 10:00 a.m. service that Sunday. And, naturally, that lovely neighbor would provide his transportation! And she did!

Thus began Kevin's very rewarding association with the wonderful, fabulous, all-accepting FPC-Birmingham. They are indeed, as they purport, Everybody's Church. The welcome Kevin has received has been nothing short of amazing! Kevin is a part of weekly worship services, a Sunday evening inclusion service and dinner, Wednesday night services; he has been a liturgist, a greeter, and most recently, an usher. As he is such a chatter, I was concerned no one would ever get seated as he would talk the ears off the worshipers, however, my concerns are unfounded and he is anxiously awaiting his official usher nametag! Many church members have attended not only the annual Angels' Place Talent Show, but also many of their Miracle League baseball games; attendees who have included two wonderful members who are blind. What loving care has been extended to Kevin!

Don't think it has not occurred to me that while my husband and I think this has been our plan, we fully recognize it really was God's plan. And we thank God for it.

*Karen Casady and husband, Patrick, are residents of Dexter, Michigan. Kevin's brother and wife have moved to Seattle, Washington, while Kevin has moved to Angel's Place:*  
[www.angelsplace.com](http://www.angelsplace.com).

## **Celebrate Life!**

*At his mother's funeral, Steve Dietz shared his memories of his mother, Ann Dietz, who passed away of Alzheimer's disease.*

My mother adored her church. Even after working 50 plus hours at the grocery store, she still would make time to do work that the church needed.

After my grandfather died, I was a 14-year-old kid who was devastated. Mom was such a comfort - explaining that everything would be OK and he was in heaven listening to everything we were saying. Shortly after, though, a close family friend died at a young age. My faith in what she said was shaken, but she eventually encouraged me to remember the time after my grandfather's death when relatives pulled out a banjo and sang...talking and laughing about the memories of him. She explained it would be harder, but to remember the great times with the family friend. Mom wanted to celebrate life and not focus on the death of someone.

My mother meant the world to me. Throughout Mom's disease, we had a long time to reflect on what she meant to us. Dad devoted the last five years of her life making sure a familiar face visited her every day. I really struggled with this and did not want to visit my Mom. Even though I was only 4 blocks from the nursing home, I resisted. She didn't know who I was and I wanted to remember the good memories and not see the losses to Alzheimer's. I was determined to continue this way until she passed. Close to the end of her time with us, a voice came to me in the night calling my name. It woke me up out of a sound sleep. Then I heard it again. I knew I needed to visit Mom. My brother was coming up from Detroit to see Mom and my sister would visit, too. I called them and said I would join them. The next day, all five members of our family gathered in her room. We shared and talked about our many memories. It gave me such a sense of joy and peace. It was PERFECT! My siblings and I had not been close, but that time brought us together. Mom would have wanted it that way.

Even though we had a long time to think about Mom's death, when she did pass, it was overwhelming. We will always be thankful for the time we had those last few days, and know that she was, too.

*Ann Dietz was a long-time member of Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church in Midland, Michigan. She volunteered in many capacities, including the church newsletter, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, and the chancel committee. Her specialty was preparing the elements for communion. Ann passed away at age 70 on September 30, 2013, after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease.*



*“Geraniums” Watercolor by Don Milloy*

## **A Case of Ignored Identity**

Rev. Bebe Baldwin

A man’s voice, loud and self-assured, broke into a quiet conversation at a nearby restaurant table. An older couple had been enjoying dinner out with the comfortable conversation that comes with a long and satisfying marriage. The intruder addressed the man: “If you had faith, you could get out of that wheelchair and walk. You just have to get right with God.”

No doubt the intruder meant well. But who would he have met if he had seen the person first and not his disability? What might he have discovered if he had seen more than a man in a wheelchair with gray hair and a paralyzed arm?

If the stranger had been able to see beyond his disability, he would have met the Reverend Donald Milloy and spouse Patricia. He might even have recognized in Don a



love for beauty and learning and a passion for social justice, attributes that described Don both before and after the stroke that ended his pastoral ministry but not his vocation.

Like many people who live with disabilities, Don had to cope with ignorance and religious prejudice. But other challenges forced the Milloys to make changes. One was their move to Gideon Pond, a senior residence that is part of Presbyterian Homes of Minnesota. Pat was able to continue working at the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and feel comfortable about Don's safety while she was working.

Even in their new home, however, ordinary tasks became extraordinary challenges. Meals on Wheels delivered Don's noon meals, but they cooled before they arrived. Don could not reach the microwave or manipulate the controls. So they bought a plate warmer which was placed on a table where Don could use it. This was but one of their creative solutions to everyday problems. Pat said, "we just figured out what we had to do."

During his thirty-four years in pastoral ministry, Don served churches in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Pat remembers the joy Don knew in planning worship. "He was never happier than when he was planning a worship service. Worship had to be a 'whole.' Everything had to fit."

To worship, Don brought a rich background in theater and music. As an actor in many community productions, he brought a sense of drama to worship. Since his years at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, when he and fellow students gathered to sing through the hymnal, he had understood music as part of the "whole."

All this changed with Don's stroke, but when they attended church at Westminster in Minneapolis, Don did more than occupy a pew. Like most of us, he and Pat had their favorite place to sit. People who sat near them came to rely upon the wit and wisdom Don shared before and after the service.

Don's love of words and learning took a new form. "We were blessed that Don's mind could remain active," said Pat. Along with other Gideon Pond residents, he and Pat organized groups to challenge inquiring minds. The "Thomas Group" and the "Live and Learn" programs fed their own need for lively discussion and discovery but offered opportunity for other life-long learners.

Don's disability did not destroy his love for beauty. He had painted before his stroke but lacked the time to pursue his interest. After his stroke he took the opportunity to study with good watercolorists who recognized his determination and nurtured his talent. As a left-handed person, one of his biggest challenges was learning to paint with his non-dominant hand. When his hand shook he learned to use weights to steady it. According to Pat, "When he was painting, he thought nothing of his disability."

Don lived his passion for social justice. Many Sunday evenings found him greeting guests at FEAST, one of Westminster Church's responses to hunger. When he had to miss an evening, the regular guests asked, "Where's the guy in the wheelchair?"

At Don's memorial service, the Reverend Steve Robertson called Don a "word person." Pat remembers that when he preached, he used a manuscript because "he loved shaping sentences." In advocating with and for people with disabilities, his love for words and his passion for justice came together. He contributed worship resources to the Disability Inclusion awareness packet developed annually by PHEWA's Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) network. As co-moderator of the Disability Concerns Ministry of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, he worked faithfully to move the church toward full inclusion of people with disabilities. He brought special energy to his commitment to ministry with military families.

Don often spoke for the Presbytery Disability Concerns Ministry. When he told his personal story, he was very honest about his life as a person who had to face the loss of abilities during late middle age. He never glossed over his own struggles. He never tried to sound like a hero, a model for others, or a super man. Perhaps that is why he was effective in moving audiences and in challenging the church.

Pat was a capable and faithful caregiver for many years. Their son, Derek, also became a caregiver for his spouse, who lived for many years with MS. When Pat affirmed him for what he was doing, he said, "I'm just doing what you did for Dad."

Looking back on their years after Don's stroke, Pat said, "It was a difficult life but a good life. Together, we did not dwell on the things we could not do. We enjoyed the things we could do together."

*The Rev. Bebe Baldwin is a retired member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, and a former moderator of the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA). She serves as the current moderator of the Presbytery Disability Concerns Ministry.*



**PRESBYTERIANS FOR  
DISABILITY CONCERNS**

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## **Do You Know The Bells?**

Abby Buhaug

You can't talk about Art Bell without also including Fran Bell. Through thick and thin, they were together. You didn't find Art without Fran and vice versa. For 72 years, they were a team. When Mom and Grandma asked me to write about Grandpa, his disabilities, and how his faith impacted those around him, I was at a loss until I realized that Art is only half the story.

The other piece of this I struggled with was the idea of Art as a disabled person. Is it a disability if you don't view it as such? Hearing loss, chronic lymphocyte leukemia (CLL), and heart surgery couldn't stop the Bells. Were it not for age and Alzheimer's, they could have stayed in the house on Ridge Court forever (something I'm sure Art wanted). But we all get old eventually and the body starts to fail, even if we never get old in our minds, so how can old age be a disability? Disability, at the root of it, is an inability to do things. Things you want to do, things you need to do. Art and Fran Bell were (and still are) able people, even as they moved a little more slowly. For me, this is best illustrated by an 86-year-old Art at the Northland Recreational Laboratory (Rec Lab) in 2005, cutting his thumb on a table saw and driving his black truck from the shop to the main camp building looking for Fran so they could go to the hospital. He was all set to drive himself to the emergency room for stitches, but his daughter Kathy (my mom) stepped in and took away the keys. He was back at camp later that evening, his thumb wrapped in gauze, cheerful and positive as ever. And the next day he was back in the woodshop. Even in the early stages of Alzheimer's, he spent time in the woodshop creating his scrap art by Art. On my dining room table is a napkin holder he made when he was still puttering. Anyone who knew Art and Fran has some sort of scrap art in their home, and "Art Bell tables" are still famous at Rec Lab.

Alzheimer's was the only thing that slowed Art down. However, even as the disease wore him down he was never abusive or mean. He always treated others with kindness, respect, humor, and love. On occasion he would get impatient, but that was more with himself, and a newfound inability to find the words he needed and to do the things he wanted. Even as he lost the labels for people, he was still Art Bell, though he came to rely on Fran, often leaning to her and asking her to put a name to a face. He did this without making a big deal of it, but also without shame. As Art once said, if it's something you can do something about, then do it. If you can't do something about it, let it go and don't worry about it.



A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

Art and Fran Bell don't talk their faith. Faith, I have learned from them, is not about what you say in church on Sundays. It is how you act and how you treat other people. Because of this, I can think of no one who dislikes the Bells. When you step into their home, you are welcome no matter your race, religion, or sexual preference. When you walk into St. Luke Presbyterian Church, the church they were instrumental in founding, the same holds true. If you go to the church website ([www.stluke.mn](http://www.stluke.mn)) on the history page is a picture of Art and Fran. They started the church for their kids, wanting them to grow up in a church home that was closer to home and where they would know the other children in Sunday school. Wanting to be sure their children grew into faithful adults.

Going through the hundreds of sympathy cards Fran received after Art's death this past September, there were many tales of how Art and Fran had impacted the life of the person writing. The journey was yours to take, but Art and Fran would be there beside you, always supportive. They allowed you to be the best of yourself, in their non-judgmental and compassionate way. You always knew you were loved when you were with the Bells. They are the kind of people we should all want to be when we grow up (although there may be some who would say that Art never really grew up, with all of the joking he did).

In the end, it all comes down to Art and Fran living a service-oriented, faithful, joyful life that is less about themselves than it is about those they loved. What can or can't be done is a side-line. If you can do something about it, then do it. Otherwise, why worry?

*Written by Abby Buhaug (Art and Fran's granddaughter) with help from Kathy Buhaug and Fran Bell. Fran, and the late Art Bell, are charter members of St Luke Presbyterian Church, Wayzata, Minnesota.*

## **Eavesdropping Opens the Door For a New Way of Thinking**

Rev. Sue S. Montgomery

Imagine yourself listening in on the following conversations:

One, a family is meeting with the pastor to plan the funeral for their father. The father was deaf, and was proud of being a member of the deaf community, a linguistic minority. His deafness was not a disability; it was a gift from God. The children explain to the pastor their father's life long wishes, that when he died the officiating pastor would not say anything about him hearing in heaven. There would be no comments that in death he could finally hear the birds, music, laughter, rain or thunder. In heaven, he would be not only a Son of God in the family of God, but he would be as deaf in heaven as he was on earth. The children tell the pastor their father warned them, "If anything is said against my will, I'll wake from the dead, sit up in the casket and correct the pastor."

Two, a young teenager with multiple disabilities has just lost his grandfather in death. He is asking many questions about heaven. He asks, "When I get to heaven will I be able to walk, talk, run, and do everything everyone else does?" The pastor with whom he was speaking was cautious and responded, "I don't know, but this I do know: you will be you, those who love you will recognize you and God will embrace you with eternal love." The young man lowered his head and then looked up and said, "Thanks. I am me and sometimes I think people want me to die so I can meet their expectations of being healed and whole. Although I'd like to be like everyone else, I like being loved for who I am, just as I am. Why is it that people feel free to tell me that I will be like them when I get to heaven? It hurts. I want to be loved for who I am. I want to be me now and in heaven. I want to be loved as I am in life not as what someone wants me to be in death."

Three, a chaplain who was retiring after 45 years of ministry with people who have intellectual/developmental disabilities was discussing his funeral plans with some colleagues over coffee at McDonalds. Here is what he said: "When I die, I don't want anyone preaching at my funeral to call me a saint for working with men and women with intellectual/developmental disabilities. I am no saint! My work is doing what God has called me to do; there is nothing saintly or special in it, nothing out of the ordinary, nothing honorable or elevated to a special status. I have always done what God called me to do; I have been who I am. My daughter and the funeral home director have received these instructions, and so, too, have you. Ministry with persons with disabilities is not something reserved for saints. Ministry is being a brother or sister in Christ to those around us. It is nothing more. Whenever people say that I am a saint for working with people with disabilities, it demeans the people I love and care for with all my heart."

Three conversations—three insights into the profound thoughts and unique identities of people who live with disabilities, their families, advocates, and friends. People who live with disabilities want their funeral services to be a celebration of the resurrection and a celebration of their faith and life. Here are some suggestions pastors can consider when writing funeral services for people who have lived with disabilities or who have been pastors with people who live with disabilities.

Do not focus on the disability unless it is absolutely necessary. The person was far more than the disability.

Speak of the spiritual gifts the person shared. Share stories of the person's faith. The gifts and stories can include the disability, but usually the stories of faith don't need the disability framework.

The person is more than their smile. Although a person can have a smile that lights up a room, speak about why the smile is so important and what the smile gave to those who saw it. Persons living with disabilities often are frustrated and demeaned by always being known only for their smiles, as if that's all they could ever do. Being expected to smile all the time further reduces and destroys their humanness. People with disabilities, as people of faith, know how to walk through the valleys of the shadow of death and despair. Expect faithfulness, questioning, and profound faith—don't lower the life of a person with a disability to the role of always smiling.

Don't be afraid to share the struggles the person endured. Don't turn them into moments of inspiration or heroic acts. Share how the person addressed adversity, just like everyone else, through faith, mutual ministry, and through the communal support of family and the worshipping community.

Don't speak of the person with a disability as being one of God's angels or state that as one of God's angels, forgiveness and entrance into God's kingdom is guaranteed. Such language perpetuates the image of the eternal child. People with disabilities, including cognitive disabilities, can and do make decisions of faith and professions of faith. Share how the person came to know Christ and chose to live their faith in Christ. People who are called to serve God in specialized ministries with people with disabilities ask that their ministries not be elevated above other ministries. Such thinking makes the statement that ministry with people with disabilities is more difficult and further demeans the lives and gifts people living with disabilities bring to their communities.

Unless you know where the person living with the disability stood on the theological issues of heaven and the heavenly body, do not speak of the perfect body in heaven where eyes see, ears hear, legs walk, hands move, and people dance with God. People living with disabilities already dance on earth, walk in the Lord, see and hear in different ways. No one knows what the heavenly body will be like. What we do know is this: when

the disabled earthly body is replaced with a perfect body in heaven, the message becomes quite clear—the body of a person with a disability is never acceptable except in death. Only the heavenly body is whole, complete, and honorable. A person living with a disability will never be accepted until they are dead and their body is made whole in heaven. This is a powerfully painful statement to those who live with bodies that are disabled. Many people with disabilities will say that they don't want a healed or perfect body, they want to be who they are, loved for who they are; there is pride and gratitude to be found in the bodies God has given them.

Make sure the service is held in an accessible venue. When the friends and colleagues of people with disabilities cannot participate or share in the funeral service it is a disservice to all. Seek to meet the ministry needs of those who need sign interpretation, hearing amplification, Braille bulletins or larger print, architectural access—including restrooms— emotional support, and/or an environment that enables those with autism or other cognitive disabilities to participate fully. Extend this to the traditional dinner held following funerals. People with disabilities also enjoy sharing and creating new memories around tables where bread is broken.

As the meditation and service is written, review it and ask, am I doing this differently than I would for anyone else? Go back and review the content—how can it be rewritten to affirm the person's life and faith without a heavy focus on the disability? People living with disabilities simply want to be just like everyone else, the person, the son or daughter of God whom God created —nothing else.

*The Rev. Sue S. Montgomery, Knox, Pennsylvania, is the Pastor of Nickleville Presbyterian Church, Emlenton, PA and Chaplain to Polk Center, a residential facility for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She is also the Team Leader for the PC(USA) Disability Concerns Consultants.*

## A Question of Marriage

Rev. Sue S. Montgomery

In 1980, when first introduced to a large group of men and women who lived with intellectual and developmental disabilities, there were several who said to me, “I’m going to marry Cindy, I’m going to marry Henry.” The staff members who were introducing me to the young, excited people talking about marriage, looked at me, winked, and moved on to other tasks. The dreams of the young men and women were basically perceived by the staff as foolish, unrealistic; therefore, the staff needed to “protect” them from such foolish thoughts. Then, as well as now, many perceive young people who live with intellectual/developmental disabilities as eternal, perpetual children who will never mature into responsible adults.

Over the last 44 years, I’ve looked into the history of the men and women who live with intellectual/developmental disabilities, with particular attention to how relationships have shaped lives, family, and faith. Due to the extended history of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities being placed in institutional settings, the early history is not positive. Institutional abuse led to documented cases of sexual abuse between staff and peers. When a female became pregnant, both she and her child were then institutionalized, as no one would adopt the child of a parent with a history of disability. Sadly, many women were forcibly sterilized, a strategy to keep women “safe” from pregnancy.

Fortunately, times have changed. Institutionalism is no longer the primary accepted practice for parents and medical professionals. Yet at the same time, the vision of allowing people who live with intellectual or developmental disabilities to marry is discouraged. Actually, marriage is frequently discouraged for all people who live with disabilities. The level of disability is often used as a factor to determine capability. Pastors are now being approached by parents, who are accompanied by their sons and daughters with intellectual/developmental disabilities, asking the pastor to guide them in their marriage plans. Parents have always been advocates for their sons and daughters. The journey into marriage is a new one and raises many questions. Should there be an actual “marriage covenant?” Would a Blessing of the Union suffice? These questions are real, in that there are multiple ramifications of a marriage license. Legal marriage affects medical insurance, Social Security Disability, and/or Social Security Supplemental Income benefits. If either partner is the recipient of death benefits of a parent, legal marriage can affect the continuation of those benefits, as well.

The good news is that young couples with disabilities are fulfilling their dream of marriage and living within a loving relationship. Group home and community placement services are being challenged by this new development. Pastors, sessions, and



congregations are being challenged in their understandings of traditional marriage by these emerging dreams. With support, married couples can live as husband and wife; with mentors and guidance, young couples can even take the journey into home ownership, responsible employment, and becoming parents. There's a whole new world opening up the frontiers of maturity and adulthood to people who live with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

This is the story of one young couple. Mary lives with Down Syndrome, Tom lives with Cerebral Palsy. Following several years of dating and living in two different group home settings, their care staff found an apartment for them and arranged for support staff to enable them to live safely in the apartment. Tom and Mary shared several happy and fulfilling years. Due to her Down Syndrome, Mary began to experience a rapid decline in her heart and respiratory health. Mary's abilities to care for herself began to decline. Tom did all that he could, but Mary needed more care. Mary was moved to a skilled nursing center where Tom now visits her every day after work. Throughout their journey, Tom and Mary have done what every other married couple does, love and care for one another. And as Tom would say, again and again, as he visited Mary, "I'm just doing what everybody does, I love my wife."

The question of marriage among people living with disabilities, especially significant disabilities, is often left unanswered or answered with an unequivocal "no," simply because of the debilitating image of the eternal child placed on youth when they reach the age of dating and marriage. The difficulty is, each relationship and setting is unique and has to be woven into all that it can be, with creativity of thought, openness to the Spirit moving in the relationship, understanding of state laws and guidelines relating to marriage, medicare/medicaid, Social Security assistance programs, and a willingness to work with what could or might happen with social service providers, community living support staff, and family. The good news is that marriages or blessed unions are no longer a dream, they are realities that are coming true for couples that have dared to dream and have rooted their futures in the love, trust, and hopes of someone they love.

The question of marriage extends beyond persons who live with disabilities. It also extends to older adults or the survivors of spouses who lived with disabilities. Spouses of Vietnam veterans who have died find that they cannot remarry until they are a certain age—usually 57 or older. If they remarry, they lose the death benefits their spouse's service-related death provided for him or her. For the same reasons, persons living with disabilities face barriers to marriage, as do older adults. The serious and life threatening risks that accompany the loss of medical and other financial benefits are hefty and frightening. Persons with disabilities who receive community support services to maintain their independence also face the risks of losing health and home care benefits. Legal marriage can nullify or significantly reduce benefits. Blessings of Unions are one of many solutions some churches and pastors are choosing. Many older couples seeking

to live together, affirming their love in faith and in a covenantal relationship, often don't have time for civil laws and guidelines to change.

The church—and pastors, along with the couples who are seeking to be married, and those who love and care for one another, are facing moral and ethical dilemmas. Spiritual and religious understandings of marriage are being examined. The time has come to move beyond what can't, mustn't, or shouldn't be, and move into a time of asking what is God doing? Certainly, just as with all couples, God is at work in bringing two people together to love one another. And so, with the guidance of God, scripture, our creeds, traditions, the time is now to ask the questions, find the solutions, and even though every situation will be uniquely different, how can the love of God flow through those who love one another? It isn't just a dream, it is God's good gift to those who dare to dream and even more so, dare to love.

*The Rev. Sue S. Montgomery, Knox, Pennsylvania, is the Pastor of Nickleville Presbyterian Church, Emlenton, PA and Chaplain at Polk Center, a residential facility for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. She is also the Team Leader for the PC(USA) Disability Concerns Consultants.*

# Presbyterians for Disability Concerns

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Resources



2014 Disability Inclusion Resource Packet  
Artwork by Craig Wood

Student of FAR Conservatory and participant in the Rejoicing Spirits Community at  
First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Michigan

## RESOURCES

### THE SEASONS OF LIFE IN THE FAMILY OF FAITH

#### Blogs

<http://everybodyschurch.wordpress.com/2014/01/01/inclusion-resolution/>

This blog comes to you from the **Disability Concerns Ministry, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area**. Check back often for new articles!

#### Books

Anderson, David W. (2012) **Toward a Theology of Special Education: Integrating Faith and Practice**. Bloomington, Indiana: WestBowPress. ISBN-13: 978-1449772499

Without flinching, Dr. Anderson tackles the tough issues: How could a good and benevolent God permit children to have disabilities? Are disabilities the result of sin? How does a Christian teacher of those with disabilities differ from secular counterparts? Especially helpful is his emphasis on the reflective teacher integrating faith and learning.

Bickenbach, Jerome, Franziska Felder, Barbara Schmitz. (2013) **Disability and the Good Human Life**. Cambridge University Press. ISBN-13: 978-1107027183

This collection of original essays, from both established scholars and newcomers, takes up a recent debate in philosophy, sociology, and disability studies on whether disability is intrinsically a harm that lowers a person's quality of life.

Conner, Benjamin T. (2012). **Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities**. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. ISBN-13: 978-0802867216

“Amplifying our Witness” is a profoundly theological discussion that reads like a call narrative for the church. Whereas we expect Conner to call us, like Moses, to lead the marginalized to their promised land, he actually beckons us to the burning bush, where we encounter the depths of who God is, and what God does. In this encounter, Conner believes, we in the church can rediscover who we are in God’s image and the divine power behind what we do.

Kind, Viki, M.A. (2010) **Caregiver's Path to Compassionate Decision Making: Making Choices for Those Who Can't**. Greenleaf Book Group. ISBN-13: 978-1608320417

Viki Kind, M.A., has worked extensively with hospice ministries, hospitals, nursing facilities, and is described as a seasoned bioethicist. This book is a helpful guide to doing just what the title says - making choices in a compassionate and educated way for those who can't.

Prins, Glenda W. (2013) **Lessons from Katherine: Spiritual Struggles Series** Paperback. Circle Books ISBN-13: 978-1780994512

"Lessons from Katherine" is a new book by Glenda W. Prins, an ordained United Church of Christ minister. The book is described by the publisher as "not a recounted biography of the adopted daughter, Katherine, but an up close and vulnerable diary of the author's spiritual struggles through life in a context tempered by disability."

Swinton, John. (2012) **Dementia: Living in the Memories of God** Paperback. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company  
ISBN-13: 978-0802867162

In this book, John Swinton develops a practical theology of dementia for caregivers, people with dementia, ministers, hospital chaplains, and medical practitioners, as he explores two primary questions: 1) Who am I when I've forgotten who I am? 2) What does it mean to love God and be loved by God when I have forgotten who God is? Offering compassionate and carefully considered theological and pastoral responses to dementia and forgetfulness, Swinton's "Dementia: Living in the Memories of God" redefines dementia in light of the transformative counter story that is the gospel.

## **Documentary**

### **Cinemability.**

This star studded documentary takes us on a thought provoking and humorous journey to explore the evolution of disability portrayals in film and television. From the early days of silent films to present day, from Chaplin to X-Men, disability portrayals are ever changing. This dynamic documentary takes a detailed look at the evolution of "disability" in entertainment.

<http://www.cinemability.com/>

## E-Mail Newsletters

**Bethesda Institute's *The Source*.** *The Source* is a free email bulletin featuring links to the latest news, information and resources in disability across all faith traditions. It is perfect for busy faith leaders, family, teachers and advocates.

Subscribe at [bethesda.institute@mailblc.org](mailto:bethesda.institute@mailblc.org)

**The Religion and Spirituality Division of the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities' *Gleanings*.** *Gleanings* includes annotated links to blogs, videos, books, articles, and conferences on disability issues touching on politics, theology, faith, culture, science, and more.

<http://www.aaidreligion.org/newsletter> Also see: <http://www.aaidreligion.org/>

## PC(USA) Resources

<http://www.phewacomunity.org/>

<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa>

**The Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)** was established in 1956 by action of the General Assembly, to organize Presbyterians into volunteer networks addressing the intersection of justice and health. With the core value of "nothing about us without us," PHEWA networks are committed to grassroots partnerships that bring everyone to the table: professionals, consumers, and family members. Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) is one of the ten networks of PHEWA. Stay connected and support this vital ministry through taking out a membership at: [http://www.phewacomunity.org/images/PHEWA\\_membership\\_fillable\\_form.pdf](http://www.phewacomunity.org/images/PHEWA_membership_fillable_form.pdf)

<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc>

<http://www.phewacomunity.org/>

**Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC)**, one of ten volunteer networks of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA). PDC offers resources and consultation to equip churches for inclusive ministry. PDC members believe that every Sunday – and every day between Sundays – should be a day for including all members of the body of Christ in the life of the community, and we dedicate our service toward that reality.

PDC offers annual resources to celebrate Disability Inclusion in your congregation and worshiping community. Previous years' packets include:

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/2013-disability-inclusion-resource-packet/>

*Before and Beyond the Benediction: Inclusion of People of All Abilities*

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/2012-disability-inclusion-resource-packet/>

***A Variety of Gifts: Inclusion of People with Disabilities as We Age***

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/2011-disability-inclusion-resource-packet/>

***Inclusion from the Inside Out: Welcoming God's Children of All Abilities.***

Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) offers resources to equip churches for inclusive ministry. The ideas and suggestions for worship and theology, confirmation, and models of ministry come from actual experiences of writers who are committed to inclusion of children and youth of all abilities. It is our prayer that this packet will assist you in your ministry with all of God's children.

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/living-body-christ/>

***Living Into the Body of Christ; Towards Full Inclusion of People with Disabilities;***

policy statement (with study guide) adopted by the 217<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2006.

<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/pdc>

***Congregational Audit of Disability Accessibility, and Inclusion***

A comprehensive guide developed by Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) to help congregations discover how welcoming they are to people of all ages and abilities. The audit includes access to all areas of church life, including leadership.

<http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/body-and-wholeness-in-glory-to-god/>

**Unbound**, the online journal of Christian Social Justice for the PC(USA). This link features an article written by PDC member, the Rev. Robin Lostetter, speaking to "What does the new Presbyterian Hymnal, *Glory To God*, communicate about justice and inclusion for people with disabilities?"

<http://cincibility.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/milontyreeintegrationstory.pdf>

An article by PC(USA) Disability Concerns Consultant, Milton Tyree, entitled, "***Lost and Found, an Integration Story.***"

[http://oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/disability\\_studies\\_and\\_the\\_bible\\_%28nyasha\\_junior\\_and\\_jeremy\\_schipper%29.pdf](http://oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/disability_studies_and_the_bible_%28nyasha_junior_and_jeremy_schipper%29.pdf)

***Disability Studies and the Bible.*** A chapter written by Dr. Jeremy Schipper, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Temple University, and Nyasha Junior, Hebrew Bible Scholar, Howard University; presented by Dr. Jeremy Schipper at the G.A. Committee on Representation (GACOR) 2013 Synod Training Event, Oct. 2013, Rosemont, IL.

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/life-abundant-values-choices-and-health-care/>

***Life Abundant: Values, Choices and Health Care.*** The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the 200th General Assembly, 1988. In pdf form, feel free to print out the sections useful to you from the G.A.'s website link.

## Web Articles

**“Messy Stories,”** Ellen Painter Dollar, [The Christian Century](#)

Social expectations, socioeconomic class, commodification of children, human traits, and different understandings of a “good” life are but a few of the issues that collide as genetic technologies advance. Theology and ethics offer a rich context for discussing these technologies publicly and to aid families in their decision making. Much goes unspoken outside the clinic doors for fear of judgment. Dollar paves the way to a healthier discourse, and it starts with telling and listening to stories.

<http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2013-10/messy-stories>

**“Discovery to recovery: Godly Play for Alzheimer’s patients,”** [Key Resources](#); Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary, the Episcopal Church.

<http://www.keyhallonline.org/profiles/godly-play-discovery-recovery/>

## Websites

<http://www.aapd.com/what-we-do/interfaith/interfaith-initiative.html>

**The American Association of People with Disabilities Interfaith Initiative.** Under the direction of Ginny Thornburgh, the mission of the AAPD Interfaith Initiative is to support people with disabilities and their families as they seek spiritual and religious access, and to bring the powerful and prophetic voice of the faith community to the 21st Century disability agenda.

<http://bethesda institute.org/>

**Bethesda Institute.** Mission: Raising the Level of Excellence in Services to People with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities.

<http://www.aaidreligion.org/>

**The Religion and Spirituality Division of the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities,** where they work to foster opportunities for spiritual growth for person with disabilities. A free e-mail newsletter is available through this link.

<http://www.accessibilitynetwork.net/>

**Congregational Accessibility Network.** Mission: The Congregational Accessibility Network (CAN) promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in faith communities.

<http://www.faithinclusionnetwork.org/>

**Faith Inclusion Network** serves many denominations in Virginia and offers excellent resources through the website.



<http://www.faithability.org>

**Faith Ability; Religion and Disability Resources.** An ecumenical website providing news articles, event information and more relating to faith for all people. Good links to other helpful websites.

<http://www.inclusion.com>

**“Together We’re Better \* All Means All \* Inclusion means WITH-not just IN”** This website takes you to the original advocates for inclusion and provides many resources, workshops, and more regarding inclusion of ALL ages and abilities in ALL areas of life.

[http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/products/Product\\_FaithBased.html](http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/products/Product_FaithBased.html)

Resources from the **Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities**, New Jersey’s federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). The Boggs Center is part of the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Department of Pediatrics and was long under the direction of

### **You-Tube Videos**

**Bethesda Institute’s 2012 Summer Institute on Theology and Disability.** Link provides access to 15 videos of conference speakers presenting a myriad of topics relating to faith and disability.

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dBd7sfo45eYwGn-bjYUjzFG4EwqvEI>

Also, **Bethesda Institute’s 2013 Summer Institute on Theology and Disability** at the following link.

<http://bethesdainstitute.org/2013-theology-presentations>

**People with Disabilities React to Mannequins Created in their Image** - on Zurich's Bahnhofstrasse. Entitled "Because who is perfect? Get closer," it is designed to provoke reflection on the acceptance of people with disabilities. Director Alain Gsponer has captured the campaign as a short film.

<http://jezebel.com/people-with-disabilities-react-to-mannequins-created-in-1475812519>

*Resources compiled by Carol Brown, a member of the Leadership Team of PHEWA’s Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC), from selections submitted by the PDC Leadership Team and the PC(USA) Consultants for Disability Concerns.*



# **PRESBYTERIANS FOR DISABILITY CONCERNS**

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

## ***RESPONSE FORM***

### ***The Seasons of Life in the Family of Faith: Resources for Worship and Inclusion***

*Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA) creates a Resource Packet of this type each year that can be used in conjunction with the designated Presbyterian Disability Inclusion Sunday in June (or whatever Sunday your congregation or worshiping community chooses). Your answers to the following questions will assist in the creating of future Resource Packets.*

*Thank you so much for your input.*

**How were the materials in the packet used by you or your congregation?**

**Which was the most useful part(s) of this packet for your use/ministry?**

**Do you have any suggestions for themes/content/writers for future packets?  
Other input?**

**How may we contact you?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( s ): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please reply to: Susan Stack, PHEWA  
100 Witherspoon St., Room 3228  
Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396  
[susan.stack@pcusa.org](mailto:susan.stack@pcusa.org)  
FAX: (502) 569-8963**