


Disability, Vulnerability, and Healthcare

The Value of Holistic
Ministries which Include
Everyone

The background of the slide is a solid blue color. In the lower right quadrant, there are several faint, concentric circles that resemble ripples in water, creating a decorative pattern.

My Friend Charlie

Nick Hajdu, Jubilee Association of Maryland, 2005

He is my friend: I am his friend

I help him out: He helps me to learn

I help him to learn: He helps me to grow

I help him to grow: He teaches me to accept



His struggle: Is my struggle
His vulnerability: Leads to my respect
My respect: Leads him to trust
His trust: Leads to my devotion



His availability: Feeds my desire to be needed

I keep his secrets: He keeps mine

We have an arrangement

His lack of self-consciousness: Leads to my tolerance

His constant need for stimulation: Leads to my patience

His discomfort: Sharpens my sensitivity

His unhappiness: Is my challenge

His presence: Eases my isolation

His loyalty: Leads to my loyalty

Which leads to mutual appreciation

His brokenness: Makes me accept my own brokenness
Which leads to healing

His humanity: Leads to personal connection

His steadfastness: Centers me

His smile: Is my reward

His joy: Lifts my spirits

His happiness: Gives me a sense of purpose

His struggles: Expose my anxieties

Which tests me

Then strengthens me

And in turn bolsters my faith

In guiding: I am guided
In helping: I am helped
In teaching: I am taught

In his laughter: There is joy
In that joy: There is energy
In that energy: There is spirit
In that spirit: There is grace

In his eyes: There is a glow
In that glow: Is his soul
In his soul: There is God
And in God: There is peace

Disability Defies Definition

- Inherited, at birth, acquired.
- Problem with words and labels
- World Health Organization:
 Impairment, Disability, Handicap
- Social construct of disability

Implications for Ministry

- What does “wholeness” really mean?
(See Shel Silverstein, *The Missing Piece*) Individual or community?
- Disease, deficit, or diversity?
World’s most inclusive minority.
Question is not “whether” but “when”
- Healing the person or social context?
- Paradigm for ministry to everyone

Theological Questions Right in Front of You

- What it means to be person?
- What it says about God?
- What it says about God's people: church, congregation, people?
- How we understand suffering and the difference between the "Why?" of life purpose and the "Why?" of suffering.

Disability: Thinking about it Universally

Religions Try to Answer Four Questions

- ④ Disability: what is it? How is it defined? How does it define me?
- ④ Why did it happen?
- ④ How am I to respond to it?
- ④ How are others called to respond?

Spiritual Questions at the Heart of our Values in D.D. Services

- Independence: Who am I?
- Productivity: Why am I?
- Integration: “Whose am I?” underneath the
“Where am I?” Under “Where do I belong?” is
“Who do I belong to?”
- Self Determination: How can I shape my life?

Western Expressions of Those Values and Answers

- Values as Expression of what is Sacred for Us and Where We Have Found Meaning
- Independence: Who Am I? Self made, Own Person
- Productivity: Why Am I? Job, Vocation, Make a Difference
- Integration: Community Inclusion: Presence to Membership
- Self Determination: Choices, Power, Control

Public Policy and Spirituality

Uneasy Partners

- ❶ Spirituality as private matter, not public
- ❷ Separation of church and state
- ❸ Science vs. religion
- ❹ Equation of faith with reason

Narratives of Illness and Disability

Which story are you/we part of?

- Recovery: Fix, cure, heal
- Chaos: Despair, destroyer of self and values
- Journey

Arthur Frank, The Wounded Storyteller

Key Pastoral Roles

- Presence: Being There and Welcoming
- Meaning in the Journey-Guiding
Key issues of purpose, sin, responsibility
- Shepherding=Advocacy
- Community of Care: Re-membering the Body

Disability as Holistic Ministry

- Not just a religious education issue and opportunity.
- Worship
- Community outreach
- Family supports and ministries
- Accessibility
- Aging and disability

Congregational Treasures

- Shared spiritual expression
- Opportunity to learn
- Socialization...and friends
- Recreation
- A place to serve and give
- Networking

Stages in Inclusion

- ④ Disability as evil or feared, outside of God's creation and God's people
- ④ Disability as special, special purpose, special services, special ministries
- ④ Disability as included. What's special is including me/us in what you do with others.
- ④ Disability as ministry. We are the ones who are growing in faith.

Ministries as Prepositions

- No ministry...outside of the realm of grace
- Special ministry to and/or for.
- Ministry “with”
- Ministry “by”

Ministry at/in Life Span Transitions

- ④ Spiritual supports at diagnosis
- ④ Opportunity for inclusion in religious education
- ④ Rites of passage as building community
- ④ Transition and employment: The power of networks
- ④ Adult Services: A place to contribute and belong.
“Who do people belong to?”
- ④ Ethical and health dilemmas: Involve clergy

Signs of the Times

- Many new services and supports in faith communities
- 2100+ congregations in Accessible Congregations Campaign. www.nod.org
- Many new resources, especially in the past two years.
- Attribution of growth in numbers and spirit to inclusion of people with disabilities and their families

Signs (cont.)

- Connections between ministries with people with disabilities and people who are elderly.
- New assertiveness in faith based action groups.
- New assertiveness by families and parents
- Stories of welcome
- Films that capture the imagination:
www.prayingwithlior.com

Signs (cont.)

- State, faith group, and national/international policy statements
- Some new research
- New focus on theological education in both North America and through EDAN, Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network, of the World Council of Churches
- Theological writings in Islam, Judaism, and Eastern religions.

Warning Signs

- ④ Spirituality as private matter, not public
- ④ Separation of church and state
- ④ Science vs. religion
- ④ Equation of faith with reason
- ④ Use of people with disabilities as “canary birds” in the ethical minefields

Getting to the ____ on Time

- ④ Practical issues.
- ④ Supporting Direct Support Professionals
- ④ Where are the real barriers?
- ④ Sharing responsibility..
- ④ Moving attendance to membership.

Working with Agencies and Systems

- ④ You are a key “natural” and “community” support
- ④ Get involved in IEP’s or other forms of annual planning.
- ④ Offer to help with “spiritual assessments”
- ④ Resource related to issues of grief and loss.
- ④ Tap the gifts that professionals and parents in your congregation may have to guide others in the church but don’t make them lead.
- ④ Recognize and celebrate the people who do direct care in any health or human service system.

Resources and Opportunities: It's a Gold Mine

- Go where there are
- Find out what is happening already
- Videos and adult education

Believing, Belonging, Becoming: Wisconsin DD Council

Ten Commandments for Communicating with People with Disabilities

Program Development Associates

- Service and mission: beyond “designated receivers”:
Find them a job in your congregation.
- Youth and children

Resources and Opportunities (continued)

- Faith group networks. What does “Rome” say?
Accessible Congregations Campaign: NOD
- Collaborative training with agencies
- Not just about people with disabilities:
Connect with all forms of ministry. Name a health care ministry or outreach, and ask how it could impact people who happen to have a disability.

Get Connected

- Connect into AAIDD Religion and Spirituality Division and Newsletter
- Write and research. Your stories?
- Journal of Religion, Disability, and Health
Personal/agency/congregation subscription.
- *Dimensions of Faith Resource Guide* on line in pdf at The Boggs Center.
<http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/>

Brand New Resources

- *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, and Congregations.* Erik Carter. First book from Brookes Publishing Company on spiritual supports.
- Themed issues from the Journal of Religion, Disability, and Health.
- *Autism and Faith: A Journey into Community*
- Watch for “*Praying with Lior*”
(www.prayingwithlior.com)

New Theological Voices

- Sharon Betcher *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*. Fortress Press, 2007.
- Stephanie Hubach and Joni Eareckson Tada. *Same Lake, Different Boat: Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability* P&R Publishing. 2006
- Tom Reynolds *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*. Brazos Press. (March, 2008)
- Hans Reinders. *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology and Ethics*. Eerdmans Publishing. (February, 2008)
- Amos Yong. *Theology and Down Syndrome: Re-imagining Disability in Late Modernity*. Baylor University Press. 2007

In development...

Themed issues of the Journal on:

- Communion stories
- People with disabilities: the other victims of war
- Inclusive religious education
- Quarterly series on spiritual supports in *Exceptional Parent Magazine*.

Guiding Lines

Faith Based Strategies in Community Building

- ④ Setting the table
- ④ The last shall be first. Reverse the questions
- ④ The deaf shall hear. Reverse the answers
- ④ Who do you say that I am? Be careful with words.
- ④ Joshua committee. One person at a time.

Guiding Lines (continued)

- Jericho mentality: power of persistent celebration
- Fish and loaves approach to planning: finding abundance in community
- Believe in the call...for everyone. God's hooks are everywhere
- What is most critical is invisible to the eye
- Watch out for idolatry, dogma, and ideology. Use the talents you have. Let the light shine. Just do it

It's About All of Us: "Where there is no vision, the people perish!"

Themes Emerging from Inclusive Ministries and Spiritual Supports

- Hospitality to the Stranger
- Re-membering the Body and healing of the memories
- Restoring the Sanctuary
- Redeeming the Gifts

Visions (continued)

- ④ Reversing the call
- ④ Recovering our senses
- ④ Rekindling the spirit
- ④ Reframing service, support, and profession

The great paradox of ministry, therefore, is that we minister above all with our weakness, a weakness that invites us to receive from those to whom we go. The more in touch we are with our own need for healing and salvation, the more open we are to receive in gratitude what others have to offer us. The true skill of ministry is to help fearful and often oppressed men and women become aware of their own gifts, by receiving them in gratitude. In a sense, ministry becomes the skill of active dependency: willing to be dependent on what others have to give but often do not realize they have.

Henri Nouwen, Gracias

Shalom

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