**Summer Institute on Theology and Disability 2016 Afternoon Workshops**

**Themes and Strands**

*(This is subject to change. Specific day and time assignments will be made later.)*

**HEALTH, SPIRITUALITY, and MINISTRY**

**1. PTSD & Disabilities: What Traumatized Children and Adults with Special Needs and Caregivers with Secondary Trauma Need from the Church**  Jolene Philo

Children and adults with disabilities are at high risk of experience trauma and developing PTSD. A high percentage of their caregivers develop secondary PTSD, also known as compassion fatigue. This workshop explains how stress, trauma, and PTSD impact daily functioning, relationships, and the faith of special needs families. Those in attendance will learn what faith communities can do to engage and support children and adults with disabilities, as well as their caregivers in both practical and spiritual ways. At the end of the workshop, attenders will participate in a question and answer session. They will leave with a bibliography for further reading and an extensive list of practical resources.

**Presenter:** **Jolene Philo** addresses disability ministry from several perspectives. She grew up with a disabled father and parented a son with medical special needs. She taught public school for 25 years and is the author of 5 books dealing with special needs and disabilities, including *Every Child Welcome* and *Does My Child Have PTSD?*, both released in 2015.. She speaks at special needs and foster care conferences around the country.  Jolene and her husband live in Boone, Iowa and are grandparents to 3 of the most beautiful grandchildren in human history.

**2. How Faith and Ethics influence Health Care** Devan Stahl

This presentation will highlight the intersections of disability ethics, bioethics, and religion as they relate to how people with disabilities are cared for and treated in the health care system. The presenter will highlight both longstanding and recent debates in bioethics concerning disability rights and how these debates influence (and are influenced by) medical research and practice. The presenter will also discuss how various Christian traditions within the American context have understood the role of medicine in the care of people with disabilities as well as the theologies that led many churches to support the American Eugenics movement in the past and various genetic technologies in the present. The presenter will address strategies for churches to become better allies for people with disabilities as well as how they can help congregants navigate the medical system and deliberate the use of medical technologies for persons with disabilities.

**Presenter: Devan Stahl** is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Ethics at Michigan State University. Dr. Stahl teaches medical ethics and medical humanities in the College of Human Medicine and performs clinical ethics consultation services throughout the state of Michigan. Dr. Stahl’s main areas of research are in disability ethics, religion and spirituality in healthcare, and clinical ethics. Devan earned her Ph.D. in Health Care Ethics at Saint Louis University and her M.Div. at Vanderbilt University.

**3. The “Body” in “Body, Mind, and Spirit”: An Overview of Wellness and Health Maintenance for Individuals with Disabilities** Mary Dell

Individuals with developmental disabilities, particularly autism and other cognitive/behavioral concerns, have many educational, vocational, behavioral, and other concerns that require significant time commitment from family members and other care providers. Often financial resources limit needed care and related services, including transportation to professional appointments and regular follow-up care. Consequently, individuals with developmental disorders, autism, and other cognitive and behavioral challenges do not receive necessary, appropriate, and beneficial medical screenings and services. This workshop (or roundtable luncheon discussion) will review regular health maintenance and screening as recommended for all age groups by several authoritative bodies, including the America Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, The American College of Physicians, and The U.S. Preventative Services Task Force. Attention will be given to weight, body mass index, exercise, routine health screening, cardiovascular health and screening guidelines, breast and GYN Health, and men’s health screening. Dental care will also be discussed, as this is often neglected in individuals with developmental disabilities even as dental health is increasingly being linked to other medical conditions and comorbidities. Attendees will be provided resources with websites and contact information for health advocacy groups and reliable, authoritative health agencies and organizations. The theological principle of stewardship, or care of God’s gift of human embodiment, will be woven throughout the session.

**Presenter:** Dr. Mary Lynn Dell is Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Pediatrics at The Ohio State University and Director of Psychosomatic Medicine at Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. She is board certified in general, child and adolescent, and forensic psychiatry, and psychosomatic medicine, and specializes in the psychiatric care of medically ill individuals. In that capacity, she routinely provides care to individuals with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities. She is active in several medical organizations and speaks on the importance of religion and spirituality in medical and psychiatric care.Dr. Dell is trained in theology and an Episcopal priest. She currently serves as Priest Associate at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio.

**COMMUNICATION**

**4. The Great Invisible Disability: Hearing Loss** David Myers

Drawing on personal experience and science, David Myers will explore the biology and psychology of hearing and hearing loss. He will also describe user-friendly assistive technologies, including hearing loops that are now conveniently enabling people to hear the word in several thousand U.S. worship places (via a wireless signal to most new hearing aids and all cochlear implants).

Presenter: David Myers is a communicator of psychological science. His scientific writings have appeared in three dozen academic periodicals, in four dozen magazines, and through seventeen books, including [general interest books](http://www.davidmyers.org/Brix?pageID=4) and [textbooks](http://www.davidmyers.org/Brix?pageID=5). In recognition of his efforts to transform the way America provides assistive listening for people with hearing loss (see [hearingloop.org](http://www.hearingloop.org/)), he has received awards from the American Academy of Audiology, the Hearing Loss Association of America, and the hearing industry. He represents Americans with hearing loss on the Advisory Council of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders.

**5. Towards an Understanding of Spirituality in the Context of Non-Verbal Autism** Karenne Hills

It is vital that consideration be given to the spirituality of people with unique life circumstances. Working from the premise that every human being is created in the image of the Divine according to a perfect plan, the question must be asked as to how this Divine Being meets those who cannot receive or articulate a Divine encounter in conventionally understood ways. Research indicates that people with non-verbal autism are a severely under-researched group, presenting unique challenges to investigation and understanding. There is growing evidence that spirituality is considered an essential ingredient of humanness, therefore the spirituality of people with non-verbal autism is worthy ofexploration. For those living with non-verbal autism, questions arise concerning the necessity of language as part of, or essential to, the experience. Similarly, if Divine intention is attributed to a certain life context, questions emerge as to the possibility that this intention substantiates an encounter specific to the unique life circumstance. If this is the case, the encounter experienced by the individual, and the potential benefits to others should be pursued. This presentation draws from academic and non-academic literature to explore such concepts, while intertwining personal and theological perspectives into the discussion.

**Presenter: Mrs. Karenne Hills** is the Undergraduate Counseling Course Coordinator in the School of Social Sciences at Christian Heritage College. She is a Ph.D. candidate at Griffith University, studying the spiritual experiences of people with non-verbal autism. She has a special interest in the theological and spiritual considerations for people with disability, an interest born largely out of her personal journey with her two sons, each of whom live with significant disabilities. Her research interests include: The spiritual experiences of people with non-verbal autism, sexuality and spirituality, sexuality for people with disability and alternative learning opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

**6. The Theology of Disability: Stroke and Aphasia** Gloriajean Wallace

In the United States, stroke/brain attack affects approximately 750,000 individuals every year. Stroke is the third cause of death in the United States, following heart attack and cancer. Stroke is the leading cause of disability. While a significant number of individuals who incur stroke will die, 80% of stroke survivors will be left with impairments that significantly impact communication, swallowing, use of the arms and hands for self-care, and walking. These things contribute to quality of life. One major disability that may result from stroke is “aphasia.” Aphasia is a communication impairment that affects speaking, understanding, reading, writing, and math skills (such as those needed for balancing check books). Aphasia makes it appear as though the person is not as intelligent as they were before the stroke, although they are. There is a lack of public awareness about aphasia. For this reason, people with aphasia do not receive adequate environmental support. Insufficient “communication ramps” make it challenging for people with aphasia to access community with full participation. This workshop will present information about aphasia, communication challenges faced by adults with aphasia, and ways that the faith-based community can promote accessibility for people with aphasia.

**Presenter:** Dr. Gloriajean Wallace is a Professor Emerita in the Dept. of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Cincinnati, and Graduate Professor at the University of Hawai’i. She is a Fellow of the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association, a Board Certified Speech Pathologist, national and international presenter, and author of 2 textbooks. She has served as clinician-advocate for people with communication impairments after stroke, traumatic brain injury and other causes of brain injury for over 40 years. Dr. Wallace is also an ordained Interfaith Minister, and will complete her M.Div. degree at United Theological Seminary in May 2016

**PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE MINISTRIES**

**7. Practical Strategies for Assimilating Disabilities into Ministry** Theresa Taylor

Using virtual communities works as an excellent tool to network disabled people with each other and leadership within a church. This networking promotes communication and problem solving on accepting the disabled in the Body of Christ. The disabled are an untapped reservoir of ministry potential that will not only help with a church’s ongoing need for volunteers, but will promote reconciliation among churches and the disabled. This is just one finding spawned from my doctoral research “Sawubona” Enabling the disabled in the body of Christ. This research has generated many practical strategies to insure welcoming atmospheres at our local faith communities. More importantly, these strategies do not require money, extra people or other resources churches struggle to maintain. They require only a heart like Jesus.

**Presenters: Theresa Taylor** is deaf-blind with a passion to reach the disabled with the saving power of Jesus. She holds several degrees including her doctorate of ministry in pastoral care. She is a Pastor with International Ministerial Fellowship. Her husband **Ken** and herself founded Seek the Son 10 years ago to promote reconciliation within the church and disabled community. Theresa loves empowering others and this includes work with the disabled and civil rights. Ken and Theresa produce podcasts, blogs and Theresa is waiting for her book to be published. This book is a manual for church leaders to increase participation and attendance by disabled.

**8. How to Build and Strengthen an Interfaith Disability Network** Karen Jackson and Rosemarie Hughes

This presentation is in three sections: An introduction and explanation of the development of Faith Inclusion Network (FIN) of Hampton Roads; a description of FIN’s new online video resources; and time allotted to questions and discussions about FIN. Ms. Jackson will begin by presenting about the founding of the organization in 2008 and its ongoing growth and development. She will cover the challenges of funding, interfaith work and marketing for this all-volunteer organization. Dr. Hughes will share information about FIN’s recent filming project and accompanying study guide that leads faith communities to explore creating ministries for those with disabilities. Q&A and discussing the vision and future projects for Faith Inclusion Network will conclude the presentation.

**Presenters:** **Karen Jackson** lives in Norfolk with her husband Scott and three children, Joseph, Samantha and Jacob. She graduated from the Eastman School of Music, NY and Temple University, PA and has been band director at The Williams School in Ghent since 1998. Karen’s experience advocating for her daughter who has autism and her work as a Parish Advocate at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Norfolk, led her to found Faith Inclusion Network in 2008. Since that time, she has written about the topic of faith and inclusion with articles published in area newsletters, the Catholic Virginian and on various websites and blogs. Recently she has contributed to the book, *Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability* *and Inclusion* by Mark Pinsky, published by Alban Institute and published her own book in 2015, *Loving Samantha.*

**Rosemarie Scotti Hughes, Ph.D.** is Dean Emerita, School of Psychology and Counseling, Regent University. She holds degrees from Duquesne University, Regent University, and Old Dominion University. Her second of four sons, Chris, has ID and autism. Her published books include *Parenting the Child with Special Needs* and *Counseling* Families *of Children with Disabilities*. She is also co-author of 126 classroom guidance lessons for children in grades K-5, called S.A.I.L. Her published chapters and journal articles include disability issues. She has presented at conferences and invited seminars throughout the United States as well as Malaysia and Oxford, England. She was a US delegate to a disabilities conference at the Vatican. She was also a contributor to *Neighbor in Crisis*. She has been a member of several professional boards, including the State Board of Counseling in Virginia, The ARC, and the religion division of AAIDD. She is on the Stephen Ministry Leadership team for her church and is a volunteer caseworker with Navy Marine Corps Relief Services at NAS Oceana. She currently chairs the Universal Family Life Local Human Rights Committee of Virginia. Her FIN experience includes fundraising, and assisting with conferences and other events.

**9. Who is Missing from the Table? Practical Strategies for Inclusion of Families with Special Needs in Faith Communities** Lorna Bradley

This practical workshop will examine the simple changes congregations can make in order to be more welcoming to families with special needs. Special needs families thirst for connection and spiritual nurture. In creating a holistic approach to welcoming all people, congregations can effectively increase personal and family resilience, dramatically changing lives for the better.

**Presenter:** Rev. **Dr. Lorna Bradley,** an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church, received MTS and D. Min. degrees from Perkins School of Theology. As a Fellow at The Hope and Healing Institute in Houston, Texas she creates resources for special needs family support, including her recently published book Special Needs Parenting: From Coping to Thriving. She has led parent support groups for over six years and worked in welcoming ministries for over ten years. She and her husband of thirty years have an adult son with Asperger’s. Lorna enjoys spending time with family, entertaining, traveling, scuba diving, and running.

**10. Providing Pastoral Care to Families with Special Needs** Lorna Bradley

Families with special needs often slip through the cracks of pastoral care due to the ongoing nature of living with disability. This practical workshop will offer strategies for providing meaningful pastoral care.

**Presenter: Rev. Dr. Lorna Bradley**, see previous bio.

**11. Circles of Love: Encouraging Congregational Networks of Care for People with Disabilities and their Families** Christine Guth

Everyone deserves the love and care of a supportive community, and faith communities are uniquely suited to providing such support. The congregation can be a vital supplement to the secular disability service system by responding to the personal, spiritual and support needs of persons living with disability and their families. Presenters will outline a vision and strategies for implementation observed in successful congregationally based support groups. They will share stories from congregations that have intentionally created a network to provide various kinds of long-term support to an individual with disabilities and/or their family. Stories include an artist with disabilities supported by a church-based corporation formed to market his artwork, a young man with developmental disabilities who was able to achieve his goal of independent living, families affected by the disabilities of more than one family member, and more.

**Presenter:** **Christine J. Guth** serves Anabaptist Disabilities Network, as program director, with responsibility for communications, consultation, and coordinating volunteers. She is a contributing author to *Circles of Love: Stories of congregations caring for people with disabilities and their families,* and *Supportive Care in the Congregation: Providing a congregational network of care for persons with significant disabilities*.

**12.** **Universal Design for Worship: Shaping Worship for Persons of All Abilities** Barbara Newman

While much conversation has happened around creating physical accessibility in places of worship, faith communities have perhaps not invested as much time in creating an accessible conversation with God in worship. This session will look at multiple practical ways to prepare in advance for a worship setting that includes persons of varied abilities. In addition to the idea of universal design, there will also be some mention of planning for specific individuals as part of that setting. Participants will learn from examples taking place in a variety of congregations as they implement ideas for the whole community as well as specific ideas for individuals.

**Presenter: Barbara J. Newman** is the Church Services Director and Consultant for CLC Network in Wyoming, Michigan, and a Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Program Affiliate. She is the author of several books on creating a  place of welcome in our congregations for persons with disabilities including “Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship”, “Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities”, “Autism and Your Church”,  "El Autismo Y Tu Iglesia" and “Body Building: Devotions to Celebrate Inclusive Community”. She is a frequent national speaker at conferences and churches. In addition to writing and speaking, Barbara enjoys working in her classroom at Zeeland Christian School.

**Responder: John D. Witvliet** is Director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and Professor of Congregational and Ministry Studies and Worship, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, respectively. His responsibilities include oversight of the Institute's practical and scholarly programs, and teaching courses at both the college and seminary.  His areas of interest include the history of Christian worship, worship practices in various denominations, biblical and systematic theology of worship, the role of music and the arts in worship, choral music and consulting with churches on worship renewal.

**13. “The old, old Story...in a new, new Way.”** Tom VanWingerden

Is there someone with intellectual disability in your faith community that would love to belong to a Bible Study group, but has not done so because the material was not well suited for everyone to participate? Learn about an innovative and inclusive Bible study called “**Together*”*** by Friendship Ministries that will better enable us to approach a more collaborative community where all can participate fully as part of the body of Christ. Inclusion has often resulted in activities and programs designed for people with intellectual disability, but apart from the main crowd. What if there was less emphasis on “apart” and more emphasis on “together’? Friendship Ministries has created two parallel tracks of Bible study opportunities. One track designed for a traditional programmed approach in a new digital/on-line format, encouraging partner participation and discovery. The other, designed to support the formation of small groups that include adults with and without disabilities. The topics are relevant to both populations and contain appropriate supports to enable the full participation of all. Come and discover how the Gospel and the story of salvation can be shared with all in a collaborative environment, working side-by-side and discovering God’s gifts together.

**Presenter:** Tom VanWingerden has been involved in Friendship Ministries for more than 20 years as a leader and mentor, and for the last 2 years as Executive Director. His background is in business, having owned his own company for 20 years and having worked in administration at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for 14 years.

**14. From the Depths I Cried Out To You: Honoring Spiritual Struggle and Hard Times for People with Disabilities**  Ruti Regan

As human beings created in the image of God, spiritual struggle is a fundamental part of our existence. Faith isn’t always straightforward, and meaning isn’t always easy to come by. Sometimes we have to work through anguish and doubt to find either. In order to have deep faith, we have to find ways to cry out from the depths. Many of us find ourselves tempted to gloss over the dark places in our work with people with disabilities. People with disabilities are all too often given a way to say amen, but no way to express dissent, doubt, or anguish. This is often particularly intense for people with communication disabilities who are only physically able to use words we make available to them. This workshop will teach practical methods for respecting the full range of spiritual expression and providing appropriate spiritual support to people with disabilities.

**Presenter:** Ruti Regan is a senior rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary. She is a founding board member of Anachnu, an organization working towards the full equality of Jews with disabilities, in Jewish community in which disability experiences can be fully acknowledged and honored. She is rabbinic intern at Matan, a Jewish organization providing professional training for inclusive education. She writes http://realsocialskills.org, a blog dedicated to practical strategies for honoring humanity, understanding power, and treating ourselves and others well. Prior to JTS, Ruti studied at Drisha and the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Her interests include liturgy, lightbulb jokes, and respectful Torah.

**SCRIPTURE, THEOLOGY and LANGUAGE**

**15. Luke 14 and A Theology of Disability**  KathyMcReynolds

A life crisis is typically viewed as having a beginning and an end. A life-altering disability, though, is a crisis that has no end. This is precisely why a theology of disability is necessary. Families affected by disability need to know that God and his church are with them in this lifelong journey. Christ’s ministry to the vulnerable and the outcast, especially as it is portrayed in the Gospel of Luke, provides a model and a mandate for the church to reach out to those with disabilities. In Luke, Jesus highlights those with disabilities as unexpected disciples, as examples of true humility—a hallmark of discipleship—and as those who will be most welcome into the Kingdom of God. In this way, Luke provides the church with a framework for a theology of disability.

**Presenter:** **Kathy McReynolds** graduated with a B.A. in Christian Education at Biola University, an M.A. in Systematic Theology at the Talbot School of Theology, Biola University and a Ph.D in Ethics at USC. She explored these issues in genetics through the lens of Aristotle’s and Bacon’s ethical theories. She is a professor in the Bible Department at Biola University where she has taught for the past 15 years. She has also taught in the Torrey Honors Institute, the English Department and she continues to work as adjunct faculty in the Apologetics Department at Biola University. In July 2007, Kathy became the Director of Public Policy at the Christian Institute on Disability at Joni and Friends. Her responsibilities included writing, speaking and networking with other like-minded scholars. In July 2010, Kathy accepted the position as the Director of Academic Studies at the Christian Institute on Disability.

**16. Disability and Ministry: A Biblical Exploration**  Mark Stephenson

In this workshop, participants will explore various passages from the Bible and examine their implications for ministry with people who have disabilities. Topics investigated will include Disability and Sin, Disability and the Messiah, Disability and Healing, and the Body of Christ. A few implications for ministry will be explored including barriers to full involvement and the importance of every member knowing that they belong and are encouraged to serve. Workshop will be interactive with participants engaging with various Scripture passages in small groups, then reporting their findings to the larger group.

**Presenter: Mark Stephenson, M.Div., Th.M.,** is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church. After serving as pastor of two churches for 17 years, he was called to serve his denomination as Director of Disability Concerns, and has served in this role for 10 years. He and his wife Bev have six children including Nicole, their oldest, who has severe, multiple disabilities. Mark’s mother had dementia the last 12 years of her life. He likes writing, speaking, organizing events and people, doing karate, reading, and spending time with his wife and family.

**17. Building Breakable Roofs: Old Testament Precedents for Inclusion**  Kristy Jones

Though central to Church and society, a significant theme in the OT, disability, has been neglected in scholarship. Often, references to figurative and literal disability are read with a normate hermeneutic of how people look, feel and think, with disability occasionally mentioned in terms of exclusion and stigmatization, but more often explained away or ignored completely. Rather than explaining away what is ‘uncomfortable’, it is forwarded that ‘allowing’ people with disabilities to figure in biblical texts as *people* with disabilities, excluded and included enables honest comparison between, and dialogue with, material about inclusion/exclusion and healing/non-healing. Such dialogue provides insights into Ancient Israelite culture, what this has meant throughout the text’s reception history, and what the present text has meant for the generations of people who have been, and will be, influenced by it.

During the workshop, participants will discuss texts and consider these exegetical tendencies, and their implications for understanding disability within and outside of the OT. This will provide the tools for honest and practical engagement with the OT, not only informing exegesis but impacting the Church.

**Presenter**: **Kirsty Jones** is working towards her MPhil in Old Testament at the University of Cambridge, and is a research associate for the Kirby Laing Institute of Christian Ethics, working on Disability in the Old Testament and Biblical Ethics of Disability. Her thesis*, 'A Highway for those with Disabilities?’* investigates inclusion of individuals with disabilities within Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the implication of healing/non-healing tropes within the wider biblical text. She has also investigated multi-sensory language in the Psalter and its impact on understanding cognitive-emotive approaches to worship and revelation, within the text of the Bible and practice of the Church.

**18. Uses of Disability in Liturgy and Ritual: Challenge, Exploration and Possibility** Lauren Tuchman

In this workshop, participants will examine texts from Jewish liturgy and tradition that employ disability metaphors and use disability in other ways. These texts will include passages from the Hebrew Bible, the Babylonian Talmud as well as specific blessings said upon various occasions in Judaism. Though such texts have been read expansively throughout Jewish tradition, individuals with disabilities have often been left out of these conversations. What would be possible if people with disabilities were empowered to speak about the impact such metaphors have on their spiritual lives? How might we rethink liturgy and how might we teach these texts differently? How can we integrate and center the perspectives of individuals with disabilities and allow for the possibility of the creation of new liturgical and teaching modalities? Though Jewish texts are the primary focus, this workshop will also explore the ways in which Jews, Christians and others can work together to transform our religious and spiritual communities, learning from one another’s perspectives.

**Presenter:** **Lauren Tuchman** is a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the first known blind woman ever to attend a rabbinical school. She is passionate about bringing disability rights and justice perspectives to bear on religious and spiritual communities out of a firmly held belief that people with disabilities have spiritual insights that are too often not brought to the larger table of spiritual and theological discourse. She has written and taught widely on the intersection between Judaism and disability justice. She has spoken at a variety of synagogues and Jewish organizations. She served as a Hollander Social Justice Fellow at the National Havurah Committee in Rindge, New Hampshire in the summer of 2014 where she spoke about practical, programmatic and attitudinal changes religious communities can make to become truly and deeply accessible and taught a course in 2015 at the NHC about centering marginal voices when teaching Torah and other sacred text. She has been published in the Journal of Interreligious Studies, State of Formation, Jewschool and RitualWell. Lauren holds a BA in religion and Judaic studies from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA and an MA in Judaic Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

**19. Tell a New Story: The Impact of Language in the Stories We Tell and the Resulting Perceptions of People with Disabilities** Lida Merrill

Using our experience as service providers who seek to provide holistic supports to the people we serve, we will share our evolution of language in storytelling. The words we share in stories can unintentionally perpetuate myths about people with disabilities and the continuance of 'othering'; or, words can draw people together to form relationships where myths are shattered and rich communities are developed. Scripturally we will look at the story of 'Blind Bartimeus" as an example of a bible story that can cause people to be seen as 'other' or 'one of us.' Through sharing some of our own stories during this presentation we will demonstrate how to use story-telling to encourage including people as they develop their own personal spiritual lives and connections with faith-communities.

**Presenter:** **Lida Merrill**, M.Th.: Lida is from Rochester, NY, where she serves as the director of spiritual life at Heritage Christian Services. She is part of a leadership team that seeks to provide person-centered, holistic services to the people they serve. She is passionate about faith communities being welcoming places for all people. She is a graduate of Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College and also serves as an assistant pastor at Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church. Lida blogs at ***AbleFaith*** where you can read her thoughts and experiences with inclusive faith communities and people with disabilities.

**20. Moving Beyond Us and Them Theology** Lynn Swedberg and Lisa Mckee

There is no place for “us” and “them” in the community of faith. We need to develop an inclusive theology of disability that doesn’t use "us" and "them" to differentiate between people who have disabilities and those who do not.  Non-disabled writers and speakers sometimes inadvertently offer disability theology that marginalizes or “others” people with disabilities.  Writers and speakers with disabilities may do the same when referring to persons who have differing types of disabilities. People-first principles offer only a beginning point, and were not developed to communicate religious concepts. This workshop offers dialogue and tools to help participants learn to challenge the assumptions underlying language used in disability theology. Drawing on insights from Nancy Eiesland’s The Disabled God, participants will examine texts to determine who is in the speaking center and how the wording can be altered if needed to eliminate hidden ableism. Participants will identify appropriate terminology for an inclusive disability theology that validates varying perspectives and lived experiences. We will also explore language use as a form of hospitality, with the hope that all of us can offer grace as we stretch to expand participation of all in the faith community.

**Presenters: Lynn Swedberg MS, OTR/L, FAOTA**, is Disability Consultant for the DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church and an occupational therapist with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her passion is facilitating accessibility and inclusion in faith communities and camps. Lynn edits the Committee newsletter *The Voice* and wrote the *Leader’s Guide* for the recent United Methodist Women study on *The Church and People with Disabilities*. She is from Spokane, WA, where she serves on her church’s Inclusivity Committee and the Spokane County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee. She is finishing certification in Disability Ministries through United Theological Seminary. **The Reverend Lisa Lavelle McKee** is an Elder in the West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. She holds a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary. Lisa has served as a pastor, community educator, and job coach for individuals with disabilities, a camp counselor, nursing home activities director, and a hospital chaplain. Lisa's work as well as her personal experience with disability gives her unique perspective on living a faithful and fruitful life. Lisa resides in Summersville, WV with her husband John, who is also a pastor, and Chloe, a spoiled Welsh Corgi.

**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN/LEADING MINISTRY**

**21. *“IN THEIR OWN VOICES”*** Russell Ewell, et. al.

This workshop is designed to bring together individuals who see the gospel as liberation. It consists of a moderator and a three to four member panel. The outline of the workshop is as follows: (1) The moderator will present the background, overview and introduce the panelist; (2) Each member of the panel will give a **five to seven** minute talk. Understanding that they will have an opportunity to entertain questions after all panelist have presented; (3) The attendees will have an opportunity to engage the panelist with their observations and questions and (4) Conclusion. Each will be asked to identify how their theological *foci*, *sitz im leben* or hermeneutical lens informs their theology of disability. Those invited thus far are: **Lisa McKee** who draws from her work as a Disability Rights Advocate. **Allyssa Green** who works from a Womanist perspective. And **Kendrick Kemp** (who like myself) identifies Black Liberation Theology as the substratum for his work. The hope is that this workshop might inform, inspire and empower those who have bee thinking about (often in silos) liberating theologies of disabilities to move to the next stage of doing this important work.

**Presenter/Coordinator: Russell Ewell**. As a person with a disability in pre-ADA America, Russell’s introduction to advocacy began with his enrolment into Kindergarten. Educators/physicians forewarned his parents, “Blind students don’t succeed in integrated classrooms.” So, “don’t dream of seeing him graduate from high school.” Confounding conventional wisdom, Russell graduated high school, college and became the first blind graduate of Eden Theological Seminary, and the first blind person ordained in the Missouri Conference of the UMC.

He enjoys engaging The Church and academia on their theology of disability, sitting at tables where liberating theologies are contemplated, and empowering people to realize their full potential.

**22. The Benefits of Engaging People with Disabilities in Ministry**  Mark Stephenson

Communities of faith can benefit from engaging people with disabilities fully in church life, and these same communities of faith will suffer loss if they do not. Benefits include completing the body, fulfilling justice, enhancing outreach, deepening care, enriching hospitality, and increasing joy, faithfully stewarding God’s grace, and growing in love. The leader will explore briefly the danger of investigating these benefits, namely, that people with disabilities could be seen merely for their usefulness to the nondisabled people in the faith community. These benefits will be explored from a Christian perspective using passages from the Bible, but the topics explored will apply to people of other faith traditions as well.

**Presenter: Mark Stephenson** (See previous bio.)

**23. Advocacy from the Inside: Addressing Challenges Faced by Professionals with Disabilities**

Stephen Weisser and Lisa McKee

It is challenging to be a professional with disabilities, special needs, or chronic illness. Even more, advocacy is even more difficult when you share these challenges. This workshop seeks to offer support by listening to stories, providing wisdom, and sharing strategies for people to enable their vocations, coping and to advocacy. Particular sensitivity will be paid to experiences of exclusion, being silenced, not being invited to the table, feeling like a mascot, feel used/consumed, or sharing feelings of unworthiness.

**Presenters: The Rev. Stephen J. Weisser, M.Div., BCC and The Rev. Lisa McKee, M.Div**. The presentation team consists of the knowledge of religious professionals with significant experience in disability advocacy. Both members of the team are ordained ministers. One is a board certified chaplain with significant interfaith experience. Both leaders have presented nationally. Even more, both members of the presentation team are life-long patients coming from chronic illness and disability communities. Living in both world of patient and professional Stephen and Lisa will seek to support, build bridges, and to facilitate coping strategies.

**THEOLOGY/EMBODIEMENT**

**24. Dis-abling the Body of Christ”**  Nancy Hale

The presentation will help participants make connections between the experience of disability and the purpose and mission of the Church. The contemporary Church, as the body of Christ, sometimes struggles with its sense of identity and mission as well as with its relationship with other social bodies in the world. This presentation will look briefly at disability theory and theology, body theology, and ecclesiology to formulate a “holistic ecclesiology of embodiment,” which are principles that answer the question, “What would it mean for the church to be a disabled body?” The intention of these principles is to help churches dis-able those beliefs and practices that keep them from being the message of the kingdom of God and from embodying the new social reality of the gospel that challenges the values of other social bodies in the world. Participants will be challenged to apply these principles in their own ecclesiological and denominational setting.

**Presenter:** **Rev. Dr. Nancy Jill Hale** is an ordained United Methodist pastor and liturgical scholar. In her Ph.D. program (at Boston University School of Theology), she focused on disability theology, ecclesiology, and liturgy. She has had progressive hearing loss since birth, and uses both a hearing aid and a cochlear implant. Nancy has been an advocate for accessibility for many years. She is chair of the Upper New York Conference Accessibility team, has served on the United Methodist Committee for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Ministry, and has taught courses on accessibility and disability theology at Mission U and at conference and district training events.

**25. Disrupting Complacency: A Solidarity of Relational Vulnerability** Patrick McArdle

It is a particularly challenging time for people living with disabilities: on the one hand, there are specialist care services, government funding and legislated parameters for building codes, anti-discrimination legislation and community awareness campaigns which suggest a high degree of inclusion, welcome and solidarity without parallel in history; on the other hand, forms of antenatal testing and reporting, bias in health, education and welfare resource allocation and discriminatory employment practices ensure that people living with disability continue to be marginalized. This presentation suggests that if we think about humans beings as living within relationships rather than legal contracts we might have a way forward. Thinking about all the interactions between humans as a set of relational narratives could give rise to a paradigm shift in thinking, policy and practice. This is the point where Christian theology and practice can make significant contributions by holding a mirror to human existence, not to eliminate flaws, vulnerabilities or brokenness but to celebrate them as intrinsically human. Believers hold that the body of Christ is not an independent and isolated perfect whole, but a community which is bound together through mutual need borne of vulnerability.

**Presenter:** Patrick has an academic background in practical theology, education and pastoral care, culminating in doctoral work on personhood and relationships in constructing models of practice in health, education and welfare. He has worked at ACU for 20 years following a successful career in secondary school teaching. Patrick is the author of three books, *Relational Health Care, On Being Pastoral* (with Prof. A. Tuohy), and *Where Do We Stand? With Whom Do We Stand? People with Disability and the Call of Jesus* (with Mrs P. Mowbray), numerous articles and conference papers in practical theology and related fields.

**26. Word Become Flesh: Embodied Theology And Spiritual Encounters** Keith Dow and Mike Friesen

In this presentation, Mike Friesen and Keith Dow will explore embodied theology and moral projections. What are the presuppositions we approach others with? How do we become aware of our own prejudice? How are these views shaped by our encounter with our own body? This interactive workshop will offer participants opportunities to encounter their own perceptions of others and themselves. Over the course of 60 minutes, we will explore together disability, body image, otherness, and the image of God. William T Cavanaugh, Søren Kierkegaard, Louis C. K. and Emmanuel Levinas will be our guides.

**Presenters:** Keith Dow is Manager of Organizational and Spiritual Life with Christian Horizons, the largest provider of developmental services in Ontario, Canada with services around the world. Keith lives in Ottawa, where he obtained his Masters in philosophy. He is currently writing his PhD dissertation in Theology on ethical care under the direction of Hans Reinders.

Mike Friesen is a student of theology and relationality. He was named Employee of the Year for embodying Shalom and hospitality with Thomas Allen, a company providing services for 3500+ people with developmental disabilities. He is finishing his Master’s degree and hopes to develop communal practices that foster belonging with those who have been excluded.

**RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES**

**27. Buddhism and Disability** Darla Schumm

This workshop will explore how several basic teachings of Buddhism can inform a rethinking of western theological understandings and interpretations of disability.  In particular, we will explore how The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism offer an alternative perspective on the presence of suffering in our world.  Additionally, we will explore how the Buddhist teaching of anatman, or no self, turns our definitions and understandings of disability upside down.

**Presenter: Darla Schumm, Ph.D.,** is professor of religious studies at Hollins University, a liberal arts women’s college nestled in the midst of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Schumm received her B.A. from Goshen College, Goshen, Ind. She has an M.A. in Social Ethics from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., and a Ph.D. in Religion, Ethics, and Society from Vanderbilt University. Schumm’s current research focuses on intersections between religious studies and disability studies. She is the coeditor of three volumes on religion and disability, and the coeditor of a forthcoming textbook on world religions and disability. She is writing a book tentatively titled *Religion and Disability in America.* In her free time, Schumm enjoys traveling, running, knitting, reading fiction and playing with her son

**28. Did they read the right signs? Disability in the Catholic Tradition since Vatican II** Zachariah Duke

This workshop traces the historical developments of how disability is portrayed in the Catholic Tradition since Vatican II. The universal Catholic Church reports that it welcomes people living with a disability, but this workshop will investigate the relationship between this rhetoric and actual substantive efforts towards genuine belonging of people living with a disability. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has probably the best chance of introducing inclusive practices under the leadership of Pope Francis. His immediate predecessors were considered more conservative, while Pope Francis is considered more progressive, according to contemporary Catholic theologians. Although this workshop will have a theological emphasis; the presenter comes from a deeply practical background, and as such, the workshop will include many tangible inclusive strategies that will be useful to families and faith communities.

**Presenter:** Zach’s recently completed PhD was entitled: ‘A critical analysis of a theology of disability in the Australian Catholic Church: a qualitative inquiry of contemporary inclusionary practices’. His main areas of research and expertise are: theological voices of marginalised and vulnerable people; disability theology; perspectives on ecclesiology and ethnography; the art and processes of theological reflection; the relationship between empirical theology and the social sciences; and the impact of service care in religious organisations.

**29. The Model for Disability Ministry Used by the Christian Reformed Church and Reformed Church in** **America.** Mark Stephenson and Terry DeYoung

The Disability Concerns Ministry of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) began in 1982. In a journal article published 10 years ago, Eric Pridmore called the CRC’s Disability Concerns ministry “a pattern for other denominations to follow.” Since 2009, the CRC and the Reformed Church in America have been working together closely in this ministry to the benefit of each denomination’s churches. The leaders of these two ministries will facilitate this workshop, describing their model of identifying disability advocates in regions and in churches, equipping them for ministry, and providing various tools and resources for churches to use toward this end, which is their tagline, “Everybody belongs. Everybody Serves.” Participants will be invited into the conversation by sharing ways of ministry that they have found to be fruitful.

**Presenters: Mark Stephenson,** M.Div., Th.M., is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church. After serving as pastor of two churches for 17 years, he was called to serve his denomination as Director of Disability Concerns, and has served in this role for 10 years. He and his wife Bev have six children including Nicole, their oldest, who has severe, multiple disabilities. Mark’s mother had dementia the last 12 years of her life. He likes writing, speaking, organizing events and people, doing karate, reading, and spending time with his wife and family.

An ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America since 1988, **Terry A. DeYoung** has served as a pastor, magazine editor, and (since 2009) the RCA’s coordinator for disability concerns. Living with a degenerative bone condition since birth, Terry confesses his development as an advocate for people with disabilities has been slow in coming, but there’s hope. Thanks to the perseverance of his wife, the Rev. Cindi Veldheer DeYoung (a hospital chaplain who has lived with significant hearing loss since childhood), and his continuing, three-decade history as a volunteer with a Center for Independent Living in west Michigan, the native Chicagoan’s optimism about the future is typical of a lifelong Cub fan.

**30. Ministering to those on the Autism Spectrum** Ron Sandison

The presenter will share his insight as a minister with autism. Learn practical methods to minister and teach children and young adults with autism. Handling meltdowns and sensory overloads in a classroom or church setting. Helping individuals with autism to feel accepted and welcome. Teaching styles to improve learning comprehension for those with autism and other disabilities. Activities and games to help develop social skills through Christian education. Mentoring to teach essential life skills and basic theology.

**Presenter: Ron Sandison** works full time in the medical field and is a professor of theology at Destiny School of Ministry. *He is an advisory board member of Autism Society Faith Initiative of Autism Society of American.* Sandison has a Master of Divinity from Oral Roberts University and Charisma House is publishing his book on 4/5/16, *A Parent’s Guide to Autism*: Practical Advice. Biblical Wisdom. He has over 10,000 Scriptures memorized including 22 complete books of the New Testament. Ron and his wife, Kristen, reside in Rochester Hills, MI. You can contact Ron at http://www.spectruminclusion.com or email him at sandison456@hotmail.com

Note: In addition to the workshops, there are opportunities for attendees to propose and lead a round table discussion at lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. If you are interested in doing so, email [bill.gaventa@gmail.com](mailto:bill.gaventa@gmail.com) for a one page proposal form.