

***Program and Time Table PhD Seminar  
SITD 2018 Duke University, Durham NC***

***Tuesday June 12 – Thursday June 14  
1.45 – 4.30 P.M.***

*Supervisors:*

Prof. Em. Hans S. Reinders  
VU University Amsterdam

Dr. Devan Stahl  
Michigan State University

***Tuesday June 12***

**1.45 – 2.30**

**Opening Lecture – Chair Devan Stahl**

Hans Reinders, Professor emeritus VU University Amsterdam, *Becoming a New Self - Disability Beyond Tragedy*

In my *Disability, Providence, and Ethics* I have suggested that in listening to what people tell you about their journey to get passed the crisis of being confronted by disability, the notion of ‘discovering a new self’ comes to mind. This suggestion depends on a way of reading their crisis as the experience of a gap. The gap between the ‘before’ and ‘after’. John Swinton has criticized my reading of this timeframe, so one thing to do in this lecture is to respond to his criticism. Part of the response will be to explore the notion of a ‘new self’ more explicitly in theological terms, for which I will draw on my pneumatological account of providence. God is present in the midst of people’s crisis, meaning that there is no gap in his presence. The moment they find witness of this presence, their lives are renewed, and they discover they have left an ‘old’ self behind, open to becoming a ‘new’ self.

**2.30 – 3.00**

**Student Presentation – Chair Hans Reinders**

**Koos Tamminga - Inclusion and Ecclesiology - Status Quaestionis**

In this paper, using literature study, I will explore the intersection of disability inclusion and ecclesiology. Inclusion, at least in the Netherlands, is a buzz word. Yet it is frequently unclear what is actually meant by this word. At the

same time, efforts for including people with disabilities in faith communities sometimes seem to overlook fundamental ecclesiological questions. At least these questions are often not addressed in literature on disability inclusion.

The intersection sketched above forms the main theoretical background of my research project. In this project I use the method of theological ethnography to engage in the life of a congregation in the Netherlands that is striving to be inclusive of people with disabilities. When this congregation (de Ontmoetingskerk, Encounter Church) was in the position to build a new church building, they decided to do this in cooperation with a number of disability service providers. This has led to a project called Hart van Vathorst (Heart of Vathorst, Vathorst being the name of a neighborhood in the Dutch city of Amersfoort), a place where about 100 people with various disabilities live, work and worship together with the rest of the congregation that had already been in Vathorst for about 10 years. Their practices bring to the fore many questions, problems and sometimes directions for solutions.

In order to present a helpful analysis that will not only be recognized in Vathorst, but also help other churches to become places where everyone is welcomed, it is necessary to place the practices of Hart van Vathorst in a wider theoretical framework. Based on the research so far, it is clear that emerging theoretical questions can be grouped in two main categories: questions regarding the concept of inclusion and questions regarding the nature of the church (ecclesiology).

**3.00 – 3.30**

**Tea break**

**3.30 – 4.30**

**Student presentations – Chair Devan Stahl**

**3.30 – 4.00**

**Emma Ceruti - Infantilism, Romanticism, and Aggrandisement:  
Problems of Misrepresentation within Disability Theology**

Since the 1990s, many scholars and theologians have contributed to the field of disability theology. Scholars such as Jean Vanier, Thomas Reynolds, Amos Yong, John Swinton, and Hans Reinders have addressed the concerns and questions of people with disabilities from a theological, biblical, practical and spiritual framework. Because of the hard work and commitment of these scholars, various conferences, panels, and symposiums have emerged within the last ten years. Conferences like the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability have been a way for scholars to share their work, collaborate with one another, and create international communities of learning. With this paper, I will survey the contributions disability theologians Jean Vanier, Hans Reinders, and John Swinton have made to the field of disability theology, while also respectfully recognizing the ways in which people with disabilities

are frequently misrepresented within their writings. Many times, people with disabilities are infantilized, romanticized, or aggrandized. This is a working typology and not a complete list of how people are being misrepresented. When this is done, the human condition of those with disabilities is deprived of the same agency and authority that would otherwise be taken for granted in the lives of the “able-bodied.” Even though disability theologians make great attempts to avoid misrepresenting people with disabilities, it is easy to fall into this trap. The perils of disability theology lie precisely in the promises of creating accessible communities of belonging. As I continue forward in my studies, I am faced with this same challenge. I am the “able-bodied” sibling of a brother on the autism spectrum. With this in mind, I need to carefully examine my methodology. I must also not fall into the trap of misrepresentation. I must not “speak for” my brother. To support my methodology, I will conclude my paper by examining the approaches of agency and authority within feminist theory and disability studies. These two disciplines will provide the resources and foundation for better inclusion and representation within disability theology.

4.00 – 4.30

#### **Cathy Webb - Integration of Disability Content in Master of Divinity Programs in the United States**

People with disabilities often face barriers to participation in religious communities. Due to the unique position of leaders in Christian communities, which are the religious majority in the United States, providing specific, disability-related training during their formal education period may help reduce the barriers faced by disabled people. However, little currently is known about the presence and integration of disability-related content in these training programs. As such, this work addresses the broad question: how do the curricula at Master of Divinity (M.Div.) programs in the United States prepare Christian religious leaders to work with individuals with disabilities and their families? To answer this question, the curricula and courses of all accredited M.Div. programs in the U.S. (n=205) will be systematically analyzed for the presence and integration of disability-related content. Publicly available data will be collected and analyzed both quantitatively (e.g. comparisons of across programs, number of courses available) and qualitatively (e.g. syllabi analysis to determine the depth and breadth of content) to enhance what is known about how students pursuing M.Div. degrees are introduced to and trained in disability-related content. This research has the potential to clarify how institutions of higher education currently are training people to diversity their faith communities by including disabled people.

## **Wednesday June 13**

1.45 – 3.15

**Thesis Presentations – Chair Devan Stahl**

1.45 – 2.30

**Keith Dow - Loving our neighbours with intellectual disabilities: Opportunities and challenges to ethical action in Christian faith-based social service.**

Caught between rich traditions of moral theology on one side and professional competencies and codes of conduct on the other, religious organizations serving people with intellectual disabilities seek to understand how faith roots ought to frame ethical service provision. This project draws on over a decade of service in one of the largest Christian organizations in Canada together with theological and philosophical inquiry to suggest a way forward in understanding moral motivation and formation in direct support provision. The doctrine of the *imago Dei* gives words to a foundation of moral obligation that transcends words and goes beyond full intellectual comprehension. In unpacking the mystery of the *imago Dei* as encountered in my neighbour, it is discovered that the *tyranny of transparency* demanded in “giving an account” must be called into question in order to fully love and value others – in particular our neighbours with intellectual disabilities.

2.30 – 3.15

**Joanne van 't Sant - A Place at the Table. A Theological narrative discussing the inclusion of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities in faith communities.**

This project narrative developed intentional conversation with congregations regarding the place of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in a typical church community. The survey questions provided data to identify where church congregations may fall on a spectrum of welcome, hospitality, and inclusion. I posed questions that intended to measure the current attitudes and perceptions of the 40+ congregations of the, RCA Classis of the Greater Palisades in Bergen County NJ. The research challenged the readiness of a congregation's ability to provide a welcoming, hospitable or an inclusive sense of belonging for people with IDD. I engaged some of the following foundational arguments from which the survey questions would emerge:

- How does the community of people with IDDs fit at the table of the individual church congregation as well the broader church RCA denomination?
- How does the church embrace this community out of love/concern for a “sister/brother” and not as a “mission project done out of pity or misplaced charity?
- What supports need to be in place to protect the integrity of a meaningful church experience?

- What supports need to be in place for people with IDD's participation as members in the church community?

Within its context of pastoral care, this focus was not only on the care of individuals but on the IDD community as an entity of the broader denominational body which may not understand the spiritual impact of their presence. Results from this project provide tools to assess the broadening of parameters for design in "church" life - in the RCA and beyond. It will provide foundational work to broaden the scope of what we consider "church" and allow a wider reach for the "other" to find a place at the Table of Christ.

**3.15 – 3.45                      Tea Break**

***Thursday June 14***

**1.45 – 2.30                      Conversation with Devan Stahl on her Third Jean Vanier Emerging Scholar Lecture – Chair Hans Reinders**

1.45 – 2.00                      Summary of the Lecture

2.00 – 2.30                      Discussion

**2.30 – 3.00                      Student Presentation – Chair Hans Reinders**

**Anne Masters - Social Role Valorization – An Opportunity to Flourish or Continued Devaluation for Marginalized Individuals?**

Proponents of Social Role Valorization (SRV) theory claim it provides a framework for understanding the social dynamics underlying continued marginalization of individuals from devalued groups, as well as providing considerations to change this. Opponents say that it is another way to devalue individuals on the margins by imposing values of the community on the individual, rather than following person-centered-planning protocols.

I will engage these two perspectives in conversation and argue that SRV provides a credible case to understand why individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are still plagued by outdated narratives of dependency and sentimentality within faith communities, which shape pastoral practices that are disconnected from creedal statements of affirmation and inhibit meaningful participation. I also hope to demonstrate that principles of SRV are consistent with person-centered planning, and a useful tool to change these false narratives to encourage the development of relationships and meaningful participation within faith communities.

**3.00 – 3.30**

**Tea Break**

**3.30 – 4.00**

**Paper Presentation – Chair Devan Stahl**

**Benjamin Wall - Naming Things Rightly: Inhabiting L'Arche through the use of language**

Vanier's naming of L'Arche is paradigmatic of how humanity has sought to make meaning of the world they inhabit through the use of language. By placing Vanier's naming of L'Arche into conversation with the Biblical account of Adam's naming of animals in Genesis 2:19–20, my paper will explore how "naming", theologically speaking, is not merely a means of communication but rather the exercise of a God-given initiative requiring humanity's discernment, acknowledgement, and affirmation of other creaturely life in relation to them as God presents them. My first move will demonstrate how Vanier's naming, like Adam's, sees the other as essential to the whole of creation and not just something with which we must learn to live or tolerate. Such reception, for Vanier, entails accepting the truth of our own creaturehood and place within the domain where God acts. My second move will involve contrasting Vanier and Adam's naming with the type of naming that occurs in Genesis 11 regarding the presumption that we can create out of ourselves a name for ourselves and name our own making as an ultimate good in order to raise the following questions: Are we naming to build right place/space/s? In our naming what are building? In our building what are we naming? All these questions assumes the notion of L'Arche being both a place and way of life named rightly.