

National Collaborative on Faith and Disability Webinar Series

Honoring Spiritual Needs and Gifts:

From Inertia to Collaborative Action by
Providers and Congregations

April 27, 2015

A webinar series hosted by:

National Collaborative on Faith and Disability (faithanddisability.org)

National Collaborative on Faith and Disability Webinar Series

Strategies for Congregations: Building Awareness and Commitment

Moderator:

Courtney Taylor (*Vanderbilt Kennedy Center*)

Presenters:

Shelly Christensen (*Inclusion Innovations, LLC*)

Lynn Swedberg (*DisAbility Ministries, UMC*)

Suzanne Potts (*Austin Interfaith Inclusion Network*)

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Also Supported By:

- Autism Society of America
- AAIDD Religion & Spirituality Division
- Parent to Parent
- Bethesda Institute
- The Arc US
- Association of University Centers on Disability
- ANCOR
- TASH
- Vanderbilt Kennedy University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

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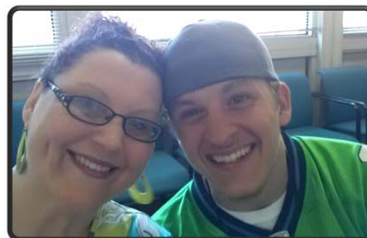
A Few Important Notes

- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted this week on the Collaborative on Faith and Disability website (faithanddisability.org).
- All slides and resources will be posted along with the webinar recording.
- Questions can be submitted in the question box for discussion after the presentations.
- We will read posted questions to the presenters during the Q&A at the end of the presentation. All phone lines are silenced.
- Our time is brief. Presenters will share contact information for follow-up.
- Information about the final webinar in this series will be shared at the end of the webinar.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FAMILIES AND FORGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH DISABILITY AGENCIES

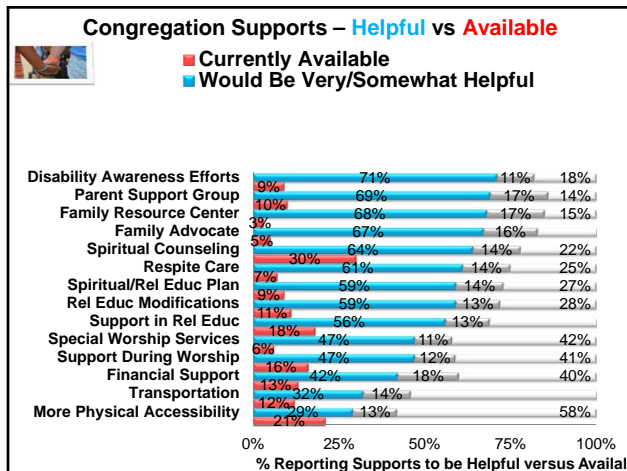
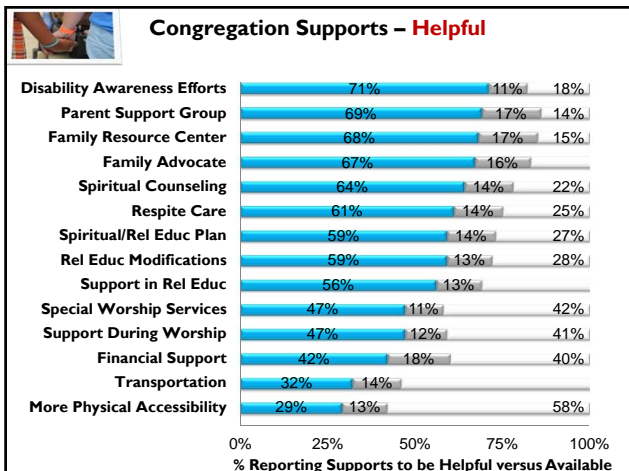
Courtney Taylor, M.Div. (Moderator)

*Associate Director, Communication and Dissemination
Coordinator, Disabilities, Religion, and Spirituality Program
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
Website: vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu
Email: courtney.taylor@vanderbilt.edu*



Youth and Families Flourishing Project

Erik Carter, Ph.D. (PI)



Disability Webinar Series

Creating a Symbolic or Religious Education Plan

In a world, saturated with disability, why would anyone expect education services for individuals with disabilities? Education Program (EP) that meets the unique needs of each student, and supports their full and joyful participation in the educational experience.

Building a symbolic education program that is meaningful and joyful for students with disabilities is a goal that all educators should have. This is a goal that is supported by the National Council on Disability (NCD) and the Department of Education (DOE). The NCD has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities. The DOE has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities.

Practice Strategies

- Ask with parents about their goals and desires for their child's education and how they can be supported in the classroom.
- Be open to the idea of symbolic education. The symbolic education program is a goal that all educators should have. This is a goal that is supported by the National Council on Disability (NCD) and the Department of Education (DOE). The NCD has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities. The DOE has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities.
- Develop a symbolic education program that is meaningful and joyful for students with disabilities. This is a goal that is supported by the National Council on Disability (NCD) and the Department of Education (DOE). The NCD has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities. The DOE has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities.
- Implement the symbolic education program in a way that is meaningful and joyful for students with disabilities. This is a goal that is supported by the National Council on Disability (NCD) and the Department of Education (DOE). The NCD has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities. The DOE has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities.
- Evaluate the symbolic education program regularly to ensure it is meaningful and joyful for students with disabilities. This is a goal that is supported by the National Council on Disability (NCD) and the Department of Education (DOE). The NCD has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities. The DOE has identified the symbolic education program as a key strategy for improving the educational experience of students with disabilities.

50%
11%

Welcoming People with Developmental Disabilities and Their Families: A Practical Guide for Congregations

By Courtney E. Taylor, Erik W. Carter, Naomi H. Annandale, Thomas L. Boehm, and Aimee K. Logeman

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Characteristics of Inclusive Communities

- Commitment of leadership
- **Use of educational resources**
- Religious teaching that positively portray people with disabilities
- **Had closer relationships with disability organizations**
- Commitment to addressing social issues

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Forging relationships with disability-related organizations

- University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)-67 Centers (at least one in every state)

State directory at: aucd.org



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Examples of collaboration

- Students gain valuable experience ministering with families with disabilities
- Congregations learn from those who have come before them
- Trainings
- Putting Faith to Work (puttingfaithtowork.org)

Turning Good Intentions into Action: Congregational Approach to Excellence in Inclusion

Shelly Christensen, MA
Founder and Executive Director
Inclusion Innovations
Co-founder Jewish Leadership Institute on Disabilities and Inclusion
www.inclusioninnovations.com
shelly@inclusioninnovations.com

“All I’ve ever wanted...



Becoming A House of Prayer for All People Requires

- Raising Awareness
- Commitment to Action
- Communication
- Every person plays a role



Communicate Why Inclusion Is a Value

For my house shall be a house of prayer for all people.

~Isaiah 56:5

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

~Micah 6:8

Do not insult a person who is deaf or put a stumbling block in front of someone who is blind.

~Leviticus 19:14

Start an Inclusion Committee



Assess, Plan and Act



Roadmap to Inclusion



Communicate Inclusion



ADA25 July 26, 2015



<http://faithanddisability.org/projects/ada-25th-anniversary/>

**STRATEGIES USED BY INTENTIONALLY
DISABILITY-FRIENDLY
FAITH COMMUNITIES**

Lynn Swedberg, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA

Disability Consultant

DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church

Website: www.umdabilityministries.org

Email: umdability@gmail.com



Use your website to show welcome

- Home page has a statement that the church welcomes people of all abilities.
- Website is useable by people with low vision and who use screen readers.
- Site lists access and who to contact regarding needed accommodations



<http://www.belmontumc.org/index.php/news/top-headlines/1468-accessibility-at-belmont-umc>

Provide signs that “We are expecting you”

- Signs direct visitors to accessible parking, entrances.
- Accessible spaces are near curb cuts and entrances.
- Greeters open the doors, help visitors locate what they need, accompany them if appropriate.
- Welcome kiosk provides large print bulletins, assisted listening devices, print copies of the sermon, etc.



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Show that all are welcome

- Bulletin boards or displays list support groups, can be viewed and retrieved from wheelchair height.
- Paper cup dispenser makes water fountain accessible
- Photos include people with and without disabilities.
- Accessible uni-sex/ family restroom is in a central location



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Demonstrate hospitality in all you do

- Variety of treats offered at coffee hour
- Allergy safety policy is in place before it is needed
- Congregation minimizes fragrance use
- Families and individuals are asked how they can best be served



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Organize an inclusivity committee

Members include people with disabilities, family members, trustees, professionals, who:

- Advocate in all committees and work areas
- Serve as accessibility coordinator for events
- Complete accessibility audit
- Hold Disability Awareness Sunday service and programs
- Look for un-met needs
- Find resources to meet needs



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Morningside United Methodist Church, Salem, OR

- Open to visitors, quick to ask what accommodations are needed
- Disability aware
- Responsive, proactive board of trustees
- Can-do attitude
- Result – pew cuts completed in one week after a first-time visitor requested them!



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Morningside, Salem, continued

- Ministry by people with disabilities – making large print bulletins on accessible copier
- Disability Connections committee meets monthly
- Parents Night Out for children with and without disabilities
- Disability Awareness Sunday celebrated annually



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Morningside, Salem, continued

- Making the building more accessible, one project at a time
- Revamping website
- Seeking grant funding, information, consultation
- Making things happen, one person at a time
- Sharing what they do with other churches



Before and after

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Resources

- "Accessibility is Another Word for Hospitality", *New World Outlook*, May/June 2014, Lynn Swedberg, <http://www.umcmision.org/Find-Resources/New-World-Outlook-Magazine/New-World-Outlook-Archives/2014/May/June/0527accessibilityisanotherword>
- "Adapting a Church Building and Program for Staff, Members, Visitors and Others who are Blind or Have Low Vision," Lynn Swedberg, Tim Vermande, and Eric Pridmore: <http://www.umdisabilityministries.org/access/blind.html>
- "Creating a Local Church Accessibility Committee," Lynn Swedberg: <http://www.umdisabilityministries.org/welcoming/start.html>
- "Website Accessibility" Tim Vermande: <http://www.umdisabilityministries.org/tech/website.html>
- Video: "Welcoming Our Disabled Neighbors in our Churches," Accessibility Ministries Committee of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church with Terry McDorman: <https://vimeo.com/88894753>

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USING AN INTERFAITH APPROACH TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FULL DISABILITY INCLUSION

Suzanne Potts, LMSW, MPH

Executive Director, Autism Society of Central Texas

Coordinator, Austin Interfaith Inclusion Network

Website: <http://onestarfoundation.org/onestar-networks/austin-interfaith-inclusion-network/>

Email: suzpotts1@gmail.com

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Interfaith and Disability Outreach

- Established network and identified fiscal partner (OneStar Foundation)
- Outreach to Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Protestant communities (over 800 faith communities in Central Texas)
- Outreach to disability communities
- Facilitated discussion between the disability and faith based groups

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Welcoming and accessibility survey

Biggest barriers to participate in their faith community:

- Worship services
- Senior programs
- Religious education

Welcoming and accessibility survey

Biggest reasons WHY these were noted?

“No one noticed me”

“Someone to show an interest in me”

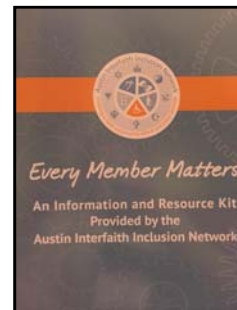
“Information to orient me to the activity or program”

“If you indicated a barrier to activities, please tell us the reason why:”

“I did not feel welcome”

“Transportation”

“Appropriate support/accommodations were not available”



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“Every Member Matters”: An Information and Resource Kit

- Overview
- Why a toolkit?
- How do we use it?

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Toolkit Content

- Tips for engaging people with disabilities
- Religious Education
- Accessibility
- Community Supports and Resources
- Parent/Family Member Suggestions

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Collaborative approach to resources

- Shared stories of faith inclusion and exclusion
- All faith communities offer examples of scripture or holy writings on people with disabilities or who suffer.
- Finding commonalities was easier than seeing differences
- Disability community working to include “faith” as a topic for true person-centered planning
- Having collaborative voices at the table allowed for greater exchange of ideas and growth of opportunities

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Year 3

- “Every Member Matters” toolkit reprint and sent to 1000 faith communities
- Spanish version
- Mini symposia (mental health summit, religious education, welcoming and faith and inclusion awards)
- Expanded survey to network and community partners
- Engaging with additional Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and disability communities
- Self Advocacy/Sustainability “Ah-ha! Moments”

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Online Tools and videos

- [Central Texas Stories of Faith and Inclusion](#)

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Q&A WITH THE SPEAKERS

Please post your questions in the question box

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NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ON FAITH AND DISABILITY

www.faithanddisability.org

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Vision and Mission

People with disabilities and their families will have compelling opportunities and supports to develop and express their spirituality, engage in congregational life, and share their gifts and talents in ways that are personally valued and that strengthen communities.

Our mission is to support people with disabilities, their families, and those who support them by providing national and international leadership in the areas of research, education, service, and dissemination related to disability, religion, and inclusive supports.

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Current UCEDD Partners



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Activities of the Collaborative

- ✓ Develop and support an interdisciplinary and interfaith network of scholars and leaders who are addressing the intersection of disability, religion, and/or spirituality in their work.
- ✓ Foster rigorous, collaborative, and interdisciplinary scholarship, including research, policy analyses, theological reflection, and program evaluations.
- ✓ Develop educational materials, programs, and technical assistance fostering collaboration among, or building the capacity of, religious leaders, human service professionals, service providers, congregations, individuals with disabilities, and families to address spirituality and build inclusive spiritual supports.
- ✓ Produce and disseminate compelling resources based on research and state-of-the-art practice in both disability services and inclusive spiritual supports.
- ✓ Provide national and international leadership by speaking to policy initiatives, cultural developments, and other emerging issues related to disabilities, religion, and spirituality.
- ✓ Serve as a central and visible "clearinghouse" for resources, research, trainings, conferences, programs, and organizations.
- ✓ Provide an accessible and engaging link between academic, professional, and lay communities.
- ✓ Support and enhance the efforts of other organizations, faith networks, and groups carrying out work in related areas.
- ✓ Pursue large-scale funding to carry out the work of the Collaborative.

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Upcoming Webinar Conversations

- **June 29:** *Best practices and resources for moving from inclusion to belonging as contributing, valued members of faith communities*
- Register at www.faihanddisability.org