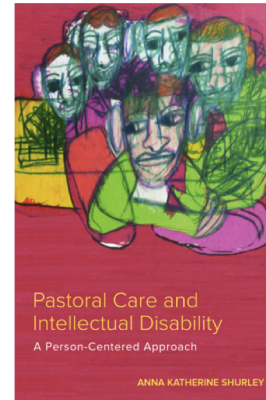


THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS

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baylorpress.com



The Body of Christ: A Different Kind of “Normal”

- God calls ALL of us to take good care of each other (1 Cor. 12:25).
- The Body of Christ cannot flourish if any of its members are not flourishing. We need each other.
- “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:5)
- The way of Christ is the way of life *together*. Caring like Christ involves ALL people caring *together*—including people with disabilities.
- The Church’s witness depends on everyone’s inclusion and participation.

A New, “Normal” Approach to Pastoral Care in the Church

- Inspired by secular *person-centered* disability supports
- Creative
- Basic form: caring partnership patterned on the life of the Triune God
- Care and healing for the sake of Christian vocation
- Given and received equally by ALL of God’s people

A Brief History of Person-Centered Support

- Growing dissatisfaction with disability services in the US
 - “Wound of life-wasting” among people with intellectual disabilities
 - Wolf Wolfensberger
 - Presidents’ Council on Mental Retardation (est. 1966)
- 1972: Wolfensberger publishes *Normalization*
 - New term: Social Role Valorization
 - PASS workshops creation of new models of disability services and supports
- 1979-1992: Twelve approaches to Person-Centered support are created

Common Features of Person-Centered Support

- Focuses on the person, not the diagnosis.
- Utilizes common language and symbols, not professional jargon.
- Honors the person and his/her need for community
- Involves deep, careful listening to the person being served, and to his/her “circle of support” (the people who know him/her best)
- Utilizes “capacity thinking,” focusing on a person’s gifts, strengths, and potential instead of his/her deficiencies.
- Actively assesses a person’s gifts and capabilities in a search for ways that he/she can use them in his/her community.

Person-Centered Support and Christian Vocation

- Viewed through the lens of faith, person-centered support gives people with and without disabilities the potential to discover and be the people that God has created and called them to be.
- Vocation: God's unique and carefully-crafted purpose for every human life.
 - Includes all aspects of life.
 - May include a job/profession, but is not limited to it.
- Common function of each unique vocation: allows each person to be a witness to God's work in Jesus Christ in his/her own unique way.

Healing Through and For Vocation

- Clarity about vocation can be healing for people with disabilities
 - Some may not have ever considered themselves as parts of God's good creation or participants in God's ongoing Kingdom work.
- Health and healing in the context of faith and disability
 - Not simply physical, social, or mental well-being (WHO definition)
 - Akin to Hebrew *shalom*: a robust wholeness of being in which a person can live fully the gift of life that God has given him/her, in communion with God and neighbor.
 - Healing: recovery of wholeness, restoration of community, reclamation of strength to fully live one's God-given life.
- Person-centered practices of care in the church may enable a person with a disability to find shalom and empower him/her to live into his/her vocation.

Importance Person-centered care for the Church

- Faith communities have a legacy of care with and for people with disabilities.
 - Specific ministries for people with disabilities (Sunday school classes, camping opportunities, visits to local group homes)
 - Supportive care groups
 - Valuable witness: cultivating awareness, breaking down barriers, acknowledging often-unique needs of people with disabilities and their families
- Unintended consequences of specific or "special" disability ministries
 - May still leave people with disabilities occupying a place in community that is still separate from others without visible disabilities.
 - May compromise the possibility of partnerships between people with and without disabilities.

Pastoral care with people with disabilities is at its strongest when it happens in the context of authentic relationships marked by mutuality and reciprocity in practices of care.

When all members of a faith community engage in practices of pastoral care as partners—as friends—they become agents of God's healing and empower one another to live into the particular vocations God has given them.

How Person-Centered Care Becomes Pastoral

- Pastoral care is a fundamentally interdisciplinary ministry
 - Borrows resources from theology as well as social sciences
- The context and framework is Christ and his Church.
- Person-centered pastoral care occurs within a holy friendship between caregiver and care receiver
 - Patterned after internal relationship between persons of the Trinity
 - Patterned after God's relationship with God's children as revealed in Christ.
 - Friendship becomes a sacred space where God's spirit can transform lives.
- Care partners creatively explore each other's hopes and dreams and how they might be actualized.

The Safe Space of Pastoral Friendship

- Healing and growth are possible when people can play freely in their own spaces where they can relax, rest, and be fully and authentically themselves.
- Person-centered pastoral caregivers nurture a safe, creative space for care receivers where dreams and ideas can be shared freely and not stifled.
 - Particularly important for people with disabilities, whose dreams and ideas are often unintentionally yet all-too-easily stifled.
- The safe space of a pastoral friendship can allow a care receiver's true self to shine through mutual respect and shared authority.
 - Threat of compliance and/or a triumph of the false self (Winnicott)

Creative, Playful Care

- Partners in a person-centered, pastoral friendship play together to uncover a care receiver's needs and dreams, as well as nightmares to avoid.
 - Can be a "play group": For example, a care receiver's "circle of support" gathers with the care receiver to explore the ideas and images that the care receiver wants to share.
 - Can be a "play date": For example, direct-support professionals can partner with their care receivers to bring to light their dreams and needs and communicate them to others. Possible resources for play: art, music, poetry, movement, simple conversation
 - Examples: Coloring with Bill, Writing Poetry with Jerry, Telling Secrets with Ra-Ra

Room for the Holy

Person-centered pastoral friendships are both safe and sacred

- Pastoral friendships are grounded in friendship with God.
- Through sacred friendships with each other, we can experience something of the sacred friendship with God that God calls each of us to embrace.
- God can make God's love and presence known in and through our friendships with one another.

Calling, Friendship, and Questions of Agency

God calls all people to be Christians who are in fellowship with God.

- God calls us to be God's friends.
- Reflects the fundamentally relational nature of God who is Father, Son, and Spirit.
- Karl Barth: Answering God's call is a "leap of faith" that each person is asked to take.

How does God call us?

- Ultimately a mystery: defies human logic and turns it on its head.
- "Awakens" and "illuminates" the whole person: body, mind, and senses—not just intellect.
- Through Holy Spirit, God calls and enables all people, even those with profound disabilities.
- Possible vehicles of calling: music, art, encounters with others in context of friendship

How can people with profound intellectual disability answer God's call?

- "You did not choose me but I chose you..." (John 15:16)
- Foundation of God's calling is God's choosing (electing) us before we could do anything on our own.
- Calling and obedience are not contingent on intellectual capability.

Who We Are

- To be fully human is to be in mutual relationships with others.
 - "Co-humanity," patterned after cohumanity of God, revealed in Jesus.
 - Knowing fully and being fully known
 - Mutual communication and assistance
- We do nothing apart from one another.

So...

When we leap, we leap *together*.

- The "leap" of obedience is possible for EVERYONE, including people with profound intellectual disability. We help each other answer God's call.
- Our humanity (co-humanity) is grounded in God, not on anything intrinsic to human beings (e.g., rationality), and is enabled by the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit works within our cohumanity and enables obedience.

Discovering Vocation through Pastoral Friendships

- We say "YES!" to God and God's friendship through our Spirit-filled relationships with one another. Friendship with God is linked to friendship with one another.
- Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's agape-love makes truly mutual, holy friendships possible, even for people with profound intellectual disabilities.
- God's Spirit and love eradicate distinctions (disabled/non-disabled) that could threaten the possibility of true friendship.
- Pastoral friendships are a place where ALL people can discover and enact their vocations (friendship with God).

Person-Centered Pastoral Care and The Church

- ALL Christians are called to be witnesses for Jesus Christ through participation in the Church's various ministries
 - Witnesses to each other, and witnesses to the world.
- The Cure of Souls: The Church's ministry of pastoral care
 - Care for the whole person
 - Attention to God's promise and claim for every person—their vocation.
 - All Christians are called to participate in the Church's caring ministry.

Person-Centered Pastoral Care and The Church

- Human beings were created to care for creation and for each other.
 - Creation narrative: God gives humans "dominion" over creation. Dominion means responsibility and stewardship.
- People with and without disabilities are called offer God's care to one another, as responsible caregivers and gracious care receivers.

Person-Centered Pastoral Care and The Church

- We are called to care *with* people with disabilities, not just *for* them.
 - Beyond "us" and "them"
- We are called to care with our friends.
- *Koinonia*: the fellowship of Christians that is grounded in the life of God. This is the telos of Christian friendships and pastoral care.
 - Lines between caregiver and care receiver are necessarily and wonderfully blurred.

Cultivating Person-Centered Care in the Church

- First things first: Creating a space for friendship
 - Making worship and meeting spaces accessible to friends with disabilities.
 - Enhanced or alternative communication techniques and worship components.
 - Education curriculum that is accessible to people at all cognitive levels
- Cultivating pastoral friendships
 - Practical, problem-solving aspects of pastoral care are still important, but are best addressed in the context of mutually-caring relationships.

Models of Pastoral Friendship

- Faith Partners
 - One-on-one relationship
 - Assist one another in participating in corporate worship, pray together, serve together in congregational mission activities
- Pastoral Friendship Groups
 - Groups of three or more people
 - Gather together for intentional time of mutual sharing, listening, and care.
 - Strengthened by attention to group process and commitment to confidentiality.
 - Each member of group has opportunities to give and receive care to fellow group members.

"Church simply was not church for her without him."

- Mickey, Karen, Bobby, and Kit
- "...The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."
- Moving from fear to friendship
- The Church needs all kinds of dreamers to carry its witness to the world. Let's welcome all dreamers with gladness and call them friends.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

- April 18, 2018 (1-2pm central)
- Title: *One Seminary's Initiative: The Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry at Western Theological Seminary*
- Presenters: Benjamin Conner + students and professors who are involved in the program
- For free registration information, go to https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bllbBS2KTJuCJn_Z6Dn05Q or <http://faithanddisability.org/events/>
- May 16, 2018 (1-2pm central)
- Title: *Ten Years/Ten Lessons: Examining the Top Ten Lessons Learned in the Development of FIN, A Regional Interfaith Networking Organization*
- Presenter: Karen Jackson, Executive Director of Faith Inclusion Network of Hampton Roads
- Description:
 - For free registration information, go to https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_zt35gcXFRNyQPqZZNh1hEQ or <http://faithanddisability.org/events/>

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