

**Summer Institute on Theology and Disability 2019**  
**Western Theological Seminary**  
**June 21-23**

**Morning and Afternoon Workshops**

**Monday, June 11: Community Day.** (See Schedule for Community Day)

- *From Longing to Belonging: Continuing the Conversation.* Shelly Christensen
- *From Longing to Belonging: Theological Education.* Sarah Barton, Ben Conner, and Carlos Thompson
- *Incomplete without You: The Church and People with Disabilities.* Erik Carter
- *From Longing to Belonging: Intellectual Disability.* Jill Harshaw,
- *From Longing to Belonging: Enjoying the Shared Language of Worship with Persons Experiencing Dementia.* Barb Newman
- *From Longing to Belonging: Mental Health Challenges.* John Swinton
- *From Longing to Belonging: Neuro-diversity.* Alex Kimmel, “The Self Determinator”

**Tuesday through Thursday (Overall Information)**

There are two rounds of workshops each day, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon, following the morning and afternoon plenary sessions. The PhD Symposium runs in all of those workshop periods. We have tried to organize the workshops so that ones connected to a similar theme are on separate days and times, so participants can make their own workshop track depending on a particular interest, e.g. inclusive worship, theology, families, etc., but we want to note that workshop subject matter will overlap. Thus, we are not designating strands. Our workshops don't fit easily in one box, as they should not. We do not have a mental health strand this year because there were not enough workshop proposals in that area.

You will note that this year we are again adding information the kind of presentation, the audiences the leader hopes to address, their use of handouts and AV, and their faith tradition background. Registrants are welcome to go to any workshop, but we hope this will give you information to decide between a lot of great workshop topics. Other than the Ph.D. Symposium, you can attend any you wish.

All workshops will be held at Western Theological Seminary's Main Building.

**Ph.D. Symposium: Devan Stahl** (Plus other faculty at times)

The Ph.D. Symposium is an opportunity for graduate students to present short presentations from their own work, receive feedback from the faculty and other graduate students, and also hear from faculty about graduate work in this area. **Participation and presentation is by approval from Hans Reinders Devan Stahl.** ( [Devan.Stahl@hc.msu.edu](mailto:Devan.Stahl@hc.msu.edu)) Hans Reinders is not present this year.

## **Tuesday Morning, May 21 (60 minutes this morning)**

- **Ph.D. Symposium:** Devan Stahl (Approval needed)
- **Incorporating Persons with Special Needs into the Worship Ministry of the Church**  
C. Trent Broussard, D. Ed. Min.  
Believing that every person in the church has been gifted by the Holy Spirit for ministry to edify the church, I will present a model of worship ministry which is accessible and inclusive of all persons. I will explore the application of best practices from education into the worship ministry of the church and advocate for not only inclusive participation in worship, but also inclusive leadership. I will suggest a church is fully discipling its members only when all of the church members are using their gifts for ministry regardless of their varying levels of ability.  
**Presenter:** Trent is a recent graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has served as the Pastor of Worship for Calvary Baptist Church in Holland, Michigan since 1996. Trent and his wife Margie have three children. Their son Andrew has autism and is fully engaged in the worship ministry of the church. Trent's doctoral thesis Incorporating Persons with Special Needs into the Worship Ministry of the Church applies the best practices of education to worship ministry.  
**Primary Audience:** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities  
**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation. Presenting from Christian perspective. Using Powerpoint
- **Marriage & Family with a Disability:** Dr. Steven Ibbotson  
Discusses how a couple works through the regular challenges of marriage & family life when one partner has physical limitations that impact traditional roles & responsibilities.  
**Presenter:** Along with teaching Marriage & Family Life at Prairie College, **Steve and his wife, Sarah** have been married for 12 years and have 3 children. Steven was born with a congenital heart condition.  
**Primary Audience:** People with Disabilities  
**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation. Presenting from Christian perspective. Using Powerpoint
- **Sam the Sinner? Cognitive Impairment and Preventive Grace:** Coralie Bridle  
In the context of The Salvation Army in New Zealand, an Irishman once patted my son, Samuel, on the head, remarking that he was the only person he had met who had not sinned. I smiled but wondered if all complexly disabled people were in receipt of a "free pass," in terms of fallen human nature? With the lyrics of the song, "I have decided to follow Jesus," as organizing motif, this paper examines the notion of sin from an Arminian perspective and preventive grace in Wesleyan thought. The paper's intention is to frame a response that neither demonizes disability nor removes persons with disability from the community of finite human beings.  
**Presenter:** Coralie Bridle is a disciple of Jesus Christ and member of The Salvation Army in New Zealand. Oncology Nursing, Palliative Care and In-service Education formed the backbone of her "out of home" career. Three adult children, one with complex disability keep her grounded amidst the complexities of modern life. Holding an MTh, Coralie is currently engaged in PhD work on disability studies, responses within The Salvation Army, and resurrection identity.  
**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities  
**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, using Powerpoint, from Christian perspective.

- **Becoming a W.I.S.E. (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive & Engaged) Faith Community for Mental Health:** Rev. Amy Petré Hill JD, M.Div.

This interactive workshop explores how to become a W.I.S.E (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) Faith Community for Mental Health. We investigate the impact mental health stigma has on faith communities and learn how eleven congregations have used a ten-step WISE process to address stigma and transform into communities of radical belonging. Although developed by the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network, the ten-step WISE process offers a roadmap any synagogue, mosque, temple, or church can follow to include individuals and families living with mental health challenges and substance use disorders into all aspects of a faith community's life.

**Presenter:** Rev. Amy Petré Hill is the Minister of Mental Health and Inclusion at Mountain View United Church in Aurora, Colorado. She brings her lived experience with mental health challenges, her former practice as a disability rights attorney, and her experience as a psychiatric hospital chaplain to her ministry. Amy serves on the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network board, leads interfaith support groups at Aurora Mental Health, and volunteers as a NAMI group facilitator.

**Primary Audience (s):** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An interactive workshop. Christian perspective. WISE began as a Christian program but is applicable to any faith community. Using Powerpoint

- **Empowering Leaders from the inside Out:** Daniel Aaron Harris

Being in ministry for 15+ years and living alone in downtown Memphis with Cerebral Palsy has helped Daniel think about doing ministry in very creative ways. Living by the 4 simple truths that we are all created, connected, called and Commissioned, Daniel can not only be the leader in his neighborhood but help others to pursue their dreams and vision for vocation.

**Presenter:** Daniel is 38, lives in downtown Memphis where he has ministered to his neighbors for 15+ years as a community chaplain. Daniel also helps bring a spirit of empowerment to people regardless of ability, thorough painting, writing children's books and speaking at various places. He uses his Cerebral Palsy as medium in order to minister the Gospel. Daniel has just received his master's of ministry with hopes of getting his doctorate.

**Primary Audience (s):** Clergy/Religious Professionals, People with Disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint, Christian perspective

## **Tuesday Afternoon, (3:30-4:30)**

- **Ph.D. Symposium** (continued)

- **Practical Applications to the Sacraments:** Robert Furtado, M Ed.

Last year there was a revision to the guidelines for celebration of the sacraments with persons with disabilities. the presentation would examine best practices for each sacrament encompassing a full range of disabilities.

**Presenter:** I was born blind which lead me into a life of advocacy and to learn techniques which allowed accessibility to the world. I have a Master's degree in Educational Technology. My background in teaching has inspired me to ensure the Church could become a place for people to worship, learn and grow in their faith. Archdiocese of Detroit.

**Primary Audience:** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities.

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, An interactive workshop. Presenting from Christian perspective. Powerpoint.

- **Transgender, Disability, and Biomedicine in the Image of God:** Max Thornton

This workshop focuses on the theological concept of the image of God from the perspective of transgender and disabled experiences of medicalization. How do the uses of biomedical technologies of gender and disability

reflect and reinforce certain narrow understandings of what it means to be human? How can constructive theological anthropology expand these horizons and promote uses of biomedicine that center trans and disabled people? I will present my research in lecture format, and then turn to an open-ended discussion in which many experiences and perspectives will be invited to help expand the conversation.

**Presenter:** **Max Thornton** is a PhD candidate in Theological and Philosophical Studies in Religion at Drew University. His work focuses on the intersections of transgender, disability, technology, and religion.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities. Presenting from Christian and Jewish perspectives

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint.

- **You Can Be BRAVE - Part 2.** Dr. Jennifer Camota Luebke & Christopher Luebke Antonio E. Contreras,

What is it like to pursue (dis)ABILITY inclusion in Christian primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions? How does one family wrestle with the tension of faith-based schools where the attitudes of people and the organizational structures are biased towards exclusion? This is a follow up presentation to the award-winning documentary film *You Can Be BRAVE* that was screened at the 2018 Summer Institute. Hear how one family has struggled to stay faithful in their efforts to change the narrative of the cliff of adulthood into a launching pad towards the orbit of inclusive communities, not just for their son, but also for other transition-aged adults who have different abilities. BRAVE stands for Bold and Relentless Action towards a Vision of Equity for people of all abilities.

**Presenter (s):** **Antonio Contreras** is an intern for Congressman Ro Khanna, an aspiring actor and model, a three-point specialist, a student at Ohlone Community College in California, and a Best Buddies ambassador.

**Dr. Jennifer Camota Luebke** works at the intersection of (dis)ABILITY advocacy, education, and business, Jennifer is the co-founder and CEO of Ability Revolution, Inc., a not-for-profit organization that advances inclusion for people of all abilities in workplaces, schools, and communities. **Christopher Luebke** is a special education teacher and department chair, Christopher is the co-founder and board chair of Ability Revolution, Inc. He manages an inclusion scholarship program for post-secondary education.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint.

- **Radical Hospitality and Faith Inclusion: Lessons from St. Benedict.**

Rev. Dr. Robert Slocum

The Rule of St. Benedict urges openness to encountering Christ's presence in daily life. The first word in the Rule is "Listen". A visitor to Benedict's community is to be welcomed as Christ himself. This is not just a grudging duty, but an opportunity to find Christ in the other. This presentation applies the Rule of St. Benedict for the practice of radical hospitality and welcome, to encourage full church participation by people with disabilities. We will describe inclusion attempts, the journey of disability attitudes, and recommendations for authentic inclusion of people with disabilities in their faith communities.

**Presenter:** The **Rev. Dr. Robert Slocum** is an Episcopal priest with doctorates in systematic theology, ministry, and law. He is Narrative Medicine Program Coordinator at the University of Kentucky HealthCare.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint, Christian perspective

## **Respite and the Accessible Church: God commands both...**

Shelley Neal, BEd; MEd; Debbie Sutherland, BA, Associate Degree Autism and Behavioral Sciences

Families affected by disability have a 92% divorce rate. These families are part of the body of Christ and need to be in a church community. They need support and respite. Supporting the family will ensure that their needs are met spiritually providing them with hope to move forward through the hard times. Providing respite holistically gives everyone in the family an opportunity to breathe; to take an evening off and just enjoy. The parents get a date, the siblings get rare 1:1 time with a buddy chosen for them; the child with special needs get to have a play date. All the families recognize that they are part of a caring community and they are not alone. We are the hands and feet of Christ to these families. Learn why respite is vital to the family's survival and how to set up a respite program within your church. Learn how to present accessibility and inclusion to church communities ensuring a successful outcome. It is biblical...

**Presenter (s): Shelley Neal** –Shelley was a Special Education Teacher with Toronto District School Board for 36 years. Her work has focused on teaching children with multiple disabilities. Her work has included a secondment at Bloorview School Authority in order to work with children with severe medical and physical needs. She is currently the Director of Programs at CE Academy (a private school for children with special needs). She is the co-founder of rEcess Kingsway program and Heartstone Ministries. Shelley's training includes a B.A in Sociology, B.Ed in Primary/Junior, B.Ed in Special Programs and an M.Ed in Curriculum Development. **Debbie Sutherland** has worked for 13 years as an Education Assistant providing Intensive Support for Children with Moderate to Severe Medical/Physical Needs at Bloorview School Authority; a section 68 school located in Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Center. Debbie's training includes a BA in English, a grad certificate in Autism and Behavioral Sciences, Educational Assistant Diploma and is continuing her studies at Ryerson University studying Disability Studies and Not for Profit Management. Her passion for working with these families can be attributed to being the child of a parent with disabilities. She is the co-founder of the rEcess Kingsway program and Heartstone Ministries.

**Primary Audience (s):** Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, an interactive workshop, using Powerpoint. Christian perspective

## **Wednesday Morning, May 22 (Note, 2 presentations in some of these 75-minute sessions)**

- **Ph.D. Symposium: Devan Stahl**

- **Including Nonverbal/Limited Verbal Members at Church** Lenae Crandall

**Lenae** has taken her expertise in teaching non/limited verbal individuals and their family members how to effectively learn and communicate and put these strategies into a free online resource. The website is specifically designed to show how to incorporate these proven strategies in religious settings. The presentation will explain how to successfully implement the strategies found on this website. A demonstration of the online resources will be provided as well as training videos.

**Presenter:** Lenae is a certified special education teacher who over the past ten years has primarily focused on teaching non/limited verbal individuals and their family members how to effectively learn and communicate. She is certified in Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) and has traveled the world teaching this method.

**Primary Audience (s):** Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An interactive workshop, using Powerpoint, Christian perspective

**And**

### **Spirituality in the Context of Nonverbal Autism: Methodological Considerations when Working with People who are Nonverbal.** Ms. Karenne Hills

Researching people with nonverbal autism poses obvious barriers, therefore consideration of strategies to allow for non-conventional expression are vital when working with these people. Currently, there is no research that

explores the lived experience of people with nonverbal autism from their own perspective. This presentation represents the methodological considerations, findings and recommendations from a Ph.D. study titled "Spirituality in the Context of Nonverbal Autism". The specific strategies implemented throughout the research process designed to address particular practical, methodological and ethical challenges such as authenticity, intellectual capacity, informed consent, facilitator influence and conversational idiosyncrasies are outlined. An exploration of the analyzed data which points to a unique type of spirituality for people previously considered severely intellectually impaired is also discussed. As working with people who do not use spoken language necessitates the use of some type of communication device, a brief response to the current debate surrounding certain types of assisted communication is included. This study has demonstrated that with researcher flexibility, a methodology that provides people who are nonverbal meaningful and collaborative participation in the research process is not only possible, but greatly beneficial in learning more about the lived reality of these people.

**Presenter: Ms. Karenne Hills** is a senior lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at Christian Heritage College. She also runs a private practice focused on supporting students with specialized learning abilities to be successful in post school educational and employment opportunities. She is currently awaiting final grading for her Ph.D. thesis titled "The spiritual experiences of people with non-verbal autism", which she undertook at Griffith University. Karenne 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, alternative learning opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, social justice, sustainability and creation care.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities. Presenting from Christian viewpoint, but inclusive of all.

**Format:** An academic lecture/presentation

- **"My child is a part of me": Embodied interconnection among maternal caregivers.**

Laura MacGregor, PhD (Cand.)

Mothers raising children with developmental delays as well as communication challenges often describe a deep sense of interconnection with their child that enhances their ability to interpret their child's needs. The proposed workshop will share the results of a qualitative study exploring mothers' descriptions of maternal-child embodied interconnection. The emerging data from this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge, particularly in the field of caregiving, that describes porous, interconnected, and profoundly relational bodies. Mothers' stories will be considered with respect to the pastoral care of caregivers embedded in relationships where the boundaries between bodies and experiences become blurred.

**Presenter: Laura MacGregor** is a part-time instructor and doctoral candidate at Martin Luther University College/Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research and teaching interests focus on the lived-experiences of maternal caregivers raising children with complex disabilities, an interest that emerges from her experience parenting her son, Matthew. Laura earned a B.Sc (1990) and M.Sc. (1993) in the health sciences before pursuing a M.A. (2011) exploring the spiritual journeys of parents raising medically fragile children.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, using Powerpoint, Christian perspective

And

**Embodied Faith and Intellectual and Psychiatric Disability** Kate Finley,

Prominent philosophical theories of faith hold that it requires, or is partially constituted by, belief – where belief is an attitude towards a proposition or mental representation. Problematically, these theories struggle to account for the robust faith of some people with intellectual and/or psychiatric disabilities. I draw on research in Embodied Cognition – which proposes that bodily states (including those involved in perception, motor feedback, and interoception) play a robust and direct role in our cognition – to sketch a more embodied account of religious belief and faith. This account can better account for the faith of some with intellectual and/or psychiatric disabilities.

**Presenter: Kate Finley** earned her PhD in philosophy from Notre Dame, and is currently an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Hope College. She works on topics in philosophy of religion, and philosophy of mind and cognitive science. She has personally dealt with psychiatric disability, and has spent significant time in ministry and relationship with teenagers and young adults with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, clergy, lay practitioners,

**Format:** An academic lecture/presentation, using Powerpoint, presenting from Christian perspective

- **Reimagining Healing: Ideas from Christian Theology and Disability Studies**

David Gayes, Sarah Jean Barton, Bethany McKinney Fox

In many contexts, but particularly in churches, the concept of "healing" in relation to people with disabilities has led to some really "unhealing" ideas and practices. Are there ways to conceptualize healing that might be liberative for people with disabilities, and therefore for everyone? We think so, and in an effort to frame these, we will examine healing from three vantage points: a Christian sacramental focus, a Gospel-centered approach to healing in the way of Jesus, and a framework that emerges out of social justice and disability studies. For each focus we will answer: what does it mean for a person to be healed?

**Presenter (s): David Gayes** is a Roman Catholic and disability rights advocate. His work on theology and disability has been featured in the Journal of Disability and Religion. David's goal is to bridge the gap between theologians and the church and the perspectives and lived experiences of people with disabilities and unite them in their common values of societal belonging and disability justice. David has been a proud participant in SITD since 2012. **Sarah Jean Barton** is a Henri Nouwen Faculty Fellow at Western Theological Seminary. She teaches courses at the intersections of disability, trauma, and theology. Sarah is also a licensed and registered occupational therapist with seven years of clinical experience. Sarah has a Doctor of Theology and Master of Theological Studies from Duke Divinity School. Her academic interests include liturgical theology, theological anthropology, and participatory research in collaboration with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. **Bethany McKinney Fox** (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) runs the Access Services Office and is adjunct professor of Christian ethics at Fuller. Her new book *Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic Healing in the Gospels and the Church* (IVP Academic) examines how Jesus' healing in the Gospels, too often used in ways that wound people with disabilities, might point a way toward real healing and mutual thriving. Dr. Fox is founder and pastor of Beloved Everybody Church, a church startup where people with and without intellectual disabilities lead and participate together.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, A presentation, An interactive workshop. Christian perspective.

- **Theology and Practice - Building Inclusive Faith Communities from the Inside (reflections from a recent qualitative study)** Justin Radstake

As part of a recent research study Justin learned from the experiences of several lead pastors within specific Pentecostal churches in Canada about how pastors understand their role in journeying with people with IDD and their family members. This presentation will draw from these experiences to discuss why understanding and addressing a community's specific theological understanding of disability may impact each community's practical inclusion of people within their community, and will reflect on some ideas on how practitioners, students, lay leaders and service providers might leverage that understanding to advocate for inclusive practice within local communities.

**Presenter: Justin** is currently completing his MA in Theology, Public Faith and Spirituality at Martin Luther University College (Wilfrid Laurier University), in Waterloo, Ontario. Justin also currently works with Christian Horizons as Manager of Quality Assurance, and seeks to advocate for inclusive communities of belonging as a licensed minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC). Justin is married, and has two wonderful boys, who are 5 and 10 years old.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities



**Format:** A presentation, suggesting a presentation based on both academic work and personal perspectives, with some discussion / interaction. Christianity, Research conducted within a specific Christian tradition in Canada; leveraging these experiences to apply to other faith communities  
Using Powerpoint.

And

**"Special Needs," and Service: Faith Community Leader Perceptions on Including Children with Disabilities.** Jared Stewart-Ginsburg, M.Ed.,

This presentation will begin by leading discussion on the importance of fostering supports in faith communities and the role of faith community leaders in inclusion, before sharing results from a mixed-methods study that investigated the perceptions of faith community leaders on including children with disabilities. The presentation centers around two outcomes: understanding the experiences, knowledge, and attitudes that this study found faith community leaders hold in including children with disabilities, and engaging partnership-building capacity in supporting faith community leaders and children with disabilities in faith communities.

**Presenter:** Jared Stewart-Ginsburg is a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte studying inclusion in faith communities. A former public school teacher, current faith community staff member, avid hiker, and mediocre theologian, he began an inclusive multisensory worship service before starting in the doctoral program to help faith community leaders empower friends of all abilities.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities, includes several faith traditions.

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint.

- **What If the Blind Want to be Ministers and Theology Professors?**

Ray W. McAllister, PhD

Part of my dissertation on blindness in the Hebrew Bible concerned blindness and social justice matters. I will spring-board from this to sharing my own story struggling with seeking employment and respect in ministry and theological academia. I will share new developments to make it easier to succeed in these fields when blind, and I will share the limitations, many of which, are social.

**Presenter:** I am the first totally blind person to earn a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible. In 2016 I shared the first prize Jacob Bolotin Award from the National Federation of the Blind for helping make Biblical language texts accessible to the blind. I teach some distance education courses, but I also am self-employed as a licensed massage therapist.

**Primary Audience (s):** My presentation will be good for all groups named above. Scholars can know how to not put a stumbling block before the blind. (Lev 19:14) Parents can know how to encourage the blind on their journeys. People with disabilities can know how to follow their dreams and the wisdom of learning a trade while waiting for opportunities.

**Format:** I plan to present for 45-50 minutes and take questions for the rest of the time. While I am a practicing Christian, the text I'm starting with, from Leviticus 19:14, would be excellent for Jews, and Muslims do respect the Hebrew Bible. I come from a Christian background, but I've found that my struggles are common among all religions, and I invite people from all religious backgrounds to attend and dialog with me.

## Wednesday Afternoon,

- **Ph.D. Symposium continues. Devan Stahl**
- **Interactive Worship Service Planning** Lida Merrill, M.Th. and Lynn Swedberg, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA

The process of developing worship services that are interactive and inclusive is easier to talk about than to impellent! The presenter will share what she has learned from planning an annual interactive Ash Wednesday



service that is inclusive of all and builds community. Attendees will work together to creatively develop a worship service liturgy that is interactive and inclusive.

**Presenter: Lida Merrill** serves as the Director of Faith Community Inclusion at Heritage Christian Services. She leads a team that focuses on walking with people with DD/ID as they develop meaningful relationships and valued social roles in their faith communities or other communities of interest. They provide faith-sensitive cultural competency training to direct care staff, and teach inclusion best practices to faith communities. Lida has a master of theology degree from Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College. **Lynn Swedberg** is consultant and newsletter editor for the DisAbility Ministries Committee of the United Methodist Church and an occupational therapist and chapel volunteer with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her passion is facilitating accessibility and inclusion in faith communities and religious camps. She is a native of Spokane, Washington. Lynn serves on her church's Inclusivity Committee and is vice-chair of Access 4 All Spokane. She is a Deaconess, a certified Lay Servant/ Lay Speaker, and is finishing paperwork for certification in Disability Ministries. She also serves on the Committee on Older Adult Ministries on the conference and national level.

**Format:** An interactive workshop

**Primary Audience:** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers. Presenting from Christian perspective.

- **A Theology of Autism & Disabilities through the Lens of St. Augustine**

Professor Ron Sandison, M. Div.

Ron Sandison, a theologian with autism formulates a theology of autism, neurodiversity, and disabilities through the lens of St. Augustine of Hippo. St. Augustine was the most prolific writer of the fourth century Latin Church Fathers with over a million words of his still in print. Ron examines St. Augustine's writings *The City of God*, *On Christian Doctrine*, and *Confessions* developing an orthopraxy response for inclusion and empowering individuals with autism and other disabilities to grow in faith. Sandison has a published book *Thought, Choice, Action on St. Augustine*.

**Presenter: Ron Sandison** works full time in the medical field and is a professor of theology at Destiny School of Ministry. Sandison has a Master of Divinity from Oral Roberts University and is the author of *A Parent's Guide to Autism: Practical Advice. Biblical Wisdom* published by Charisma House and *Thought, Choice, Action*. He has memorized over 10,000 Scriptures including 22 complete books of the New Testament. He speaks at over 70 events a year. Ron and his wife, Kristen, reside in Rochester Hills, MI.

**Primary Audience:** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation using Powerpoint. Presenting from Christian perspective.

- **Using Video Modeling and a System of Least Prompts to Teach People with Intellectual Disability to Participate in Faith Communities** Victoria Slocum, PhD

There is a lack of empirical studies using evidence-based practices to teach people with intellectual disability (ID) the skills necessary for meaningful participation in faith community activities. The purpose of this study was to examine the use of evidence-based practices in teaching people with ID to participate in a community activity. This study consisted of a multiple probe across behaviors design to analyze the effect of video modeling and a system of least prompts on participation in faith communities for people with ID. The experimental design was replicated across participants and settings in different faith communities.

**Presenter: Dr. Victoria Slocum** holds a Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of Kentucky. Her present research focus is the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in their faith communities. As Director of Academic Accessibility Resources at Asbury University, Dr. Slocum serves as a disability subject matter expert, coordinates appropriate accommodations for students in the classroom, and the use of facilities in order to provide equal access to educational opportunities.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, A presentation, using Powerpoint. Christian and Jewish perspectives.

- **How The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Is Supporting Members with Disabilities** Dr. Cade Charlton, Mary Woodruff and Katie E. Steed, M.S.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has multiple programs, policies and strategies to support members with disabilities. Some of these efforts will be shared in this presentation. Ideas of how to implement them in other faith communities will also be discussed. Procedures used to support members with disabilities that will be presented include: job training, missionary opportunities for members with disabilities, activity programs for adults with disabilities, accessible formats of church curriculum, articles in church magazines, disability.lds.org, teacher training, First Presidency Statement, advisory groups, policies for service dogs and food allergies in church settings.

**Presenters:** **Cade** is a professor of Special Education at Brigham Young University. His research interest focusses on how organizations collaborate effectively with one another to achieve success. He is currently studying how effective collaboration works in faith settings. **Mary** is a grad student majoring in Special Education. Her thesis focuses on preparing missionaries to teach individuals with intellectual disabilities the gospel message. **Katie** is the Disability Specialist Manager for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She focusses on developing solutions to reach members with disabilities to feel included in the Church community. Discover God's plan for them. Make the gospel more accessible and to feel inspired to grow.

**Primary Audience:** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities. From Christian perspective.

**Format:** Presentation with Powerpoint

- **Understanding and Responding to Ableist Oppression: Allyships and Belonging in Faith Communities** Thomas N. Murphy

This workshop is situated within the conversation about moving from inclusion to a deeper sense of belonging in faith communities. The workshop engages resonant anti-racism literature to invite participants to consider ability privilege and its role in the systemic nature of oppression against those who differ from societal norms of ability. Additionally, the workshop explores productive steps towards action against this ableist oppression, primarily considering allyships that celebrate a broad range of human difference and help foster communities of genuine belonging. The workshop will introduce these themes and engage workshop participants in a conversational unfolding of their implications.

**Presenter: Thomas N. Murphy** is a PhD student at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. His scholarly interests are at the intersection of disabilities studies, theology, and religious education. His research is driven by gratitude to his friends from L'Arche, with whom he has been fortunate to live and work alongside for many years in the L'Arche Boston North

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities. Christian perspective.

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint

## **Thursday Morning, May 23**

- **Ph.D. Symposium. Devan Stahl**

- **The Interface of African Culture, Traditional Religion, and Disability: Implications for Pastoral Care Ministry in West Africa.** Reverend Olutayo Stephen Shodipo

People with disability are part of the human society. In fact, disability is defined by culture and, in some contexts, also by religious communities within society. Consequently, without the awareness and understanding of how people perceive disability in a cultural and religious context like Africa, a pastoral care ministry does not stand much chance of being useful and relevant. This is because Africans' understanding of and attitudes towards the inclusion of persons with disability are often set within a religio-cultural worldview.

**Presenter: Olutayo Stephen Shodipo** is a Nigerian Baptist Minister with years of experience in ministry and in services with people with disabilities.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities. Presenting as Christian but also focusing on African traditional religion.

**Format:** Presentation, with Powerpoint.

and

**Double-Hospitality: A Holistic Approach for the Church to Welcome People with Disabilities by Learning from Luke 10:25-37** - Rev. Helen A. Setyoputri, M. A.,

Learning from the parable of a good Samaritan, the presentation proposes an “open church” in the Indonesian context, which welcomes people with disabilities. Such an ecclesiology operates in two ways. Firstly, the good Samaritan who sees a wounded man and helps him by sacrificing his time, energy, and money, demonstrates the willingness of the church to engage with public space which often expresses harsh rejection towards people with disabilities. Secondly, the innkeeper who welcomes the wounded man teaches the church to be an open house for all (pandocheion). Both ways help Indonesian churches create double-hospitality ministries in befriending people with disabilities.

**Presenter: Helen Setyoputri** has a Bachelor’s degree: Faculty of Theology at Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2004) and a Master’s degree (Special Education): College of Education at the University of Arizona, USA (2017). She has participated in an ecumenical cooperation in Depok, Indonesia (2015), the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) and World Mission Conference of Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in Tanzania, Africa (2018), and the 6th International Conference on Information and Education Technology (ICIET) in Osaka, Japan (2018).

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint, Christian perspective

- **"I Don't Deserve This!" How Special-Needs Families Are Susceptible to The Prosperity Gospel Message and How to Recognize Its Influence and Overcome Its Deception.**

Sandra Peoples

"I don't deserve this!" is expressed by many parents when they hear a special-needs diagnosis for their child. But this idea of reward and punishment is a belief held by the prosperity gospel movement. It is not the message we see in the Bible. I will share how special-needs families are susceptible to the prosperity gospel message and how to recognize its influence and overcome its deception.

**Presenter: Sandra Peoples** (M. Div.) is the author of *Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities of Life in a Special-Needs Family*. She has the unique perspective of being both a special-needs sibling and a parent. Sandra and her family live outside of Houston, TX where her husband is a pastor. You can connect with her at [sandrapeoples.com](http://sandrapeoples.com)

**Primary Audience (s):** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation using Powerpoint and discussion. Christian perspective

- **Twenty-Five Years after \*The Disabled God\*: Confronting Ableism, Transforming Religious Symbols** Dr. Rebecca F. Spurrier

Twenty-five years after the publication of *\*The Disabled God\**, Nancy Eiesland’s imperative to engage in the work of transforming religious symbols in light of disability experience within religious contexts remains as important as it was at then. This workshop offers insights and challenges from one community’s efforts to engage the symbol “One Body/Unity” differently in light of a theology of access and invites group participants to reflect together on symbols that are being transformed or need to be transformed within liturgical or ritual contexts in which they participate.

**Presenter: Dr. Rebecca F. Spurrier** is Associate Dean for Worship Life and Assistant Professor of Worship at Columbia Theological Seminary. Engaging ethnographic theology and disability studies, her research explores the hope of human interdependence and the importance of liturgical access for religious practice and Christian community. She integrates a focus on disability studies and liturgical theology in the classroom with the formation of worship leaders through daily chapel services.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An interactive workshop, using Powerpoint. From Christian perspective

and

### **Disability Theology or Theology of Disability?** Stephen Bedard

Is there a difference between disability theology and a theology of disability? Disability theology could be thought of in the context of black, liberation and feminist theology, written by insiders about their own experience. A theology of disability could be done by people with or without disabilities, simply as reflection on this topic. This presentation will argue there is a role for both in this conversation.

**Presenter: Stephen Bedard** is a pastor in St Catharine's, Ontario, Canada. He has written on the area of disabilities and faith with a focus on autism. In addition to having two children with autism, Stephen is also on the spectrum.

**Primary Audience:** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, People with Disabilities. Presenting from Christian perspective.

**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture with Powerpoint

- **Advanced Illness Care and Persons with Disabilities** -Margaret Peterson, PhD

Advanced illness care (including palliative care, hospice, and advance care planning) is rooted in a growing awareness that the high-tech medical interventions that can be life-saving in the context of acute illness are often inconsistent with the goals and values of persons who are chronically ill and/or nearing the end of life. At the same time, members of historically underserved communities (LGBT+ individuals, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities) may be understandably suspicious of approaches to care that seem to encourage doing "less." How can Christians understand and navigate these issues in ways that honor the dignity of persons with disabilities?

**Presenter: Margaret Kim Peterson** is Professor of Theology and Psychology at Eastern University in Saint David's, PA, and a member of the Interfaith and Diversity Workgroup of the Coalition to Transform Advanced Care (C-TAC). Her interests in advanced illness and palliative care are grounded in her experiences of spousal caregiving with her first husband, who died of AIDS in 1995, and her second husband, a wheelchair user who died in 2016 of osteomyelitis secondary to paraplegia.

**Primary Audience:** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A discussion/conversation. Christian perspective. Using Powerpoint

- **Faith & Vulnerability: Principles of Care** Joe Landis

Over the last half-century, care paradigms for persons with intellectual disabilities and autism have evolved dramatically and the future promises to be no different. This workshop shows how faith and vulnerability have been key to the provision of care and engagement in the community at 3 critical junctures during that time in the presenters' life: in the 70's when he began, in 1999 when founding a new organization, and 2017 upon retiring. Using a world café approach, this workshop will invite participants to dialogue about faith and vulnerability as key principles for provision of care and engagement in the future.

**Presenter: Joe Landis** is the former CEO of two organizations serving individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism, rooted in the Anabaptist faith, one of which he founded. The heart of both agencies is to care for mind, body and spirit and create opportunities for belonging. After working 40 years in the field, he retired in 2017 and started a consulting business focusing on guiding non-profit start-ups and facilitating belonging.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint. Presenter is Mennonite but presentation applies to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim contexts.

**And**

**From Workers to Witnesses: Accompanying People with Impairments as Christian Vocation.** Jason Greig,

For those of us who accompany persons with cognitive impairments – particularly in the context of secular service provision – there is a tendency to categorize us as “workers.” While these terms are meant to signal the “professional” aspect of being with persons, they can too easily cohere with the commodification of labor embedded within a neoliberal, consumer society. What if we approached accompanying persons rather as “witness,” seeking to give society a sign that friendship is truly possible with persons many believe to be at the fringes of humanity? Might this lens not only be a more mutual way of encountering persons, but also transform our vision of “work” or “labor” itself?

**Presenter:** I recently graduated with a PhD from the Free University of Amsterdam in theology and ethics, and accompany people with cognitive impairments. I live in Kitchener with my wife and two boys.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, An interactive workshop, A discussion/conversation. Christian background.

## Thursday Afternoon

- **Ph.D. Symposium (continued)**
- **Disability, Theology, and Ministry in India and Zambia:**  
Discussion with Bishop Patrick Chisanga, Zambia and Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, India Following Morning Plenary. Participants will have the opportunity to engage the speakers with questions and participate in a discussion about their work and trends in inclusive ministries in India and Zambia.
- **Theology and Disability: Affirmation Undermined by Shadow Narrative**  
Anne Masters, MA, FAAIDD  
Despite creedal affirmations and good intentions, faith communities still struggle to live as a community of interdependent people, where persons with disabilities feel a true sense of belonging. Understanding our past can help us change the future. My own historical study in the US Catholic Church reveals a deeply affirming theology on disability, whose bright light continues to be eclipsed by a persistent shadow narrative. How can the shadow be brought into the light, and thus extinguished? While I will be speaking from a Catholic perspective, I look forward to conversation partners from other faiths. We can all learn from each other.  
**Presenter: Anne Masters, M.A., FAAIDD** is particularly interested in the intersections of disability, culture, theology and Christian charity. She is the Director of Pastoral Ministry with Persons with Disabilities for the Archdiocese of Newark; a member of the Council on I/DD for the National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities (NCPD); a past president of AAIDD Religion & Spirituality Interest Group, and a PhD student in Theology at Vrei University, Amsterdam.  
**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Christian perspective  
**Format:** An academic/scholarly lecture, using Powerpoint
- **Sunday School Teacher Training** - Cade Charlton & Mary Woodruff

Being called as a Sunday school teacher is an exciting and overwhelming opportunity. These feelings can increase as teachers work with individuals with disabilities without direct formal training on how to effectively do so. This workshop will review the impact specific teaching skill instruction, accompanied with coaching, has on improving Sunday teachers' skills in working with students with disabilities. Workshop attendees will learn how to evaluate the teaching skills of teachers and use effective training procedures to enhance the teaching quality for members of their congregation.

**Presenter (s): Cade** is a professor of Special Education at Brigham Young University. His research interest focuses on how organizations collaborate effectively with one another to achieve success. He is currently studying how effective collaboration works in faith settings. Mary is a grad student majoring in Special Education at Brigham Young University. Her thesis focuses on supporting lay Sunday school teachers with teaching strategies that promote belonging.

**Primary Audience (s):** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** A presentation, A discussion/conversation, using Powerpoint, Christian perspective

- **Aberdeen's Friendship House: The Challenges of Starting an Equitable Community**  
**Topher Endress**

In 2018, the University of Aberdeen launched a community for students and adults with intellectual disabilities where each person is equally valued. This community is rooted in a theological belief in the worth of ability diversity and a suspicion of a world which says we must constantly 'improve' ourselves. As a founding fellow in the Friendship House, I will explore both the divergent ethics of the university system compared to the Friendship House and the unique logistical challenges of building an inclusive community.

**Presenter: Topher Endress** is a former minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), most recently serving a congregation in Austin, TX before moving to Scotland. He began his Ph.D. in Practical Theology in March, 2018, and is writing on constructive disabled ecclesiology (re-imagining what it means to gather and worship in light of a more diverse expression of human embodiment). Topher enjoys running, tennis, college basketball, and long hikes with his wife.

**Primary Audience (s):** Scholars, People with Disabilities, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** Presentation, using Powerpoint, from Christian perspective.

- **Holding Space: Disability Culture and Identity in Faith Communities:** Catherine Webb

As more faith communities become aware of access needs, it is increasingly important to consider how disability culture and identity also are vital to creating communities of belonging. This workshop will define and explore disability culture and identity from a Disability Studies perspective and provide attendees with an opportunity to discuss how the infusion of disability culture and identity is beneficial to faith communities. The presenter will use her own experiences of participating in disability culture and building a disability identity to help provide context.

**Presenter:** Catherine Webb is a Ph.D. candidate in Disability Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago and holds a M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology. Ms. Webb's current line of research explores the training religious leaders receive about including people with disabilities in their faith communities.

**Primary Audience (s):** Clergy/Religious Professionals, Lay Practitioners and volunteers, Families, friends, and advocates of people with disabilities

**Format:** An interactive workshop, using Powerpoint