

# **Thirsty for Belonging: Teens & Adults with Disabilities**

APCE Workshop 210; January 25, 2024



Welcome! This workshop will open the window into the lived experience of people with disabilities. We hope by the end of our time together, you will learn to listen to people with disabilities in your community and discover new patterns of relationships. We hope you will be better equipped to walk beside people of all abilities who are navigating the transition from being teens to living as adults in our faith communities.

Your workshop leaders are all members of the Presbyterians for Disability Concerns (PDC) Leadership Team. We are volunteers who advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of the church. We are excited to be at APCE, making our experience and resources available to you and your congregations. At the end of this document you'll find links to PDC websites, resources, and leader bios.

**GOAL:** To equip congregational leaders to walk beside us as we navigate the transition from being teens to living as adults in our faith communities.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Participants will view one of the healing stories of Jesus through the lens of disability theology. (John 9) They will note new patterns of relationships in the text.
2. Participants will listen to the experiences of people with disabilities in faith communities. They will choose one conversation practice to learn to listen better.
3. Participants will consider "Best Practices" for belonging in congregations, and identify 3 barriers within their local congregation.
4. Small group time: Leaders from Presbyterians for Disability Concerns will facilitate conversations about implementing "best practices" in participants' local congregation.
5. Participants will identify appropriate support for transitions toward communities of belonging.

# Thirsty for Belonging: Teens & Adults with Disabilities

## Part I Relationships of Belonging: Listening to Scripture & Self-Advocates

- A. Welcome & Introductions
- B. Lectio Divina      John 9:1-12      *Hunter Steinitz*  
Listening to scripture through a Disability Theology lens
- C. Belonging Interviews: Experiences of Disability in our Faith Communities:  
Quinna, Joel, Josh  
*Hunter Steinitz, Marijo Hockley, Joanne Van Sant*

12-minute break:      Resource Table; Questions on Easel

## Part II Your church: Best Practices, Barriers, Support for Transitions

- D. Best Practices for Belonging in Congregations  
*Marijo Hockley, Joanne Van Sant*
- E. Erik Carter's "Belonging Circle"      *Evelyn McMullen*
- F. Small Group Conversations:  
Implementing Best Practices & Identifying Barriers  
*Marijo, Hunter, Joanne, Evelyn*
- G. Identifying Support for Transitions toward Communities of Belonging  
*Joanne Van Sant, Hunter Steinitz*

## Links to Presbyterians for Disability Concerns Resources:

[Presbyterian Mission Agency Presbyterians for Disability Concerns | PHEWA | Presbyterian Mission Agency](#)

PDC Blog: [Presbyterians For Disability Concerns \(wordpress.com\)](#)

PDC Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/PresbyteriansForDisabilityConcerns>

## Meet Your Workshop Leaders

Hunter Steinitz, MDiv

Hunter is the Moderator of PDC. She's a Candidate for Ordination and a Ruling Elder at Riverview Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. She is also a contributor to the Presbyterian Outlook and a disability liberation theologian. Hunter is the oldest woman in the United States with her rare genetic skin condition, and she advocates for the diverse beauty of all beloved children made in the Image of God.

Evelyn McMullen, MACE, DEdMin

Evelyn comes to disability ministry through her 40 years of experience as a Certified Christian Educator. In the Tampa Bay area, Evelyn helped church leaders of a variety of denominations learn to weave people of all abilities into the fabric of congregational life. She has now closed her nonprofit, Bright Threads Ministries, and retired to Greensboro, NC, to be closer to family. She is enjoying building relationships with a new network of inclusive ministries.

Marijo Hockley, MDiv

Marijo serves as Secretary of PDC. Her path to ministry began with working with older adults with disabilities, helping them remain in their own homes as long as possible. After seminary, she served as an inclusion ministry coordinator with high school students with cognitive disabilities and older adults through a mentor and work-study program. Currently, Marijo serves as Community Life Coordinator for New Life Presbyterian Church in Sterling, MI. Marijo's goal for ministry is to demonstrate and encourage all God's children to actively serve God by sharing every individual's unique and important spiritual gifts.

Joanne Van Sant, MDiv, DMin.

Joanne's role on PDC includes representing the team on the newly-formed Disability Ministry Network, where she serves as secretary. Joanne is the Pastor of Friends to Friends Community Church in New Jersey, a PC(USA) and RCA congregation. This is a community of Christians open to all but with a particular focus on including people with developmental and physical disabilities. They offer an ecumenical contemporary worship to bring the richness of our faith to all who attend. <https://www.friendstofriendsc.org/>

## **APCE Partner Denominations' Disability Ministry Links:**

Christian Reformed Church in NA + Reformed Church of America = THRIVE

- \*[About Us | Disability Access | Christian Reformed Church \(crcna.org\)](#)
- \*[Everybody Belongs, Serving Together | Disability Access | Christian Reformed Church \(crcna.org\)](#)
- \*[Accessibility and Disability Concerns | Reformed Church in America \(rca.org\)](#)
- \*[Beyond Accessibility: Involving Young Adults So That Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves | Reformed Church in America \(rca.org\)](#)

Presbyterian Church in Canada

- \*[Opening Doors to People with Diverse Abilities](#)

Presbyterian Church (USA)

- \*[Presbyterian Mission Agency Presbyterians for Disability Concerns | PHEWA | Presbyterian Mission Agency](#)
- \*[Presbyterian Mission Agency Disability Concerns Consultants | PHEWA | Presbyterian Mission Agency](#)
- \*PDC Blog: <https://presbyteriansfordisabilityconcerns.wordpress.com/>
- \*PDC Facebook: [PDC Facebook page](#)
- \*[Presbyterian Mission Agency Disability Inclusion Toolkit | Office of Christian Formation | Presbyterian Mission Agency](#)

Quicksheets:

Speaking Words that Welcome,  
Creating Sacred Spaces (Physical Access, Accommodations, and Supports)  
Being the Body of Christ (Social Access)  
Guiding with Intentionality (Policies, Forms, and Planning)  
Resource Roadmap (annotated with links)

## **Disability Ministry resources from other denominations/networks:**

[Access Sunday | United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries \(uccdm.org\)](#)  
[Disability Ministries of the United Methodist Church - Accessible ministries with resources for people with disabilities, families and churches \(umcdmc.org\)](#)  
[NCPD - National Catholic Partnership on Disability |](#)

## **"Thirsty for Belonging" Suggested Resources**

### **COMMUNITIES OF BELONGING**

[Erik Carter | Belonging | Psalm 67 \(3/4/2022\) - YouTube](#)

[Webinar: Inclusive Religious Education - Collaborative on Faith and Disability](#)

Carter, Erik W. *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, and Congregations*. Paul H Brookes Publishing Co., 2007

Conner, Benjamin T. *Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities*. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.

### **DISABILITY THEOLOGY**

Conner, Benjamin T. *Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness: Exploring Missiology Through the Lens of Disability Studies*. Intervarsity Press, 2018

Eisland, Nancy L. *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Abingdon Press, 1994

Fox, Bethany McKinney. *Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic Healing in the Gospels and the Church*. Intervarsity Press., 2019

Gaventa, William C. *Disability and Spirituality: Recovering Wholeness*. Baylor University Press, 2018

Reynolds, Thomas. *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*. Brazos Press, 2008

Swinton, John. *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship*. Baylor University Press, 2016

### **VOICES: THIRSTY FOR BELONGING**

Becker, Amy Julia. *A Good and Perfect Gift: Faith, Expectations, and a Little Girl Named Penny*. Bethany House Publishers, 2011

Gottlieb, Daniel. *Letters to Sam: A Grandfather's Lessons on Love, Loss, and the Gifts of Life*. Sterling Publishers, 2006

Leichtweisz, Jessica and Aidan Allman-Cooper. *This is Autism*. 2020. [This is Autism: Leichtweisz, Jessica, Allman-Cooper, Aidan: 9798674458722: Amazon.com: Books](#)

Wong, Alice. *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century*. Vintage Publishers, 2020