



Five Seminaries in Pennsylvania Awarded Mini-grants for Educational Projects in Ministries with People with Disabilities and their Families

Five seminaries in Pennsylvania have been awarded mini-grants by the Faith Community Leadership Project to enhance skills of seminarians in inclusive ministries through trial educational opportunities as part of the seminary curriculum. Grants ranged from \$2750 to \$5000. The projects will be completed by the end of 2011. Funding for the Faith Community Leadership Project comes from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.

The seminaries are: Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield; Evangelical Theological Seminary, Myerstown; Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg; Palmer Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; and Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Philadelphia.

A summary of their respective projects follows:

1. Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield.

An experiential, hands-on learning opportunity, with readings, preparation and follow-up, through providing partial scholarships for six seminary students to work as volunteers at the one week Joni and Friends Family Retreat in Pennsylvania. Each participant for credit will be asked to complete pre-retreat and post-retreat assignments. These will include a reflection paper detailing their experiences with families affected by disability to date and a paper detailing what they have learned and how they hope to apply it in their current and future ministry settings. Contact: Jerry Borton (jborton@joniandfriends.org)

2. Evangelical Theological Seminary, Myerstown.

A semester long course in the fall of 2011. Many of their students are already working in congregations, so the course will include projects that can begin in those congregations. Two related goals are to develop a data base of regional ministries and services and to continue development of online educational opportunities to help their curriculum be more accessible to pastors and others, including people with disabilities, who cannot easily travel to the campus. Contact: Dr. Michael Sigman, President (msigman@evangelical.edu)

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3. Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

Participation by one or more faculty members in the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability, followed by planning for faculty retreat in the early fall with afternoon of discussion on ways that issues related to disability can be addressed by all of the disciplines at the seminary and included in courses. Contact: Dr. Leonard Hummel (lhummel@lts.edu)

4. Palmer Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

2011 fall course that will include presentations and dialogue with faculty from other theological disciplines, outside speakers, videos, experiential learning, readings, and development of project model for ministry. Focus on theological, Biblical, and ethical foundations for inclusive and welcoming ministries. Contact: Chancellor Christopher Hall (chall@eastern.edu) and/or Dr. Ira Frazier. (Dr.Ifrazier@gmail.com)

5. Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Philadelphia

A two-day mini-course involving readings, presentations, people with disabilities and their families, both for current students and rabbis in Philadelphia region. The course is developed as a trial way of meeting proposed competencies on inclusion and disability that will be part of the competencies for all graduating seniors. Presentations videotaped for use by others. Contact: Rabbi Judith Abrahamson (rabbijabrahamson@aol.com.)

For more information on resources and strategies for inclusion of issues and resources related to disability and theology in seminary curricula, contact Bill Gaventa, Project Director, at bill.gaventa@umdnj.edu or 732-235-9304.

For information on the 2011 Institute on Theology and Disability, July 18-22, download a brochure from http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/projects/Pennsylvania_Faith.html

For downloadable audio files and other resources from the 2010 Summer Institute or a CD (\$10) with all of those resources, go to http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/products/Product_FaithBased.html

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