



Addressing Disability Issues and Opportunities in Clinical Pastoral Education: A Pennsylvania Project

Background

The Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council has awarded a two year grant to The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities in New Jersey for a project in “Faith Community Leadership.” It is headed by Rev. Bill Gaventa, Director of Community and Congregational Supports at The Boggs Center, with the assistance of Rev. Alice Walsh, a new Supervisor in Training at The Boggs Center.

One component of our project proposal allows both time and resources to work with CPE programs in Pennsylvania on strategies to address, integrate, and/or strengthen the ways that disability issues and training opportunities are part our your curriculum and training. We recognize that most CPE programs are not in disability settings, but also know that many people with disabilities, both life-long and acquired, are served by your programs and students. Those include pastoral care at times of diagnosis or injury, coping with grief and end of life issues for people with developmental disabilities (especially for agency staff and families), inclusive and supportive ministries in congregations, ethical issues around quality of life, and more. We also recognize that CPE programs often have full agenda and didactic plates, so to speak, so consider this an inquiry and an offer.

Possibilities, Opportunities and Resources

First, we’d love to hear about the ways you already include issues related to disabilities in your training? Those kinds of ideas and strategies can be shared with others. We are also contacting seminaries in Pennsylvania to find out the same, and to offer assistance where appropriate.

Second, the following are some of the possible ways that Rev. Gaventa and Rev. Walsh can work with you:

1. Organize and provide a didactic seminar in consultation with your program goals and with help from other resources in Pennsylvania, perhaps close to you. Those could relate to pastoral care issues, inclusive ministries, ethics, grief and loss issues as experienced by people with developmental disabilities, pastoral care strategies in a life time perspective, or others. Alice Walsh brings rich resources to this option as a new SIT and as a parent of a young man with Asperger’s. A project advisory board in Pennsylvania will help locate other good resource speakers. There are also excellent video and bibliographic resources. Our

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hope would be that we could help do this in a way that provides you with the resources and contacts to repeat it in the future without our involvement (the grant runs for two years).

2. Assistance with finding other speakers and appropriate reading resources.
3. Suggesting resources for your CPE library. Note the listing of resources related to grief and end of life issues for adults with developmental disabilities included, and the list of a number of new and excellent books in theology and ministry. We also have two Boggs Center publications, one on brain injury and another on autism, which we would be happy to provide to your library and students.
4. Assisting in exploration of new training options with area agencies who serve and support people with disabilities and their families.
5. Assisting with a continuing education workshop for area clergy or others in this area. If you know denominational groups who sponsor continuing education events for clergy, the project enables us to help provide resources and speakers for conferences or workshops organized by other networks.

This list is meant to stimulate possible dialogue and collaborative work. We look forward to the opportunity to talk with you, and find out more about what your program is already doing, and might like to do.

For more information, contact Rev. Bill Gaventa, 732-235-9304 or bill.gaventa@umdnj.edu or Rev. Alice Walsh, 732-235-9314. alice.walsh@umdnj.edu

FYI, a number of excellent new resources that have been published in the last two years:

Sharon Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*. Fortress Press, 2007.

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

Stephanie Hubach. *Same Lake, Different Boat: Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability* P&R Publishing. 2006

Tom Reynolds *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* Brazos Press. (March, 2008)

Hans Reinders. *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology and Ethics*. Eerdmans Publishing. (February, 2008)

Amos Yong. *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* Baylor University Press. 2007

Frances Young. *Brokenness and Blessing: Toward a Christian Spirituality*. Baker Publishing.

For a wider list of resources, see *On the Road to Congregational Inclusion. Dimensions of Faith and Congregational Ministries with Persons with Developmental Disabilities and their Families*. New Brunswick: The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, UMDNJ. (PDF version available at <http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/products>.)