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## **Faith Community Leadership in Inclusive Ministries: A PA Project Ideas for Individuals with Disabilities, their Families, and Disability Organizations**

### **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, also a parent, at The Boggs Center. A Project Advisory Board made up of Pennsylvania representatives will work with The Boggs Center, and a listserv for sharing ideas, information, and training resources is being established for anyone in Pennsylvania who is interested in the project.

The project is working through four strategies in developing, strengthening, and providing training opportunities for clergy and congregational leaders:

1. Collaboration with seminaries and other training programs for congregational leaders at colleges or universities
2. Collaboration with Clinical Pastoral Education programs.
3. Collaboration with faith networks and their own continuing education programs
4. Collaboration with individuals, families, and provider agencies working with congregations and clergy.

Our core beliefs are (1) that people with disabilities and their families have much to give, and to receive, from faith communities of their choice and tradition, and (2) that clergy, congregational leaders, and congregations have increasing opportunities and resources to develop inclusive ministries that can make a huge difference in the lives of individuals, families, and, indeed, the whole congregation.

### **Individuals and Families**

The project recognizes that many individuals and families are already involved with their own congregation and/or have worked to help their congregations become more inclusive. If you would like to be part of the statewide listserv to share what you are doing, learn from others, and share ideas and resources, please email Elizabeth Ong, at [ongel@umdnj.edu](mailto:ongel@umdnj.edu) and ask to be on the [FCLPADDC@umdnj.edu](mailto:FCLPADDC@umdnj.edu). (Faith Community Leadership Pennsylvania DD Council)

If you are interested in resources or materials to share with your clergy or other congregational leaders, see some of the resources listed on the next page and feel free to contact the project staff, Rev. Bill Gaventa or Rev. Alice Walsh.

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*A University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service*

## Provider Agencies and Advocacy Networks

Likewise, this project recognizes that many provider and advocacy organizations may have already begun or sponsored creative training opportunities and collaborative projects with clergy and congregational leaders. The listserv is also open to you.

If you are interested in developing strategies or educational and training opportunities for clergy and congregational leaders in your area, and would like assistance, please feel free to contact Rev. Bill Gaventa or Rev. Alice Walsh.

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

- 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 (A Pennsylvania author!)
- 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.
- Sharon Betcher. *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement*. Fortress Press, 2007.

**The book by Erik Carter, in particular, is one that is written for individuals with disabilities, families and staff from provider agencies.**

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.umdj.edu/boggscenter/products>.)

We have the following resources quickly and easily available electronically and/or hard copy:

- **Beginning Ministries**. A one page list of ideas and resources
- **Ten Strategies for Provider Organizations and Networks**.
- **Resources in Spiritual Supports** from national advocacy and human service organizations.
- **Autism and Faith: A Journey into Community**. A 52 pp. resource booklet for congregations and a wider resource listing in autism and religion resources. Now on The Boggs Center website.
- **Brain Injury: When the Call Comes. A Congregational Resource**. 36 pp. booklet from The Boggs Center. Also on The Boggs Center Website.

For more information, contact Rev. Bill Gaventa, 732-235-9304 or [bill.gaventa@umdj.edu](mailto:bill.gaventa@umdj.edu) or Rev. Alice Walsh, 732-235-9314. [alice.walsh@umdj.edu](mailto:alice.walsh@umdj.edu) . To be added to the Faith Community Listserv, email Beth Ong at [ongel@umdj.edu](mailto:ongel@umdj.edu) .

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