

DOVETAIL

A Publication of Peaceful Living

Volume 5 Issue 2 Fall 2008

Peaceful Living Mission: Creating Belonging for Persons with Disabilities Within the Faith Community

The Sign Says, “Everybody Welcome!” Is it *really* so?

By Ella Roush
Dovetail Contributor

Today’s faith leaders want members and potential members to see their religious community as welcoming. They know that the message they have to share must have willing listeners to be heard. Faith communities must grow and attract younger members to remain viable. Friendliness ranks high on the list of qualities many worship centers seek to achieve or maintain. Signs often proclaim, “Everybody Welcome!” But if we dig deeper, what do our actions (or our inaction) toward people with disabilities and their families *really* say?

More Than 1 in 10 People Live with a Disability

To be fair, many faith leaders are unaware of the prevalence of often-invisible disabilities among their current members and the broader community. If your membership reflects the community at large, you can expect that 12% of your members are living with a disability. Some congregations have installed wheelchair ramps and feel they are now friendly to people with disabilities. The ramp marks a wonderful beginning, but *truly* welcoming people with disabilities and their families requires more of us.

Families Too Exhausted to Ask for Help

Faith leaders legitimately may ask why these families have not spoken up for what they need. While some families try to do so, others are simply too exhausted from fighting the system on a daily basis on behalf of their loved one or themselves, that they simply don’t have the energy left to work to educate their church community about their needs. Some don’t feel they deserve special treatment from their religious home. It would be difficult to overstate the sense of isolation and alienation some families feel.

Peaceful Living Bridges the Gap

Peaceful Living’s congregational coaching program can bridge the gap between church leadership and families who desperately need the support and belonging that an active, informed congregation can

provide. Some faith communities are taking positive steps to assure that the welcome sign resonates with people with disabilities and their families. Read on to see how Covenant Community Fellowship and Rockhill Mennonite Church are increasing sensitivity toward and inclusion for people with disabilities.



Peaceful Living

Creating belonging for persons with disabilities within a faith community.

Join Us to Learn More!

A Conference
For Faith Leaders:

*Honoring a Place in
Faith Communities for People with
Disabilities and Their Families*

**An Action-Oriented Workshop
Filled with Tips, Tools & Wisdom**

Saturday, September 13, 2008

7:00 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. Clergy Breakfast

8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Workshops

Host Location: Salford Mennonite Church
480 Groff’s Mill Road, Harleysville, PA 19438

**Register at www.peacefulliving.org
Or call 610-287-1200**

See reverse for conference details

**Register Today!
Space is Limited**

Congregations Take Action To Understand the Experience of Disability

Recently, Peaceful Living helped two congregations, Covenant Community Fellowship in Lansdale and Rockhill Mennonite Church in Telford, gain some sense of what it is like to live with a disability.



Lori Detweiler (at table, right), assists a friend at Covenant Community Fellowship during a meal where attendees simulated having disabilities. Photo by Joe Landis

As attendees entered the churches, a member of each family was assigned a disability and the props that helped them imagine what it would be like. Some were given crutches; others had an arm bound; others were blindfolded to simulate blindness. Throughout the service and the meal that followed, individuals maintained their temporary disability.

During the meal, individuals with “disabilities” found that they had to ask for help, which caused them to feel some awkwardness. Sara Hoover, one of the Covenant youth who was assigned a broken leg, said, “It’s never happened to me. It made you think about how people with disabilities can’t do everyday things. After awhile, it was annoying, like I wanted to fend for myself. People can definitely be frustrated by not being able to take care of themselves.”

Jody Freed, another of the youth at Covenant, said, “It was actually kind of cool though. It gave me just a slight picture of how it is to be a little different and how awkward and insecure it can make you feel. And that was only after keeping my disability for 30 minutes. I can’t imagine dealing with it for a lifetime.”

Peaceful Living Conference

Honoring a Place in Faith Communities for People with Disabilities and Their Families

Agenda - Saturday, September 13, 2008

Speaker Bios and Workshop Descriptions

For a Complete Listing of Workshop Descriptions and Speaker Bios, visit www.peacefulliving.com

6:30-10:00 a.m.	Registration & Continental Breakfast
7:00-8:15 a.m.	Clergy Breakfast Topic: Disability and Pastoral Care - Dr. Richard Steele
8:30-9:45 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies Christopher Dock Choir Keynote Address: The Enabling Congregation Dr. Richard Steele
9:45-10:00 a.m.	Break
10:00-11:00 a.m.	Workshops
Workshop A	Rekindling the Spirit of Direct Care-Bill Gaventa
Workshop B	Sarah Goes to College - Sarah Steele and Marilyn Hair (via remote connection)
Workshop C	From Client to Citizen - Derrick Dufresne
Workshop D	Going Beyond the Pastor to the Rest of the Church - Carl Yusavitz
Workshop E	Loving Kim: Watching Our Designer God at Work – Paul Miller and Kim Miller
Workshop G	Healing Community in an Over-Stimulated World – Paul Leichty
Workshop H	Finding a Place in the Congregation – Elizabeth Howes
Workshop J	What to Say to a Person in a Wheelchair - Marilyn Kriebel
11:00-11:15 a.m.	Break
11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Workshops
Workshop F	Problems of Caring in an Over-Corporatized, Consumerized Service System - Bill Gaventa
Workshop L	For Fathers Only – Rick Steele
Workshop M	From Client to Citizen - Derrick Dufresne
Workshop N	When Life Takes an Unexpected Turn – Mark Garis
Workshop P	Where to Turn When a Child with a Disability Is Born - MARC
Workshop Q	Blessed Is the Meadow-Barbara Shisler
Workshop R	Rejoicing Spirits
Workshop S	Starting & Continuing a Successful Special Needs Bible Study Program – Friendship Ministries
12:30-1:00 p.m.	Call to Action & Closing

Derrick Dufresne – Senior Partner, Community Resource Alliance; CEO, Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities, St. Louis, MO. Visit craconferences.com and instituteonline.org. Based upon the premise that all people are entitled to a meaningful life, Derrick's workshop, *From Client to Citizen*, answers important questions... What strategies can providers use to help individuals with developmental disabilities build opportunities and competencies to be full members of the community? What role can the faith community play? This workshop will explore a radical understanding of self-determination and person-centered support.

Bill Gaventa, M.Div. – Associate Professor and Director, The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; Co-editor of the Journal of Religion, Disability, and Health; Columnist for Insight, the national newsletter for the ArcUSA. Visit rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/. Bill's workshop, *Rekindling the Spirit of Direct Care*, recognizes that in the everyday world of individuals with disabilities, we are often overwhelmed by the day-to-day and immediate needs of the individual. This workshop will focus on cultivating a deeper spiritual relationship between caregiver and individual and will describe ways to enhance that relationship.

MARC – Serves more than 900 children in the Early Intervention program per year and 2,400 families who need advocacy services for a family member with a disability; membership of 1,500. The Arc works to better the lives of people with mental retardation and other developmental needs. Visit marcpa.org. MARC's workshop, *Where to Turn When a Child with a Disability Is Born*, will share tips, tools, and resources for the family or congregation that is new to the world of developmental disabilities.

Richard Steele, Ph.D. – Seattle Pacific University, Professor of Moral and Historical Theology and father of a daughter with a disability; author of (among numerous books and articles) a book chapter, *Five Things I'd Like a Youth Minister to Know about Disabilities*. The workshop, *For Fathers Only*, will create space for fathers to openly discuss their feelings and will offer father-to-father tips and wisdom on nurturing themselves and their families.

Registration Form (Deadline: September 3, 2008)

Name _____	Title _____
Congregation _____	Email Address _____
Mailing Address _____	City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone Number _____	Fax Number _____

Please select your top two choices for both workshop sessions (indicate the letters used on the agenda on the left):

10:00 a.m. Workshop	11:15 a.m. Workshop
1st choice _____	1st choice _____
2nd choice _____	2nd choice _____

Signing requested - We will be happy to secure signing throughout the conference provided we receive the request no later than August 27.

Check here if you would like a certificate of participation for this conference.

I plan to attend the clergy breakfast.

Feel free to copy this form for additional registrants. Download copies of this registration brochure at www.peacefulliving.org, or register on-line.

Please remit registration form with check in the amount of \$25 for each Saturday attendee to: Peaceful Living, 850 Old Skippack Rd., Box 130, Lederach, PA 19450.

Scholarships are available if needed.