

People with Disabilities  
are Indispensable

REV. SCOTT LICHT AND MONA FUERSTENAU  
LUTHERANS FOR LIFE  
LIFE WEEK CONFERENCE  
2021

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Indispensable  
1 Corinthians 12:18-22

- But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.
- If all were a single member, where would the body be?
- As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.
- The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
- On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

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Marginalized by disability

- Blind
- Deaf
- Physical disability
- Recovering veterans - missing limbs, PTSD, TBI
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Mental illness

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John 9

<sup>1</sup> As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, **but that the works of God might be displayed in him.** <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

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Not just about healing stories....

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Exodus 3:10-4:16  
God Calls

- Come
- I will be with you
- Lays out plan
- Object lessons showing God will give him the necessary tools
- I know you, I made you. Go, I will help you.
- God gives Moses a helper because he CHOSE Moses.

Moses "buts"

- Moses: *But who am I?*
- Moses: *But what do I say?*
- Moses: *But they won't believe me*
- Moses: *But I am slow of speech*
- Moses: *Send someone else*

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Breakout rooms – 5 minutes

- What assumptions or biases do you have about people with disabilities?
  
- What is needed to make a shift?

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It's all about meeting the basic need of Belonging

- Research by Dr. Erik W. Carter - Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, Nashville
- Outcomes from 500 families
- Ten essential dimensions of Belonging
  
- Belonging is not something granted by the host but a feeling on the part of the guest

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Dimensions of Belonging

• Present	• Supported
• Invited	• Cared for
• Welcomed	• Befriended
• Known	• Needed
• Accepted	• Loved

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**Present**

- Disconnected within community
- Disconnected from workplace
- Disconnected from friendship
- If no one but you is there to represent your identity or cohort, it will not feel like a place for you.
- Who is represented?
- Seeking connection

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**Invited**

- Specifically asked
- Intentional
- Personal
- more than 9/10 unchurched said they would come to church if they were invited by someone they know
- BUT ONLY IF, they had heard you talk about your church, and you had previously invited

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**Welcomed**

- Introduce yourself
- Invite to share about self
- Connect to someone
- It's not enough that the signs or the mugs or the bulletins say "All are welcome"
- Each person is approached with a "we are so glad you are here" attitude

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**Known**

- Ask questions
- Remember the answers!
- Seek to find points of connection
- What's your name?
- What or who brought you here today?
- What felt good/resonated with you?

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**Accepted**

- We are all God's children
- Part of the Body of Christ
- Difference is created by Creator
- Unconditional positive regard for each person
- We've been waiting for YOU
- You are just what we need

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**Supported**

- Ask about visible support needs
- How did we do?
- Any barriers to participation?
- How can we support your family?
- Please describe your experience
- What can we do for the next time you come?

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**Cared For**

- Authentic
- Active
- Reciprocal
- Noticed when there
- Missed when gone
- Follow up to check in
- Genuine concern

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**Befriended**

- After the benediction
- Outside the walls
- The other 6 ½ days of the week
- Remember Invited?
- Remember Known?
- Active

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**Needed**

- Recognize worth
- Gifts identified
- Given a role
- Missed when absent
- Incomplete without you
- Gaps or holes in our community
- Early ask, engage when ready
- Follow up

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Loved

- Genuine sense of family
- In for the long haul
- We've got you
- Because of whose you are
- They may not have any other
- Everything else is transitory
- No matter what
- Not in spite of what you've done

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Serve  
1 Peter 4:10

- Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

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Breakout rooms – 10 minutes

- What are you doing well?
- What can you do better?
  
- Return and report

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Outreach opportunities, Sources and Resources Handout

- State and national organizations
- Dr. Erik Carter
- Senator Ben Sasse
- Mona Fuerstenau MLFuerstenau@gmail.com
- Web page links to disability resources of LCMS, NALC, ELCA

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