

THE 2012
SPECIAL
NEEDS
MINISTRY
WEB
SUMMIT
MAGAZINE



INCLUSION FUSION

a key ministry event

Presented in partnership with...



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“Why”...our theme for Inclusion Fusion 2012

For me, the “why” came back in the late 1990’s, after an Elder Board meeting in which Libby Peterson spoke about the church’s efforts to support families from the church who had adopted kids from Eastern Europe with very complicated emotional, behavioral and developmental disorders.

I went back to my practice and discovered that the majority of the patients we were serving were unable to do something that me and my family took for granted...the ability to be part of a caring church family on Sunday morning. Ten years ago, between services on Christmas Eve, Key Ministry was formed so that there would be “a church for every child.”

Thanks for joining us for our Second Annual Inclusion Fusion Special Needs Ministry Web Summit, produced in partnership with our friends at Pajama Conference.

Ten years ago, I would not have imagined us being able to offer a conference with the incredible speakers and resources we can offer this week. As I write, I’ve had the ability to view the majority of the presentations, and I can assure you that whether you’re a pastor, a church staff member, a volunteer or a parent, you’ll be incredibly blessed.

I’d also encourage you to do something with the stuff you learn and the people you connect with this week. We do this so that folks with different passions and leadership roles can connect and work together so that families everywhere impacted by disabilities, either visible or hidden, can finally join their larger family in Christ.

Game ON!

Stephen Grcevich, MD
Program Chair, Inclusion Fusion
Key Ministry

2012 Inclusion Fusion Program Committee..

Shannon Dingle
Providence Baptist Church
Raleigh, NC

Barb Dittrich
SNAPPIN Ministries
Oconomowoc, WI

Harmony Hensley
Key Ministry
Cincinnati, OH

Aaron Scheffler
Mark 2 Ministries
Indianapolis, IN

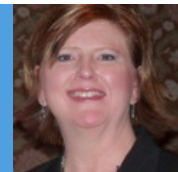
Katie Wetherbee
Key Ministry
Chagrin Falls, OH

Mike Woods
Special Friends Ministry
First Baptist Orlando
Orlando, FL



Key Ministry provides free training, consultation, resources and support to help churches connect with kids impacted by disabilities and their families

Join us at 9:00 PM Eastern for nightly Tweetchats During Inclusion Fusion!



What is a Tweetchat?

What's a Tweetchat you ask? Barb Ditrach (our Tweetchat hostess) is happy to explain the process...

Like to connect with others? Ask questions and get immediate answers? Find new, helpful links on the web? Then TweetChat is for YOU!

While it may seem daunting to those unfamiliar, this real-time group conversation is a fabulous, easy tool. Here's how it works. First, you must have a Twitter account established. If you don't already have one, simply go to Twitter.com and set your account up at no cost. Once you have your Twitter account set up, you are ready to go to your preferred chat (in our case, #inclusionfusion12 Chat) at the designated time. To attend the chat, simply go to <http://tweetchat.com/room/inclusionfusion12>. You will be prompted through an easy three-step process.

When you click "Sign In", you will then be asked to "Authorize an Application" through your Twitter account. To attend, you will have to click the blue "Authorize App" button.

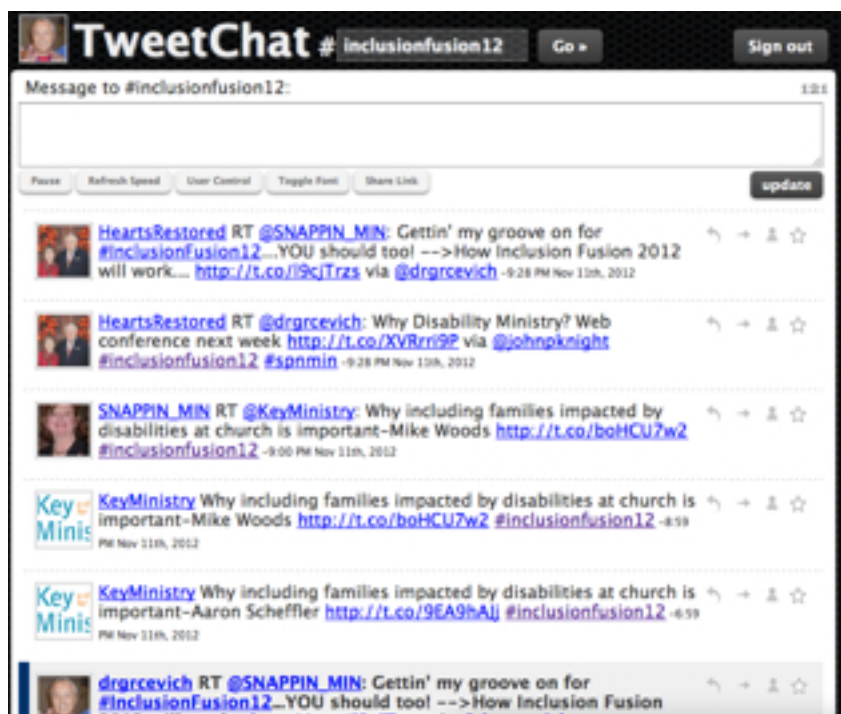
Once you have done so, merely type in the "Hashtag" or name of your chat that you wish to attend at the top of

the page, and click go. In our case, type in inclusionfusion12. Now you're in the chat room! But you're not finished yet.

To keep most current with the conversation, go to the upper left hand side of the screen and click on "Refresh Speed". Slide the tab down to 5 seconds. This will keep you up-to-date with the scrolling conversation.

Remember, just like on Twitter, you are limited to only so many spaces for your comments...in this case 120. You do not need to write in #inclusionfusion12 after every post. Merely being in the chat room will add that to each of your posts. Of course, if this is too complicated for you, a person can always follow the conversation on regular Twitter by typing in that #inclusionfusion12 in your searches. This will avail you of much of the conversation. However, there is nothing like being in that TweetChat room with the live, scrolling conversation that you need not continually refresh. The discussions with people who share a common passion or interest from anywhere in the world is truly amazing!

I pray that you find this information helpful to you! I encourage you to try this out prior to **our first chat on November 12th at 9:00 PM EST**. We look forward to chatting with you and all of the participants in the Inclusion Fusion Special Needs Ministry Web Summit every night at 9:00 PM during this year's Web Summit!



Inclusion Fusion 2012 Live Chat Schedule

Mon 11/12	Tue 11/13	Wed 11/14	Thu 11/15	Fri 11/16
9 – 10 Mike Woods Live Chat	9 – 10 Matthew Stanford Live Chat	9 – 10 Marie Kuck Live Chat		
10 – 11 Mike and Penny Hanlon Live Chat	10 – 11 Bryan Roe Live Chat		10 – 11 Cindi Ferrini Live Chat	
11 – 12p Harmony Hensley Live Chat	11 – 12p Rhett Smith Live Chat	11 – 12p Amy Dolan Live Chat		11 – 12p Gillian Marchenko live chat
12p – 1p Rebecca Hamilton Live Chat	12p – 1p Katie Wetherbee Live Chat	12p – 1p Nella Uitvlugt Live Chat	12p – 1p Jolene Philo Live Chat	
	1p – 2p Aaron Scheffler Live Chat	1p – 2p Libby Peterson Live Chat	1p – 2p Aaron Scheffler Live Chat	1p – 2p Mike Beates Live Chat
2p – 3p Ryan Wolfe Live Chat	2p – 3p Amy Jacober Live Chat	2p – 3p Cara Daily Live Chat		2p – 3p Jim Hukill Live Chat
			3p – 4p Ann Holmes Live Chat	
4p – 5p Colleen Swindoll Live Chat	4p – 5p Jeff Davidson Live Chat	4p – 5p John Knight Live Chat		
6p – 7p Jeff McNair Live Chat				

Live Chat Schedule

Look to the bottom right of your screen to chat at any time while viewing presentations during Inclusion Fusion

Interact With Our Faculty...

Inclusion Fusion faculty have agreed to be available at designated times to chat with conference registrants... schedule is subject to change- updates will be posted here daily:

<http://wp.me/Pd3Cx-qe>

Monday, November 12:

- 9:00 AM-10:00 AM: Mike Woods
- 10:00 AM-11:00 AM: Mike and Penny Hanlon
- 11:00 AM-12:00 PM: Harmony Hensley
- 12:00 PM-1:00 PM: Rebecca Hamilton
- 2:00 PM-3:00 PM: Ryan Wolfe
- 4:00 PM-5:00 PM: Colleen Swindoll
- 6:00 PM-7:00 PM: Jeff McNair

Tuesday, November 13:

- 9:00 AM-10:00 AM: Matthew Stanford
- 10:00 AM-11:00 AM: Bryan Roe

Live Chat Schedule...Continued

11:00 AM-12:00 PM: Rhett Smith

12:00 PM-1:00 PM: Katie Wetherbee

1:00 PM-2:00 PM: Aaron Scheffler

2:00 PM-3:00 PM: Amy Jacober

4:00 PM-5:00 PM: Jeff Davidson

Wednesday, November 14:

9:00 AM-10:00 AM: Marie Kuck

11:00 AM-12:00 PM: Amy Dolan

12:00 PM-1:00 PM: Nella Uitvlugt

1:00 PM-2:00 PM: Libby Peterson

2:00 PM-3:00 PM: Cara Daily

4:00 PM-5:00 PM: John Knight

Thursday, November 15:

10:00 AM-11:00 AM: Cindi Ferrini

12:00 PM-1:00 PM: Jolene Philo

1:00 PM-2:00 PM: Aaron Scheffler

3:00 PM-4:00 PM: Ann Holmes

Friday, November 16:

11:00 AM-12:00 PM: Gillian Marchenko

1:00 PM-2:00 PM: Mike Beates

2:00 PM-3:00 PM: Jim Hukill

Nightly Tweetchats throughout Inclusion Fusion at 9:00 PM Eastern hosted by Barb Dittrich...for more information, [click here...](#)



Thanks to SS&G for serving as a sponsor for Inclusion Fusion 2012! SS&G provides accounting services to Key Ministry and dozens of other non-profit organizations.



Mike Beates

Joni and Friends

Disability and the Gospel

Mike Beates did an interview on his new book, ***Disability and the Gospel*** with our Inclusion Fusion team-Here's more from Mike

IF: *You discussed your experience when your daughter (Jessica) was diagnosed with a chromosomal abnormality. How has your experience as Jessica's father impacted your spiritual development? How has having Jessica impacted your family's church participation and spiritual development? Is there any advice you'd offer to other couples after raising a child with disabilities?*

MB: I often tell people that Jessica has had an earth-shaking impact on me, Mary and our children. Our appreciation for the rich grace of the Gospel deepened significantly and our faith in Christ (that is trusting, leaning heavily upon and surrendering to the goodness of God for us) was experienced at a whole new level. Jessica was born while we were serving on Young Life staff, reaching out to high school kids in Buffalo, N.Y. I was working on the presumption that God was lucky to have me "on His team." Without realizing it, my life of faith was based largely on being good and pleasing God. Then . . . our first child is born with profound disabilities . . . and life was never the same.

Looking back, Mary and I went into a free fall spiritually. "How could God do

this to us?" we asked without necessarily saying it out loud. But over the years, her quiet – indeed wordless – life spoke volumes to us about trusting God more fully. I wrote about her continuing impact recently here: <http://mikebeates.wordpress.com/2012/07/15/silent-impact/>

As far as church went, our church at the time (The Wesleyan Church of Hamburg) was a wonderful community – despite some people asking awkward questions like "Have you confessed the sins that lead to this tragic situation?" Since then, as we moved from Buffalo to Philadelphia (Lansdale Presbyterian Church), and then to Florida (with a couple of churches over 20-something years), Jessica's participation in our family life determined in strong ways where we would worship. I remember visiting a church when we dropped her off in her oversized "stroller chair" the children's worker asked, "You're not leaving her with us, are you?" Needless to say, we did not go back. But then at another church, someone approached us, got down on a knee and introduced herself to Jessica, and volunteered to take her to a children's program – we had a found a church home!

So I would give this advice to young families with children who live with disability: Ask God to lead you to an accepting church. When you visit a church, offer whatever simple instructions might be necessary to care for your child in the nursery or Children's program and see how they



More on Mike:

Short Biography

Mike is a parent of a 30 year old who lives with profound disabilities related to a chromosomal anomaly. He has served since 2000 on the International Board of Directors at Joni and Friends and is author of "Disability and the Gospel" (Crossway, 2012).

Short Message Description

The Scriptures teach (but our cultures denies) that we are all broken human beings. People with disabilities are a necessary part of the community of Christ, bringing the gift of "presence" to remind us of our desperate need of God's grace

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Facebook Address: <http://www.facebook.com/mike.beates>

respond. Are the teachable and accepting? Do they show the love of Christ to your child as much as to you? Are they willing to find ways to accommodate your family and enfold you into the congregational life? If so, thank God and settle in. Your child will have a ministry of “presence” that is hard to quantify.

IF: In the book, you state *“The church needs to reach out more effectively to those who live with disabilities.”* What are some strategies you’d recommend to congregations who want to pursue kids and adults living with disabilities with no connection to a church? Since you’ve provided a “plausible apologetic,” can you suggest a plausible methodology?

MB: THIS is a tough question. I have told people that my book, *Disability and the Gospel*, is a book that seeks to address “Why” a church should embrace those who live with disability. Many others have addressed pragmatic issues in helpful “how to” books – and they are better than I could write. But a simple answer may be this: Every family with disability is unique in their needs and in the gifts they bring. If a church seeks to enter this vital area of ministry, they should start with those whom God brings to them. Learn ways to help. Never say, “Call us if we can help.” Rather, suggest ways to help – in fact, better yet, tell a family “We will come over on such-and-such a day. Then we can learn how we might be able to serve you and walk with you.” Show up! Learn as you walk together. Then God will expand your reach. As soon as families learn they are welcome and your church will take a risk, learn and grow, more and more families will come. And your church will be blessed!

IF: I liked your statement that *“A successful measure of disability effectiveness in a local church would be that it would not need to have a disability ministry.”* How

might that be accomplished?

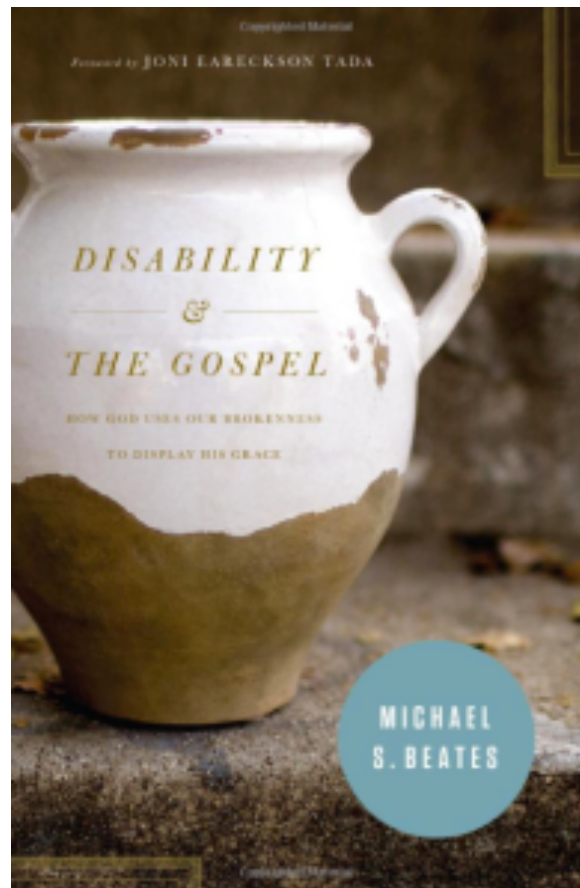
MB: A sub-text of my thesis in the book is that we are all broken people. As we embrace that idea, as we see ourselves as “disabled” (whether spiritually, emotionally, or more outwardly physically), we can better walk with those who live more openly with disability. When this happens, brokenness becomes the norm, not the exception.

Now, I also recognize that some situations require special accommodation. I was speaking with someone recently who said a family in their church was struggling with how to enfold a family whose autistic child was so disruptive that the entire worshipping body was distracted. I remember times when my Jessica would become upset, cry, even scream, at times when it was necessary to find another setting for her (at least for a while). We knew we were in the right church when brothers and sisters in Christ would

follow us out of the sanctuary and offer to stroll with her so we could return to and benefit from worship.

Such situations will always require special accommodation – we treat some weaker members with special modesty and care (see Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 12). But as much as possible, we seek to bring all people into worship, under the means of grace of preaching and sacrament – God will speak to all in ways only the Holy Spirit will know.

Mike’s book, *Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace* is available for the Kindle at Amazon.com, and is also available in paperback through many fine retailers.





Ben Conner

Young Life Capernaum

Amplifying our Witness: From Inclusion to Partnership

Ben discussed his new book, Amplifying Our Witness while preparing for Inclusion Fusion 2012

IF: *In your book, you make a connection between the doctrine of election and the importance of pursuing relationships with kids who have disabilities. What strategies would you recommend to churches seeking to pursue kids with developmental disabilities and their families?*

BC: I was reading books written by John Elder Robison, a well known self-advocate for people with Asperger's when I noticed that his solution to the problem of being disconnected was to make yourself more "choosable". For him, this meant to discern emotions and proper responses outside of feelings. To learn when sarcasm might be used even if he can't pick up on it. To avoid certain verbal responses to situations even if they seem merited. His plan worked for him, but is not feasible for many of the kids I work with who don't share his intellectual capacity. Instead, I suggest, these kids need to be chosen as friends. In order to choose them as friends, people from our churches need to be where they are. So my strategy is to go where kids with developmental disabilities gather or are gathered: Buddy sports programs, help out at a local school, volunteer at a therapeutic horse riding facility, get

involved in Special Olympics, or even have someone from your church start a program, like an assisted art program, that supports that community. When you reach out in love to kids with developmental disabilities you will also be serving their families.

IF: *You cite the statistic that nearly 20% of youth are diagnosed with a developmental disability in emphasizing the need for inclusive ministry for teens, but much of your book focuses on the relatively small subgroup of kids with intellectual disabilities. What suggestions do you have for serving teens with developmental disabilities without intellectual disabilities? Teens with anxiety or ADHD? Teens who have been traumatized or suffer from attachment issues? Teens with Asperger's Disorder who are often very sensitive to being lumped together with kids who have intellectual disabilities?*

BC: Most of the kids who are involved in our ministry who have Asperger's without an intellectual disability are given some sort of leadership role so that they can contribute to the ministry. We will make them responsible for either an individual or some aspect of our event or program.

IF: *You claim in the book that "it is our culture that disables." What do*

More on Ben:

Short Biography

BENJAMIN T. CONNER has worked with adolescents for twenty years and currently runs a ministry to adolescents with developmental disabilities in Williamsburg, Virginia. He has taught courses at Union Presbyterian Seminary and at Memphis Theological Seminary through the Center for Youth Ministry Training and is the author of *Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities* (Eerdmans).

Short Message Description

How do we convince our churches that including kids with special need in their ministry is vital? *Amplifying our Witness* challenges congregations to take seriously the seventeen percent of adolescents with developmental disabilities by offering a practice-centered approach to ministry that accounts for their perspectives, faith responses and contribution to the church's witness.

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Website:
www.capernaumthrutheroof.com

you see as the role of the church in transforming the disabling culture?

BC: Clearly it is not culture that has given/caused the developmental disorder or intellectual disability, but it is our culture that makes it difficult for such people a place to exercise their gifts, participate in social life in meaningful ways or feel like they belong. Church youth groups are strategically placed to transform our disabling culture, beginning in the lunchroom at school. Youth groups can prepare students to befriend their peers with developmental disabilities, to share in life with them and to give kids with disabilities activities to look forward to.

IF: ***How can the church serve better serve parents and caregivers of teens with developmental disabilities? How can the church best partner with parents in promoting the spiritual development of teens with developmental disabilities?***

BC: Parents need to be heard and connected to other parents who share their particular struggles. They also need respite. Try having a regularly scheduled parents night out where the church provides a fun and spiritually meaningful time for their kids and I bet you will have a growing response.

IF: ***I liked the statement you made in the book... “The problem is not that adolescents with developmental disabilities have cognitive impairments; the problem is a lack of imagination and an incomplete understanding of prayer on my part.” What are some of the most imaginative strategies you’ve encountered for ministering effectively to youth with developmental disabilities that you weren’t able to include in the book?***

BC: Recently I have hired a Staff

Associate who has gifts in art. She has been using art to communicate things about the image of God, our interconnectedness as part of Christ’s body, our unique giftedness and contribution to the community. For example, she has a blank puzzle (you can purchase at any craft store) and she is putting images of our kids on each of the puzzle and letting each kid see themselves connected and then is giving them their piece.

The puzzle is not complete unless everyone is represented. She is also talented enough to take ideas from our group and paint an image that incorporates everyone’s input. The students play a part in creating something in an image that they imagine. She then ties our creation to the idea that we are a creation of God, created in His image. Finally, and more simply, we were talking more about being in God’s image and not letting the world “squeeze you into its mold” (Romans 12:1-2, J B Phillips). We found cross-shaped stepping stone molds at a craft store (Ben Franklin, Michaels and others) and in groups with the kids made the stepping stones together. The compound was formless until it was poured into the mold, but the cross-shaped mold gave it definition. Kids were given beautiful stones to decorate the crosses with their leaders.

The stepping stones now live outside on of our regular meeting places so the kids see them every time they come and are reminded to be shaped like Christ. I will be working on a companion book to *Amplifying Our Witness* that includes many of these ideas in detail.

IF: ***Throughout the book, you make a compelling argument for full inclusion in the church of kids with disabilities. You’re also an influential leader within Young Life Capernaum, which serves teens with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Why is there a need for Young Life***

Capernaum? Wouldn’t it be more effective to include teens and young adults with developmental disabilities into existing Young Life groups?

BC: This might sound hypocritical, given all that I have been saying so far, but sometimes it is best to have events that are “reverse mainstreamed” events and sometimes it is simply fine to have events that only partially include people with developmental disabilities for their own sake. Reverse mainstreaming means that the event prepared with the persons with developmental disabilities in mind and the typically developing peers come around them. This is most of our Capernaum events. But, sometimes, you want a wild, busy, strobe-light filled, fast-moving ministry to reach different kids—I would not want to take many of my Capernaum kids to such a club, but I see the value in them. This is why we have separate summer camping strategies with the option for taking kids with dev. dis. to typical summer camps. On another level, I love to share in Bible study and prayer with kids with disabilities and I think they should all be included in the major weekly event of our congregations, Sunday worship. At the same time, I also love to read hard-core academic theology and discuss it with friends who are much more cerebrally gifted than I—to be “included” in such a group in a significant way is simply not possible for my friends with intellectual disabilities. At the same time, their presence in the life and community of people who are our theologians is an absolute necessity. For example, I rewrote my dissertation in light of the lessons I was learning from my friends with disabilities.

Ben’s book, ***Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities*** is available through Amazon.com and other fine retailers.



Dr. Cara Daily

Daily Behavioral Health

Building Behaviors

Autism Center

Do I Have to Have Surgery to Open My Heart to Jesus?

Dr. Cara Marker Daily serves on our Key Ministry Board of Directors and was pursuing a career as an up and coming investigator at several prestigious academic medical centers when she left academia to launch a center where she could incorporate Biblically-based principles to evidence-based treatments for children with autism spectrum disorders. Cara's presentation for Inclusion Fusion 2012 will be *Do I Have to Have Surgery to Open My Heart to Jesus?* In her interview, Cara will discuss how to present the Gospel to children with autism.

Philadelphia and postdoctoral fellowship at The Children's Hospital at The Cleveland Clinic.

Dr. Daily is a member of the Department of Pediatrics at Fairview Hospital, the American Psychological Association, the Ohio Psychological Association, and the Christian Association of Psychological Studies. Her specialty is in the consultation, assessment, and treatment of children with autism spectrum disorders

Cara is a licensed Pediatric Psychologist and owner of Daily Behavioral Health. She is also the founder and executive director of the Building Behaviors Autism Center at Inner Health Ministries Child Center. She received her Ph.D. in School Psychology at the University of South Carolina, and completed her pediatric psychology internship at the Children's Hospital of

More on Cara:
Website Address:
<http://www.dailybh.com>
Other contact address:
<http://www.buildingbehaviorscenter.org>

Thanks to Fresh Concepts for their sponsorship of Inclusion Fusion! 2012!
Fresh Concepts developed the new Key Ministry Website along with www.freerespite.com

For Social Skills Classes
or 1:1 sessions

Inner Health Ministries Child Center
proudly presents:

Building Behaviors

a behavioral-based treatment program for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Disruptive Behavior Disorders & other special needs



<p>Summer Treatment Program</p> <p>Each summer, we offer our Building Behaviors Day Treatment Program, which is a specialized behavioral-based treatment program.</p> <p>You'll learn about following directions, stress and anger management, social skills and daily living skills in a week long "adventure" program.</p>	<p>Workshops</p> <p>Monthly classes focused on teaching behavior modification and the basic principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) are available for professionals, schools, churches, and parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADHD and other special needs.</p>	<p>Autism Clinic</p> <p>Free or reduced cost Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)/Discrete Trial Training (DTT) services are offered through our weekly autism clinic. An individualized and based DTT program is created after a comprehensive assessment. This program can be used to provide services in the home and in the school.</p>
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Jeff Davidson

Rising Above Ministries

Cookeville, TN



“Two-Gether”

In putting together Inclusion Fusion, our team very much enjoys the opportunity to connect with other individuals or ministries sharing our passion for including kids with disabilities and their families in the life of the local church. **Jeff Davidson** certainly falls into that category.

Jeff is the Founder and CEO of [Rising Above Ministries](#), a pastor and communicator- a father of a child with special needs who was called by God to be a missionary to the special needs community based on his own experiences. Jeff’s topic for Inclusion Fusion will be **“Two-Gether.”** He’ll talk about the differences in men and women as it relates to being parents of a child with special needs. He’ll discuss how men and women are wired differently, think differently, and react differently to being a parent of a child with special needs. Once parents understand one another’s differences and makeup we can take their relationships to a whole new level and be better equipped to serving the needs of their families.

The vision for Rising Above Ministries was birthed through the life of Jon Alex Davidson and the Davidson’s own experiences raising their son with special needs. In the fall of 2005, Jeff and Becky Davidson launched a monthly worship service for families of individuals with special needs in their hometown of Cookeville Tennessee. Soon the local ministry was providing faith-based support

groups, weekly Bible studies, and regular family outings and activities as well.

The following year Rising Above held its first Easter “Eggstravaganza” for the special needs community in a local park and hundreds turned out from all over Middle Tennessee. With 12 egg hunts all modified for various special needs, games activities, and entertainment for all ages, the event demonstrated the overwhelming need to reach out to those with special needs.

As the ministry grew, more and more ambitious projects followed. Other signature events include the annual Hero’s Ball, special needs vacation Bible schools, sock hops, fall festivals, family movie nights, and other monthly family activities all specifically designed for special needs children and their families.

In 2010 God gave Jeff a clear vision and calling to expand Rising Above into a national ministry. Jeff and Becky stepped out to devote themselves full-time to the ministry. Since then, in addition to Cookeville, chapters and affiliates have been established in Nashville, Murfreesboro, Atlanta, and Birmingham. The chapters and affiliates all now minister in the same way as the original chapter in Cookeville.

This year the ministry conducted three Easter “Eggstravaganzas” in Cookeville, Nashville, and Murfreesboro the same day serving hundreds of middle Tennessee families.

In addition, the ministry now hosts national retreats and events such as “By The Brook” retreats for moms raising children with special needs, the Brookside one-day women’s events for moms of children with special needs, the “SOAR” men’s weekend experiences for dads of children with special needs, and the new “Two-gether” marriage retreats for couples raising a child with special needs.

More on Jeff:

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Website:
www.risingaboveministries.org

Facebook: facebook.com/risingaboveministries

Blog: www.jeffdavidson.me

Jeff’s blog is [available here](#). Check out “The Razor”, posted on August 28th of this year.



Barb Dittrich

SNAPPIN' Ministries

Oconomowoc, WI

Making the Case for Mentoring

Mentoring is an effective biblical model used by mature men and women to disciple younger ones. Parents can use the mentoring model to support and be supported as they face the special challenges of raising a child with special needs. This workshop will describe the components required to create a strong special needs mentoring program and healthy mentoring relationships. It will also provide an overview of SNAPPIN' Ministries' new mentor training curriculum, mentoring program, and ongoing support system for mentors and mentorees. This workshop can benefit parents who want to take part in SNAPPIN' Ministries' program and to churches and organizations interested in launching their own mentoring initiative.

Barb answered some questions about SNAPPIN' Ministries' Mentoring Initiative

IF: *What prompted SNAPPIN' Ministries to devote so much time and resources to develop a training curriculum for training mentors to serve families of kids with special needs?*

BD: Our core competency as an organization is with the parents of children with unique abilities. This project just naturally flowed out of our

mission statement. Our Board of Directors set things in motion at our annual vision casting meeting a couple of years ago.

IF: *How are the mentors trained by SNAPPIN' different from parent mentors who advocate for the needs of children in special education or the mental health system?*

BD: I would like to believe that our training is more thorough than most. It is also has a distinctly faith-based approach. Our vision is that mentors would not only help mentorees with practical and advocacy issues, but also that they would experience spiritual growth together.

IF: *What type of time commitment is required of individuals interested in serving as a parent mentor for a family of a child with special needs?*

BD: The training period requires a minimum of 2 hours per week of online video chat training plus reading in between for a period of 3 months. Mentors are finding this appealing because they know we are sending them out well-equipped. After the 3 months of training, we ask them to commit to a minimum of another 3 months to meet with their mentorees 2 hours per week.

More on Barb:

Short Biography:

The mother of three children, two of whom have a variety of special needs, Barbara Dittrich founded SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES (Special Needs Parents Network) in 2002 and currently serves as its Executive Director. The organization she leads was one of three finalists for WORLD MAGAZINE'S Hope Award for Effective Compassion in October of 2009, in conjunction with the American Bible Society. With a unique vision for serving parents of children with special needs, she has led the SNAPPIN' MINISTRIES team in developing an innovative parent mentor curriculum. She blogs at [http://](http://comfortinthemidstofchaos.blogspot.com/)

comfortinthemidstofchaos.blogspot.com/

e-mail: barb@snappin.org

Website: www.snappin.org

Twitter: @SNAPPIN_MIN

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/snappinministries>

Other: <http://pinterest.com/snappinmin>

IF: Is the mentor training available through SNAPPIN' Ministries available everywhere? Can churches serving kids with special needs and their families across the U.S. and beyond replicate SNAPPIN's training model?

BD: We know that a parent living in as remote area needs support with probably fewer resources than those living near urban areas. We designed the web components, so this program can be participated in by anyone anywhere. In an effort to assure the quality of the program, we are not offering training independent of our direct enrollment. However, we will come and inform churches or other organizations of the program, so they can learn more and see if this is something they want to refer parents to.

IF: What impact have mentors had on you and your husband as you've have raised two children with very different challenges associated with their disabilities

BD: I have been VERY blessed to be mentored by excellent mothers in both the faith community and the

special needs community, but never both combined as we are offering in this program. Nevertheless, those

mentors were absolute lifelines to me. They were critical in my darkest hours. I have also been blessed to serve as a spiritual mentor to a mom with a son who has special needs. (No coincidence in my opinion.). The mutual edification and significance

from that relationship was remarkable.

My husband has experienced mentoring in a much different way. For years he has met 2 other special needs dads for breakfast and Bible study every-other Thursday before work.

IF: Anything you'd like that I left out?

BD: Our testimonies are personal narratives of hope. My prayer is that this program would help pass on that hope to many, many parents.

The screenshot displays the Key Ministry website interface. At the top, there are three main navigation sections: "OUR MISSION" with an image of hands holding keys, "HELPING CHURCHES" with an image of a person in a blue hoodie, and "HOW TO HELP" with an image of stacked hands. Each section has a "Read More" link. Below these is a section titled "A CHURCH FOR EVERY CHILD" featuring a video player with a play button and "Share" and "More Info" options. To the right, under "HIGHLIGHTS", there is a list of resources: RESOURCE KIT, TRAINING, FREERESPITE, INCLUSION FUSION, JAM SESSIONS, BLOGS, SUCCESS STORIES, and ANNUAL REPORT.

Check out the new Key Ministry Website... www.keyministry.org Over 180 free, downloadable resources-and complete access to last year's Inclusion Fusion!

Amy Dolan

Lemon Lime Kids

Chicago, IL



The Intersection of Calling and Opportunity

Amy Dolan brings previous children's ministry experience from Willow Creek Community Church where she served as Promiseland's Age 4-5 Curriculum Writer and Teacher, Willow Creek Association where she led as Executive Director of Children's Ministries, Head Start where she worked as Lead Preschool Teacher, and The Chapel as Children's Ministry Director.

In addition to leading Lemon Lime Kids, Amy also develops curriculum for [What's in the Bible?](#), Directs the [What Matters Now in Children's Ministry Project](#), and is listed among the top [100 Children's Ministry Blogs](#).

Amy serves as a Board Member for [Pathways to Global Literacy](#), a not-for profit organization aimed at promoting literacy in developing countries.

Amy believes the church fully empowered, combined with the

commitment of the family, and the compassion of the community has the power to inspire children's faith for a lifetime.

For the sake of children's spiritual formation, we must absolutely recognize our calling {that specific unique call that God gives to each of us} and then match that call with an opportunity {a place in which our calling can be lived out}. Children need us to be serving out of our calling.

And yet, discovering our calling requires that we listen to God's voice, receive feedback from others, and take note of the patterns in our lives. For Amy, her calling is to care for church leaders who lead children in the church. She's continually heard God's voice on this, even on the days she most doubts herself and feels tempted to pursue a new career path. God doesn't let this her calling go, ever, instead asking her to accept

opportunities to live this out.

And yet, matching a calling with opportunity can often be the difficult part. Finding an opportunity {whether as a paid staff member or as a volunteer} is where your calling comes to life. God calls for a reason. Your opportunity often is that reason. And for us, matching our calling with opportunity is key for the spiritual formation of children. Whether it's teaching, leading, singing, creating, writing, administrating, or managing, your opportunity is where you affect the lives of children. Don't miss out.

More on Amy

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Amy Dolan is Founder and Lead Consultant for Lemon Lime Kids. Bringing previous children's ministry experience from Willow Creek Community Church, the Willow Creek Association, and The Chapel.

Amy works hard to offer personal and strategic consulting to her clients. Amy believes the church fully empowered, combined with the commitment of the family, and the compassion of the community has the power to inspire children's faith for a lifetime.

Joe and Cindi Ferrini Family Life

More on Joe and Cindi:

Dr. Joe and Cindi Ferrini speak nationally for Family Life “Weekend to Remember Get-A-Ways” and have written *UNEXPECTED JOURNEY-When Special Needs Change our Course*. They have 3 grown children (one with special needs) and are grandparents. They enjoy staying connected to the outside world via social media and their website! Joe and Cindi gave a very well received presentation at last year’s Inclusion Fusion...we’re pleased to have them back for a return appearance for Inclusion Fusion 2012! The title of their presentation is *We are FAMILY!*

Presentation Summary

Special needs care for ONE person in a family affects all the others. The Ferrini’s will share ideas to help all children in the family feel included and “special” in every day life, and will touch briefly on the part extended family can play. Here’s a guest blog from Cindi previewing this year’s presentation...



We are Family!

Mom, I Feel Like Cinderella

And no, that was not a good thing....

Kristina, our second born was healthy, smart, helpful, and compliant. She was often there to help our son Joey (3 years older than her) when he needed his shoes tied, face washed, or teeth brushed. The problem was – she was only about 7.

Joey’s special needs made it such that he needed a lot of help for us just to “get out the door” and often, she was very willing to help. But this one particular day, I had asked her to do a number of things, right in a row, and not with much chance to comprehend it all. That was when she said, “Mom, I feel like CINDERELLA. Not the pretty one, but the one who had to do all the work.” Ouch.

Sometimes it takes the mirror of reality for us to stop and change our course. That comment did just that for me. I became keenly aware of the fact that she needed to be a kid. I know I didn’t expect her to “take over” my job of caring for our son with special needs, but I was happy for her help, and at that moment I could see I’d lost the ability to see that I was asking too much.

From that moment on, I made some changes. Perhaps the changes I made, will be helpful for you with your children, but also with your extended family, friends, and others in your life:

Changes I Made...by Cindi Ferrini

- Don't bark orders and expect others to jump.
- Each child needs attention. Give them one on one as often as you can. Make it a point.
- Allow your children to "understand" that you must take time (and often more time) with the child with special needs, but find things *they* like to do and purpose to do it with them.
- Have family meetings. Talk about the "work load" and if they feel you are expecting too much of them. You might not like what you'll hear, but the open communication serves well for *now* and when they become adults.
- Don't beat yourself up when your children are honest with you. Let them share.
- Show appreciation in words and actions for those who lend you a hand.
- Don't make others feel *stuck* helping you. Ask first.
- Don't expect others to *know* what you *need*. If others offer to help, tell them what is helpful.
- YOU make caring for you loved one *look easy* because you do it all the time. Others will need to be trained to help you. Take the time.
- When asking other children in the family to babysit/care for/look after the one with special needs, treat them like you would someone coming in to help. Ask them to set the day aside for you and confirm it with them – like you would with a babysitter. Pay them like you would a babysitter. Ask them how things went and if there is a way that would make life easier for them when they are helping you. (And we would let our daughters have *one* girlfriend over so that once Joey was in bed they could enjoy time with a friend.)
- Don't expect people to read your mind. If you need help – ask.
- When people offer to help, ask them what they most enjoy doing. Make and keep that list so you can call on them. The longer your list, the less often you'll have to call on and rely upon one or two people.
- Be sure to do things your typically developing children want to do – even if it means finding someone to stay home with the one with special needs.
- Invest in each child, so there will be no regrets when they are adults.
- Have fun. Life is better that way.
- Make sure you get your daughter a pretty prom dress when her time comes – so she knows how the pretty CINDERELLA felt!

Beth Guckenberger

Back2Back Ministries

Monterrey, Mexico



Holistically Serving the Adopted/Foster Child

Our team at Key Ministry is encouraged by the intentional efforts of so many churches to provide homes for kids in foster care and children available for adoption. We wanted to draw attention to the spiritual needs of kids who have been adopted and their families. We're pleased **Beth Guckenberger** will be joining us for Inclusion Fusion 2012 to help address the topic.

Beth and her husband, Todd, live with their family in Monterrey, Mexico where they serve with [Back2Back Ministries](#), an international orphan care ministry headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio. Both Beth and Todd graduated from Indiana University with degrees in education and between biological, foster, and adopted, are raising nine children. Currently the ministry has operations on three different continents (Mexico, India, and Nigeria). The Guckenberger's have lived in

Monterrey since 1997 and in that time have hosted thousands of guests on the ministry campus.

Beth is the author of [Reckless Faith](#) (Zondervan, 2008), [Relentless Hope](#) (Standard Publishing, 2010), and [Tales of the Not Forgotten](#) (Standard Publishing, 2012). She travels and speaks regularly at women's and missions conferences, youth gatherings and church services. Her topics include, but are not limited to, orphan care, missions, parenting, marriage/intimacy, and general faith. Her style is story-telling and she draws from her field experience as a missionary and parent of nine children for illustrations to biblical concepts.

Beth will be speaking on the topic... ***Holistically Serving the Adopted/Foster Child***. Here's a summary of her presentation:

Blending the needs of foster and adopted kids can be challenging and with scriptural and practical examples Beth will share some of her experiences of how she has had to foster/adopt a child right where they are and how to help them enter into a community.

Check out [Beth's website](#) to learn more about the impact of her ministry.

More on Beth

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Website:

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The logo for FREERESPITE, featuring the word in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a teal rectangular background.

Check out videos from Harmony Hensley and Rebecca Hamilton at Inclusion Fusion 2012 to learn more about joining the FREERESPITE movement!

Rebecca Hamilton

Key Ministry

Chagrin Falls, OH



FREERESPITE Training Info

Together with Harmony Hensley of the Key Ministry team, Rebecca has developed training modules available to any church that wants to provide respite care for kids with special needs; these modules are also designed to correspond to our written **FREERESPITE** training manual for churches that choose to participate in the **FREERESPITE** network.

About Rebecca:

Rebecca earned her Master's Degree in Public Administration from West Virginia University in 1990 and has worked in the field of non-profit management ever since. She has worked in fund development for organizations like the American Red Cross, Lawrence School, and Malachi House, among others. Since September 2006, Ms. Hamilton has served as Director of Operations for Key Ministry. In her role with Key Ministry, she has worked on building a network of Christian churches to provide free, rolling respite care for children with disabilities; she has served her home church, Fellowship Bible Church in Bainbridge, Ohio in organizing their monthly respite events, which are called 'Breathe.'

Ms. Hamilton resides with her husband and two teenage daughters in Auburn, Ohio.



More on Rebecca:

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Mike and Penny Hanlon

Avon United Methodist Church



Organizing, Planning and Managing While Loving

Here's a brief introduction from Penny about their Inclusion Fusion presentation...

Organizing, planning, and managing, while loving...this tag line says it all. I would like to say this all happened over night but then again I think I would have missed out on what an awesome God we really have. God has been so good to us in spite of our challenges. I am so thankful for what He has done for us.

Mike and I have been married for 17 years. We have 4 beautiful children, one with special needs.

Out of my 6 pregnancies, our first child was born three weeks early by emergency C-section. Our second child was a difficult pregnancy and delivery. She had multiple delays and problems. One morning, when she was 10 months old, I found her dead in her crib. She had suffocated. My next 2 pregnancies were relatively smooth. I then had a miscarriage, and we then had another son.

Despite the various medical problem pregnancies and the loss of our second child, Jessica, nothing prepared me for the intense medical needs for our daughter Gabrielle. At four months things went terribly wrong; she was rushed to the hospital with severe seizures. The doctors put her into a medically induced coma.

We did not know if she would live or die. God's miraculous hand brought her home to us. She was later diagnosed with multiple disabilities; among them a seizure disorder, brain damage, and a mitochondrial disease being her primary diagnosis. She was in the hospital for over a month and when she came home our lives were changed forever.

When we were told we could take Gabrielle home my mind was focused on the fact that we were finally leaving the hospital and our lives were going to get back to normal. Normal, now that couldn't be further from the truth. What was once normal, raising my three children all under the age of five, going to the park, having play dates, making

More on Mike and Penny

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Website: www.cominghomemedicalorganizer.com

Mike and Penny Hanlon are the parents of 4 wonderful children. Having experienced loss of their daughter Jessica Marie in 1997 and dealing with the needs of a terminally ill daughter, Gabrielle; they have created resources for families through their Coming Home LLC business. Penny is the owner and founder, while Mike works in Sales and Marketing. Both team up on resources designed to Help and Heal families and caregivers who need to feel God's love, mercy and grace in their lives.

Penny and Mike serve on a number of boards; from hospitals and non-profit organizations to church and outreach ministries. Penny serves as the Director of Special Needs for Avon United Methodist Church, while Mike is the President of the board of Nehemiah Ranch; both Christian outreach efforts within their community. Penny was recognized in 2008 by Nabisco, as one of the nation's "100 Most Extraordinary Women".

Did you know you can arrange to speak to a Key Ministry staff member to brainstorm ideas for including a child or family with unique needs at your church...all for FREE? Contact:

rebecca@keyministry.org

katie@keyministry.org



The screenshot shows a website header with a family photo and the text "Organizing, Planning & Managing while loving". Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, About Us, Our Products, Who We Help, News, Contact Us. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Medical Organizer**: "The Coming Home 'Medical Organizer' provides families a simple solution to organizing their loved one's medical information while connecting them with helpful health care resources that take the worry out of coming home." Below this is a "Purchase A Medical Organizer Now!" button.
- The Healing Journey "A Healing Journal"**: "The Coming Home 'Healing Journey' journal is our **NEWEST** resource; helping families experience healing through the traumatic times that begin when a love-one is diagnosed with a chronic or terminal illness." Below this is a "Purchase A Healing Journal Now!" button.
- Program Get Started**
- Sponsor Become One**
- Information**
- Gift Make a Difference**

dinner for my family, now became a life of a constant scheduled existence. There was so much to manage; it was very frustrating trying to remember and keep track of all of her medical history. My weeks turned into a whirlwind of doctor's appointments, tests, phone calls, questions, symptoms and treatments. I was always answering the same questions, needing to explain her symptoms and condition over and over again; giving doctors and nurses lists of her medications. The information seemed never ending.

Because of my experience, I created an organizer to help me manage Gabrielle's medical information. I learned how important it was to keep everything together, organized, and up to date. Once I started using it I felt more prepared with meetings with doctors, therapists, and during emergency room visits. I felt more confident to make decisions on my daughter's behalf. The more I began to organize her medical information, the more proactive I became in managing her care. I was less focused on my worry and anxiety related to her illness and could better focus on being her mama and just loving her. The peace of mind was incredible! I discovered others who needed this type of resource, leading me to turn it into a product and offer it to others.

The journal was created because I needed to find God in all of this pain and suffering. I have always been a Christian, always went to church, always loved God but when this kind of deep emotional suffering began happening in my life, my view changed and I began to question God. Does He really love me? Will this pain ever end? Why did He give me a "broken" child? As all of this was going on I began to search for something to help me put things in perspective. I needed to find an outlet for this emotional rollercoaster that I was on, one that was positive, spiritual, and uplifting. I needed to find something that talked about having a special needs child, and the feelings, frustrations, and challenges that a mother and family go through in raising a special needs child. I needed to find a resource, guidelines, something that would help me process all of the traumatic events of my child's life that would ultimately change my life as a wife, mother, caregiver, and friend. I needed to know that through the pain and suffering God is there, God does love me and that my child is not broken she is a precious gift from God and if I will let Him, He will show me all of this and more.

From all of this I have learned that there is healing and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ! In spite of our challenges God wants to touch our hurting spirit and heal our broken hearts. May you know that when you put your hope in God and in his Word he who promised is faithful!

The Coming Home Medical Organizer developed by Penny is [available here](#).

Harmony Hensley

Key Ministry

Cincinnati, OH



FREERESPITE-Join the Movement!

Here's a brief introduction from Harmony to the presentations she did with Rebecca Hamilton on **FREERESPITE** for Inclusion Fusion 2012...

FREERESPITE is a movement of Christ-honoring churches who are reaching out to families affected by disability through respite outreach. The site is being finished up now and is jam packed with some awesome features to really bless both families and host churches.

For Inclusion Fusion we presented on the topics of safety, communications and project management, launching a respite ministry, recruiting strategies,

volunteer roles, and information on what the movement is and how to get involved.

I know our whole team at Key Ministry has had the joy of serving through respite in one way or another. One of the things we have all enjoyed most is hearing the stories of parents who were able to have a break for the first time in years, and others who enjoyed going to a movie or taking a nap for the first time since their child was diagnosed. Respite is simply giving someone a break, and what better a way to show God's love to these amazing families! Everyone deserves a break sometimes.

We hope you join us this week for Inclusion Fusion. We believe that

God is going to do some HUGE things through this summit and we pray you are a part of it.

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About Harmony: Harmony Hensley is the Director of Ministry Advancement for Key Ministry, which helps churches serve families affected by disability. She has a dual degree in Biblical Studies and Ministry Leadership from Cincinnati Christian University and is currently pursuing a Graduate degree in Church Growth & Planting. Harmony has a background in marketing, design, and vocational ministry and has leveraged these skills to develop volunteer strategies and creative ministry approaches. Her passion for inclusion ministry stems from high school, where she was a special education student.

Harmony lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with her husband Skyler, and son Ransom. She and her family attend Horizon Community Church where her husband is also on staff.

John And Ann Holmes

A Restoration Church, Pittsburgh PA

A Restoration Church



John and Ann sat down for an interview with our Inclusion Fusion team about their church in Pittsburgh with a unique focus on ministry to families impacted by disabilities...

IF: What led the two of you to start a church specifically to welcome persons with special needs and their families?

AH: There were two startling "watershed" experiences during the last 30+ years in ministry that God used to draw our hearts toward this mission. John briefly describes both in our interview with Katie (Inclusion Fusion presentation). In a nutshell, these two experiences (and others less dramatic) brought us to the realization that there is a significant "sub-group" in our culture that has been largely ignored by the institutional church - individuals with special needs and their families.

In addition, we have personally experienced "hidden disability" through a number of personal medical issues that seriously impacted us as a couple and as a family. Our own pain gives us a unique perspective into the world of special needs.

JH: I was not aware of any other churches - going back 6-8 years when this vision really began to crystallize - planting churches or being a church with a core value of being welcoming and discipling (mentoring) to special needs individuals and their families. It just seemed like both a call from God and a huge need in the Body of Christ!

We were already in the process of planting A Restoration Church when our son met and fell in love with the mother of a daughter with Down syndrome. God gave us a granddaughter with DS. What a wonderful "hug from God"! She blesses us and gives us a special window into the lives of families with special needs.

More on John and Ann:

John and Ann are a ministry team. They have served churches in SC, AL, VA and PA. They are starting a church in Pittsburgh focused on intentional, inclusive, embracing church worship and community for families and individuals. A Restoration Church intends to welcome and include special needs families and individuals. John has an MDiv. from Columbia Theological Seminary (Atlanta, GA) and a DMin. from Westminster Seminary (Philadelphia, PA). John and Ann have two married sons and seven grandchildren.

Short message description:

Intentional outreach and ministry that includes kids and adults with special needs and their families is not just a good idea. It is a mandate from Scripture (Luke 14:12-14). Churches must explore and implement ways to reach out to and provide a welcoming, safe worship community for these families. This is both a foundational principle and a practical necessity for the health of the entire church family.

We have a new understanding of the Biblical mandate for this kind of ministry. [Luke 14:12-14](#) and other passages make it plain that this is God's priority for His forever family. It is the primary focus of Jesus' years in ministry prior to the cross. Scripture is clear that it is not an option to reach out to the special needs community. It is an imperative!

IF: *How is pastoring a church composed primarily of persons with special needs different from pastoring a more "typical" church?*

AH/JH: There are so many people needs that it is almost overwhelming at times- especially when there are many more needs than there are willing hands and hearts prepared to step up to support those needs. There isn't a defined template for this kind of ministry. There is support and there are resources available to encourage such a ministry as A Restoration Church. Finding them is the challenge. One way to find resources is Twitter and other social media. The number of friends connected to special needs ministries we have found on Twitter and Facebook is so supportive and such a blessing! One reason we are so excited about Key Ministry is the encouragement we are receiving. Walking with others on this particular ministry path is invaluable! Thanks so much!

We are still figuring out how to "market" this vision to build a church committed to ministry to special needs individuals and their families. We have done some of this right as we are finding our way. We have made mistakes. There is a two-pronged focus of welcoming special needs individuals and their families while also reaching out to more "typical" individuals and families. In our culture it is difficult to sell more "typical" parents with more "typical" children on what a huge blessing participating in a church with this vision can and will be. Just being

part of a church like A Restoration Church has great value for more "typical" families in teaching their children and youth to love unconditionally and sacrificially. This isn't just a ministry we do. It's a mutual ministry of serving and receiving encouragement! Like Paul says in [1 Corinthians 12:14-27](#) it takes inclusion to be the REAL Body of Christ before the watching world!

There is a fear factor both for leadership and for individuals and families who catch the significance of this type of ministry. Getting past that barrier is very much a difficult challenge. We can all be entirely too wrapped up in both image and what we perceive success to look like. "Selling" the vision for planting and building churches with a core value of including special needs individuals and their families is both daunting and challenging as well as incredibly rewarding!

The fact that many of our people do have special needs also means that their commitment to consistency in attendance and contribution of energy and resources fluctuates rather dramatically. It helps to always keep in view that this is God's work and that He just chooses to use us to build His Kingdom. The temptation to measure "success" by nickels and



is a false standard. Only God can build this kind of ministry. It is amazing to watch what He does with "broken" people, including us. He loves to take "the weak" and to be

strong for them/us.

There are many adaptations to a more "typical" ministry style when the focus is being welcoming and supporting to special needs families: such as,

- Issues with music
- Traditional components of worship like prayers, creeds and even the sermon (tho' the more relaxed atmosphere accepted in many churches makes this particular challenge easier to address). Sermon length and presentation needs processing through a different spectrum, as do many other aspects of a more traditional church.
- All the accommodations to special needs...like hearing assistance. We have hearing devices of several different kinds available in our welcome area, large print bulletins, access issues and even language adaptations. One example of a language adaptation... when there are people who present in wheelchairs it is a barrier to say, "Stand." Reconditioning the worship leader's expression to "Rise with me in your hearts as we sing....." is a retooling challenge. Another challenge is signing for the hearing impaired - finding the right person to fit our people.

On the other hand, one HUGE blessing in this ministry focus is the opportunity to participate in people's lives in the midst of their personal pain, developing deep relationships and making a difference. The memories and life impact are amazing! The stories are compelling and provide a wonderful backdrop for us at A Restoration Church as we promote and live out this vision.

In the area of practical considerations there are some wonderful stories as well. One example is putting our Internet skills together with the need for an accessible van for one

individual. "We found" a van advertised for an amazing price. It was a fluke, because the headline for the ad said nothing about the van being accessible. In the eBay bidding process we were able to secure the van for less than \$4,000, including licenses and registrations. The van was located in another city. When we were making arrangements to pick up the van and introduced ourselves on the phone as the person who bought the accessible van, the seller said, "You mean the person who stole my van?" We got the van for the price we bid and God was so obviously in the details!

Pastoring A Restoration Church has both huge challenges and huge blessing. The main thing is walking closely with God, depending on His strength, spending a lot of time on our knees and trusting Him to do "His thing"!

IF: How have you seen God at work through the ministry of A Restoration Church?

AH/JH: God works through simple and practical ways - like an accessible van at an unbelievable price making it possible for a person - who would be confined to her small apartment otherwise - to get out and to build relationships and participate in the ministry of A Restoration Church. She even allows her van to be used by and for others with accessibility issues from time to time.

God works through even mistakes and difficulties to stretch and challenge us in the process of planting A Restoration Church. One example is that we were able to begin this mission with some significant funds that came from the sale of two properties. Those funds are mostly depleted now so we are both working for separate paychecks (sales for John and teaching Latin for Ann) so our personal finances and needs

aren't a hindrance to the ministry of A Restoration Church. Actually, this difficulty is a blessing in forcing us to rely on God's provision rather than what we can actually see in the bank. Having other resources for our finances also allows us to participate significantly with stewardship of our own finances. Then there are the contacts we make at both jobs that either make people aware of A Restoration Church or draw them into A Restoration Church. Both of these results happen.

God builds relationships in surprising and unexpected ways. At A Restoration Church there is more of a spirit of acceptance, forgiveness and grace than we have seen in any of the other pastorates we have had in our years in ministry (even tho' that includes some pretty wonderful people and churches). The mentality of being success driven or image driven just doesn't exist at A Restoration Church. When the people you spend most of your time with and who are your closest friends have special needs, there isn't the same level of expectations/demands that we have encountered in more "typical" ministry venues.

Because we know very well how broken we are, our hearts are tenderized toward others who share our brokenness both in obvious and hidden ways.

There are so many wonderful people stories. We have produced a booklet with some of those and it's time to do a sequel. We just desperately need willing hands and hearts to come alongside so we can do more.

We have opportunities to reach out to other churches in Pittsburgh to encourage them as they develop their own special needs ministries.

IF: What advice would you give to someone else experiencing a call

to plant a church like A Restoration Church?

Be sure your calling is from God, as you will need His approval, blessing and strength! There will be delays and discouragements along the way. It is HUGE to know that this is God working to build **His** Kingdom! This is a team effort - God and His servants working in tandem. There is no place for personal kingdom building in this kind of ministry focus.

Don't try to reinvent the wheel. Make use of resources available in special needs ministry. There are increasing resources as more and more churches participate in this Kingdom-building movement.

It is essential to build a strong core group of like-minded people who understand the vision to be a church for and to individuals with special needs and their families.

It would be very helpful to have a supporting parent church or denomination willing to undergird a ministry like A Restoration Church. We have found a lot of fear in the institutional church about nickels and noses related to this kind of ministry. It is a very different model that requires people with commitment and vision to participate in this wonderful, life-changing opportunity

More on John and Anne:

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Other: www.livesrestored.org

Jim Hukill

Lift Disability Network

Orlando, FL



Exchange of Presence

Jim Hukill has been a leader in the disability ministry movement before I became aware that there was a disability ministry movement...a true “founding father.” For the past fifteen years Jim has served as Executive Director of [Lift Disability Network](http://www.liftdisability.net), the successor organization to the Christian Council on Persons With Disabilities. He was one of the first speakers to sign on for our inaugural Inclusion Fusion. He’s back this year to speak on the topic ***Exchange of Presence***.

Before the age of two, Jim was diagnosed with a neuro-muscular disease, a form of Muscular Dystrophy, a disease that has steadily weakened the muscles of his body and has left him dependent on the use of a wheelchair. However, the limitation of Jim’s physical body has not dictated the limits of his life. Jim

says, “If you dream big dreams, you will live bigger realities”. With a life expectancy of less than ten years and a diagnosis of life-long respiratory problems, Jim has experienced living well beyond this early prognosis. Today he celebrates more than five decades of “life-miracles” and bigger realities.

What does it mean for Jesus to have come and dwelt among us? What does abide have to do with His physical presence in the human experience? Does Christ’s example of being present in the world set a precedent for us as his followers in regards to how important presence is as an exchange of life with each other? In this discussion on the Exchange of Presence, Jim will discuss the importance of presence in each other’s lives and, in particular, the ministry of presence within the

disability communities’ exchange of life with the church. Finally, he will look briefly at a practical example of what an exchange of presence looks like in the inclusive church.

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Twitter: @jimhukill

Other contact address:
[www.facebook.com/Lift
DisabilityNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/LiftDisabilityNetwork)

Blog: <http://jimhukill.com>



By registering for the Key Ministry website, you can access any presentation from last year’s Special Needs Ministry Web Summit at any time, “on demand.” Go to www.keyministry.org to learn more

Amy Jacober

Youth Ministry Architects

Young Life Capernaum



Good For All: How Serving in Ministry With People With Disabilities Strengthens Your Faith

Pastors and church leaders who minister with teens and young adults are essential to the disability ministry movement. Our Program Committee for Inclusion Fusion was intentional this year about seeking out leaders in youth ministry who are passionate about seeing the church become more effective in serving teens with disabilities. We're very fortunate to have a nationally recognized youth ministry leader of **Amy Jacober's** status join us for this year's Special Needs Ministry Web Summit. Amy will be speaking on the topic of ***Good For All: how serving in ministry with people with disabilities strengthens your faith.***

Amy (Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary) is a youth ministry veteran with ministry and teaching

experience. She is a lead consultant with Youth Ministry Architects and serves on the Young Life Capernaum national board. Most recently she she wrote *The Adolescent Journey* (IVP, 2011) with a book on theology and disability in process. In her free time she can be found playing with her two girls, husband and oversized dog.

In Amy's presentation, she'll expound upon her observation that many people find after volunteering with people with disabilities that their own faith not only is strengthened but flourishes. What may begin as a hesitant agreement to "serve others" becomes a life changing experience for all involved. This is good news for those recruiting leaders who may be reluctant thinking that they either not qualified or fearful of what it may do

to their faith.

Amy shared a wonderful invitation to followers of her blog earlier this week entitled *Invitation to Inclusion* about why including adolescents with disabilities and their families into the life of the church is so important. We encourage you to check out her post, and check out her presentation for

More on Amy:

e-mail: amy.jacob@gmail.com

Blog: www.theologicalcurves.com

Twitter: @AmyJacob



Last year, over 1,300 pastors, church staff, volunteers, family members and caregivers from 42 states and five countries participated in Inclusion Fusion 2012! Help us expand the impact of this year's Special Needs Ministry Web Summit by inviting anyone you know passionate about seeing families impacted by disabilities connect with local churches.

John Knight

Desiring God

Minneapolis MN



For the Sake of Your Own Joy! Why Your Church Should Want Families Like Mine

We're blessed to have **John Knight** be a part of Inclusion Fusion next week. We're grateful he's found the time to be part of this year's Special Needs Ministry Web Summit.

John serves as Director of Donor Partnerships at Desiring God. He is married to Dianne and together they parent their four children: Paul, Hannah, Daniel, and Johnny. Paul lives with multiple disabilities including blindness, autism, cognitive impairments and a seizure disorder. John blogs on issues of disability, the Bible, and the church at [The Works of God](http://www.theworksofgod.com). His presentation for Inclusion Fusion is ***For the Sake of Your Own Joy! Why Your Church Should***

Want Families Like Mine. Here's a brief summary of his presentation...

As a leader you know you should 'do something' about all those people with disabilities around you – but what? If you've been stuck about what to do, maybe it's because you don't have the proper motivation. It isn't really about them, but about your pursuing your own joy in God!

John did a fabulous video promoting his Inclusion Fusion appearance on the topic of "Why" inclusive ministry to families impacted by disabilities is so important. You can view it here... <http://youtu.be/jGfrOkWyFX8>

More on John:

Website: www.desiringgod.org

Blog: <http://theworksofgod.com>

Twitter: @johnpknight



We have prepared the Key Ring Binder to help you as you begin your ministry. The resources you'll find here are designed to provide purpose, assist with logistics, and streamline your processes. Download it today at www.keyministry.org

Marie Kuck

Nathaniel's Hope

Orlando, Florida



Bridging the Gap-Can Be Fun and Not So Scary

Our team first met **Marie Kuck** for the first time five or so years ago at the McLean Bible Church Accessibility Summit. Marie interviewed another ministry leader who impressed me greatly while sharing her story of how God used her struggles in high school to sensitize her to the needs of persons with disabilities...**Harmony Hensley**.

Marie is Co-Founder of [Nathaniel's Hope](#), a nationally growing ministry dedicated to sharing hope and encouragement with kids with special needs (VIP Kids) and their families as well as educating and equipping the community, especially local churches with training and programs to reach out and "be a buddy" and minister to these families. Nathaniel's Hope was birthed after the life and death of the Kuck's son Nathaniel, who was born with multiple special needs. In 2001, at the age of 4 1/2 Nathaniel unexpectedly had a change of address from Earth to Heaven. It was after this that the Kucks responded to the call and started Nathaniel's Hope.

Nathaniel's Hope has developed many programs to assist families,

including a growing respite program called Buddy Break. Buddy Break is a free kids/respite program done in partnership with local churches that provides a free "break" for caregivers of kids with special needs. The Kucks hope is to build a national network of 1,000 churches to support VIP families with respite care. Other programs offered by Nathaniel's Hope include Caroling for Kids, a National VIP Birthday Club, Keep 'm Smiling, Hall of Hope, and an Online Resource Center. Last June, Nathaniel's Hope hosted their 10th annual Make 'm Smile festival at Lake Eola in downtown Orlando to honor and celebrate VIP kids, hosting over 10,000 people... including 1,500 VIP kids!

Marie currently serves as Executive Director of Nathaniel's Hope. As an ordained minister, Marie worked in youth ministry for over 10 years serving on church staffs in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Orlando. She is a graduate of Wheaton College, has taught in the Department of Communications at North Central University (formerly North Central Bible College) and co-hosted "Today's Family" a local Christian

television talk show in Orlando. Marie considers herself to be a "Mom on a Mission."

Marie and her husband Tim have been married for 23 years and have 3 children, Brianna (20), Ashley (18) and Nathaniel (4 1/2, in heaven). They reside in Orlando, Florida.

About Marie:

Marie is Co-Founder of Nathaniel's Hope, a growing national ministry dedicated to sharing hope and encouragement with kids with special needs (VIP Kids) and their families as well as educating and equipping local churches with tools and opportunities so that even the most inexperienced people can "be a buddy" and reach out and minister to these families.

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Website: www.nathanielshope.org

Twitter: @NathanielsHope

Message Description:

Learn about creative ways that churches and the most fearful inexperienced individual can begin to reach out to kids with special needs and their families using fun meaningful outreach opportunities. Nathaniel's Hope has engaged thousands of "green" volunteers thru their annual Make 'm Smile festival, Christmas Outreach and respite care program.

Gillian Marchenko

The King's Table

Chicago, IL



Loss and Grief in Parenting Children With Special Needs

Gillian Marchenko is a rising star in the disability ministry movement who God is positioning to do great things in advancing the cause of God's Kingdom. She'll be serving as a faculty member for Inclusion Fusion 2012. Her topic is ***Loss and Grief in Parenting Children With Special Needs***.

Gillian and her husband Sergei are building a church in Chicago ([Christian Fellowship Church](#)) where families of kids with disabilities are welcome. She leads a ministry ([The King's Table](#)) offering weekly respite care to families of children with special needs, and an inclusive ministry for weekend worship. Gillian is attracting a rapidly growing following for her skills as a writer, speaker, and advocate for individuals with special needs. She writes and speaks about parenting kids with Down syndrome, faith, imperfection,

and adoption. Her work has appeared in MomSense Magazine, EFCA TODAY, Four Cornered Universe, CHICAGO PARENT, Story Bleed, CHICAGO SPECIAL PARENT, and is forthcoming at Thriving Family, Literary Mama, and Connections Magazine. She speaks to Mothers of Preschool groups and teaches about inclusive church with Joni and Friends Chicago.

Our team began reading Gillian's blog after one of our staff members started posting her articles on Key Ministry's Facebook page. The authenticity of her writing immediately caught my attention. She's written some fabulous blog posts on her personal experience with depression that's among the best stuff we've seen on mental health from a Christian perspective. [This post](#) in particular about her struggles with depression is

especially poignant

We're very much looking forward to Gillian's Inclusion Fusion presentation. Check out her website at www.gillianmarchenko.com, her [Facebook page](#) or her [Twitter feed](#)

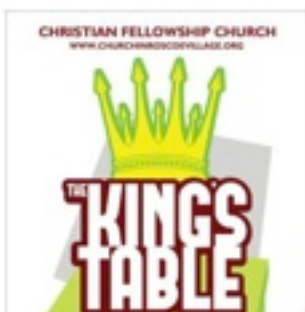
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Twitter: @GillianMarchenk

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/GillianMarchenkoPage>



Gillian's church has launched a weekly respite care ministry for families of kids with special needs in the Roscoe Village area of Chicago.

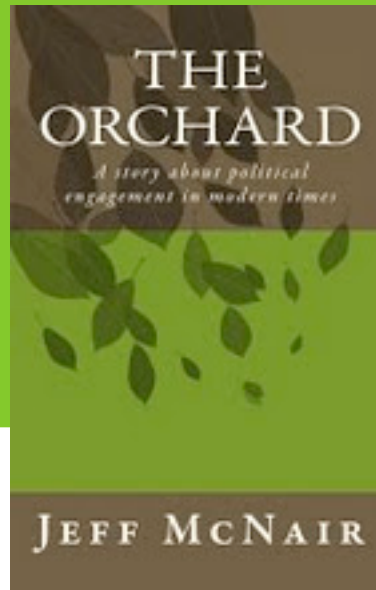
Jeff McNair

California Baptist University

Joni and Friends



Jeff McNair Ph.D.



Maturity in Ministry

Jeff McNair serves as Professor of Special Education and Director of the Disability Studies MA program at California Baptist University. One of the few programs of its kind offered by a Christian university, the Master of Arts in Disability Studies is a distance learning degree program designed to develop expertise in human differences. Beyond preparing professionals to lead, establish and shape disability programs, ministries and policies, CBU's M.A. in Disability Studies prepares graduates to challenge and change the way society and organizations relate to people with disabilities.

We're pleased to announce Jeff will be presenting for Inclusion Fusion on the topic of ***Maturity in Ministry***.

Jeff's presentation will look at movement toward maturity in disability ministry. If someone is

involved in ministry, even for a long time, that doesn't necessarily imply that what they are doing is best. So how can one move toward maturity? What might one aspire to in ministry? This presentation will provide more of a road map than a destination in assisting those in ministry to evaluate what they are currently doing such that they might continue to innovate and move forward.

Jeff has written several books, including **The Church and Disability: The Weblog disabledChristianity**, a compilation of selected blog entries from the first five years of the weblog Disabled Christianity. It was written in response to requests to have the weblog material in a more accessible form. Entries are grouped into several categories including, the church, ministry, and people with disabilities.

Jeff and his wife Kathi have personally been involved in local church ministry to adults with intellectual disabilities for over 30 years. We're honored to have someone of Jeff's credentials joining us for Inclusion Fusion.

More on Jeff

e-mail: jeffmcnair@gmail.com

Blog: <http://disabledchristianity.blogspot.com>

Twitter: @jeffmcnair

Website: <http://jeffmcnair.com>

Chris Nelson

Traders Point

Christian Church

Indianapolis, IN



Technology and Special Needs Ministry

Technology is everywhere. Technology makes events such as Inclusion Fusion possible. Leaders in the disability community are beginning to explore the use of available technologies to minister to more individuals and more families more effectively. **Chris Nelson** will be providing a primer in the use of technology in inclusion ministry in his upcoming presentation ***Technology and Special Needs Ministry***.

Whether you're still trying to figure out how to justify the cost of an iPad for your ministry, or you're an old pro looking for new apps for existing mobile devices: it's Chris' goal to help you use technology to reach kiddos with the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Chris is a consistent volunteer who for the past three years has run the Special Needs Ministry at **Traders Point Christian Church**. He is also the Director of Operations at Delivra, a "software as a service" company based in Indianapolis, Indiana. He lives in the small town of Pittsboro with his wife and two children. Chris is an active board member on the CIO Advisory Council for NPower Indiana, sits on the Strategy Advisory Committee for Techpoint Foundation For Youth, and serves on the Industrial Advisory Board for the Technical Communications Program for the IUPUI School of Engineering and Technology.

More on Chris:

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Website: www.tpcc.org

Twitter: @LimitedWisdom

Check out the **free** app developed by Mike Woods and his Special Friends Ministry team at First Baptist Orlando! Available for iOS and Android



Nick Palermo

Young Life

Capernaum



Including Kids With Special Needs in your Youth Ministry

We're honored to have **Nick Palermo**...a founding father of the disability ministry movement join us as a speaker for Inclusion Fusion 2012.

Nick was born and raised in San Jose California and met Christ in high school through the ministry of Young Life. Nick volunteered as a Young Life leader for 11 years and has served on the full time staff of Young Life for 29 years. Nick founded [Young Life Capernaum](#) in 1986...Young Life's outreach to young people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities. Nick has a degree in sociology from San Jose State University and a Masters degree in theology from Fuller Seminary. Nick has been married to his wife (Sumarah) for 22 years...They have

three boys (Joel, Zack and Sam). Nick's Inclusion Fusion topic will be ***Including Kids With Special Needs in Your Youth Ministry***. Here's a summary of Nick's talk...

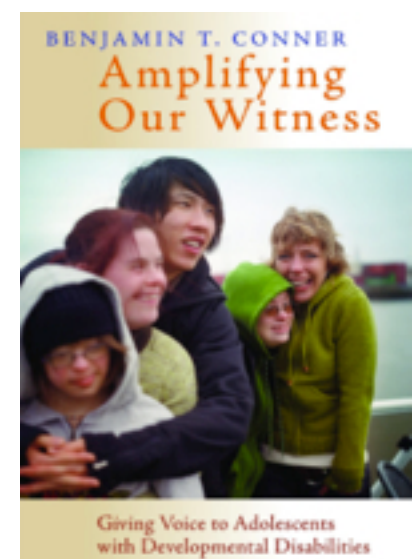
What is the culture of kids with disabilities? What are their unique needs? The family's unique needs? Why has the church been so hesitant to respond? And specifically when 20 % of the teen population has some form of a disability why don't we see them represented in our youth ministries? How could they fit in to our communities? What it would like? What would be the outcome for typical kids in our youth ministries? We will discuss the concept of a "withness" ministry where typical kids and kids with special needs

encounter Christ mutually. We will look at the long range benefits for the church at large as we include young people with special needs into our faith communities.

More on Nick:

e-mail:

nickfriend1954@pacbell.net



Ben's book explains WHY the church is called to serve kids with developmental disabilities while leaving the HOW to our God-given imagination and the working of the Holy Spirit. One of my favorite quotes in his book..."*The problem is not that adolescents with developmental disabilities have cognitive impairments; the problem is a lack of imagination and an incomplete understanding of prayer on my part.*"

Amplifying Our Witness can be ordered through [Ben's Amazon author page](#), or through many fine Christian bookstores.

Libby Peterson

Bay Presbyterian Church

Key Ministry



Inclusion: An Idea, an Event, or a Lifestyle?

Here's a preview Libby has written for her Inclusion Fusion Presentation... *The Church Has Left the Building*

What if the church left the building?

“So, you mean that we can invite the child we just met at the respite event to our house for my son’s birthday party?”

The question was asked at a gathering we held following a respite event at our church. We invited volunteers who served at the event to my house to debrief the respite and talk about connections they had made with the kids.

My answer to that question was an unreserved and totally enthusiastic: “YESSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!”

We held this gathering to begin to cast a vision for a next step in ministry that took ministry outside the walls of the church. I believe ministry happens best when real relationships develop – and we wanted to encourage our families to people to begin building relationships/ friendships with the families they

served. Our hope is that through these relationships not only will these families be drawn closer to Christ, but that through these relationships we’d be able to develop relationships with families they know who we don’t know or ever see at one of our events. And some real friendships have emerged.. ..and we’ve learned AGAIN just how much we need each other. Once real friendships emerge, the depths of some of the real needs surface too. One family might not have all it takes to really love and serve another. We need each other.

So we started asking: What if several families from the church who care about reaching families with children with special needs began to get together in community and as a community they were intentional about doing ministry outside the walls of the church – to love and serve and reach families with children with special needs?

And what if – through these friendships over time, the families with children with special needs were invited to be part of these communities? After all – belonging to a community of Christ – followers is the best way to learn to follow Christ!

We are challenging ourselves to take that next step in ministry – to move from ministry through programs to ministry through lifestyle. . .from asking families to come and be with us – to going to be one of them.

What if we woke up one day and discovered – as one of my pastors, Carol Rettew, recently put it –

The church has left the building!!!!!!

How exciting to envision the church on mission to families with children with special needs – on their turf!

More on Libby:

e-mail: lpeterson@baypres.org

Website: <http://www.baypres.org>

Blog: <http://baypresblogs.com>

Libby Peterson has served Bay Presbyterian Church for 20 years - as Director of Children's Ministry and most recently as Family Ministry Director. She was instrumental in helping begin the church's Special Needs Ministry, which serves over 30 children and their families. Libby also serves as Vice-President of Key Ministry, where her wisdom, patience and common sense serve as a welcome contribution to the Board.



Jolene Philo

Different Dream Parenting

Boone, Iowa

It's Not Just For Soldiers Anymore: PTSD and Kids With Special Needs

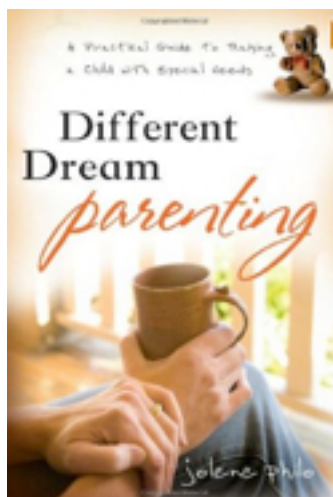
As more and more churches become involved in adoption ministry and pursue initiatives to care for children and teens in the foster care system, they'll need to understand the complex manifestations of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to most effectively meet the needs of the kids they seek to serve and the families committed to adoption and foster care ministry. We're fortunate **Jolene Philo** has agreed to a return appearance for Inclusion Fusion 2012 to educate us about PTSD...her topic for Inclusion Fusion 2012 is ***It's Not Just for Soldiers Anymore: PTSD & Kids with Special Needs.***

Jolene is the author of two books for parents of children with special needs, ***A Different Dream for My Child*** and ***Different Dream Parenting***. She is the parent of a child with special needs who

developed PTSD due to early, frequent and invasive medical treatment. She also taught traumatized students at a correctional facility and collaborated with special education teachers to mainstream traumatized children in her classroom during public school teaching career. She's conducted extensive interviews with trauma experts and is currently working on a book about PTSD in children. More information about PTSD and kids can be found at her website, www.DifferentDream.com.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental disorder most commonly associated with combat veterans that also affects children with special needs. Jolene will discuss six common myths and misconceptions about PTSD in children.

“What I most appreciated from a physician’s perspective about [Different Dream Parenting](#) is conveyed in the book’s subtitle...A practical guide to raising a child with special needs.”



About Jolene:

Jolene Philo is the author of two books for parents of children with special needs, *A Different Dream for My Child* and *Different Dream Parenting*. She is the parent of a child with special needs who developed PTSD due to early, frequent and invasive medical treatment. She also taught traumatized students at a correctional facility and collaborated with special education teachers to mainstream traumatized children in her classroom during public school teaching career. She's conducted extensive interviews with trauma experts and is currently working on a book about PTSD in children. More information about PTSD and kids can be found at her website, www.DifferentDream.com.

Website: www.DifferentDream.com

Blog: www.jolenephilo.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DifferentDream

Twitter: @jolenephilo

Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/jolenephilo>



Bryan Roe

Crosspoint Community Church
Oconomowoc, WI

The Greater Miracle

Here's a brief summary of Bryan's upcoming Inclusion Fusion presentation...

It's inevitable. At some point, every parent of a child with special needs is going to wonder why. Why was our family afflicted with this? Why would God allow this transpire? Why can't God just take it away? Throughout his deep struggle with Tourette's Syndrome, Pastor Bryan Roe has wrestled with these questions and found comfort through one crucial truth in the Scriptures: God can use everyone—even those with special needs—to make his love known to the world.

Bryan took the time recently to answer a few questions about growing up with Tourette's Disorder and ministry with teens with special needs....

IF: In your Inclusion Fusion presentation, you talk about your experiences growing up with Tourette's Syndrome. How did your experience with Tourette's as a child and a teen impact your spiritual development?

BR: When I reached middle school, my tics were so bad so overmedicated that I began to wonder, If God is so loving, why would he give me this? I also began to wonder if he could possibly have a plan for a person like me. This caused a massive cloud of depression and doubt to set in until one night, contemplating suicide, I prayed an honest prayer of surrender. From there, everything changed. Through a series of experiences shortly thereafter, God answered that prayer by showing me the miracle of redemption; God's ability to save and use a broken kid with Tourette's like me.

IF: *What did you learn from your experience with Tourette's that most impacts your ongoing ministry with youth?*

BR: Simply that there are kids everywhere struggling with similar issues, looking in the mirror and seeing someone who is "less than" enough. The point is, God can use anyone and everyone. In fact, his typical bend tends to be toward the kids who don't think they'll amount to anything. If my story communicates anything, it communicates the fact that God can use you in spite of – and often times in light of – your weaknesses.

About Bryan:

Bryan Roe is a successful youth pastor who experienced firsthand the emotions of a teen with a significant disability growing up with Tourette's Disorder. We're honored to have Bryan join us for Inclusion Fusion 2012. The title of Bryan's presentation is ***The Greater Miracle***.

Bryan is a graduate of Judson University in Chicago IL and currently serves as Pastor of Student and Young Adult Ministries at Crosspoint Community Church in Oconomowoc, WI. He and his wife Briana partner together to bring the next generation of young people into passionate relationships with Jesus Christ. They have two young sons named Stellan and Caedman, and they take their boys on small adventures whenever they get the chance.

Website:
www.crosspointwi.com

Twitter: @b_roe

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bryan@crosspointwi.com

Key Ministry staff and volunteers provided live training or consultation in ten states in 2012...Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

IF: *What suggestions would you share with other youth pastors seeking to welcome and include teens and young adults with outwardly apparent or more "hidden" disabilities who don't feel comfortable about becoming actively involved with church?*

BR: These are the primary points I'm hitting in my message, but here they are in response to this question...

1. Regularly feature testimonies from adult leaders who have seen God use them in ways that he used me. Additionally, make sure that the leaders who are giving

their testimonies make themselves available to talk to (and pray with) students who are impacted by their stories.

2. Create positions for serving in the church that can be filled by individuals with special needs. Invest in them this way and you add value to them. Be creative and don't be afraid to experiment.

3. Communicate stories about how Jesus interacted with people who were on the margins of culture. Through this, build a case to the rest of your youth (or overall church) population about how we should be intentionally and



Thanks to our friends at Children's Ministry Deals for sponsoring Inclusion Fusion 2012!

www.childrensministrydeals.com

Aaron Scheffler

Mark 2 Ministries

Indianapolis, IN



Networking for Ministry

Leading up to this year's Inclusion Fusion, our team wants to introduce you to some of the people God has called to serve as leaders in the movement among local congregations to more effectively serve, welcome and include kids with disabilities and their families into the life of the church. Today, we'd like to start by introducing you to **Aaron Scheffler**, one of our speakers for Inclusion Fusion 2012, and a first-year member of the Program Committee responsible for assembling the speakers and content for this year's Web Summit.

Aaron serves as the Executive Director for [Mark 2 Ministries](http://www.mark2ministries.org), an organization that works with churches around the globe to equip them to be able to show Jesus' love to people with disabilities and to integrate these same people into their congregations. He is a life-long learner in the areas of Scripture, Business, Leadership, Disability, and Education. Aaron is a

native of the north side of Indianapolis Indiana. He now lives in the Indy north suburban area with his wife, Debra where he enjoys cycling and reading in his spare time. Aaron's Inclusion Fusion presentation is on the topic...***Networking: For Ministry.***

Mark 2 has served a vital role in pulling together a diverse group of churches from throughout the state of Indiana for training and mutual support as individual churches pursue active disability ministry initiatives. Many believe that networking is a business activity that is used solely by businesses. Mark 2 has demonstrated how networking is now a vital part of church life and ministry as well. Aaron will spend time in his presentation discussing how to develop networking groups to facilitate churches talking to one another to share experiences – good and bad – to further the Kingdom. He'll also discuss how networking

groups help to propel ministry while avoiding pitfalls.



More on Aaron:

e-mail:

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Website:

www.mark2ministries.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/mark215

Twitter: @mark2ministries

Aaron will be inviting over 100 churches from across Indiana for an Inclusion Fusion "watch party" on Thursday, November 15th. Staff and volunteers from churches served by Mark 2 will gather and watch some of the video presentations of greatest interest. Members of our Key Ministry team can be available to video conference for other church groups planning watch parties for Inclusion Fusion week (November 12-16).

Rhett Smith

Plano, TX



Reframing Anxiety: The Inclusion of Anxiety in Our Church Communities

Earlier this year, Rhett was interviewed by a member of our Key Ministry team about his popular book... The *Anxious Christian: Can God Use Your Anxiety for Good?* Here's the interview...

IF: *The title of your new book suggests you see ways in which God uses our anxiety for good. How do you address this concept with people who are prone to misinterpret ongoing anxiety symptoms as a reflection of inadequate faith or a lack of diligence in practicing spiritual disciplines, especially prayer?*

RS: This is such a great question, and I wish I had one answer for it. But I've found that because anxiety seems to be unique to each person (how it manifests itself), I have to pay real close attention to the individual and the context of the situation. But I believe that the most important place to start in cases like this is with the Bible since most people come with preconceived ideas or notions about what the Bible says about anxiety. They've been told that the Bible says don't be anxious (and that is true, but there is more to that), and that they just need to pray more, or have more faith. So I like to begin by looking at

stories in the Bible since everyone connects with stories in our narrative driven culture. And in therapy we may unpack the story of Abraham and Isaac for example and explore the anxiety that is implicit in the text. Interestingly enough, it was reading Soren Kierkegaard's work *Fear and Trembling* for the first time at 23 that I began to rethink the idea of anxiety and how it plays out in our faith. Kierkegaard's entire book talks about Abraham and Isaac and the role of anxiety in the the text. Or we might explore the story of Noah and the anxiety that it must have experienced trying to build an ark in faith. Or the anxiety that Jacob felt when he first encountered his brother Esau for the first time after betraying him. Or we look at the life and ministry of Jesus, especially his journey to the cross and the anxiety in those scenes. I believe the Bible is implicit with anxiety and that is part of our condition as not only humans, but especially as followers of Christ. So there is a sense that I first try to help someone normalize their feelings of anxiety.

I also think that one of the things that keeps people mired in anxiety in an unhealthy way, and that keeps them from looking at it as an opportunity for growth is the idea of shame. Shame drives people into hiding and not seeking and getting the help they need. I have been most helped by a

About Rhett:

Rhett Smith is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Plano, TX. In addition to his private practice, Rhett is on staff of The Hideaway Experience, which is a 4-day marriage intensive in Amarillo, TX. He is the author of ***The Anxious Christian: Can God Use Your Anxiety for Good?*** (Moody, 2012), and the coming book, ***What It Means to be a Man: God's Design for Us in a World Full of Extremes*** (Moody, 2013). He is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary (MDIV, MSMFT), and lives in McKinney, TX with his wife Heather and his two children. Rhett's Inclusion Fusion presentation is entitled ***Reframing Anxiety: The Inclusion of Anxiety in our Church Communities.***

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Blog: www.rhettsmith.com

Twitter: @rhetter

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/rhettsmith

counselor friend of mine Todd Sandel (www.lifegatecenter.com) when he distinguished between shame and guilt for me. Guilt is the belief that I have done something wrong, but I can be forgiven for it. I can make amends. Shame is the idea that I have done something wrong, therefore something is wrong with me. I'm a bad person. I want to help clients see anxiety as not a shame issue, and not a judgment of their character or identity.

I also like to point out to people that there is no command in the Bible that our spiritual life has to consist of a 45 minute Evangelical quiet time each morning. Or that their prayer life has to look this way and use these exact words. Rather there are lots of examples in the Bible of how people connected with God. It might have been through worship, or prayer, or retreating to quiet space, or using a model of prayer like the Lord's Prayer. I try to free people up to experiment with options. I like the word experiment because it doesn't imply a certain formula that needs to be followed and if not done correctly, you are wrong. Experiment implies the idea of trying out different things and seeing what works and what doesn't work. And then having the freedom to keep experimenting or sticking with something for a while.

This is hard work to help people overcome the shame they have felt over the anxiety they have been carrying for a long time. So it takes time, but I think we can make progress as a Christian community if we can continue to uphold a different model, or way of thinking about anxiety than one has always had. It's a process in my mind of helping someone re-imagine their anxiety.

IF: *In the book, you openly discussed your own personal struggles with anxiety as a child, following the loss of your mother. Looking back, how do you think your experience of anxiety hindered your spiritual*

development as an adolescent and as a young adult? How did your anxiety help you mature spiritually?

RS: Yes, I'm very open about the loss of my mom from breast cancer when I was 11 years old. She was diagnosed when I was six years old, so it was quite a long and anxious journey before she died. Her death was preceded by the death of her mom (my grandmother) to breast cancer, and was followed by the death of her sister (my aunt) to breast cancer. Breast cancer runs in our family and has created a lot of anxiety, and continues to cause a lot of anxiety for newer generations.

I think that the anxiety hindered my spiritual development in several ways. One way is that I set up God as this God who punished people for something they did wrong. And so the way to appease God was to make bets with him and make him happy. My mom didn't do anything wrong, but I thought that perhaps I did, and so maybe she died because I didn't do something right. So I kept God at arm's length, fearful of him, but I also needed him so I could make bets with him and try to appease him. It was very confusing, and I didn't feel safe with God in the way that I think He desired for me.

I think that it also hindered my spiritual development in terms of my identity. If God really created me for a purpose, than I thought he must have really screwed up with me since I was now stuttering and unable to read after my mom's death. I didn't learn this till later, but death can create such trauma that it can lead to issues like stuttering. So I felt less than. I felt like God really couldn't use me to do great things for him. So spiritually speaking, I just really wondered if God could use my life and that hindered my ability to really open myself up to be used by him.

Anxiety also hindered my spiritual

development in that I was so anxious a lot, and fearful to stutter around others, that I tended to withdraw at times. That withdrawing left me feeling isolated, alone and abandoned. I don't want to paint the wrong picture here. I had lots of friends and played sports and participated at church, but inside I felt alone and was in a withdrawn place mentally. So at a time in my life when I really needed to feel connected and invite people into that lonely space, I tended to keep people at a safe distance. That's hard in adolescence, because that's such an important time in life for connection and community.

Now here come the paradoxical shift for me. Anxiety helped me mature spiritually at some point because as I opened myself up to God I kept hearing him calling me to do things and participate in things that required me to face my own anxiety. So ultimately, the very anxiety that hindered me spiritually early in life, would later be the siren that beckoned me to follow hard after Him and face my fears. It came to me in several stages, but the real first moment was when I made a promise to God in prayer. I told him that if he gave me the opportunity to speak (face my greatest fear of stuttering in front of others), I would take it. And like two days later I got a call from my college chaplain's office to preach at the Easter sunrise service. I immediately said no, but upon hanging up the phone, I realized that I had prayed for that opportunity earlier in the week. So on April 7, 1996, almost 20 years to the date after my mother's death (April 20, 1986), I stood up in front of my college classmates and preached on resurrection. That was the day that God resurrected my anxiety. And that would continue after that and continues on today.

IF: *You served for a number of years as a college pastor at Bel Air Presbyterian Church and more recently, you taught parenting classes at Highland*

Park Presbyterian Church. Do you see anxiety as a significant barrier to church attendance and participation for teens and young adults? What advice do you give parents when their kids struggle to attend worship services, participate in small groups or participate in retreats and special events because of anxiety? How would you help adults when anxiety becomes a barrier to them finding a church or becoming more involved at church?

IF: I'm not sure if I have ever really seen anxiety as a significant barrier for teens and young adults. But as you asked this question and I have thought more on it, I think it has, but in not ways that are always that obvious. I think one can have anxiety, but still comes to church. But anxiety will keep them from maybe doing things like getting baptized for fear of being up front. Or from taking a mission trip because of fear of the unknowns. Or fear on coming to a small group for fear of being asked about their faith and not knowing what to say. So I think that anxiety doesn't necessarily act as an initial barrier to going to church, but will act as a greater barrier as more and more opportunities arise for them in church. Then they are faced with the decision to face their anxiety or not. But I know there are more extreme cases of anxiety, things like panic attacks, where one maybe can't even get to church. Also, I owe a lot to [Adam McHugh](#) and his book *Introverts in the Church* on this topic. Great, great book and a must read for anyone in church....especially leadership. But I wonder how many people are introverted in nature and have a mild anxiety about participating in a very extroverted culture like church. So something like raising hands in worship, doing a crazy high school skit, shaking hands with someone new before church, or being in a small group can raise anxiety and be huge barriers for people in Jr. High, High School.....and really, all ages.

I was asked by a parent last Sunday about what advice I had for a kid who didn't want to go through confirmation. Ultimately I didn't have great advice. But what I told them was this. And this mainly comes from my youth pastors friends who are more seasoned in youth ministry than I am. My friend Neil Gatten in particular from La Casa de Cristo Lutheran Church helped me with this. Give your kids some freedom in their choices spiritually. If you don't empower kids to make choices in life, then you haven't set them up for success when they leave the nest. So it might look something like, "We expect/want you to go to church with us on Sunday, but it's up to you if you want to go on Wednesday nights, or attend events?" I think that's real important to give choice and freedom here. Also, I think when it comes to anxiety (and let's assume we don't know if anxiety is at the heart), we need to talk to our kids. Ask them why they don't want to attend? What's going on with them? Get below the surface. Ask them about their fears of being at church, or what they worry about. I told the mom who asked me about confirmation this. I told her that if I was faced with confirmation as a kid, I would have wanted to get confirmed. But I would have had so much anxiety about having to read catechism stuff out loud in my class that I would have done anything.....even rebelled to the point of getting kicked out of the class....to avoid the fear of having to read out loud and being embarrassed when I couldn't, or when I stuttered. So maybe there are anxious reasons under our kids' reasons for not wanting to participate in church. We need to figure out creative ways to explore those. And if we can't, help find someone who can.

Since I believe we ultimately grow by facing our anxieties, I think that I would help an adult by SLOWLY, moving them towards opportunities that they desired to participate in, but had anxiety about. I also think I would find 1-2 people that they could confide in that would be a helpful

community for them at church. That connection goes a long way in helping people face anxiety. I also would explore whether or not the community they were in was the right community for them. Putting commentary aside on our church shopping and want driven church culture, not every church is the right "fit" for us. If I'm someone who is anxious a lot, or more introverted per se, I may not feel a sense of belonging in a more charismatic church. I might want to explore faith in an Anglican community for example, or a community that practices more solitude, space and has liturgical practices that are more communal driven than individually driven. This could be a whole other book, but our temperament and the way God wired us may have us exploring a different faith community than the one we are currently in.

Ultimately, adults can better face their anxieties when they know they aren't going to be judged, the shame is removed, and they have a community of people around them who support them and walk through life with them. Maybe as leaders in the church, we as well have to rethink how we approach, work with, and welcome people into our midst who are struggling with anxiety. It's a two-way street.

IF: What recommendations would you make to pastors and church staff members who want to create welcoming and inclusive ministry environments for kids and adults who struggle with anxiety?

RS: I think this begins by first education pastors and church staff members. For example, I knew that I was somewhat introverted, but I didn't realize the exclusion that many introverts feel in a church until I read Adam McHugh's book. So that was an education for me. And I wish I had read that book before I began pastoring because I think I would have made more intentional space

introverted type people than I did. So educating people because I think there needs to be a paradigm shift in our thinking. As we educate pastors and church staff members we have to help equip them to have hearts, eyes, ears, minds, souls, etc. to see people who are struggling with anxiety. Because we can educate all we want, but if we don't help them see people differently, and get below the surface of what is going on, then all the reading won't help.

I would train leaders to create spaces and groups and communities in churches where anxious people are welcome. To do this I might eliminate things that might make a person anxious. Like getting up front to give a testimony. I might not require small group participation. But here is the catch.....lots of people face their anxiety by getting up front at some point and sharing their testimony (perhaps about anxiety), and small group connection is a good source of help for people who are anxious. But I think we eliminate immediate barriers and as anxious people become more comfortable in a setting, we implement stuff that helps them grow and face their anxiousness.

I think it's probably a lot to ask a church to change a lot of stuff to make an anxious person feel welcomed. So I think we have to rely on individuals and ministries to come alongside people and minister to them. I also think, as I said above, some faith communities probably lend themselves better to people who are anxious. And so we might have to help direct people to places and churches that aren't ones we participate in and help them find a place where they can be all that God has created them to be.

One time when I was in grade school at VBS I was called upon to read. And I couldn't read...I stuttered my way through it. Clearly the teacher knew this. Why didn't they pull me aside to see what was going on? Why didn't

they ask if I wanted to read at all? I think there are some things we can do better like noticing a kid who is anxious, and coming alongside of them and just asking them how we can better help them navigate life, church community, etc.?

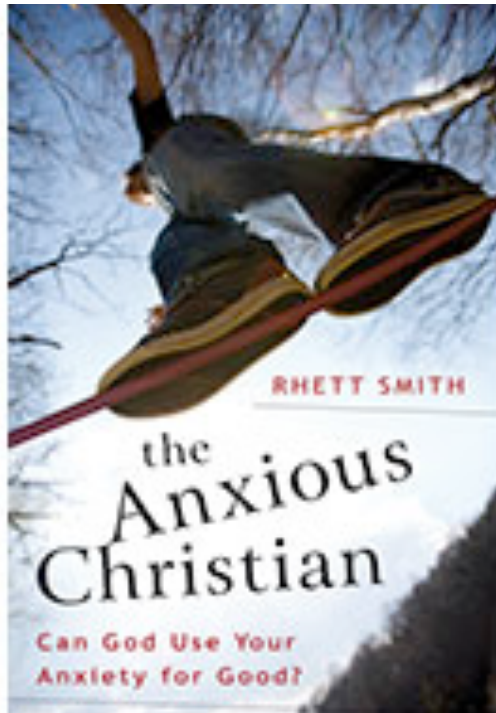
And as I ramble on this question I'm faced with the fact that this is a hard question to answer. I would start with just dealing with the stigma of anxiety in the faith community. The stigma that allows many people to judge other's faith because they are anxious. So we as a Church have to eradicate the stigma of anxiety, and if we can make progress there, then perhaps we will find people in the faith communities we participate in, helping those with anxiety in ways that we could not imagine. If we can even have an open discussion about anxiety...and if we can even get a few people at a time to rethink their view of anxiety....that is a win in my opinion. It's slow, tedious work, but I believe it will make an impact.

IF: You've written extensively about the use of new media in ministry. How do you foresee churches using electronic ministry to better serve the needs of youth and adults with anxiety?

RS: This is a real interesting question because I haven't really thought much of it from that perspective. I've done some ministry with LifeChurch.tv (www.lifechurch.tv) in the past, and they are essentially the leaders in the online space. My friend Tony Steward was their first online pastor, and the first person I know of to hold that position. Now lots of churches are starting to do that. I'm wrestling with how we live as an embodied community in the flesh, but also take advantage of all the online tools that are out there. I think that a person could perpetuate their anxiety in unhealthy ways by relying on online tools, or by only watching services online from their home. But again, that could be a great entry

point to get connected to a faith community when a person may never step foot in a church. So maybe the new media tools are a good way to lower the initial barriers and as we do that, we need to think of creative ways to use the tools that allow people to come out of hiding or the shame they feel, and enter not only to online community, but in person, face-to-face community. I see the tools helping aid people with anxiety, but not as the ends in and of themselves. They are rather the means to help us come alongside people with anxiety. This is a huge issue in the church, and I am at the point where I can be swayed in several different directions. I use tons of tools online and they are amazing. I met some of my best friends in Dallas on Twitter and FB and my blog when we moved here. But I desired to move offline and meet up with them for coffee and lunch. So the tools were the catalyst that helped me connect and face my anxiety and move towards a face to face in person connection. But they weren't the ends in themselves. I still use the tools to connect with my friends online, but I also meet with them in person. They aid and benefit each other.

I could envision a scenario where a kid might be socially anxious and have a hard time coming to church or attending a more intimate setting like youth group. As the pastor, rather than trying to just get them to show up to events. I might begin a journey of chatting on FB with them because that is a much easier medium for people who are anxious to communicate on. The more and more I chat with that kid, the more and more they hopefully feel safe, and trusting of me. As we build that trust and relationship I may ask to meet him for lunch. And as we meet more regularly for lunch, I may ask him to meet me up at church one day, etc. etc. It's a slow progression and we have to be patient. Discipleship doesn't happen overnight, and neither does this.



On the flip side, I think it's important that I also state that social media and technology use is also a great source of anxiety for many people. There is lots of research being done on the rewiring of our brains through the use of technology, and how our open lives on Facebook have created a sense of anxiety in kids as they look at their friend's lives online, and wonder why their lives aren't like that. I have worked with kids in counseling who become anxious because they aren't invited to all the parties that their friends are invited to, and they see all the photos on Facebook. I know of girls who struggle with anxiety and eating disorders because they feel like their body image doesn't match up with the ones they see online. So technology can create anxiety, and we can feel it when we aren't constantly plugged in as well. So as we use technology to help people who are anxious, I think we have to ask the right questions regarding how we use it and why we use it.

I think that social media can be a great platform for people to talk about anxiety, and to have a more open discussion on the issue. My own hope is that my book, and the discussions that occur online can help open the topic, and help

eliminate some of the stigmas we have about anxiety. So technology could be a great front line tool for us to look at the issue and discuss it.

IF: What's the most important takeaway for church leaders seeking to minister more effectively with persons who struggle with anxiety?

The most important takeaway I believe is this. We are all anxious. We all will and do experience anxiety. Anxiety is part of our human condition. With that being said, I believe that God uses our anxiety as a tool to help us grow. It's a catalyst that keeps us from getting stuck, as it propels us to continually follow God. I think church leaders could best help others by reframing anxiety as a positive aspect in our lives when we pay attention to it and respond properly to it. 'What is God saying to you in your anxiety' is a great question in my mind. As church leaders we just have to do a better job of pastorally caring for people... that takes time...that takes relationship. Something many church leaders don't have or don't make time for.

More about Rhett:

In addition to being the author of *The Anxious Christian*, Rhett is a contributing online journalist to Youth Specialties and Fuller Youth Institute, as well as writing articles for Collide Magazine, Start Marriage Right, etc. He also co-authored *Outspoken: Conversations on Church Communication and The New Media Frontier* where he wrote on the topic of "New Media Ministry to the MySpace-Facebook Generation."

Rhett earned his Master of Divinity and MS in Marital and Family Therapy degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. He is a member of the The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, The Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapists, and The Dallas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

Rhett's new book, *The Anxious Christian: Can God Use Your Anxiety for Good?* is available in paperback and Kindle editions through Amazon.com. You can read his blog at www.rhettsmith.com

Matthew Stanford

Mental Health Grace Alliance

Waco, TX



Viewing Mental Illness Through the Eyes of Faith

Matthew Stanford is a world-class neuroscientist currently doing some remarkable work examining at the impact of trauma on faith and spiritual development. I'm convinced that God is preparing to use Matt and his colleagues at Baylor and at Mental Health Grace Alliance to do some remarkable work in changing attitudes in the church toward people with mental illness.

Matt is a Professor of Psychology, Neuroscience and Biomedical Studies at Baylor University. Professionally he has worked with a variety of mentally ill and brain injured individuals.

He is the author of the Focus on the Family recommended resource, *Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness* (2008) and *The Biology of Sin: Grace, Hope and Healing for Those Who Feel Trapped* (2011). A fellow of the Association for Psychology Science (APS) his research on the interplay between psychology and faith has been featured nationally on radio talk shows, TV and publications such as USA Today and the New York Times,

as well as news websites including Fox, MSNBC, Yahoo and US News & World Report.

He is the co-founder and director of **Mental Health Grace Alliance** (MHGA) where he continues to write, conduct training seminars and serve those affected by mental illness and their families. We're honored that Matt will be speaking on the topic of ***Viewing Mental Illness Through the Eyes of Faith*** for Inclusion Fusion 2012.

Matt's presentation is designed for anyone interested in learning more about mental illness from a Biblical perspective. Topics covered in this workshop will include:

What is a Biblical and clinical understanding/response to mental illness?

How to recognize mental illness.

The essential role of the church in the recovery and treatment process.

How to respond to families dealing with mental illness.

How to create mental health related supportive care within the church.

Resources to help families navigate the health care system and everyday life.

The heart and vision of the MHGA is to see the works of God displayed in individuals and families affected by mental illness (John 9:1-3). This presentation will help equip you and your church to effectively minister and support those living with mental illness. Don't miss it!!

More on Matthew:

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Check out [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#) of our interview with Matt from last winter examining his group's research on the relationship between mental health and faith practice.



Mental Health Grace Alliance

Nella Uitvlugt

Friendship Ministries

Grand Rapids, MI



Ministering Beside Adults With Intellectual Disabilities

Nella Uitvlugt is one of the leading advocates in the church for inclusive ministry to adults with intellectual disabilities. She was at the top of our list of speakers we wanted for last year's inaugural Inclusion Fusion. We're glad that God has provided Nella to be part of this year's Web Summit via video. She'll be presenting on the topic ***Ministering Beside Adults with Intellectual Disabilities***.

Churches need to plan for ministry to adults with intellectual disabilities. In Nella's talk, viewers will learn how church members can walk alongside adults with intellectual disabilities, creating an environment of mutual growth in their faith journey together. Friendship Ministries has been doing that for 30 years through relationships developed within a Bible Study setting that enables our "friends" to

become active members of God's family.

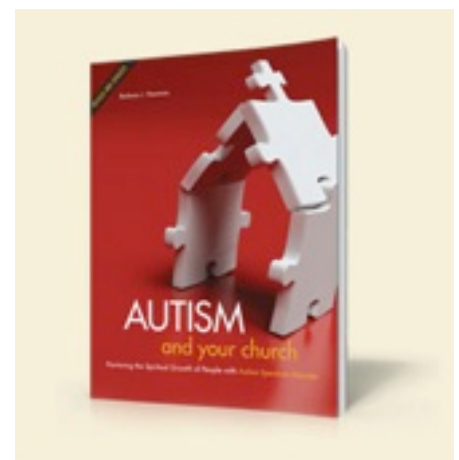
Nella is the Executive Director of **Friendship Ministries**, an interdenominational organization for people with Intellectual Disabilities. She is also the Past-President of the Religion and Spirituality Division of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, served on the leadership team of the National Council of Churches in Christ Committee on Disabilities, and the Advisory Committee of the CRCNA Disability Concerns Committee. She consults with pastors and congregations, giving presentations in both the US and Canada regarding the spiritual needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Nella has received the Christian Service Award from Bethesda Lutheran Communities.

More on Nella:

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Katie Wetherbee

Key Ministry

Chagrin Falls, Ohio



Sticks and Stones, Clicks and Phones: Solutions to Prevent Bullying at Church

Here's a preview from Katie of her presentation for this year's Inclusion Fusion...

It has become a national public health crisis keeping over 160,000 children home from school every day.

Adults need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of this issue:

- Sudden changes in appetite
- Gastrointestinal distress
- Chronic headaches
- Loss of eye contact
- Poor posture
- Decreased communication with parents and peers
- Increase of nervous habits such as tics or nail biting
- It's not autism. It's not a virus or an environmental issue. So what is this insidious threat?

Bullying.

And unfortunately, bullying is not only happening in schools, but in neighborhoods and extracurricular activities as well. Sadly, children with special needs are often targeted by bullies at a much higher rate than their typically developing peers. This causes a great impediment to their learning and their opportunities to make and keep friends. Students report that often, adults don't know about the instances of bullying. In addition, peers join in or ignore the bullying as it occurs.

Research tells us that bullying is largely about social power...attaining it and keeping it. While we might think of a bully as a large, tough caricature, children who engage in this behavior are very likely to look just like anyone else. Many times, these individuals are in the middle of the social power structure and are trying to gain more recognition from those they perceive as having more control. To accomplish this, children who bully others exclude, start rumors or tease their targets. When others join in or laugh, the "bully" has been recognized as a leader and therefore, has power. This cycle can be difficult to break, both for the child who is bullied AND for the child who is bullying others.

As we look forward to Inclusion Fusion, we are going to tackle this issue of bullying...and more importantly, focus on bullying prevention. Pastors, KidMin leaders and volunteers need to know how to proactively prevent bullying, because sadly, this kind of behavior can—and does—occur in churches, too. We hope you will join us to learn some practical strategies that can change the social culture of Sunday mornings. And, as we focus on kindness and community in our programs, wouldn't it be wonderful if what we accomplish at church could

change the culture of schools and neighborhoods as well?

*National Education Association data

Katie Wetherbee is a former special education teacher who now serves as Director of Education for Key Ministry. In this role, Katie works with pastors and volunteers to help them understand and include families affected by disabilities. She also enjoys writing about parenting, teaching and ministry for a variety of publications. Most of all, Katie loves being a wife and mom, and is proud to be known as the mom who makes the best chocolate chip cookies.

More on Katie:

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Ryan Wolfe

First Christian Church

Canton, OH



“If You Build It, They Will Come”

Here's a short description of Ryan's message...

Several years ago I read a book "The Present Future" by Reggie McNeal that challenged me to look at ministry in a way I had never considered before. For the first time I saw myself as a missionary in my own community. My wife and I began coaching as volunteers in our local Challenger Baseball League. This is a division of Little League baseball for children with disabilities. As our relationships continues to develop our

eyes were opened to so many possibilities. One of those possibilities was the fact that the league had grown so much that they did not have enough fields to play on. Our church like most others has underutilized space. We had the space, there was a need, and we met that need! We raised over \$50,000 in less than a year and built a top notch baseball facility for the children of our community with disabilities. This effort cost the church ZERO dollars! We now have during baseball season at least two teams on the field every

night of the week. We have also seen several families from the league start to attend our church. Edgewood Field is not only used by the Challenger League but it is also now the home field of two of our local Special Olympics softball teams. We can't wait to share with you ideas on how to not only see the needs of your community but also to meet the needs of your community.

More on Ryan:

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Twitter: @ryanewolfe

Website: <http://firstchristian.info/building-a-baseball-field/>

Ryan's Bio:

Ryan serves as Pastor to the Developmentally Disabled community of Stark County. Married to my best friend and father to two amazing children. Our family clings to two Bible verses. Micah 6:8 "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Proverbs 31:8 "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.". These verses have propelled our family into our efforts of reaching out to our community. We started a Day Services Program, built a baseball field for Special Olympics teams, help Proms for over 400 adults, and more! These ministry efforts have been blessed by God because they are near to His heart.



Mike Woods

Special Friends

Ministry-First Baptist

Orlando



Partnering With Parents

Mike Woods was an original member of our Program Committee for **Inclusion Fusion**, and would have been a featured presenter if not for having accepted the position of Director of Special Needs for **First Baptist Orlando** shortly before last year's inaugural Special Needs Ministry Web Summit. Now that Mike has settled into his new position, we're thrilled that he'll be presenting on the topic ***Partnering With Parents*** at this year's Inclusion Fusion.

What matters more than anything else is that kids with special needs have an authentic relationship with God. Scripture reminds us that God chooses to use family as the primary

place to nurture a child's faith. Mike's presentation will share some proven ideas on how your church/ministry can help parents actively participate in the spiritual formation of their own child (or children) with special needs.

Mike worked for 9 years as the Autism and Inclusion Specialist for a large St. Louis County school district. Mike has also worked as a Master Training Specialist for the Judevine Center for Autism and as an Early Interventionist for the Missouri First Steps Program. While living in North Carolina, Mike taught continuing education courses for special education teachers at Coastal Carolina College.

Mike is happily married to his lovely wife Linda and is the father of three wonderful boys, all of whom are on the autism spectrum.

In addition to Mike's thriving ministry at First Baptist Orlando, he and his team developed and released ***The Special Friends App*** for iOS and Android, the first (and only) app I've seen for parents of kids with special needs interested in promoting the faith development of their children. Mike graciously agreed to be interviewed about FBO's new app.

More on Mike:

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[www.facebook.com/
SpecialFriendsMinistry](http://www.facebook.com/SpecialFriendsMinistry)

Twitter: @specfriendsfbo

Check out the free app from Special Friends Ministry at First Baptist Orlando for lots of helpful resources for parents, church staff and volunteers, especially those caring for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders... <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/special-needs-ministry-at/>

IF: *What motivated your team to take on such a significant project?*

MW: The genesis for our app came one question posed in a team meeting by our Children's Pastor: "What can we do to help parents nurture their child's spiritual development at home?" He gave us a week to come up with some possible answers. I searched for answers in several different books, *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity*, *Spiritual Parenting*, and also read through the [book study that you did last year \(Steve\) on Think Orange](#). In the process of trying to come up with an answer to the problem other parents were experiencing, I discovered that I too had a problem.

As I read through Deut. 6:4-7, Psalm 78, and the central focus of the books I mentioned, I was reminded that as a parent I'm the one that God holds primarily responsible for my boys' spiritual development. My problem was that as a father to three boys on the autism spectrum, I had become so focused on their social, emotional, academic, and communication needs that I had been neglecting their spiritual needs. Why is this a problem? Because as Reggie Joiner said, "100 years from now the only thing that will truly matter in a child's life is his or her relationship with God." So at the end of the day parents have to look in the mirror and answer this question, "Have I invested my time in what really matters the most?" And what matters most, according to our Father, is our children's spiritual health. The app is our attempt to partner with parents and support them in what matters most: nurturing their child's spiritual development.

IF: *How can families who don't attend FBO make use of the app?*

MW: Great question, Steve. As you know there are a lot of families who have a child with special needs that

do not have a church to call "home." Between Apple and Android we've had almost 300 downloads of our special needs ministry app. We have about 50 families of children with special needs here at First Baptist Orlando. So that tells me that around 250 families who don't attend First Baptist Orlando have downloaded the app! We want to make sure that our app is supporting those families too. In the bigger picture our special needs ministry app will support all parents by accomplishing two things: 1) Give them a plan. Our app focuses on a different Christ-like virtue each and every month. The app will provide a system of support and a steady flow of relevant information via videos and podcasts, and 2) Show them how to "take the next step." Nurturing a child's spiritual development can feel like an overwhelming task for a group of parents who often feel overwhelmed already. Simple and useful ideas are provided each week to remind parents to pause and make the most of everyday moments with their child and strengthen their faith. For the parents who use Apple products, the special needs ministry app utilizes "push notifications" to alert parents to a recently published "take the next step" strategy.

IF: *Are there two or three "must-see" resources on the app for families of kids with special needs?*

MW: There are a handful of resources available on the special needs ministry app: blogs, podcasts, videos, tweets, and links to other special needs ministries that support families (like Key Ministry!) to name a few. The "must see" resources or what I consider to be the backbone of our app are the podcasts and videos. There are two types of podcasts on the app. The first is found under the LISTEN tab and these are podcasts that are focus on parenting and spiritual development type of topics. The second type of podcast is found under the GROW tab and these are

podcasts that are inspirational and focused on encouraging parents in their daily walk with the Lord. Our videos are found under the WATCH tab and are instructional. Parents (and special needs ministry volunteers) will find videos on visual schedules, crisis intervention, first-then boards, and more. Both podcasts and videos are designed to be listened to or watched in under 20-minutes.

IF: *How do you hope families will make use of the app?*

MW: The primary way that I hope parents will make use of our app is as a daily or weekly resource for encouragement and for ideas to nurture their child's faith. Parents of children with special needs are b-u-s-y! The goal is not to engage parents to do all things related to strengthening their child's faith! The app is designed to support parents in discovering one small thing that they can do, one small step that they can take to help their child become who God wants them to be.

IF: *Now that the app has been available for a number of weeks, what type of feedback have you received from parents and families?*

MW: We've received mostly positive feedback from parents about the special needs ministry app. 100% of this positive feedback has been from parents who have not yet found a church that can provide the type of support they need in order for their entire family to attend. They are grateful for this resource because their child's spiritual development is a priority for them. We've also received some constructive criticism and that's okay too. This type of feedback helps us to understand what's working and what's not working for parents and allow us to make adjustments to the app. One adjustment that was made based on feedback was to make some of our resources that we use in our Special Friends classroom at First

First Baptist Orlando available thru the app.

IF: *What additional resources do you hope to provide when updates are available?*

MW: The special needs ministry app is so new that we're still tweaking and improving what we are currently doing with it. We haven't given too much consideration just yet to what types of additional resources that we could provide. The one idea that we're kicking around is how to tie the app in with Google Hangouts so that we could develop communities of support for parents who need to connect with other parents.

The **Special Friends Ministry app** from First Baptist Orlando is available through iTunes by clicking on the icon in the right sidebar of this blog. [Click here](#) for a link to download the app from the Android Marketplace.



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Laura Lee Wright

Table Ministries

Orlando, FL



Leading With a Limp

Leadership development is a current hot topic. This quick presentation gives an overview of leadership. Participants will have a better understanding regarding the need to develop persons with disabilities for leadership and

how to include persons with disabilities into leadership.

Laura Lee has been a national figure in the field of disability ministry for many years. We hope you enjoy her passion for providing persons with disabilities the opportunity to use their gifts in the service of God's Kingdom.

More on Laura Lee:

e-mail:

lauralee@tableministries.com

Blog:

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Laura Lee Wright once had a friend who described her as a "Ministry Junkie". Laura Lee has a strong passion for developing people into strong Disciples of Christ and to see the universal church become whole. The church does not become whole until all persons are fully included into all aspects of church life, especially those living with disabilities. Over the last decade, Laura Lee has worked globally in large and small churches to help congregations include persons with disabilities.

Just recently, Laura Lee founded Table Ministries, a consulting agency helping churches and para-churches to understand the complexities of disabilities, and helping them to create space at the table.

Recently, Laura Lee began her pursuit of a PhD in leadership with the hopes of writing her dissertation of disability and leadership. She sits on the Young Life Capernaum national committee and loves hanging out with Young Life friends and leaders.



Help our Key Ministry team continue to serve churches **FREE** of charge!

Key Ministry's mission is to help churches reach families affected by disability by providing **FREE** resources to pastors, volunteers, and individuals who wish to create an inclusive ministry environment. We invite you to partner with us as we advance the Kingdom through our collaboration with the local and global church.

We have designed this virtual catalog to create fun opportunities for our ministry supporters to join in our mission. The Key Catalog includes a variety of gift options for every budget. A

gift from the Key Catalog also makes for an amazing gift for a friend or loved one who is passionate about seeing the Body of Christ become more inclusive of people with disabilities. We can provide a "gift certificate to present to your loved one: detailing how the gift purchased in their honor will advance the Kingdom. E-mail us at info@keyministry.org to request one)

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