

BREAKING BARRIERS

Published by Disability Concerns, Christian Reformed Church in North America Spring 2006; Issue 70

A Sledgehammer in New York

When I was in grade 9 or 10 a local educational group loaned our school a number of wheelchairs. The students took turns, a few hours at a time, wheeling around in them, trying to find out what the world looked like from a permanently seated position.

The experiment wasn't too successful. Why? Because for a few hours at a time, wheelchairs are awesome toys. We had wheelchair races, played wheelchair tag, and then ran over all our friends' toes. Wheelchairs were fun!

But while my empathy didn't really kick in back then, I got a better feel for it a few summers ago. I spent three weeks in New York with my buddy Andrew. His motorized scooter isn't a toy to him (though he too, likes to roll over his friends' toes); it's just the way he gets around.

While hanging out with Andrew I started seeing some of the "stupid little things" disabled people have to deal with. For example, our hotel claimed to be handicapped accessible. It was equipped with a special elevator that was a little wider so people in wheelchairs or scooters could roll right in. But outside the front door a 12-inch step blocked entry to all wheeled traffic. Stupid!

I got a little more annoyed when I found out that while tickets to a New York Liberty basketball game cost as little as \$10, but if you're disabled they start at \$26.50. You

would figure there would be a law against doing something like that.

Getting dinner was frequently frustrating. Half of the restaurants in the city had a front step or two that blocked the way.

I became downright angry when we discovered that the subway station had no elevator in it, so a person in a wheelchair had better be careful where he gets on and off. Every time we used the system a few guys had to haul Andrew's 200-pound scooter up multiple flights of stairs while Andrew, with the assistance of the stairwell handrail and the arm of a helpful passerby, slowly hauled himself up step by step. Isn't that the stupidest thing you've ever heard of?

Effectively banished from the subway, we gave the buses a try. I was still angry about the subway fiasco as we boarded the bus. But then we started talking with a man whose wheelchair was strapped in next to Andrew's scooter.

"What do you think of the New York transit system?" Andrew asked, "Do you find it very accessible?"

"It's wonderful!" the man replied.

"But what about the subway?"

"Oh, I've never been on the subway. But the buses here allow me to go anywhere I want."

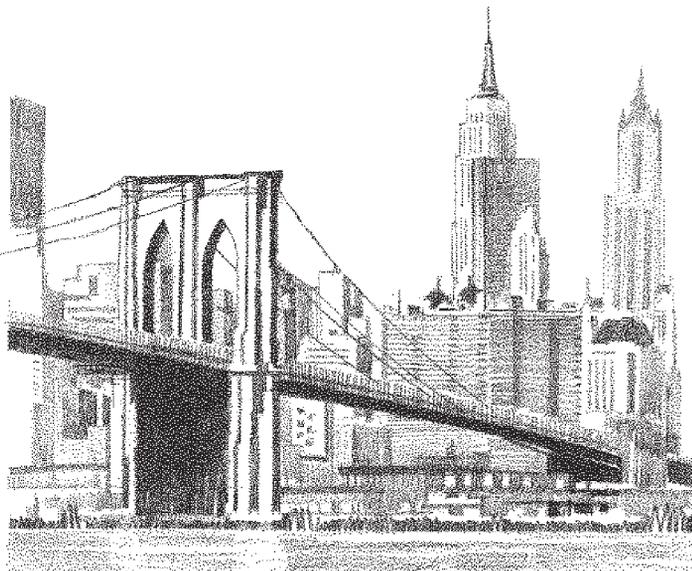
The man went on to tell us that whenever he visited his sister in another city he couldn't even leave the house because the buses there weren't wheelchair-accessible. "It's so much better here!"

I was angry before I met this man. Why weren't people more empathetic? Why weren't they loving their disabled neighbors like themselves? Disabled people seemed to be getting a raw deal in New York.

After talking with him I started wondering whether my righteous indignation was a little misplaced. If people with disabilities can use buses to get to any part of the city they want, is it really outrageous that they can't use the subway?

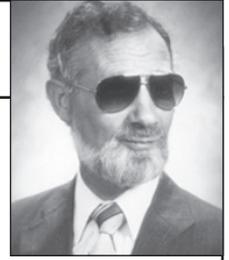
I soon started noticing the many ways in which the needs of the disabled were being addressed. Maybe half of the restaurants in New York did have steps barricading the entry...but I didn't have to go further than a

continued on page 8



Jon Dykstra

From the Director



Some churches treat people who have cognitive impairments and developmental disabilities as mentally unfit for full membership and participation in communion. This is tragic. It's also in conflict with biblical teaching.

The depth of new members' theological understanding should be evaluated by standards appropriate to their level of ability. When people show in their own way that they trust God for everything, they are expressing the heart of the Christian faith.

The Bible says in Romans 10 that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead we will be saved. Surely people who have cognitive impairments and developmental disabilities can meet that requirement.

We may rightly expect a more detailed account of the faith from those who have no mental limitations, because each one's account of the faith should be in keeping with his or her abilities.

However, the self-examination Saint Paul prescribes in 1 Corinthians 11 is not a matter of mental capacity but of spiritual sincerity. In the service of profession of faith we dedicate everything we have to the Lord. Some have more of one gift and some have more of another, but each has something from the Lord to offer. The ceremony should accommodate that variety.

Church membership is not just for those who contribute "enough" to the congregation, but for all those God calls and brings in. Their capacities range from the babblings of infants, to the gasps of those with Alzheimer's, and everything between—including the deep ponderings of theologians.

No one is saved by what he or she brings to the church. We are saved only by the grace of God. As Saint Peter said to the church in Jerusalem about Cornelius and the other gentiles in Acts 11, if God gives them his Spirit how can we refuse to let them in?

In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul rebukes some believers for going ahead with the Lord's Supper while ignoring the poor members who had too little to eat. He tells them that they are not discerning the body of Christ when they act this way. By this he does not mean the sacramental body in the elements, but the church body of believers. He makes this clear in the next chapter with his powerful description of the church as a body. The self-examination he commands these careless members to conduct is to bring them to realize that their neglect of the marginal church members is a deadly sin against the Church, the body of Christ, and therefore against the Lord himself.

But what we too often do with this call to self-examination is to turn it into an intellectual inquiry as to how much the professing Christian knows about the catechism or about the church and its rules. These things are valuable to know, and people should know them if

they have the capacity. But we should not use this examination to exclude members with developmental disabilities from communion and from full church membership. Perhaps they can not give intellectually complete answers to the council's questions, or perhaps they can not speak clearly enough to be understood, but their faith in Christ as their savior is unmistakable from their demeanor and from their body language.

If we exclude people from the Lord's Supper because they can not put their faith into words, we are denying them the very sacrament which our Lord instituted to convey himself to believers without words through the touch, the taste, the smell, and the color of the elements. That is, we are doing the same thing the church in Corinth was doing. We are ignoring and excluding poor and disabled people from participating as equals with ourselves in the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a rehearsal for the eternal Kingdom feast. That's why the Lord said during the last supper that he wouldn't drink wine again till he drinks it new in the kingdom. That's why he said we should remember him by celebrating it till he comes again.

That's also why we must get it right, now, during the rehearsal. If we exclude people with disabilities who belong with us, we will be in danger of getting ourselves excluded when the real feast begins.

To help church members deal with this important issue, Faith Alive Christian Resources has prepared a booklet called *Expressing Faith in Jesus: Church Membership for People with Cognitive Impairments*. It is available from Faith Alive Christian Resources by calling 1-800-333-8300. I urge you to purchase it and read it through. It analyzes profession of faith and includes many practical suggestions for bringing people with mental impairments into the church.

Breaking Barriers is a newsletter on disability concerns, published by Disability Concerns, Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560; phone: (616) 224-0801. Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Disability Concerns, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8.

It is published three times a year and is mailed without charge. A \$5.00 suggested donation for annual subscription costs is appreciated.

Rev. James L. Vanderlaan is Director of Disability Concerns and Editor of *Breaking Barriers*.

To reach us

Phone: 616-224-0801

Fax: 616-224-0834

E-mail: vanderli@crcna.org

Letters

Thank you so much for the concern and love you show disabled people. I enjoy *Breaking Barriers* so much, I read it cover to cover. Involvement in our church and community is so important for this wonderful group of very special people. They truly teach us so much.

Sandy Uthoff
Michigan



Keep up the great work. May God give strength and courage. He is able and willing to give hope, courage, and love.

Rev Wilmer and Ruth Witte
Michigan



Dear Reverend Doctor Vanderlaan,

I praise you for the most recent issue of *Breaking Barriers*.

It is one of the best issues you have ever published. I always pass on my copy to a friend who needs arm braces to walk. I'll send you a few dollars to cover printing and postage when I can. I praise the Lord that I am a GS05 for the federal government despite my physical and emotional difficulties.

Richard C. Jackson
Hawaii

Letters are welcome in keeping with the purpose of *Breaking Barriers*. They may be edited for style and length.
—Rev. James Vanderlaan

You may now access
Breaking Barriers through
our website at

<http://www.crcna.org/pages/disability.cfm#publications>



Caregivers!

Using the following web community address, caregivers can ask and answer questions or make comments that they feel could benefit someone.

www.caregiver.guidedvision.com

Please try it out and let us know what you think.

—JV

(Note: The following meditation was published in the 2005-06 winter issue, but the author's last name was incorrect. We apologize for the error and publish Heidi's meditation again with the correct name.)

The Kindnesses of the Lord

I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me," and so he became their Savior. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

—Isaiah 63:7-9

Sometimes I wish I were a very little child. The world is full of miseries and unkindness, and the very young are not as aware of this. Being able to ride in a stroller looks like the best thing.

When I see this verse, I am gradually comforted. I see that God is compassionate and kind. I see that he has chosen people to be his, and even in my sorrows, I believe that I am one of them. The things that distress me also distress him. The more I can grow to reflect his character, the clearer my witness will be. The presence of the Holy Spirit translates my inept prayers even when I am depressed.

God loves me enough to take me away from the devil's hand. My soul is out of Satan's reach. This verse even says God carries me! Who needs a stroller? Being carried by God has to be better.

As the Holy Spirit shifts my perspective, I see things I can do. I can tell about all the things God has done and provided for me. How many are there? Although I do have cerebral palsy and my body doesn't function as well as an ordinary person's, my mind is undamaged, and I can think and be creative. God allowed me to grow up in a Christian family, and I know the most important thing of all, the security of belief in Jesus Christ.

After I graduated from an excellent Christian college, I was unemployed for quite some time. One of the jobs I applied for was in a town in California. After I learned that I did not get that job, I also heard that flooding heavily damaged the California town. God spared me any involvement with that situation by refusing me employment there.

The job God did open to me was with a Christian publisher in my own hometown. I could do my work in my own home, without needing to travel. I helped prepare many manuscripts for publication, works that still praise God's power.

God has done even more for me than this, but what could you tell? What has God done for you?

—Heidi Kortman

KEEP ON KEEPING ON

The New Hope Support Network for Extra Special Families is the name of the disability ministry of the Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, New Jersey. We are a support team for families and friends of children and adults who have disabilities, or as we prefer to say, different abilities.

Our goal (destination) is to create a new community where children and adults who have different abilities will be accepted and provided the accommodations and modifications they need to worship, work, and socialize with their peers.

New Hope has been in existence for nearly five years, but during the last few years we have changed significantly. We began to realize that to truly bring children and adults of varying abilities together, we needed to help them build stronger family relationships. So we moved toward encouraging families to participate in church, community, and school meetings and training activities.

New Hope has developed inclusion packets to promote inclusion in church programs, day care, and after school programs. We are always ready to intervene in response to parent or program requests.

For example, we found that many parents were unable to find appropriate after-school care for their children with autism. Through the grace of God, New Hope was able to bring about an innovative collaboration to start the first-of-its-kind after-school program for autistic children in the public schools. This program has been so successful and has filled such a need that there is a long waiting list, and parents from other schools are even calling for information!

Another change is our tutoring program. For the past few years New Hope has trained a cadre of men to teach ADHD-classified boys to read. We have developed a reading curriculum which centers on the interests of the boys. The program provides a spiritual context in which they learn how to pray, and an enrichment part in which they learn how to perform the task they are reading about. For example, while learning to read about golf, the boys also learned to play golf.

Realizing that we were not maximizing the capabilities of approximately 125 boys and girls with our after-school program and our Saturday program, New Hope applied for and received a grant to develop a Family Technology Literacy Center. This center helps families integrate assistive technology into their challenging educational needs. We are currently in the process of setting up this exciting new program.

If we elected to give an award for the most improved students, two children enrolled in our Friendship Class would win. The boy has autism and the girl has ADHD. It is hard to believe they are the same children who used to kick, scream and bite. The whole church rejoiced in seeing Ian recite a Bible verse for the Youth Day program in front of the entire congregation during morning worship.



(left to right) Barbara Brooks, Lenore Maine, and Lois Van Der Stad

In addition, he plays the tambourine for Sunday school and for the church service.

We are also excited about the new book from Friendship Ministries titled *Expressing Faith in Jesus: Church Membership for People with Cognitive Impairments*. It appears that this curriculum is appropriate for other populations as well, and we will be testing the waters.

For several months, concern had been expressed about people who cannot hear. So we made an announcement, and the Signing for Jesus Chorale was born. Our instructor is a certified teacher of the deaf who grew up in the church. Although we really enjoy signing a song each month, we are eager to become more sign-proficient so that we can witness with people who depend on sign language.

A few months ago, we had a "Different Abilities Awareness Sunday" during the morning services and Sunday School. The Signing for Jesus Chorale rendered the "Lord's Prayer," the pastor gave an encouraging sermon about how our weakness can make us strong, and a New Hope spokesperson gave an update on the New Hope ministry. The "Different Abilities Awareness Day" ended with a dedication prayer to the Lord for the opening of the New Hope Resource Center library.

I would like to leave you with this thought. Disability ministry is not as challenging as you may think. We started out by appointing a Contact Person who invited a few people to join a disability concerns team. A short needs assessment was made to determine what resources were already available and what was needed to make the church more accessible and comfortable for people with different abilities. Then we got started, and to this day, WE JUST KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

Mary Cornish is Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church's contact for Disability Concerns and the Regional Disability Consultant in Classis Hackensack.

We Live By Faith, Not By Sight"



Kim and Joe

OASIS for the Visually Impaired

Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight." This verse provides hope and encouragement for severely visually impaired adults who receive services from OASIS For the Visually Impaired, our new Christian non-profit organization in the Chicago suburbs.

OASIS For the Visually Impaired, located in Park Forest, Illinois, provides one-on-one independent living skills training, rehabilitation workshops, support group sessions, and resource information to adults who are finding it difficult to cope with vision loss.

Participants who are losing their vision receive low-cost or free products and devices that will enable them to perform basic tasks of daily living. Such items include talking watches, bold-lined writing paper, felt-tip pens, large-print check registers, and signature guides.

We encourage family members to attend support group sessions and rehabilitation workshops in order to better understand the visual impairments of their loved ones and learn how they can effectively help them cope with vision loss.

Our organization also participates in community health fairs and disability expos in order to educate the general public about vision loss.

OASIS For the Visually Impaired became a nonprofit corporation in December 2004. We, Kimberly and Joseph

Kuster, its co-founders, ran the corporation out of our home in Orland Park, Illinois until the Lord blessed us with a new office in Park Forest, Illinois on September 1, 2005.

We had our beginning at Orland Park Christian Reformed Church on April 4, 1996 as a small support group for adults with visual impairments. There were only three attendees at the first support group session. We continue to hold support group sessions at Orland Park CRC and have three additional groups throughout the Chicago suburbs. One of our newest support groups is located at Calvin CRC in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

OASIS For the Visually Impaired currently serves approximately 75 visually impaired adults through our support group meetings. Since our beginning we have served over 200 individuals with severe visual impairments. We hope that participants attending support group sessions or receiving other services will feel the love of Christ provided by our entirely volunteer staff.

We included OASIS as part of our name because we desire that members will view our organization and meetings as a safe haven or oasis as they cope with sight loss.

Often, when people experience vision loss, they feel as if they are stranded in the desert. As new members attend support group sessions, they begin to feel a newfound hope as they discover that they are not alone in dealing with their visual impairments. At support group meetings, they experience the love of other members who also have similar sight loss yet have a positive outlook in life.

Participants also experience the love of Christ as they interact with caring and compassionate volunteers. They learn how to cope with vision loss by learning new adaptive techniques for performing tasks of daily living with limited or no vision.

We had a deep desire to establish an organization for adults experiencing sight loss because our Lord Jesus Christ has brought us through our own desert experiences as we coped with our own severe visual impairment.

I, Joe, am totally blind and have been visually impaired since birth as a result of glaucoma. I am expert at obtaining resource information on visual impairment agencies and have 22 years of experience in facilitating support group sessions.

I, Kim, am legally blind and have been visually impaired since birth from optic nerve atrophy. I received training from Western Michigan University in providing rehabilitation services to adults with vision loss. I received my Master of Arts degree in rehabilitation teaching in December 1993.

For further information about OASIS For the Visually Impaired, contact us, Kim and Joe Kuster, at 708-283-9454 or write to OASIS For the Visually Impaired at 400 Forest Blvd., Park Forest, IL 60466. We can also be reached by e-mail at kjkuster@juno.com.

Pastoral Care

What pastoral needs do people with disabilities have? How can care providers in the church—elders, pastoral care workers, members of small groups—help to meet those needs?

Within the Disability Concerns Ministry, this question is receiving increasing attention. In this article I hope to provide some helpful information about “us”—people with disabilities—for those of you who can provide care.

Our situation varies a great deal from person to person. The severity of our disabilities (I include chronic illnesses) and the way we experience them differ, as do our personal characteristics and social supports. Our life of faith is uniquely ours, as is the way we function in our congregations and the way our congregations reach out to us. You will need to be flexible and sensitive to our personal and unique situation! But there are some common issues you are likely to find among us.

Many of us experience social isolation. Being confined to a wheelchair or to our home tends to isolate us. Our personal appearance or needs may cause people to avoid us. Our society marginalizes us because of its focus on perfect bodies and “looking out for Number One.” This tendency is often present in our congregations too. It is not uncommon that people charged with pastoral care find it difficult to visit us.

We have many practical issues to deal with. Managing our diet, dealing with doctors, finding transportation to a dialysis center, getting respite care—there are many such details! They can occupy much of our time, and it can be hard to juggle them all while we work towards a normal life. It would help us to discuss with you how we experience all this.

Various kinds of losses may threaten us or actually become real: the loss of roles we prized—mother,

spouse, student—the lost ability to go where we want to go and do what we want to do, the loss of being comfortable and free of pain. These losses often need to be grieved, and grieving them is easier if we can express them at suitable times to persons like you. Nicholas Wolterstorff has written that people suffer when something prized is ripped away from them. Don’t be surprised if you find we are suffering.

Serious health impairments and the losses they bring threaten the way we regard ourselves, our self-esteem, our self-confidence. For instance, a father who has always provided for his family may well question his worth as a person when a disability prevents him from working.

Health limitations are likely to affect our spirituality. This may refer to our personal well-being, our integrity, and intactness. A history of past abuse can be a factor here, and many of us have had such experiences. Health professionals have observed that illness can shake our life to its foundations and threaten to shatter us.

We are not always injured in spirit by a disability, but we often are. The way we view God, for instance, may require revision. We may come to see God not primarily as a providential being but as a God who grieves deeply for us. We may wrongly have assumed that disease would not touch us or our families. Charles Swindoll has written that in his experience Christians often expect a speedy cure from God when illness does strike, and are disillusioned with him when a cure does not come quickly.

In view of these possibly serious effects of health impairments, what can we rightly expect of you or of your small group? A key thing for us to remember, and for you to help us remember when we need it, is that God is not only a God of power who can cure us when he so desires, but

he is the one who *faithfully accompanies us through difficulties*. God never lets go of his children. Jesus calls us his sisters and brothers, and regards our ailments as if they were his own (Matt. 25).

God also expects you to accompany us faithfully. Let go of the idea that you must lead us to the right interpretation of scripture and “fix” what is wrong with us. Think instead about *being present to us*, of giving us time to describe for you what our life is like, to express any grief and joys we may have. Think of reading scripture and praying with us.

In such relationships there is spiritual healing, because you represent our Lord. Healing will come when you help us bring our needs to the Lord. If you do not come to visit us, do not include us in your small groups, if you avoid us, or if we avoid you, we are denied such means of grace.

There may be times when our problems require expert care. Think here of those who have experienced abuse but have not had counseling. There may be deep emotions, such as anxiety, that linger. We may also show a tendency to remain in our grief and fail to cope and adapt. Don’t hesitate to discuss our situations with your pastor or to recommend professional help.

What form might our spiritual growth take from our illness or disability? And how might your pastoral care help us grow this way? We all need to think more about such questions. In time we may begin to experience, despite everything our unhealthy bodies or minds tell us, that life is not about us but about our finding our place in that unfolding story of the coming Kingdom of God.

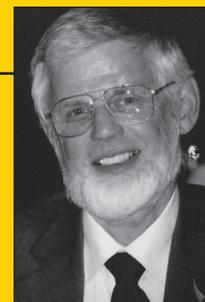
We must be reminded that we all are kin, and that you, too, have to find yourself in that story. There is no room within pastoral care for condescension and pity towards us,

Pastoral Care

for looking down on us as objects of care. You are wounded just as we are. Pastoral care is your walking and journeying with us. In

this there is Spirit power for both of us.

John Cook is the Regional Disability Consultant for Classis Eastern Canada. He has Chronic Fatigue Syndrome



D.O.O.R. International (Deaf Opportunity OutReach)

Think about it.

The worldwide Deaf community (about 25 to 40 million people), is one of the largest remaining unreached people groups in our world today. Imagine! Twenty-five to forty million people virtually unreached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is estimated that less than 1% of Deaf persons in the world are Christians.

These people possess distinct customs, habits, thought patterns, languages, and common experiences that make up a truly unique culture. Many a Deaf Russian would say he has more in common with a Deaf American than he does with his own family!

The "core" Deaf are one of the most overlooked, misunderstood, unreached people groups in our world today:

- The vast majority have received little or no effective education.
- 85% are functionally illiterate in the written language of their native country. Therefore, they cannot read the Bible or other religious material.
- They cannot be reached with radio or audio tapes.
- Sermons preached by hearing persons (even when interpreted by very good "sign language interpreters") are almost impossible for most Deaf people to understand due to the fact that the idioms, illustrations, theological terms, and structures of spoken sermons are all totally foreign to the Deaf culture.
- The Deaf who do become Christians are almost never allowed to become pastors, elders, deacons, choir members, Sunday School teachers, or even ushers in the hearing church.

D.O.O.R. (Deaf Opportunity OutReach) International believes we must train and equip Deaf to reach Deaf. We are dedicated to using Deaf workers to translate scripture into signed languages. We have developed methods for Deaf to do personal and group evangelism, teach inductive Bible studies, conduct believers' fellowships, lead corporate worship, as well as train and equip other Deaf leaders.

The ministry of DOOR is to train, equip and send the Deaf of every country to share the gospel, through the use of sign languages with the Deaf in their own country and around the world.

Our goal: to have indigenous reproducing Deaf Believers' Fellowships in every country. DOOR will bring the gospel, likely for the first



time, to a Deaf person. Without it, many Deaf will never "hear" the Good News! Remember—for the 25 to 40 million Deaf in our world, their only hope of "hearing" the gospel and becoming true believers is to see it on the hands and in the faces of other Deaf.

D.O.O.R. International is bringing the Gospel to the Deaf of our world. Over the past several years DOOR has found that the Deaf, just like the Israelites of old, learn best through the use of stories, dramas, and songs. Obviously, in the case of the Deaf, these activities must be conducted in Sign Language. And, because they must memorize virtually everything they learn, stories must be told in chronological order, reinforced with drama and songs, with each story building on a previous story.

We now have the tools needed to equip the Deaf to share the gospel with other Deaf. We call it Chronological Bible Storying (CBS). We have taken 170 chronological Bible stories and put them into Sign Language and taught them to key Deaf Christian leaders in 47 countries of the world.

DOOR is also preparing a "Bible" of these stories by putting the signing onto videotapes and DVDs. This will enable a second generation of Deaf Christians to have access to the "original text," helping to assure its accuracy as it passes from one generation to the next.

D.O.O.R. International currently has training programs in Costa Rica, Kenya, India, Thailand, and the Philippines. More than 270 Deaf students from 47 countries have come for training, and then returned to their "home" countries to spread the Good News to other Deaf in their region.

Are the Deaf receptive? Yes, they are. We covet your prayers and support!

*Mike Buus, President
D.O.O.R. International
(Deaf Opportunity OutReach)*

A Sledgehammer in New York, continued from page 1

couple of blocks to find a good restaurant with a ramp installed out front. And while it is annoying that there are no \$10 basketball tickets for people with disabilities, the management has ensured there is seating available to accommodate wheelchairs.

I soon realized that my "righteous" indignation wasn't particularly righteous and was instead rooted in a very immature empathy. Yes, Christ commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but in this command he requires more from us than just cheap empathy.

More worrying for me was the realization that my empathy was hardly empathy at all. I wanted "someone" to make things better for my buddy Andrew, but the someone I was thinking of was always someone else. I was eager to force other people to give of their time and money to deal with the problems Andrew encountered. The government could get things done on a grand scale, making it illegal to have steps in front of restaurants, or putting elevators at every subway stop. And they could force the local basketball team to install wheelchair-accessible seating in all sections. But I slowly came to realize that even with all that, Andrew would still have to rely on a little help from his friends—a little help from *me*.

I wanted to foist that responsibility off on others, on the government, but the truth is, I am my brother's keeper. Maybe others can do more, but I know I can.

In the end there was only one thing that still aggravated me about my stay in New York—that 12-inch step in front of our "accessible" hotel. The next time I'm in the Big Apple I'm bringing a sledgehammer.

*Jon Dykstra, Editor of Reformed Perspective
Alberta*

ONTARIO SPRING CONFERENCE 2006

April 29, 2006 is the date of the Ontario, Canada, Spring Disability Conference, the ninth annual gathering in a one-day format! The location this year will be the Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Waterdown, close to the Burlington, Ontario, offices of the CRC. These conferences, while set up to train congregational Disability Contact persons, also benefit pastoral care workers, pastors, elders and deacons.

The keynote speaker, Emeritus Ethics Professor James Olthuis, will address the topic of "Pastoral Care for Those Dealing with Disabilities", first explored in the 2005 conference. Dr. Olthuis, formerly with the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, is well qualified for the task: he is an engaging speaker with a unique vantage point. Participants will have ample opportunity for input and questions through participation in small groups.

All who are interested in disability issues are welcome to attend. Further details are available from Kim Vanderniet, Administrative Assistant Disability Concerns at 1-800-730-3490 or by email at vandernietk@crcna.ca



DISABILITY CONCERNS
of the Christian Reformed Church

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan
49560-0800

P.O. Box 5070, STN LCD1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 149
Grand Rapids,
MI