

# BREAKING BARRIERS



everybody belongs ■ everybody serves

Summer 2018 Extra

## **Adapting Ministry after a Stroke**

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When Jim Beltman had a stroke seven years ago, he was serving as pastor of congregational care at our church, Community Reformed. My husband enjoyed serving in that capacity, and many he called on were elderly, including some with disabilities. He advocated for them in practical ways, ensuring that adequate accessible parking and accessible entrances were available. Little did he realize these would be the very accommodations he himself would need.

Following his stroke and lengthy hospitalization and rehab, the pastors and congregation reached out to him in many caring ways. Unfortunately, the stroke caused physical disabilities and aphasia (loss of language function), keeping him from participating in a leadership capacity. However, by God's gracious healing and the amazing elasticity of the human brain, he is able to sing in worship services and, on occasion, join with the Men of Praise singing group.

Recently, when Jim had another brain injury and was hospitalized for several weeks, he again received kind attention from church staff and the congregation. He enjoys attending worship services and is always greeted warmly. Though his words are few, his smile is genuine and he feels very much a part of the church family.

Because Jim can use only one hand and his other hand has a tremor, it is difficult for him to do such tasks as handing out programs, folding paper, serving food, etc. On occasion he greets before services, and people don't seem to mind that he greets with the "wrong" hand. He accompanies the pastor/elder teams to serve home communion. Even though he does not read the liturgy and team members need to help with his wheelchair, Jim enjoys serving with them and in visiting members living in care facilities. We have also participated in the annual CROP walk by taking a shorter "wheelchair walk," which perhaps inspires others to support that ministry.