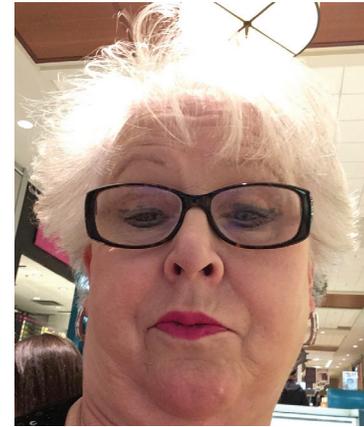




**MICHÈLE GYSELINCK,**  
Regional Disability Advocate  
for CRC Classis  
Eastern Canada



**KYLE CRIST,** Director of  
Congregational Care for Rejoice!  
Community Church (RCA), Iowa



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## Bearing Witness to God's Kingdom

where everybody belongs and everybody serves

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**LAURA AND  
REV. GERRY KONING,**  
Trinity CRC in Classis  
Georgetown  
(Michigan)



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## Advocates are Champions, Advisors, and Witnesses

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to join Jesus' followers forever. Advocates are not caregivers, though many caregivers are advocates. Advocates are not cheerleaders, though many are encouragers who also challenge negative attitudes. Advocates come alongside to champion, advise, and bear witness to the coming reality of God's kingdom where everybody belongs and everybody serves.

People with disabilities need space to advocate for themselves. Because many with disabilities and their families spend their lives advocating, they need other people to join them. Such support is life-giving and reduces the isolation many advocates and people with disabilities feel.

Michèle, Gerry and Laura, and Kyle share how advocacy shapes their communities and their discipleship efforts.

- ▶ **Michèle:** Becoming a regional disability advocate boosted her feelings of self-worth. "Most of us have little energy, but we don't look sick so people assume we're just lazy and look down on us." In her role, Michèle advocates that all people are beloved children of God who are vital in the body of Christ.
- ▶ **Gerry and Laura:** At their church, a young man with Down syndrome and the pastor shared the scripture reading. An elderly man shook each of the children's hands during the greeting time. "We get to witness the compassion of Christ. We see eyes glistening and exuberant smiles on those asked to participate in worship. We see believers in our congregation accepting their ministry among us."
- ▶ **Kyle:** Because he couldn't get in the door, safely use the restroom, or access the pulpit, "I decided to become a disability advocate out of necessity" and because "this is what scripture calls us to do." With a more accessible facility, other people with disabilities attend the church; all are welcomed as brothers and sisters in Christ.

How are you advocating so that all people share in, shape, and lead God's community? How is the Holy Spirit working in you and your congregation, calling you to be a community in which everybody belongs and everybody serves?

For a disability advocate position description, see [network.crcna.org/advocatejob](http://network.crcna.org/advocatejob). For more information, please write us at [disabilityconcerns@crcna.org](mailto:disabilityconcerns@crcna.org) or [disabilityconcerns@rca.org](mailto:disabilityconcerns@rca.org).

[crcna.org/disability](http://crcna.org/disability)  
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everybody belongs ■ everybody serves

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