INTRODUCTION

I would rather be giving you these greetings in person but unfortunately I have been sick the last few days. Anyway, on behalf of Disability Concerns I would like to introduce myself as the Regional Advocate for Classis GLA. Disability Concerns has been in the ministry of encouraging CRC churches for 30 years to become more inclusive with those who have disabilities as well as their families. Disabilities cover a wide area, including physical, developmental and emotional issues. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that the inclusion of people with disabilities has not been a high priority of the church. And yet, when we look at the ministry of Jesus, we see the opposite. While it is not the desire of Disability Concerns to be judgmental of our churches, we do take what it says in Scripture passages such as 1 Corinthians 12, where it speaks about the importance of the unity of the body, seriously.

It is true that churches are at different stages when it comes to being fully inclusive with people with disabilities. Some of your churches might be very active in this while others have not. It is my goal, as Regional Advocate, to find out where the churches in Classis GLA are in this important area of ministry and to encourage you as you move forward. Personally, I am in the beginning stages of understanding what it means to be inclusive with people who have disabilities. So, I am currently enrolled in “Beyond Suffering”, which is a course written by Joni and Friends, specifically designed to encourage churches in disabilities ministry.

Disability Concerns is also planning a conference for Southern California to be held on February 23, 2013 at Anaheim CRC. I have given flyers to Pastor Joel to hand out today with all the information. There will also be information posted on the Classis website. This conference is being designed as a “Disability 101” conference. There will be a keynote speaker, Jeff McNair, who is well known in this field and is also on the board for Joni and Friends. There will also be a panel discussion and several breakout sessions to choose from. Please plan on attending this conference. Invite others from your churches including youth and adult ministry leaders to come with you. This conference is being put on for Classis GLA, Classis California South, Classis Pacific Hanmi and the classes of the Reformed Churches in Southern California.

Finally, included in the conference brochures is my business card. Please feel free to call me or email me with any questions or concerns. Whatever stage your church is in when it comes to disability ministry, let’s all strive to move forward to follow Christ’s example and become more inclusive of those with disabilities.

Thank you.

Steve Nyenhuis, Regional Disability Advocate for CRC Classis Greater LA

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