

8 October 2006  
Church of the Servant  
Grand Rapids, MI

DISABILITY AND YOUR CHURCH  
A Conversation About Second Level Thinking  
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WHAT ARE FIRST LEVEL QUESTIONS?

Much has been accomplished by asking what we might refer to as *first level* questions of disability and Christianity—these questions attempt to bring disability into the Church by way of *physical* and *social* accommodation.

1. Does our church have steps at its entrance?
2. Is there an accessible bathroom in the church?
3. Does the floor plan of the worship and social spaces of the church allow someone in a wheelchair adequate mobility?
4. Do we have brail transcriptions of our hymnals?
5. How can we be sure that we are not alienating people with disabilities?
6. What can I (the ablebodied Christian) do to understand them (the disabled Christians)?
7. What can we do or say to make them (disabled Christians) feel involved?

WHAT ARE SECOND LEVEL QUESTIONS?

*Second level* questions aim to understand the historical, philosophical, political, cultural, and theological implications of a church's doctrinal, liturgical, and biblical messages about disability.

1. A question about history: how should the contemporary Church view the historical, Christian treatment of people with disabilities, in which illness was seen to be a product of the devil and witchcraft? Many people with disabilities were killed in the name of God—how can the contemporary Church explain this?
2. A question about representation: how does the Church, in its homiletic, liturgical, and hymnal practices, represent disability? Disability is often represented as a sign of the Fall, in affect, aligning it with sin. In addition, disability is often represented as something to be cured, or fixed, by God ("...was blind, but now I see"). How might these representations influence our cultural beliefs about disability?

See other side...

3. A question for the ablebodied Christian: how do you imagine your disabled brothers and sisters? Do you see them as equal, covenant partners, able to contribute to the Christian project of shalom? Do you need them? What is their role in your church—is it an active role or a passive role?
4. A question for the disabled Christian: what is your role in your church? Do you play an active role or a passive role? Are your relationships with your church family one sided, i.e., are you the only one being served, or are they more interdependent? How do you serve your church family.
5. A question about voices: when it comes to issues of disability, what voices are heard the clearest in you church? In other words, are the voices of people with disabilities heard? Or do others speak for them, about them, and to them?
6. A question about mission: what are we willing to do to start providing a place in our churches wherein people with disabilities are not only welcome, but are also depended on as active members of our communities?