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Intentionally Inclusive Worship

Mark Stephenson

Christian Reformed Church in North America

Bill Vanden Bosch

Linda Vanden Bosch

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A25: Intentionally Inclusive Worship

Presentation by Rev. Mark Stephenson,
Rev. Bill and Lyn Vanden Bosch
Calvin Symposium on Worship, 2012



1) Gaining perspective

- a) A little about us
- b) What do you hope to accomplish in our time together today?
- c) Some thoughts on “normal,” “abnormal,” and ableism.
- d) Toward a definition of disability: “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” (Article 1: Purpose, “Final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities,” United Nations General Assembly, A/61/611, 6 December 2006)

2) Theological principles

- a) All people are created in the image of God; therefore, each person has intrinsic value not based on what she can do but on who she is.
“Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image”
(Genesis 1:26)
- b) Jesus’ body, the church, has many parts but is ONE; therefore, each member of Christ’s body (each person) is essential for a healthy church.
“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. . . . those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 22)

- c) All believers are called by God; therefore, each believer has a mission given by God to fulfill while here on earth.
“For we are what [God] has made us, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” (Ephesians 2:10)
- d) All believers have spiritual gifts; therefore, each believer receives from God the gifts he needs to accomplish this mission.
“Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit . . . ” (1 Corinthians 12:4)
- e) All believers are invited to participate in God’s work; therefore, every member of Christ’s body fulfills an essential and unique function in the body.
“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good . . . ” (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- f) In healthy churches, everybody belongs.
“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (1 Peter 4:8-9)
- g) In healthy churches, everybody serves.
“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10)

3) Making ministry inclusive: a conversation with about the journey.