



DISCIPLES MISSION WEEK · WEBINAR RESOURCE SHEET

Disability Equity: The God Who Sees Me

September 11, 2026 · Allisonville Christian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

Every ministry, book, law, scripture, and idea referred to in this webinar, gathered in one place. Click any underlined title to open it. Items tagged **MENTIONED** were named during the webinar. Items tagged **LEARN MORE** are trusted sources on a topic the speakers raised.

NIGHT 1
Food Insecurity

NIGHT 2
Healthcare
Equity

NIGHT 3
Housing
Insecurity

NIGHT 4 ·
TONIGHT
Disability Equity

Panelists & Moderator

Rev. Dr. Topher Endress

Founding Director, Disciples Access;
author of *Accompanying Disability*.

Rev. Dr. Milton Keys

Founder & Executive Director, Advocates
Embassy; author of *Finding My Place*.

Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund

Senior Pastor, First Congregational UCC,
Indianapolis; Minister for Disabilities and
Mental Health Justice, UCC national staff,
and prolific author.

Rev. Dr. Chris Dorsey

Moderator. President & CEO, Disciples
Home Missions.

Two Ways to See Disability

The panel leaned on the social model, while noting there are many models and that disability is also a real experience, one people may embrace, grieve, or both.

WHERE IS THE PROBLEM?

Medical model

"The problem is my body. Let's fix it."

Locates disability in the individual. In churches this has meant trying to heal people rather than welcome them.

WHERE IS THE PROBLEM?

Social model

"The flight of stairs is the barrier."

Locates disability in environments built to exclude. Change the space and the culture, and people can participate.

Key Ideas from the Conversation

Epistemic injustice

Not believing someone's account because of a label such as disability, gender, or race. It comes in two forms: **testimonial** (their testimony is doubted) and **hermeneutical** (they lack the language to name what happened).

Theology of accompaniment

The caregiver walks alongside without taking over the story. Caregiving and disability are connected but not the same.

Ableism

Discrimination favoring non-disabled people. Rev. Dr. Keys first learned the word in seminary, after a lifetime of experiencing it.

Neurodiversity

Differences in how minds work are part of God's diverse creation. "Our differences are gifts."

Person-first vs. identity-first

"Person with a disability" or "disabled person"? People choose differently, and both deserve respect.

Nothing about us without us

People with disabilities belong at the table and in leadership, not only as recipients of ministry.



SECTION 1

Books by the Panelists & Others Cited

Mentioned and Recommendations

Accompanying Disability – Topher Endress

MENTIONED

A theology of accompaniment that treats caregivers' and care receivers' stories as connected but distinct.

<https://disciplesaccess.wordpress.com/disciples-access-swap/accompanying-disabilities/>

Finding My Place – Milton Keys

MENTIONED

A devotional about disability and the human experience. It opens with Genesis 16, "the God who sees me."

<https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Place-Devotional-Disability-Experience/dp/B0DZTRQG42>

Blessed Are the Crazy – Sarah Griffith Lund

MENTIONED

Breaking the Silence About Mental Illness, Family, and Church (2014). The first of a series from Chalice Press that also includes *Blessed Union*, *Blessed Youth*, *Blessed Minds* (on neurodiversity), and the new *Blessed Hope*, a 90-day devotional for mental health and faith.

https://chalicepress.com/products/blessed-are-the-crazy?_pos=4&_sid=bc74c372b&_ss=r

Chalice Press

MENTIONED

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) publisher of Rev. Dr. Lund's books.
chalicepress.com

Crippling Youth Ministry

MENTIONED

A new book that includes Rev. Dr. Lund's chapter on youth ministry as suicide prevention.

<https://crippinglyouthministry.com/>

Dr. Benjamin Conner – Western Theological Seminary

MENTIONED

Disability is both a real impairment and a social construct, and a lens for understanding discipleship. See his book *Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness*.

<https://www.westernsem.edu/?s=benjamin+conner>

Epistemic Injustice – Miranda Fricker

MENTIONED

The source of the testimonial and hermeneutical injustice framework Rev. Dr. Endress described.

<https://circulosemiotico.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/fricker-miranda-epistemic-injustice.pdf>

“God sees me like an artist ... I’m just another variation to God’s artwork.”

Rev. Dr. Milton Keys



SECTION 2

Scripture

Texts the panelists drew on.

Hagar and “the God who sees me”

MENTIONED

Genesis 16:7–14, Beer-lahai-roi, “the well of the Living One who sees me.” The opening of Rev. Dr. Keys’ devotional.

biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+16%3A7-14&versio...

A high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses

MENTIONED

Hebrews 4:14–16. God not only sees but empathizes.

biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+4%3A14-16&versio...

Abundant life

MENTIONED

John 10:10, the vision behind Advocates Embassy.

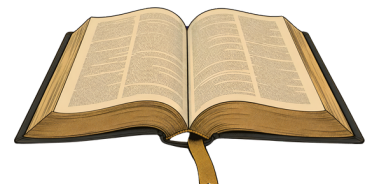
biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A10&version=NRSVUE

The man born blind

MENTIONED

John 9:1–12. Rev. Dr. Keys warned against preaching disability as sin.

biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+9%3A1-12&version=NR...





SECTION 3

Law, Policy & Advocacy



The policies the panel urged congregations to protect and champion.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

MENTIONED

The 1990 law covering both physical and mental impairments.
ada.gov

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

MENTIONED

School accommodations for students with disabilities, which Rev. Dr. Keys said are under threat.
ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/disability-discr...

The Olmstead Decision & Community Integration

MENTIONED

The right to receive services in the community rather than in institutions. Rev. Dr. Keys raised a recent Department of Justice ruling that weakens it.
<https://archive.ada.gov/olmstead/index.html>

SSI and the “marriage penalty”

LEARN MORE

Disabled people can lose benefits if they marry, one of Rev. Dr. Keys’ examples of what “getting it right” would fix.
ssa.gov/ssi

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) International

MENTIONED

The national training model for police responding to mental health crises. Advocate for it to be funded locally.
citinternational.org

United Nations – Disability & the CRPD

MENTIONED

The June UN disability conference where Rev. Dr. Lund heard that disabled girls and women with neurodevelopmental disabilities face the highest risk of sexual abuse.
social.desa.un.org/issues/disability

[The Trevor Project](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

Research on suicide risk for LGBTQ and transgender youth. Rev. Dr. Lund called advocacy for trans rights for both disability advocacy and suicide prevention.

thetrevorproject.org

[U.S. Department of Labor – Disability Employment Policy](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

On the high unemployment rate among disabled people.

dol.gov/agencies/odep

“The largest barrier to participation is cultural in our churches.”

Rev. Dr. Topher Endress



SECTION 4

Learn More: Disability & Mental Health

Background on ideas from the conversation.

[WHO – Depression](#)

[MENTIONED](#)

Depression is the most common cause of disability worldwide.

who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression

[Disability Studies – University of Illinois Chicago](#)

[MENTIONED](#)

Recommended by Rev. Dr. Endress for going beyond the medical and social models.

ahs.uic.edu/disability-human-development

[The Social Model of Disability](#)

[LEARN MORE](#)

A plain-language explainer: stairs, not the person, are the barrier.

scope.org.uk/social-model-of-disability

[“Nothing About Us Without Us”](#)

[MENTIONED](#)

The disability rights principle Rev. Dr. Keys put first: include disabled people in every decision.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing_About_Us_Without_Us

Person-First & Identity-First Language

LEARN MORE

“Person with a disability” or “disabled person”? Ask people what they prefer.
apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-langu...



SECTION 5

From Disciples Home Missions

Stay connected after Disciples Mission Week.

Disciples Mission Hub – Disability Equity

Webinar resources, panelists' book lists, and the link to Disciples Access.
disciplesmissionhub.org

General Assembly Resolution on Disability Justice (Memphis, 2025)

Passed unanimously. It calls every level of Disciples ministry to orient toward disability justice. Rev. Dr. Endress, a lead author, suggests using it as an “entry point” with hesitant leaders.

<https://disciplesaccess.wordpress.com/disciples-access/ga-2513-resolution/>

Disciples Home Missions

Host of the first Disciples Mission Week.
discipleshomemissions.org





12 Ideas for Congregations

Concrete steps the panelists suggested.

- 1 **Nothing about us without us.** Gather a group interested in disability access and justice that includes disabled members, and pray together about what your church needs.
- 2 **Start with the most immediate need.** Don't try to fix everything in three weeks. Give yourselves grace.
- 3 **Read together.** Use the Disciples Access book list for study groups.
- 4 **Invite the experts.** Disciples Access, Advocates Embassy, and Rev. Dr. Lund will all come to your congregation.
- 5 **Change your theology.** Stop preaching disability as sin, curse, or something to pray away.
- 6 **Change the culture, not just the building.** The biggest barrier to belonging is how people are treated.
- 7 **Make room for bodies and senses.** Post signs that it's OK to stand, lie down and offer fidget toys and headphones.
- 8 **Share leadership.** Invite disabled people to serve as liturgists, ushers, acolytes, council members, and preachers.
- 9 **Mark the days.** Hold an Access Sunday (UCC resources) and a Mental Health Sunday each May.
- 10 **Start young.** Talk with children about disability, inclusion, feelings, and safety plans. It is suicide prevention.
- 11 **Advocate locally.** Push for crisis intervention training and culturally trained mobile crisis teams instead of policing.
- 12 **Use the GA resolution.** Point to it to bring disability justice into every level of ministry.

Body

“Let’s not be afraid to talk about disability!”

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund Griffith

Keep the conversation going...

Join **DisciplesMissionHub.org** to connect with congregations and individuals working on food insecurity.

