Serving Those with Special Needs
An Annotated Bibliography of Possible Resources

Michael Beates's concern with disability issues began nearly 30 years ago when his eldest child was born with multiple profound disabilities. Now, as more families like his are affected by a growing number of difficulties ranging from down syndrome to autism to food allergies, the need for church programs and personal paradigm shifts is greater than ever. Working through key Bible passages on brokenness and disability while answering hard questions, Michael offers helpful principles for believers and their churches. He shows us how to embrace our own brokenness and then to embrace those who are more physically and visibly broken, bringing hope and vision to those of us who need it most.


A congregational community is an ideal place to share and strengthen faith, form lasting relationships, and develop special gifts and talents. Too often, though, people with developmental and other disabilities lack the opportunities and supports to fully participate in the life of their faith community. That's why families and service providers need to read this groundbreaking guidebook—and share a copy with congregations that want to become places of welcome and belonging for people with disabilities.

Draws on themes of the disability-rights movement to identify people with disabilities as members of a socially disadvantaged minority group rather than as individuals who need to adjust. Highlights the hidden history of people with disabilities in church and society. Proclaiming the emancipatory presence of the disabled God, the author maintains the vital importance of the relationship between Christology and social change. Eiesland contends that in the Eucharist, Christians encounter the disabled God and may participate in new imaginations of wholeness and new embodiments of justice.

Ferguson, Danyelle, and Lynn Parsons. *(Dis)abilities and the Gospel: How to Bring People with Special Needs Closer to Christ*. Springville, Utah: CFI, 2011. Print. Each day, parents and Church leaders struggle to teach individuals with special needs. Using real-life stories and a touch of humor, this inspiring book guides you to teach effectively, overcome communication barriers, and build strong relationships with people of all ages with disabilities. Discover each person's ability to learn and grow as you help them feel like a valuable part of your life.


When the church attempts to function without all of its parts, the body of Christ becomes disabled. Same Lake, Different Boat is a transformational work--designed to renew our minds to think biblically about disability in order that our lives, our relationships, and our congregations might wholly reflect Christ.
Lee, Amy Fenton. *Leading a Special Needs Ministry: A Practical Guide to including Children and Loving Families*. Cumming, GA: ReThink Group, :, 2013. Print. This book serves as a practical "how-to" handbook for the family ministry team working to welcome one or 100 children with special needs. Easily referenced guidance is offered for expressing care for parents who are learning that their child has a diagnosis all the way to developing programs, policies and education for volunteers working with children with disabilities. Example ministry documents are provided throughout this resource guide.

Newman, Barbara J. *Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2001. Print. Children with disabilities are part of God's family, but people don't always treat them that way. In this book you'll discover how to help kids and their leaders welcome and include kids with disabilities at church or school. This revised edition contains a wealth of helpful information for understanding disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder; AD/HD; behavioral challenges; hearing, visual, and speech/language impairments; intellectual disabilities; physical disabilities; learning disabilities; and severe or multiple disabilities. This book also includes guidelines and forms to help churches identify and meet needs, lesson plans for presenting information on each area of disability, fact sheets about specific disabilities to share with adult leaders, and much more. It's an indispensable resource for teachers, Sunday school leaders, church staff, and anyone who works with children.

Autism has evolved from an unfamiliar term to an everyday reality for millions of people. Bookstore shelves are filled with resources that address how Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects children and adults at school, work, and home. But what about the church? What about your church? How can it become a welcoming place for individuals and families affected by ASD/Autism and Your Church offers practical ways to welcome and include individuals with ASD into the full life of your congregation. This resource will enable church leaders to:

- appreciate those with ASD as persons created in God's image
- learn about six common areas of difference in individuals with ASD
- discover ten strategies for including people with ASD in the life of your church
- develop an action plan for ongoing ministry with children and adults who have ASD

A reproducible resources section includes interview and permission forms, a coordinator's job description, a sample Individual Spiritual Formation Plan, and more.


As parents of a son with disabilities, Thomas E. Reynolds and his wife know what it's like to be misunderstood by a church community. In Vulnerable Communion, Reynolds draws upon that personal experience and a diverse body of literature to empower churches and
individuals to foster deeper hospitality toward persons with disabilities. Reynolds argues that the Christian story is one of strength coming from weakness, of wholeness emerging from brokenness, and of power in vulnerability. He offers valuable biblical, theological, and pastoral tools to understand and welcome those with disabilities. Vulnerable Communion will be a useful resource for any student, theologian, church leader, or lay person seeking to discover the power of God revealed through weakness.


For many parents seeking faith formation for their child with special needs, the resources are either severely lacking or nonexistent. A family looking to participate in the life of the Church can find it a struggle to get the support, materials, and community needed to grow the faith for their child with special needs. David and Mercedes Rizzo know the struggle all too well. When they searched for sacramental preparation materials for their daughter Daniella, who has autism and is nonverbal, they found a lack of suitable resources. Both memoir and manual, *Spiritually Able: A Parent’s Guide to Teaching the Faith to Children with Special Needs* is a life-preserver to parents who are seeking ways to grow and nourish a deeper relationship to God and their faith for their child with special needs. Full of tips, advice, and personal accounts, *Spiritually Able* helps bridge the gap and invites all into the welcoming embrace of the Church.


Open your heart to the most amazing ministry a church can have! There’s perhaps no better way to share and
receive God’s love than through a special needs ministry to children. Do you know what it takes to these kids—and their parents—feel welcome in your church? This practical, insightful book is your guide to answering all those questions and more. Packed with case studies and personal stories from recognized experts in this ministry field, you’ll learn the truth about:

- The best ways to reach the most overlooked group of people in your community
- How to launch a special needs ministry in your church
- How to promote your ministry and recruit the right volunteers
- What families with children who have special needs really need from you
- And much, much more!(Revised and updated from the formerly released Special Needs Special Ministry: for Children’s Ministry.)


Jesus set a high standard when He said “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” The call is not limited to children who will sit quietly at His feet and listen, who color between the lines, who raise their hands and wait to be called upon, and who work at grade level. Children’s ministries are responsible to be ready to bring children with disabilities to Jesus’ feet too. Every Child Welcome is the guide for leaders and volunteers to assist in purposeful planning and skill development for a ministry inclusive of children with unique needs.

A theologian whose life experience includes growing up alongside a brother with Down syndrome, Amos Yong in this book rereads and reinterprets biblical texts about human disability, arguing that the way we read biblical texts, not the Bible itself, is what causes us to marginalize persons with disabilities. Revealing and examining the underlying stigma of disability that exists even in the church, Yong shows how the Bible offers good news to people of all abilities — and he challenges churches to become more inclusive communities of faith.

*These books are all available through Amazon.com.*

**Websites to visit:**

http://www.rejoicingspirits.org/


http://mintools.com/special-needs-ministry-resources.htm


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