



Wings

...Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31 [NRSV]

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For, By and About PHUMPS
(Physically Handicapped United Methodist Persons)



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FROM WHERE I SIT By Jo D'Archangelis

Good morning, class, and welcome to Disability Paradigms 101. Let's begin with a summary of the main disability models that have developed within the past 50 years or so.

The first is the medical model, popularized by research institutes, charitable organizations, and telethons. Under this model, disabilities are afflictions to be cured, treated, and/or prevented. People with disabilities are 'patients', and their lives are controlled by the medical industry. Its symbol is the poster child—helpless, pitiable, and doomed unless cured.

The second model, related to the first, is the rehabilitation model. The rehabilitative idea is, in the absence of cure or treatment, to restore as much physical function as possible and to approximate 'normal' activity with the aid of appropriate therapies and adaptive equipment. Rehabilitation is particularly important in the areas of employability and—athletics. In fact, its symbol is the hunky paraplegic male, chest and shoulder muscles gleaming, whooshing around in his sporty wheelchair. Fabio on wheels, if you will.

The third disability model is the psychological one. The key words here are 'adjustment', 'adaptation', 'acceptance', and 'attitude'. Disabilities are to be 'overcome' with the proper mental perspective. One has to learn to adjust or adapt to one's limitations, accept one's losses, and have the right attitude. Anger, depression, bitterness, and self-pity are in themselves dis-enabling. A positive, upbeat, cheerful outlook diminishes the negative impact of physical disability on oneself and on others. The symbol here is a bottle of Prozac.

Fourth is the minority model of disability. The fault, dear friends, is not in ourselves but in the oppressive structures and institutions of an able-ist society. Physical, communication, and

attitudinal barriers conspire to keep disabled people locked away in bedrooms and nursing homes, out of sight and out of mind. Only by the concerted efforts of the disability community over the past 20 years have rights to equal opportunity in employment, housing, transportation, and education been publicized, recognized, and legalized. The most prominent symbol here is the ADA enacted in 1990.

... Its symbol is the hunky paraplegic male, chest and shoulder muscles gleaming, whooshing around in his sporty wheelchair.

Now, class—question. Which of these disability models is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? What's that you say, Coriander? All of them and none of them? What are you—some kind of reasonable fool? Well, you're right. Each has some truth—its value and importance varying in degree from time to time, person to person. And each has its drawbacks, the main one being the rigid categorization of disability without regard to the wide range of experience, individual and societal, that constitutes the reality of living with a disability.

Equal opportunity to employment doesn't mean much to those who are so severely disabled that simple survival takes all their time and energy. Being rehabilitated to take our place in society means nothing if

all those places have twenty steps to reach them. Rights and rehabilitation hold no value for someone locked in depression. Over-emphasizing psychological 'adjustment' and suppressing attitude-with-a-capital-TOOD only result in perpetuating second-class citizenship.

At this point, class, I want to present another model or paradigm of disability—what I call the Redemptive Model, for want of a better name. This model holds that we are all born children of God, created in his image. At the same time we bear bodies that are imperfect, minds that are clouded, and souls that are estranged. But God

calls us not to perfection of body or to clarity of mind, but to reconciliation of self with him. He shows his unconditional love for and acceptance of us in the sacrificial death and triumphal resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ.

Each of our lives, like that of Christ himself, is one of brokenness and blessing, pain and joy. Through it all, the Holy Spirit sits beside us, nurturing, teaching, and guiding. She makes us whole despite our outward brokenness and vulnerability. She gives us grace upon grace to be used in ministry to each other within the church, that is, within the body of Christ—a body incomplete without all of us.

Now what, Coriander? You don't think this is just a model of disability; you think it's a model of any Christian, disabled or non-disabled?

Exactly. You just aced this course, Coriander.

The new order that comes into existence through reconciliation is a community of interdependent persons, all of whom are differently abled.

"Creation, Handicappism, and the Community of Differing Abilities" by Dawn DeVries, from *Reconstructing Christian Theology*, edit. R. S. Chopp and M. L. Taylor, copyright © 1994, Augsburg Fortress.

INVISIBLE By Laverne Schneider

Having a disability is not always visible to those around us. My disabilities happen to be that I am legally blind and my hearing is severely impaired. I have been legally blind for two years now and have worn hearing aids for more than five years. I worked as a church secretary for 31 years before retiring ten years ago—just when I started to have real problems seeing and hearing.

I carry a white cane to help keep me from stumbling or falling and wear hearing aids in both ears. These aids are helpful to me, but, as far as I can tell, very few people around me realize that I have any problems. I am fortunate to have a wonderful husband who transports me to any place I desire and who stays near me wherever we are. He serves as my eyes and ears, but in such a quiet and unobtrusive way most people are unaware of my limitations.

It's amazing to me how family members and almost all of our friends absolutely avoid asking any kind of question about my vision or hearing.

It's like they don't

even want to broach the subject. Maybe they are afraid that macular degeneration or hearing loss are somehow catching!

Sometimes I think how nice it would be if just one person would ask me what it's like to be legally blind or what it's like not to be able to hear

It's like they don't even want to broach the subject. Maybe they are afraid that macular degeneration or hearing loss are somehow catching!

much of anything. They would learn so much from me—like how the Braille Institute, where I attend a support group, offers wonderful classes in computer, all kinds of arts and crafts, sensory perception, mobility training, ballroom dancing, folk dancing, and even golf and bowling. They probably think, as I used to, that we only learn to read Braille. Instead it's like attending class at adult school or at college.

If they asked, they might be interested to learn that hearing aids are much improved nowadays. They are smaller and easier to manipulate, and

they have more features to help a person hear better without "background" noise.

I have to admit that I often feel "invisible" because of the attitude of those around me. I am a naturally shy and quiet person—and now that I am unable to see or hear well enough to fully enter into social situations, I find the world to have become a much more lonely place. Just a small amount of interest on the part of people who come into contact with me would enrich my life so much.

If only all of us would try to find out more about any person whom we meet with a disability, even if that disability is not so obvious. We could all learn a lot from each other. And that warm feeling that comes from knowing someone who cares could take over and change some of the lonelier aspects of living with disabilities.

Laverne Schneider lives in Whittier, Calif., and is a member of the United Methodist Church of Montebello.



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Founder/Editor
Computer Layout/Graphic Design
Jo D'Archangelis

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Send All Correspondence To
Jo D'Archangelis, Editor, Wings

Church Address
Fallbrook United Methodist Church
1844 Winterhaven Road
Fallbrook, CA 92028
Telephone [619] 728-1472
Fax [619] 728-7433

Home Address
592 West Ammunition Road, Apt. 1
Fallbrook, CA 92028-3191
Telephone/Fax: [619] 723-2668
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1996 DISABILITY RETREAT HELD AT CAMP CEDAR GLEN

“Tell your story,” urged Zelle Hammond, retreat leader, to those attending the 1996 Earl Miller Spiritual Life Retreat for Persons with Orthopedic

and/or Vision Disabilities at Camp Cedar Glen near Julian, Calif. The retreat, sponsored by the California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, took place on the weekend of May 31 to June 2.

Hammond, a deaconess within the United Methodist Church and chair of the Health and Welfare Division of the Conference Board of Global Ministries, shared stories of faith in action to those assembled. Some of the stories were read, some were told, and some were shown on video. Presenting her own story as a special education teacher as well as the stories of Martin Luther King, of a Carmelite nun-poet, and of (yes) Winnie the Pooh, Hammond emphasized the importance of Christian beliefs and teachings in motivating people to live out their ideals in love and service to others.

She also stressed the empowerment that comes to people, whatever their calling in life, when they tell their own stories to themselves through faith-journaling on paper or on computer or to others in group experiences.

In between class sessions, those who attended the retreat enjoyed fellowship with each other, went swimming and hiking, watched or listened to video movies, joined in song sessions, and visited the old mining town of Julian.

Bill Tell, church pastor from Riverside, assisted with Sunday worship service and provided musical inspiration with his singing and guitar playing. Tom Simmons of Newbury Park served as retreat dean, and Norm and Helen Stockwell of Redondo Beach handled registration.

Other "retreaters" this year included Dolores Anderson and Dick Martin from Torrance; Jo D'Archangelis and Ruth Owen from Fallbrook; Phyllis-Anne Church, Eun Bok Kyung, Marie Munns, and Rita Roberson from San Diego; Jill Halley and Christine Halley from San Clemente; Cindy Smith from Lakeside; Gigi Tell from Riverside; and Abby Vincent and her seeing-eye companion, General Mills, from Culver City.

The 1997 Earl Miller Spiritual Life Retreat is tentatively scheduled for the first weekend in June at Camp Cedar Glen.





“HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN” ACTOR FINDS ROAD TO FULL LIFE HERE ON EARTH

James Troesh has achieved a few firsts in his life. He was the first quadriplegic actor to join the Screen Actors Guild; he was the first disabled actor to play a romantic lead in a television program (*Highway to Heaven*); and he believes he was the first quadriplegic to skydive, in 1989.

Troesh did the skydiving tandem style with his instructor on his back. Afterward, he decided to make his first jump his last. As he explained in a telephone interview from his home, “I proved to myself I could do it, but I found out I might get pretty banged up too. It just wasn’t worth the risk to try again.”

In other areas, Troesh has not let the possibility of getting “banged up” deter him from going where few disabled people have gone before. Born and raised in Whittier, Calif., he was disabled at the age of fourteen when he climbed up on a tower to install a television antenna. Somehow a spark from an adjacent electric cable touched the antenna, and between 20- and 40,000 volts ripped through his body.

“I don’t know if it was from the shock or the fall, but I woke up paralyzed from the neck down,” he says. He underwent rehabilitation at Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center in Downey, Calif., for 11 months. A C4-5, he learned to operate the controls of a power chair using chin movements. He can also move his shoulders and breathe on his own.

Some years later, Troesh entered Rio Hondo College in Whittier to study journalism and found himself deejaying on a local radio station. In 1980, to perfect his radio and journalistic skills, he took acting classes at PATH, the Performing Arts Theater of the Handicapped, then located in Los Angeles. The acting bug bit him deeply. “I gave up everything to focus on acting and writing,” he says.

He made his acting debut a year later in a theatrical production of “The Caine Mutiny Court Martial”. In 1983 he got his first speaking part on television in the short-lived series, *AfterMASH*. Small roles in other series followed, plus some commercials. But he credits the real breakthrough in his career to the

late Michael Landon, actor-writer-producer of *Little House on the Prairie* and *Highway to Heaven*.

Troesh recalls, “In 1984 Michael was holding auditions for someone to play a person in a wheelchair in an episode of *Highway to Heaven*, and he picked me out of all of those who

own idea.

In the late 80’s acting jobs became scarce, so Troesh concentrated on his writing. He has published several poems [see below] and short stories and has written newspaper articles. His play, “Another Pleasant Evening”, was presented in Los Angeles and won a disabled playwrights award. He has screenplays in development and hopes to find a publisher for his autobiography, *Dare To Dream*.

Has his disability kept him from getting more acting jobs? “No,” he says,

“There are about 17,000 actors looking for work and a minimum number of roles available. It’s lucky for anyone to find a job acting, disabled or non-disabled. I’m not bitter at all.”

Luck was with him recently, however. The producers of an independent film, “Notes From

the Underground”, were looking specifically for a disabled actor to fill a minor role that didn’t even require a disability. Troesh auditioned and got the part. “The film should be released in about six months,” he says.

Now living in Rowland Heights, Calif., Troesh keeps body and soul together working fulltime in Advocate

(ACTOR continued on page 4)

“Our only real limitations are the ones we place on ourselves; we must not allow ourselves to be stifled by society’s stereotypes.”

**--James Troesh--
from a motivational talk**

showed up, disabled and non-disabled.” Landon was so impressed by the first episode Troesh appeared in, he later wrote a two-parter especially for him. Troesh played the recurring role of “Scotty” in several episodes during the six years *Highway to Heaven* was on the air. He even co-wrote the episode, “A Match Made in Heaven”, with Landon, based on his

WANTED: ATTENDANT FOR ACTIVE QUADRIPLLEGIC MAN

My friends, my enemies,
my confidantes, my critics,
my painfully obvious,
invisible associates.

Always dependent,
but somehow above it all,
and them
eternally making a day
in my life
into a day at their office.

They know all my secrets,
my personal affairs--
a constant struggling
for privacy,
my thoughts their only
mystery.

Resentment cloaked in humor,
orders masked as
offhanded requests,
wishing all the while
that they would see
behind the veil.

Precious things become
meaningless
as they treat them
without regard.

A memorable picture,
a childhood sculpture,
a pet
become little more
than clutter.

Every point is disputed,
every action must be
justified.

I tremble with fury but fold,
as always,
to avoid confrontation.

Accommodating and
compromising until
self disappears,
an actor in an endless play,
ever-ready to resume
my daily performance.

Days of forged laughter,
nights of scorn,
endless fretting,
forever saying,
someday it will be
different,
someday I’ll take charge.

Memory fades them
one into the next
as the years pass,
leaving nothing but faceless,
nameless hands....

- James Troesh -



HERE IS THE CHURCH

A new boy had come to the second grade Vacation Bible School class. This young boy was missing an arm. The teacher didn't know what the circumstances were for the missing arm, and she wanted to be careful not to embarrass the boy. Earlier she had taught the children how to do "Here Is the Church"—how to intertwine their fingers curving downward toward the palms of their hands and the thumbs upward resting next to each other ["Here is the church..."], how to raise their index fingers upward and press the tips together ["Here is the steeple..."], how to pull the thumbs apart ["Open the doors..."], and how to turn the hands over and wiggle the intertwined fingers ["And here are the people!"]. As the class came to a close, the teacher invited the children to join in the closing ceremony. "Let's make our churches," she said. "Here is the church, here is the..." She stopped speechless. She had done the very thing she didn't want to do. As she pondered for a brief moment, the girl next to the boy with the missing arm reached over, took his hand, and said, "Davy, let's make this church together." And together they formed, "Here is the church; here is the steeple; open the doors; here are the people."

Adapted from "Disabled Boy", *Dynamic Preaching* [Sept., 1994].

(ACTOR continued from page 3)

Services for the regional Independent Living Center. His job entails community outreach, speaking to senior citizen groups, promoting ILC services, writing the Center newsletter, and advocating for disability issues with members of the California State Legislature.

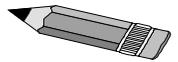
For the past four years Troesh has been a member of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Hacienda Heights where he lived until recently. Although not raised a Methodist, he says he was drawn to Methodism because he found more freedom "to do my own thing. They don't beat you over the head with the sin thing or the money thing."

Even though no longer living in Hacienda Heights, he still attends St. Matthew's. He likes the church's comfortable, family-oriented atmosphere and generally finds it

accessible. When he sang in the choir (something he doesn't have the time to do now with the demands of his job and his daily maintenance routine), the church provided a temporary ramp to the choir loft for him. "But there is no wheelchair accessibility to the altar," Troesh notes. "So I couldn't get married there if I wanted to."

It seems that a highway to heaven is one thing; a way to the altar another.

MAKE A NOTE!



DISABILITY RETREAT REUNION

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