



Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles....(Isaiah 40:31)

Wings

A FAITHLETTER FOR, BY AND ABOUT UNITED METHODISTS WITH DISABILITIES

Spring 2002 — Vol. 12 Issue 4 No. 48



FROM WHERE I SIT By Jo D'Archangelis

What's wrong with this quotation?

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the voice of the speechless sing for joy.

(Isaiah 35:5-6 nrsv)

Nothing, so far as content is concerned; Isaiah is describing, somewhat poetically, an ideal future when disabilities will be absent from the earth. But for those familiar with the guidelines for writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it's a mess.

In his article, "Disability In Bible Translation,"* Kerry Wynn lists four such guidelines:

1. Use person-first descriptions, such as "a woman who has a disability" rather than "a disabled woman" and "people with vision impairments" rather than "the blind."
2. Use terminology generally accepted by the persons with the disability in their culture and language group, such as "disabled" for "crippled" and "mobility-impaired" for "lame," or "speech-impaired" for "dumb."
3. Avoid euphemistic terms, such as "physically challenged," which deny the reality of disability.
4. Avoid unnecessarily clinical terminology which reduces disability to illness.

According to Kerry, biblical translations that ignore these guidelines alienate those of us with disabilities and at the same time create a negative image of disability by those who preach or teach from the Scriptures.

Although I generally use disability-sensitive language in my writing (and am, moreover, a proponent of gender-inclusive language in the Bible), I must admit that I rarely thought about disability-sensitive language in the Bible

until reading Kerry's article. Oh yes, I was always offended when I saw the word "dumb" used in, for example, the popular Wesleyan hymn, "O For A Thousand Tongues." (An alternate "*mute" is given at the bottom of the hymnal page, but I've never heard it sung in church.) Yet I more or less accepted words like "crippled" and other disability-ignorant terminology when reading the Bible.

I mean, isn't that the way they talked in those days? Well, no — not unless writers like Isaiah were conversant in 20th-century, middle-class English (New Revised Standard Version) or 17th-century, scholarly English (King James Version). I knew, of course, that I was reading the Bible as translated from the ancient Hebrew and Greek, but I guess I assumed that, say, the Greek word, whatever-it-was, had to be rendered for the sake of ac-

curacy by the English word "crippled." Not so, I learned. Good biblical translations employ many criteria, but the main criterion — faithfulness to the original meaning of the text — rarely requires language considered demeaning or inappropriate to a specific ethnic or cultural group. (In fact, Kerry maintains that a disability-sensitive translation can often be more accurate than the ones currently in use.)

What then would a more disability-sensitive translation of the above passage from Isaiah look like? Before I present my version, please keep in mind: I don't know my Hebrew from my Greek, and I don't necessarily follow the guidelines as given by Kerry. For example, I will occasionally put the disability-adjective before the person, as in "the disabled woman," for brevity's sake and where the reference is purely descriptive. I prefer the word "disability" to "impairment" as a general term but will use "mobility impairment" as a more specific term when needed. And I will commonly use the single adjective forms "deaf," "blind," or "mute" rather than the "something-impaired" forms.

Now, given my preferences, the Revised Standard D'Archangelis Version of Isaiah 35:5-6 is:

Then the eyes of those who are blind shall be opened, and the ears of those who are deaf unstopped; those with mobility impairments shall leap like a deer, and those who are mute sing for joy.

I am, however, open to the gentle correction of friends and readers who are deaf, blind, and mute — or who are Deaf, deafened, hard-of-hearing, hearing-impaired, vision-impaired, and speech-impaired.

***From *The Bible Translator*, Oct. 2001 [Vol. 52, No. 4]**

**EARL MILLER MEMORIAL
SPIRITUAL LIFE RETREAT**

When: Friday, June 7-Sunday, June 9, 2002

Where: Camp Cedar Glen, Julian, California

Leader: Rev. Tom Reinhart-Marean, Minister of Visitation,
First United Methodist Church, Pasadena, California

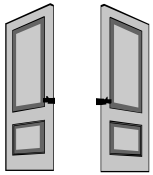
Cost: \$75 per person, registration deadline May 15,
partial scholarships available

Participants: Adult persons with orthopedic disabilities and/or sight
impairment plus companions, caregivers, or adult family members

Registrars: Norm and Helen Stockwell,
1816 Armour Lane, Redondo Beach, CA 90278,
Phone: 310-374-1535, E-Mail: n6ns@mailaps.org

Retreat Dean: Tom Simmons, 3981 Sherman Drive,
Riverside, CA 92503, Phone: (home) 909-351-8544,
(work) 909-444-7066, E-mail: tommyboy_92503@yahoo.com

(See flyer/registration form insert in this issue of *Wings*)



OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS

◆Worship Made Accessible

For 17 years, Saint Luke's [United Methodist] Church, Columbus, Ohio, has offered special ministries for adults with developmental disabilities.

According to Tammy Hansan, director of special ministries, adults labeled "mentally retarded" or "developmentally delayed" need a place to worship and grow in their faith.

The ministry, which serves 40 members, encourages people with mental handicaps to participate in all aspects of church life: acolytes, liturgists, ushers, nursery helpers, committee members, and the clown ministry [which marches in parades and visits nursing homes].

A video is available for any church interested.... For more information, call 614-488-9695; website www.gbgu-umc.org./stlukesohio/.

From *Interpreter* [Oct. 1999]

◆Enabler

Retired [United Methodist] pastor, Samuel NeSmith, 63, wanted people with handicapping conditions to experience the joy of mission work from which they are often excluded. So last October he led a 24-member team, at least nine of whom have disabilities, on a mission trip to Russia. The team worked with children with handicapping conditions living in an orphanage in Pavlovsk. During the 10-day trip, team members (ranging in age 17 to 86) donated to the orphanage Bibles,

wheelchairs, and money for renovations. They also painted and repapered walls, did minor repairs, played games with the children, offered them spiritual support, and taught them how to maneuver better with their disabilities. NeSmith says he finds "great happiness in being an enabler and watching [team members] enjoy the hidden jewels and experiences that come from helping others."

From *Interpreter* [Nov./Dec. 1999]

◆Her "Wheels" Bring Opportunities

Born with a condition that prevents her from walking, Kristen Garrett, 28, is turning her disability into an "asset."

A member of Lambuth [United Methodist] Church in Oklahoma City, Okla., Garrett teaches youth Sunday school and volunteers twice a week for the church after-school program, JETS, which targets underprivileged junior high schoolers. She also volunteers year-round as coach for 6- to 16-year-olds involved in wheelchair athletics.

"This wheelchair has opened up so many doors for me to serve Christ," she says. "I use my disability to gain kids' attention, then teach them that God can make any negative situation into something positive. I want to make a difference in the lives of children."

From *Interpreter* [Oct. 1999] to a



BECOMING SURE-FOOTED By Mary Craft

Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights.

(Habakkuk 3:19 nrsv)

No! It can't be multiple sclerosis!" But all my tears didn't change my doctor's opinion or my physical condition. I felt trapped in a body I hated.

"Why is this happening?" Frustrated and bitter, I blamed God for destroying my vision of the future. I could not see the blessings waiting ahead for me.

I turned to the Bible and found the words of the prophet Habakkuk, who foresaw a terrible time for the Jews: death, destruction, and captivity. But still the prophet praised God's goodness. Why? Because he knew God was his strength and would give him freedom, vigor, and sure-footed confidence.

Twelve years have passed since I received that diagnosis, and I have learned to thank God for the gifts that have come to me because of this disease. God has given me quiet hours and the opportunity to pray for others. God has sent strength and courage for my husband. And God has given me time for friends, for study, and for service. Although my legs may be weak, God has given me a sure-footed faith!

From *The Upper Room* [Nov./Dec. 1995]

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CLARIFICATION

The book *Christian Discipleship and ME! Narcissism's Impact on Christian Discipleship* by Susan Lemly (see *Wings*, Winter 2002) may be purchased directly from the publisher: Total Support Group, P.O. Box 6103, Oceanside, CA 92032-6103 (e-mail: rsmith@cox.net). Each copy is \$12.95 plus \$3.95 S&H.



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Founder/Editor Computer Layout
Graphic Design Jo D'Archangelis

Correspondence Send all correspondence — including original writings, items from other sources, and changes of address — to Jo D'Archangelis, Editor, at
Mailing Address 592 West Ammunition Road, Apt. 1 Fallbrook, CA 92028
Telephone/Fax [760] 723-2668 (please call before faxing)
E-Mail JODARLIS@aol.com

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BUMPS AND POINTS By Joni Eareckson Tada

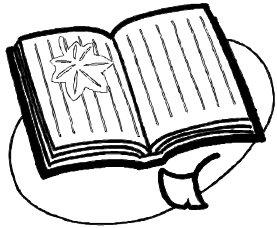
I watched as a church elder escorted Dale Britten up the carpeted steps to the pulpit. Dale was completely blind. Although he knew the Grace Community Church campus like the back of his hand and could navigate most rooms and hallways by himself, the pulpit area was one place he never frequented. But today was special. It was the church's first Disability Awareness Sunday.

Dale stepped up to the pulpit and heaved onto it an incredibly large book with thick pages. As the elder lowered the microphone for him, Dale flipped to a section in the middle of the book. He adjusted his black glasses as if he could see and then began reading: "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come...'"

I immediately recognized the familiar passage from Isaiah 35. Dale's huge and cumbersome book was the Bible written in Braille. But not the entire Bible. The volume from which he read that morning represented only several books from the Old Testament — Dale had left most of his Bible home for there was no way he could carry the entire thing!

The blind man continued his reading, with his hands placed squarely on the page and fingers constantly moving over the bumps and points. He spoke with firm authority: "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of

the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy." Every once in awhile Dale paused when his fingers encountered a staple in the page (his way of "underlining" a verse).



Dale looked so small behind the big book and even bigger pulpit. But in my eyes I never witnessed such a prominent and imposing saint. As I watched him close the Old Testament book and make his way down the steps, I knew I would never look at the Word of God quite the same. *The Bible must be incredibly precious to Dale seeing that it requires such an effort to read it...to underline a verse...to even cart it around. Goodness, if Dale wants to take his whole Bible somewhere, he must need three boxes!*

That morning was a highlight at Grace Church, and to this day people are still talking about that special Disability Awareness Sunday. For many in that congregation, it provided more than just a glimpse of God's power showing up best in weakness through folks in wheelchairs or people who are deaf or blind. It opened eyes and hearts to the value of God's Word in one man's life.

Oh, and one more thing. There wasn't a soul who left Grace Church that morning who didn't clutch their Bible a little more tightly, a little more tenderly.

From "Thoughts From Joni," JAF Ministries Newsletter [June 1997]

THIS I BELIEVE

I am a person who happens to have a disability.

More importantly, I am a person who can acknowledge my feelings about myself and my physical condition.

I can be sad and upset when it is appropriate, but I will not live with pity or self-doubt.

Instead, I will seek the positive, look forward to tomorrow, and continue to do the things I enjoy.

I will not judge myself or others too harshly. I accept my limitations and will adapt to my changing life circumstances.

I recognize my own emotional and physical vulnerability.

I will not dwell on the past. I have seen the cost to me of holding onto anger, bitterness, and resentment. I have the power to choose not to continue these feelings.

I will not give up on myself. I will continue to do what I can with what I have today, so that tomorrow, should those abilities be lost to me, I will have few regrets about the way I lived.

I will continue to find new ways to live and grow in the present.

From *Amputees Are Able* (Jan. 1997), newsletter of the National Amputee Association



*Honor Roll
Of Appreciation*

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- Bill & Ruth Bevell
- Dulcie Henwood



COMING EVENTS

April 27, 2002 — California-Pacific Conference Council On Disability Ministries, day-long retreat, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM at Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church, Mission Viejo, Calif., lunch provided, Keynote Speaker: Dr. Ken Tittle, Co-director Mariposa Ministry. Contact Tom Simmons, e-mail address: tommyboy_92503@yahoo.com, telephone: (home) 909-351-8544, (work) 909-444-6077.

June 7-9, 2002 — Earl Miller Spiritual Life Retreat for adults with orthopedic and/or visual impairments, Camp Cedar Glen, Julian, Calif. See front page of this issue of *Wings* or flyer insert for more information.

June 11-16, 2002 — California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Mariposa Ministry & Conference Council On Disability Ministries joint display booth, plus video presentation by Rev. Jerry and Juda Carter, Disability Ministries Coordinators, plus open forum on disability issues and the church, University of Redlands, Redlands, Calif. Contact Juda Carter, e-mail address: judaathome@aol.com, telephone: 949-855-8297, or Lupita Redondo, Co-director Mariposa Ministry, e-mail address: alonsore@hotmail.com, telephone: 760-768-0598.



DIFFERENT PEOPLES, DIFFERENT CONGREGATIONS

Most Deaf people don't like to be called 'hearing impaired' or 'hearing challenged,'" said the Rev. Kirk VanGlider, chaplain at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., speaking last year at a meeting of the United Methodist National Committee on Deaf Ministries. "When you say 'impaired,' you're talking about the medical view of deafness: people whose ears don't work. I'm talking about a gift from God that made me part of a particular community, so you can say 'deaf' or 'hard of hearing' — and if you don't

know what to say, ask a deaf person."

About ten percent of people who do not hear are members of the Deaf community, Van Glider said. They have their own culture and their own customs. Another group within this minority of the population are the hard of hearing, people who understand the English language and communicate vocally or by sign with assisted listening. The third group, the deafened, are people who have had a hearing loss earlier or later in life. Their first language is English, and their culture is the hearing world.

It is the variety of needs and experiences among the Deaf and the hard of hearing that makes a single ministry response inadequate, said the Rev. Andrew M. Hall Jr., director of the Ministry with the Deaf in the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Many congregations, Hall said, can serve hard of hearing and deafened people with assisted listening, sign interpretation, and real-time text. The Deaf, however, need to be in their own congregations, served by Deaf clergy, and it takes a group of congregations or a district to offer this kind of ministry.

From "Deaf Ministries National Group Educates, Advocates," *The United Methodist Review*, West Ohio News [Vol. 15, No. 8]

A NEW CHILD OF GOD

The potential had always been
within us,
But we were not aware of it,
And no one had prepared us for it.

We love this child of God,
But she is not like others we have
known and loved.
She cannot understand our sounds;
We cannot understand her signs.

We seem to be in different worlds
Though we live
In the same home,
In the same church,
In the same community.

We are both frustrated and afraid;
We don't know what to do.
And no one seems to know how to
help us.

Some "experts" advise us
To start a separate church
With others "of her own kind."
But that would separate her
From hearing families and friends.

How would we ever learn to
understand
And come to know each other?

Maybe we need to enter her world
of silence
And learn together about each
other's worlds
Before we can expect this new
child of God

To enter our hearing world.

Then perhaps we can help each
other grow
In ways neither of us can grow
alone.

— Elsa T. Ellis —

Slightly modified by permission from original poem, "The Church Has A New Baby." Elsa and husband Henry Ellis are "sort of" retired after having served almost 50 years in deaf and disability ministry in the United Methodist Church.

IN REMEMBRANCE: NANCY BURNS

Nancy Burns, Co-chair of the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf Committee on Youth Ministry, died unexpectedly at her home in Julian, Calif., shortly after returning from last year's UMCD National Conference in Los Altos, Calif. Nancy's thoughtful questions and creative imagination about how we should deal with ministry with deaf young people will be missed greatly.

Excerpted from *Signs Of Change: The UMCD Newsletter* [Dec. 2001]

God who spans our differences,
help us step forward in faith,
to build bridges
across those barriers that divide us.
Grant us safe crossing,
and bring us to a new home.

AMEN



Alive Now [Sept.-Oct. 1995].



"A Faithletter For United Methodists With Disabilities
And Those Who Care About Them"

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