

## DISABILITY CONCERNS Report for Classis February 16 2022

We hope and pray that 2022 will be a great year for you and for the churches in which you serve. The first couple of weeks of the new year are not starting off all that great, with more lock-downs and more isolation. This certainly isn't at all what we had hoped for. Last year in our report we, along with the Regional Pastors, showed the video "*Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Challenges*". At that time, we were fairly confident that in a year the outlook would be much brighter. Yet here we are; Covid is still making things look pretty bleak.

We want to stop for a few moments and picture how this new round of isolation plays out for those with disabilities. Their programs have all but disappeared. Their opportunity for getting out to meet others are almost non-existent. And what about their care-givers? When will they find some relief? When will they be able to step out, even for a little while, of their role as care-giver? Yet in all of this, God has provided many of them with a church family; people who reach out to connect, to encourage and to bring a glimmer of hope. We thank them, and can join them, to be a friend in times of need.

2021 has been quite a remarkable and unforgettable year. Tough stuff to deal with, but also some neat and wonderful events have taken place. In November, our director of Disability Concerns, **Mark Stephenson** stepped down after leading the ministry for 15 years. He was dedicated to make this ministry healthy and vibrant. A ministry where all could access and find relative information and support for a wide variety of issues. Taking over as director is **Lindsay Wieland Capel**. Some years ago when she first learned about Disability Concerns, she felt that this was a ministry that she wanted to be part of, and off and on has been. She too, pursues the vision of belonging and serving for all of God's children. Both Mark and Lindsay are quick to confirm that the ministry is largely driven by the dedicated work of the many Church Advocates serving at the grass roots level-about 20 of them in classis Huron.

We also had some great informative and training webinars over the past year. A two-day event on "**Who is missing in My Church**". The first day the speaker focused on, "**Lived experience of Being Young and Disabled in the Church**". The second day's focus was on "**Welcoming the Presence of a Younger Generation**". Another very good webinar was the **October Series**, which replaces our annual face to face Ontario Conference for now. On four consecutive Thursdays, four different presenters focused on the new comprehensive guide book "**Everybody Belongs...Serving Together**" [everybody belongs, serving together](http://everybodybelongs.servingtogether.com) . A session was spent on each of these topics "Everyone Indispensable", "Changing Attitudes", "Belonging Beyond Being There" and "Curing vs Healing". This new handbook is a must for all leaders in the church. Whether you are part of discipling or worship, this booklet has simple, valuable ways on reaching those with disabilities. All of the training sessions, the new handbook and a lot more interesting material can be found on the disability network web-site, along with some very good short videos. Check out the disability concerns network at [www.crcna.org/disability](http://www.crcna.org/disability) , all you have to do is look.

Thank you, and blessings from you Regional Advocates

Len and Rynie Bakelaar