

DISABILITY MINISTRY TRAINING

2-24-24

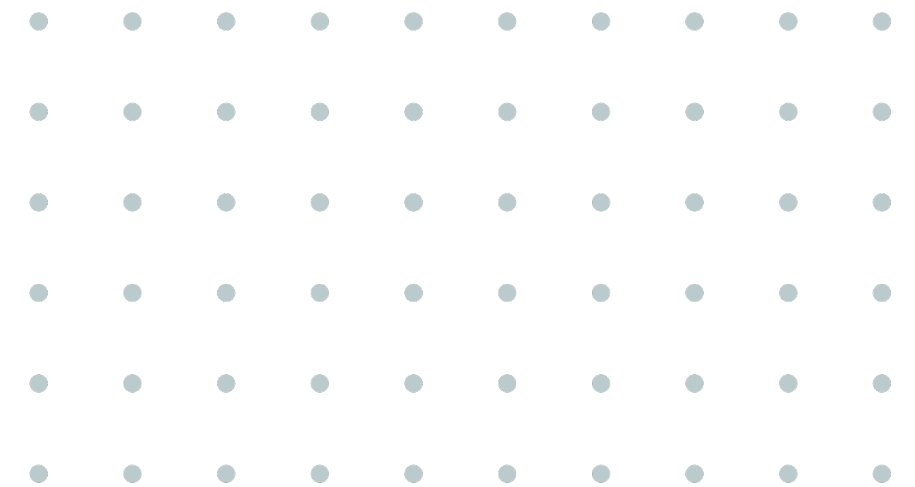
AGENDA

- Introduction
- Becoming a Welcoming Church: The Disconnect and a Theology of Disability
- Supporting Special-Needs Families and Students with Disabilities
- Q&A
- Lunch
- Volunteer and Buddy Training
- Next Steps and Resources
- Q&A

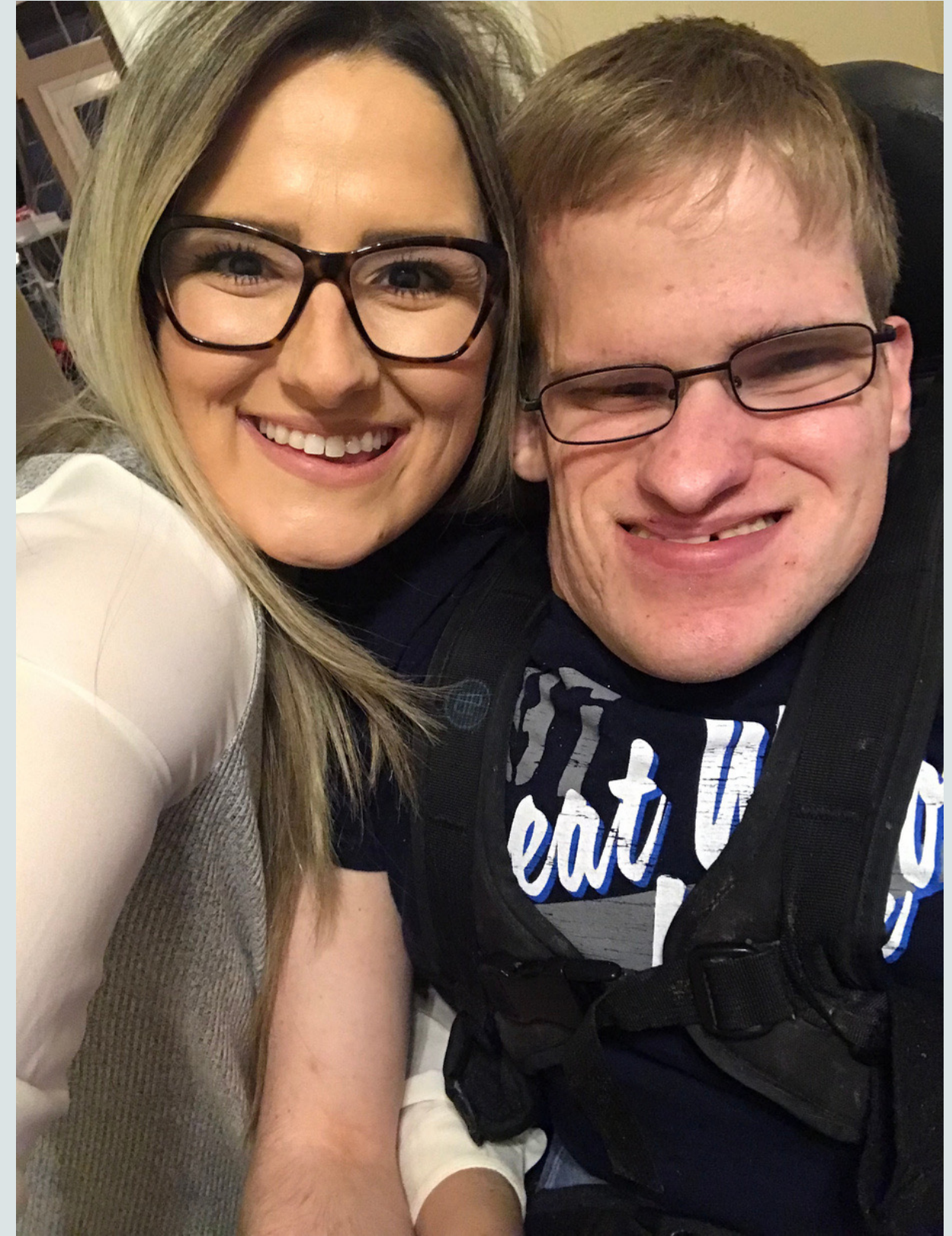
INTRODUCTION



I am deeply committed to the inclusion, integration, and flourishing of people with disabilities within the life of churches and communities.



HOW IT STARTED...



HOW IT'S GOING...



Special Needs Mom
Disability Consultant for
local organizations



Special Needs Ministry
Director, First Mansfield
Disability Ministry Specialist,
SBTC

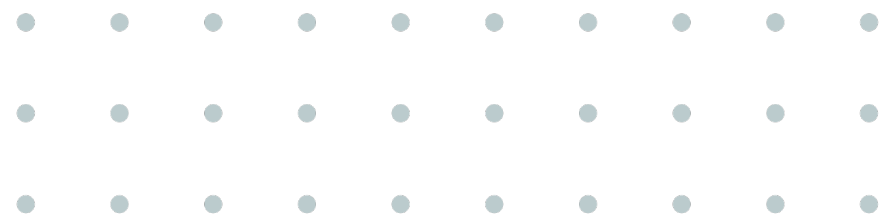
1 Corinthians 12:12-27 CSB

BECOMING A WELCOMING CHURCH

The Disconnect and a Theology of Disability

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DISABILITY MINISTRY?

- Unreached people group
 - According to Christian Council for Persons with Disabilities, 80 percent of families who have a loved one with special needs are unchurched.
 - “Then he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” Mark 16:15 CSB
- Disciple children, students, and adults with special needs to become Christ-followers (Multiply)
- Provide support that enables families to attend church together



WHAT ARE CHURCHES SAYING?

A person with disabilities would feel welcome at our church.

Among Protestant pastors



Among Protestant churchgoers



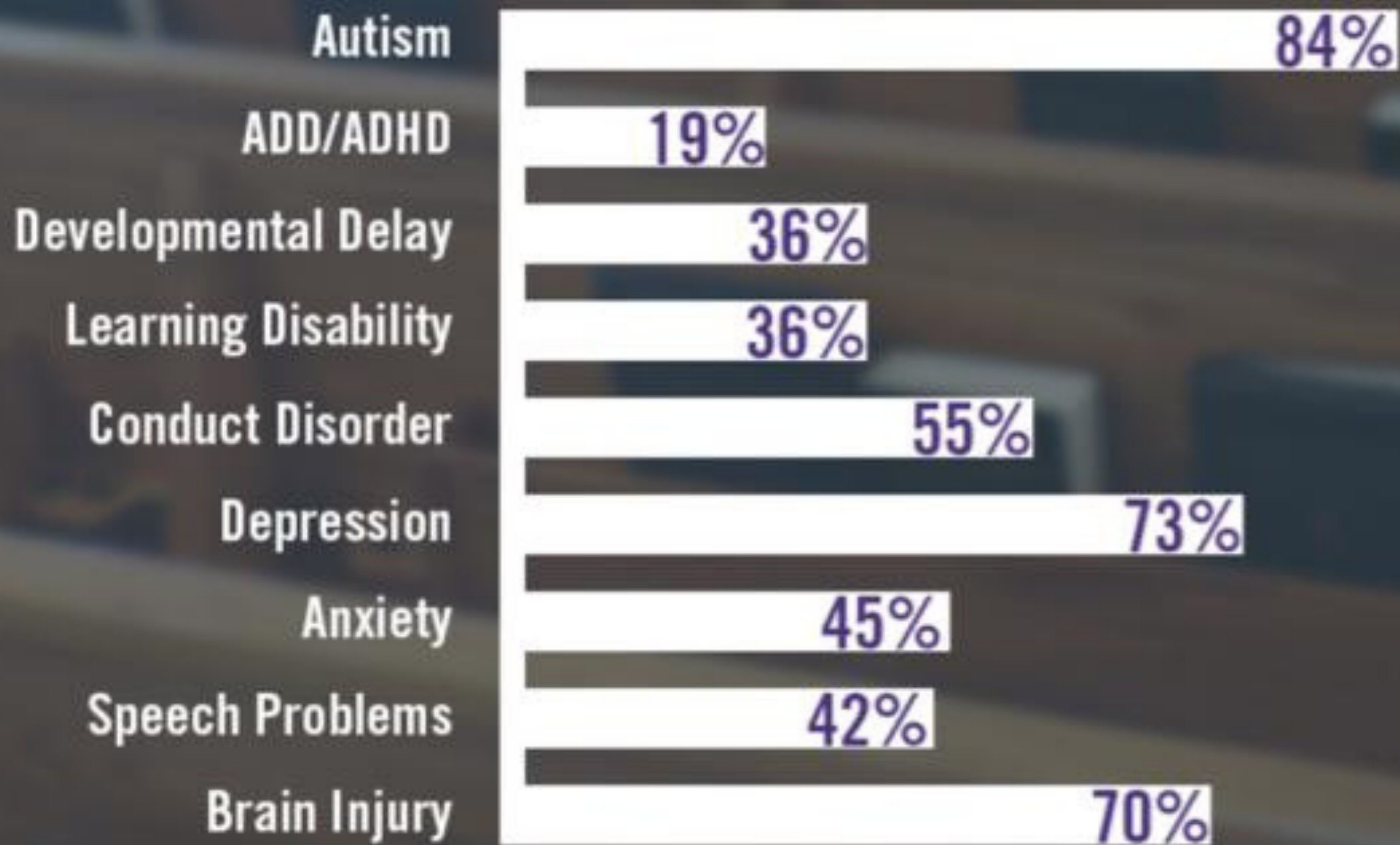
LifeWayResearch.com

WHAT ARE SPECIAL-NEEDS FAMILIES SAYING?

According to their parents, fewer than one-half of children and youth with autism, deaf-blindness, intellectual disabilities, or multiple disabilities participated in religious group activities at any point during the previous year (Wagner, Cadwallader, & Marder, 2003; Wagner et al., 2002)

When more than 200 parents of adolescents and young adults with autism were asked about their children's attendance at religious services, less than one-third reported that their child attended religious services on a weekly basis. Furthermore, only 11% of youth and adults with autism attended social events at religious settings more than once or twice a month (Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004).

**CLEMSON
RESEARCH
EXAMINES HOW
CHRONIC HEALTH
CONDITIONS
AFFECT CHURCH
ATTENDANCE
AMONG YOUNG
PEOPLE**



The percent increase in odds of children with chronic health conditions never attending church compared to children with no health conditions

THE DISCONNECT

Clearly, there's a big gap between what pastors believe about how welcoming their churches are vs. what special needs families and people with disabilities believe about those churches actually being welcoming.

WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF THE DISCONNECT?

Mark 2:1-12

There's a story in the Gospels of a group of people who had also reached their limits and a gathering with no more room. And like what often happens in churches today, in Mark 2, a person with disabilities was cut off from accessing Jesus and from the people who followed him. But instead of excuses and fear, we read what can happen when friends make a way to reach Jesus.

TIME, VOLUNTEERS, SPACE

Mark 2:1-12

At this time, people with disabilities were blocked from having access to the temple. By being cut off from the temple, people with disabilities were also cut off from the community built around the rhythms related to worship, sacrifices, and feasts. No temple and no community.

They had the same challenges we are faced with: no time (Jesus may only be passing through and there for a short time), no volunteers (It's up to just the four friends), and no space (They couldn't even open the door). But instead of these being hindrances they couldn't overcome, they used them as motivation.

THE GOOD NEWS

Mark 2:1-12

These men thought they were coming for their friend's healing. What they found was the gospel—the good news that Jesus can forgive sins and create new life in all of us.

This is the good news of the gospel message, and this gospel message is why we do inclusion.

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF DISABILITY

Disability, viewed through the lens of Scripture, is simply a more noticeable form of the brokenness and difficulty that is common to the entire human experience.

Most importantly, the biblical view unabashedly embraces human dignity and diversity while honestly acknowledging the difficulty where it exists.

DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF DISABILITY

- **Disabilities do not stem from the sin of parents.**
 - “As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.” John 9: 1 – 3
- **All humans were made in the image of God and therefore have inherent worth and value.**
 - “So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.” Genesis 1:27 CSB
 - “For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Psalm 139:14 CSB