

Curriculum Vitae

BENJAMIN T. CONNER

Post 101 E 13th St, Holland, MI 49423

E-mail benjamin@westernsem.edu | Phone 757.784.8607

ACADEMIC POSTIONS

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Director of the Center for Disability and Ministry (October 2019-present)

Professor of Practical Theology (July 2017-present)

Director of the *Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry* (September 2016-present)

Associate Professor of Christian Discipleship (July 2013-June 2017)

MEMPHIS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (AND THE CENTER FOR YOUTH MINISTRY TRAINING)

Adjunct Professor Mission of the Church (2014)

Adjunct Professor of Church History/Adjunct Professor Mission of the Church (2011)

Adjunct Professor of Church History (2010)

UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY

Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Education (2009)

EDUCATION

Ph.D., PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (2009)

History (Mission, Ecumenics and History of Religions)

M.Div., UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND PRESBYTERIAN SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (2004)

B.A., VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY (1991)
Communications

AWARDS

HENRI NOUWEN AWARD (2016), From the Religion and Spirituality Division of the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)

UNION-PSCE, *Sallie Shepherd Perkins Fellowship* for graduate study.

UNION-PSCE, *Anne Trichler Prize* in Church History.

CERTIFICATIONS

CQ Certified, CENTER FOR CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (2017)

(Teach, administer, and debrief Cultural Intelligence assessments)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

YOUNG LIFE STAFF

Director of Capernaum Ministries (2007-2013) and Interim Area Director Young Life, Williamsburg, VA (2011-2013)

STONE HOUSE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WILLIAMSBURG, VA

Director of Student and Family Ministries (8/2002 – 12/2003)

YOUNG LIFE STAFF

Area Director, Williamsburg, VA (9/1999 – 6/2002)

Area Director, Fredericksburg, VA (8/1994 – 8/1999)
Young Life Intern, Fairfax, VA (9/1992 – 7/1994)
THE CHAPEL AT KINGSMILL, WILLIAMSBURG, VA
Pastor (12/2000 – 7/2002)
WILLIAMSBURG COMMUNITY CHAPEL, WILLIAMSBURG, VA
Youth Director, (9/1991 – 8/1992)

PUBLICATIONS

CO-EDITED CO-BRANDED JOINT BOOKS

with John Swinton, *Disabling Theology as Practical Theology: New paradigms, fresh possibilities for Christian Ministry* (IVP Academic and WTS Center for Disability and Ministry co-branded joint books, agreement signed January 24, 2020, volumes forthcoming)

BOOKS

Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness: Exploring Missiology Through the Lens of Disability Studies (IVP Academic, Missiological Engagements series, 2018)

Amplifying Our Witness: Giving Voice to Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012)

Practicing Witness: A Missional Vision of Christian Practices
(Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011)

BOOK CHAPTERS

“Disabled Adolescents, Enabling Youth Ministry” in *Embodied Youth: Exploring Youth Ministry and Disability* (Routledge, 2020) Wes Ellis and Michael Langford, eds.

“Stewarding a Living Tradition: A Case Study” in *Before the Face of God: Essays in Honor of Dr. Tom Boogaart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Publishing, 2019) Dustyn Elizabeth Keepers, ed., pp. 63-76.

“For the Fitness of Their Witness: Missional Christian Practices” in *Converting Witness: The Future of Christian Mission in the New Millennium* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019) David W. Congdon and John G. Flett, eds., pp. 123-138.

“Discipleship” in *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, (Regnum and WCC, 2016) Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, Roderick Hewitt, and Kenneth Ross eds., pp.246-258.

“Lessons from my Friend Carter” in *Letters to a Young Youth Worker*, (CYMT, 2012). Mark DeVries, ed., pp. 123-126.

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

- “How do you think you are going to be a pastor?: Vocation and Disability” in *Theology Today* (forthcoming)
- “Disabled Adolescents, Enabling Youth Ministry” in *Journal of Religion and Disability*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2018.1521765>
- “Beyond the Limitations of Applying Western Youth Ministry Thought to an Ethiopian Context: A Case Study” in *Journal of Youth Ministry* 16(3), fall 2018, pp. 48-65, with Rode Sheway Molla,
- “Enabling Witness: Disability in Missiological Perspective” in *Journal of Religion and Disability* 19(1), 2015, pp. 15–29.
- “The Unsettling Practice of Missional Theology: Discovering the Dialogue between Gospel, Church, and Culture” in *Immerse: A Journal of Faith, Life and Youth Ministry*, July/August 2012, pp. 28-32.
- “Affirming Presence: spiritual life and friendship with adolescents with developmental disabilities” in *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* 15(4), November 2010, pp. 331-339.

OTHER ARTICLES

- “Between Text and Sermon: Isaiah 35” *Interpretation* Oct 2019
- “Darrell Guder” in *Princeton Theological Review* 18(1), 2015, pp. 5-8.
- “Affirming Presence: Spiritual Life and Friendship with Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities” republished in *Lifelong Faith*, Winter 2012.
- “The Ministry Section of BEM: Affirmations and Challenges” in *Princeton Theological Review* 16(1), 2010, pp. 53-66.

REVIEWS

- Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
- George R. Hunsberger, *The Story that Chooses Us: A Tapestry of Missional Vision* in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
- Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* in *Interpretation*
- Brian Brock and John Swinton, eds. *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader* in *Interpretation*

Mark T. B. Laing, *From Crisis to Creation: Lesslie Newbigin and the Reinvention of Christian Mission* in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*

Erik W. Carter, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities: A Guide for Service Providers, Families, & Congregations* in *Journal of Religion, Disability, and Health*

Susan J. Dunlap, *Caring Cultures: How Congregations Respond to the Sick* in *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*

Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity* in *Interpretation*

Jeff McNair, *The Church and Disability* in *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*

GRANTS

Henry Luce Foundation, *Enabling Theological Education: Preparing the Next Generation of Christian Leaders—Presence, Intention, and Dimension for Ministry to, with, and by People with Disabilities*, (\$425,000) September 2017-September 2020.

PRESENTATIONS

“Amplifying Their Witness” at *Theology and Disability: Exploring the Intersection of Personal Experience, Ministry, and Theological Education*, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, July 2011.

Learning to Trust: Social Outcomes of Therapeutic Horsemanship for Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities at the PATH Region 3 Conference, Williamsburg, VA, March, 2012.

“Amplifying Our Witness”, *Growing Together in Faith: Summer Institute on Theology and Disability*, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, July 2012.

“Amplifying Our Witness: From Inclusion to Partnership”, Key Ministry’s *Inclusion Fusion* Special Needs Ministry Web Summit, November 2012.

“Discipleship and Developmental Disabilities” at *Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry*, Epworth By The Sea, St. Simons Island, GA, January 28-31, 2013.

“Amplifying Our Witness” *Morton Library Book Talk* at Union Presbyterian Seminary, February 26, 2013.

Chair of session “Pluralism, Culture and the Holy Spirit” at *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*, Regent University Center for Renewal Studies, VA, March 1-2, 2013

“Discipleship and Developmental Disabilities” at *Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry*, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, April 23-26, 2013.

- “Our Iconic Witness: Disability in Missiological Perspective” plenary session address at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability* at SMU Perkin’s Seminary, June 16-20, 2014
- Workshop, “Inclusive Youth and Young Adult Ministries” at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability* at SMU Perkin’s Seminary, June 16-20, 2014
- “Mission of God” and “Personhood” presentations as Theologian-in-Residence at CYMT’s *Uncharted* youth mission conference, Nashville, TN, July 8-11, 2014.
- Keynote Address**, “Disability, Discipleship, and Witness” at the Youth Cartel’s *The Summit*, Nashville, TN, November 7-8, 2014.
- “From Inclusion to Belonging: Students with Disabilities and the Image of God” at *Christian Educators Association Convention*, South Bend, IN, October 22-23, 2015
- “Integrating Disability into Seminary Life and Curriculum” at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability* at Western Theological Seminary/Hope College, May 24, 2016.
- “Why Should Matt Have to Sit Alone at Lunch” at *AAIDD Religion and Spirituality Division Conference* in Atlanta, GA, June 9, 2016.
- “Universal Design, Responsive Design: Keys for Welcoming People with Varied Abilities” at *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship* in Grand Rapids, MI, January 26-8, 2017.
- “Practice-centered Youth Ministry: An Inclusive Approach to Youth Ministry” at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability* at Azusa Pacific College, June 6, 2017.
- “Youth Ministry, Disability, and Medicine” lecture series with John Swinton at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, MN, June 13-14, 2017.
- “Universal Design for Community: A Disability Ministry Training Event” *RCA/CRC Training Event*, Panel Member, Prince Conference Center, Grand Rapids, MI, September 22, 2017.
- “A Historical Perspective on Disability”; “Major Challenges to the Church on the Path to Maturity”; “Mission Studies and Disability”; and “Our Iconic Witness” at *Beyond Suffering Intensive* (Joni and Friends International) Sadler Global Missions Center, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, TX, October 4-7, 2017.
- “Disabling Theological Education” presentation to select members of administration, staff, faculty, and student body at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ, January 30, 2018.
- “Disabled Adolescents; [Dis]abling Youth Ministry” and Panel Discussant for “Journey Together: Mutuality in Ministry and Witness” at the *Institute for Youth Ministry’s Disability and Youth Ministry Conference*, Princeton, NJ, February 1-2, 2018.

- “Hidden Disabilities” at *Youth Unlimited Leadership Summit*, Prince Center, Grand Rapids, MI, March 3, 2018.
- “Disabling Youth Ministry” *Progressive Youth Ministry Conference*, Montreat, NC, April 3-6, 2018.
- “One Seminary’s Initiative: The Graduate Certificate Program at Western Theological Seminary” *Collaborative on Faith and Ability Webinar*, April 18, 2018.
- “Ways We Witness: Disability and the Mission of the Church” at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability* Durham, NC, June 11, 2018.
- “Disability, Theology, and Ministry: Emerging Questions and Themes: A Panel of the Faculty” at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability* Durham, NC, June 12, 2018.
- “Disabling Higher Education” Hope College Pre-College Conference, Hope College, Holland, MI, August 23, 2018.
- “Discipleship: Living into Our Vocation” and “Amplifying Our Witness” *Flagler Youth Ministry Program* St. Augustine, FL, October 4, 2018.
- “Disability and Ministry Workshop” *Flagler College Youth Ministry Program* St. Augustine, FL, October 6, 2018.
- “Ways we Witness: Disability and the Witness of the Church” at *Young Life Mid-West Divisional Diversity Summit* Timber Wolf Lake, Lake City, MI, Oct 24, 2018.
- “Disabling Theological Education” at American Academy of Religion *Integrating Religious and Disability Studies Pre-conference Workshop* Denver, CO, November 16, 2018.
- “We All Worship: Dis-abling the Ways We are Gathered and Sent” at *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*, Calvin College, Grand Rapid, MI, January 24, 2019, with Barb Newman and L. S. Carlos Thompson.
- “Ways We Witness: Disability and the Mission of the Church” at *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*, Calvin College, Grand Rapid, MI, January 25 and 26, 2019.
- “Disability as an Aspect of Human Diversity: Musings from a Missiologist” at *Disability and Human Nature Day of Study, 2019* sponsored by Saint Benedict Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture, and Evangelization at Hope College, Holland, MI, February 2, 2019.
- “Stories of Joy and the Joy of Storytelling: A Response” at *Conference on Joy and Disability Research*, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, March 11-12, 2019.
- Keynote Addresses** “Disability Missiology: Opening Up the Conversation” “Amending and Expanding Our Witness: Intellectual Disability and the Gospel” and “Ways We Witness: Disability and the Missional Church” at *Beyond the Boundaries: A*

Conversation Towards a Disability Missiology at Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, England, March 13-15.

“From Longing to Belonging: Theological Education” with L.S. Carlos Thompson and Sarah Jean Barton at *Summer Institute on Theology and Disability*, Holland, MI, May 20, 2019.

“Disabling Our Imagination: A Case Study” in *Teaching All Students: Accessible Pedagogy* at AAR/SBL, San Diego, CA, November 24, 2019.

“Ways We Witness” Young Life Chicagoland Summit, Chicago, IL, January 25, 2020.

Keynote Address “Disabling Education: A First Step toward Universal Design in Learning” *Involve Conference*, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA, February 11, 2020.

“Universal Design in Learning Toolbox” *Involve Conference*, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA, February 11, 2020.

“Called to Serve: Vocation and Intellectual Disability” NED Talk, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA, February 12, 2020.

Theologian in Residence, *Missing Voices Project*, Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL, February 28, 2020.

“Befriending and Including Disability in Youth Ministry” at *Flagler College Youth Ministry Forum*, Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL, February 28-29, 2020.

Led numerous regional and divisional training courses and seminars with *Young Life* and *Young Life Capernaum*.

Upcoming major presentations:

- October 22, 2020, Keynote Address, *Christian Educators Association*, Grand Rapids, MI
- November 14, 2020, Keynote Address, *Faith and Health Symposium*, North Park Theological Seminary and North Park University School of Health and Science, Chicago IL

COURSES TAUGHT

At WTS:

MN 102 The Practice of Discipleship

MN 573 The Practice of Youth Ministry

MN 581 Ministry and Margins

TH 112 Gospel, Culture, Church

MN 564 The Practice of Evangelism

MN116 Introduction to Disability and the Church

Elsewhere:

Church in Mission, Center for Youth Ministry Training at Memphis Theological Seminary,
Fall 2011, Fall 2014

Introduction to Christian History, Center for Youth Ministry Training at Memphis
Theological Seminary, Fall 2010; Fall 2011

Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality, Union – PSCE, Spring 2010.

Theology of Youth Ministry, Hope College, Fall 2018, Fall 2019.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Summer Institute on Theology and Disability (Institute on Theology and Disability/2019),
Faculty (July 2017-present)

Young Life Capernaum Mission-wide Board (Sept 2015-present)

Friendship House Partners Advisory Board (Sept 2016-present)

American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and AAIDD
Religion and Spirituality Division (January 2017-2018)

American Society of Missiology

REFERENCES

Erik Carter, *Professor, Department of Special Education*, Vanderbilt University,
erik.carter@vanderbilt.edu, (615) 322-8150

Kenda Creasy Dean, *Mary D. Synnott Professor of Youth, Church and Culture*, Princeton
Theological Seminary, kenda.dean@ptsem.edu, (609) 497-7910

Craig R. Dykstra, *Research Professor of Practical Theology and Senior Fellow at
Leadership Education*, Duke Divinity School, cdykstra@div.duke.edu (919) 660-
3400

Darrell L. Guder, *Henry Winters Luce Professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology
(Retired)*, Princeton Theological Seminary. darrell.guder@ptsem.edu (609) 497-6366