

Curriculum Vitae

BENJAMIN T. CONNER

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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), 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 BOOK SERIES EDITOR

with John Swinton, *Center for Disability and Ministry Books* (IVP Academic and WTS Center for Disability and Ministry co-branded book series)

BOOKS

Missing Voices in Disability Theology (IVP Academic – CDM Books) with John Swinton (under contract)

Harmony with Horses: A Christian Vision for the Horse-Human Relationship with Melissa Conner (Cascade, forthcoming, spring 2027)

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

“Belonging” in *Disciples & Friends: Investigations in Disability, Dementia, and Mental Health* (Baylor University Press, 2022) Armand Leon van Omen and Brian R. Brock, eds., pp. 229-246.

“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

“Disability and Youth Ministry: The Book I’m Not Going to Write” *Journal of Religion and Disability*, 2023

“A Baptismal Ecclesiology of Inclusion for Every Body” *Theology Today*, 2022.

“Playgrounds, Curriculum, and Universal Design in Learning” in *Didaktikos* 5(3), 2022, 23-25.

Guest Editor for the *Journal of Religion and Disability* 25(3), 2021 special issue titled “Disabling Theological Education” (243-250) along with the Introduction and an orienting article of the same designation.

“How do you think you are going to be a pastor? Vocation and Disability” in *Theology Today* 77(2), 2020, 138-153.

“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 Shewaya 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

“Ways We Worship: Disability and Worship” *Faithful Lives: Christian Reflection on the World – Faithful Worship* 5, 2020, pp. 81-90.

“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.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Journal of Disability and Religion, (Spring 2020 – present)

GRANTS

Lilly Foundation, *Nurturing Children with Disabilities*, (\$1,149,061) September 2023 – August 2027.

Lilly Foundation, *Nurturing Children with Disabilities*, exploratory grant, November 2022 – January 2023.

The Seminar on Vocation and Disability: A project of the Collegeville Institute and WTS Center for Disability and Ministry (\$150,000) May 2020 – November 2, 2023.

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.

Theologian-in-Residence for *Missing Voices Project* (Lilly Funded) Flagler College, St. Augustine Florida, February 2019 – February 2022.

Working Group Member for *Disability Pedagogy: Mapping the Lay of the Land* (Wabash Funded), November 2021 – June 2022.

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.

Keynote Address *Ways We Witness*, CEA (Christian Educators Association) Convention, October 20, 2020 (held virtually due to COVID)

“Ways We Witness: Disability and the Mission of the Church” at Joni and Friends *Global Access Conference*, February 4, 2021

“Called Now: Youth and Vocation” *CEA Convention*, Grand Rapids, October 21, 2021

Keynote Address, “Ways We Witness: Disability and the Mission of the Church” *Faith and Health Symposium*, North Park Theological Seminary and North Park University School of Health and Science, Chicago IL, November 6, 2021.

“Disabling Theological Education” Theological Education Committee and Religion and Disability Studies Unit, American Academy of Religion, Panelist with Sarah J. Barton, Devan Stahl, J.J. Flag, Erin Raffety and Miriam Spies, November 20, 2021.

“Youth and Neurodiversity” *Institute for Youth Ministry*, Princeton Theological Seminary panelist, via Zoom, December 6, 2021.

“Called Now: Youth and Vocation” *Young Life Mosaic Conference 2022*, Dallas Texas, January 3-6, 2022.

“Ways We Witness: Disability and the Mission of the Church” *Surge Network*, Roosevelt Community Church, Phoenix, Arizona, January 13, 2022.

“Youth Ministry 101” and panelist for “Difficult Conversations: Race, Sexuality, and Disability” at *Flagler College Youth Ministry Forum*, Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL, February 11-12, 2022.

Panelist, *Reimagining Mission through Disability* with Andrew Opie, Audrey Seah, and Roger Schroeder, American Society of Missiology, St. Mary’s College, June 17-19, 2022.

Respondent to Michael Niebauer’s *Virtuous Persuasion: A Theology of Christian Mission* at American Society of Missiology, St. Mary’s College, June 17-19, 2022.

Keynote Address “Ways We Witness: Disability and Mission” American Professors of Mission, November 4-5, 2022

Intervarsity’s Urbana Missions Conference, December 28-31, 2022, Seminar leader “Ways We Witness: Disability and the Mission of the Church” with Debbie Abbs (Access Intersity)

Stonebelt Arc Webinar, May 25, 2023, “Bridging the Purpose Gap: Disability and Vocation” with Dr. Daniel Harris (Fallen Walls)

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, June 20-21, 2023, Invitational Consultation (expertise in disability and worship), Prince Conference Center, Grand Rapids.

Center for Disability and Ministry Summer Symposium - Vocation, July 15, 2023, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI. Hosted and facilitated.

Thrive (CRC) and RCA Disability Concerns, “Nurturing Belonging: Exploring Hospitality, Disability, and Theology” October 11, 2023

Keynote Address “Hospitality in Equine Assisted Services: A Practice the Moves the Margins” and workshop “Horses as Our Partners” with Melissa Jolly Conner (PATH Intl. Master Instructor) PATH Intl. Region 4 Conference, May 3-5, 2024 Holland MI

Disability Training for Fuller Theological Seminary (online presentations), “Developing a Grammar for Disability” with the staff of Fuller Theological Seminary, February 10, 2025; “Disabling Theological Education” for the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary, February 18, 2025.

Keynote Address “Ways We Witness” 2026 Faith and Culture Forum “Reimagining Wholeness and Holiness: Disability, Neurodivergence, and the Church” Palm Beach Atlantic University, February 19-20, 2026.

Seminar for Lausanne MADE COP, “Ways We Witness: Docents in a World of Wonder” February 23, 2026.

Breakout session, “Seeking Harmony with Horses” PATH Region 3 Conference, Camp Geneva, Holland MI, May 3, 2026

Led numerous regional and divisional training courses and seminars with *Young Life* and *Young Life Capernaum* and numerous trainings around disability and faith for the Lilly Foundation.

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

MN412 Christian Life and Mission

MN 564 The Practice of Evangelism

MN361 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, Fall 2020, Fall 2022, Fall 2024, Fall 2025

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Institute on Theology and Disability (Institute on Theology and Disability as of 2019),
Faculty (July 2017-present)
Koinonia Inclusion Network – Center for Disability and Ministry in Asia, Advisory Council
(February 2021-present)
Young Life Capernaum National Board (Sept 2015-Sept 2020)
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, *Luther Sweet Endowed Chair in Disabilities*, Exec. Dir. Baylor Center for Disability and Flourishing, Baylor University, Erik_Carter@baylor.edu, (254)710-3438

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

Chris Dorsey, *President and CEO, Disciples Home Mission* [Disciples of Christ], b.chris.dorsey@gmail.com, (312) 953-7006

John Swinton, *Chair in Divinity and Religious Studies*, University of Aberdeen, Scotland. J.swinton@abdn.ac.uk +44(0)1224 273224