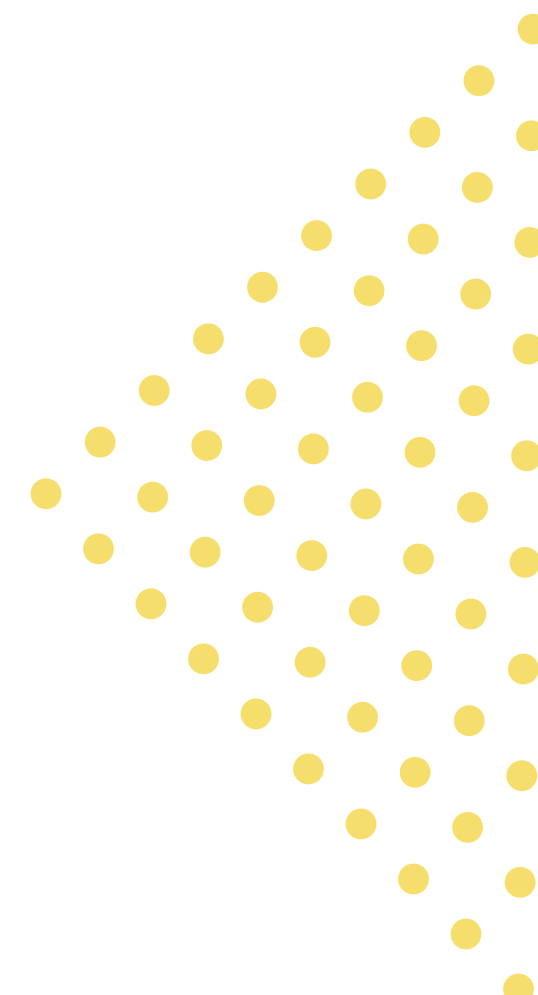
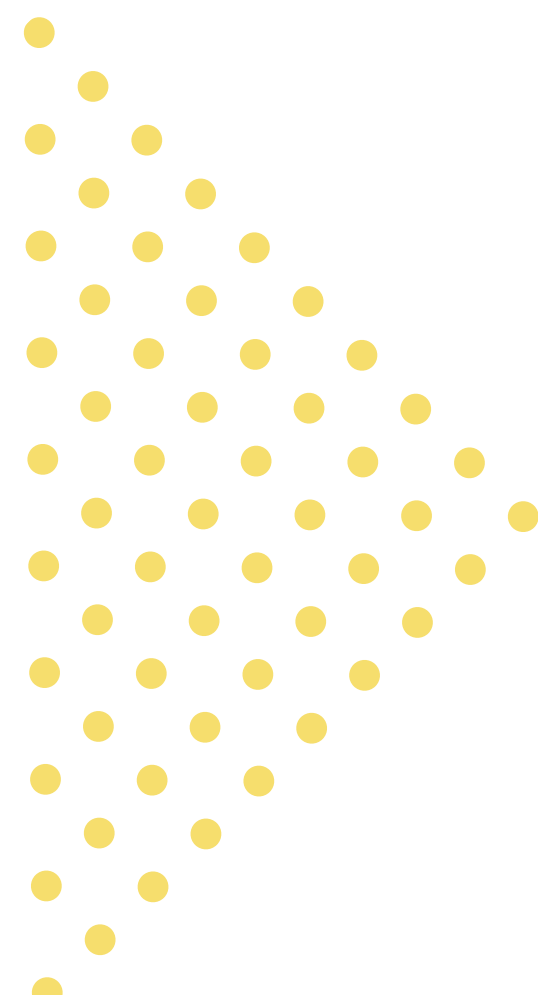


# ROOM AT THE TABLE:

## Welcoming People with Disabilities in the Church and Missions





# WHAT IS DISABILITY?

# BY THE NUMBERS

- 1.3 billion people with disabilities (WHO 2023)
- 1 in 6 people of the world's population is disabled (WHO 2023)

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, Article 1)

# WHAT IS DISABILITY?



**HOW DOES THE CHURCH  
VIEW DISABILITY?**

# MEDICAL MODEL

- The **medical model** of disability views disability as a defect that needs to be cured or managed.



# SOCIAL MODEL

- The **social model** of disability states that societal barriers and negative attitudes are the problem—not disability.

# MORAL MODEL

- A moral model argues that sin, karma, or the actions of the person or their family cause disability.



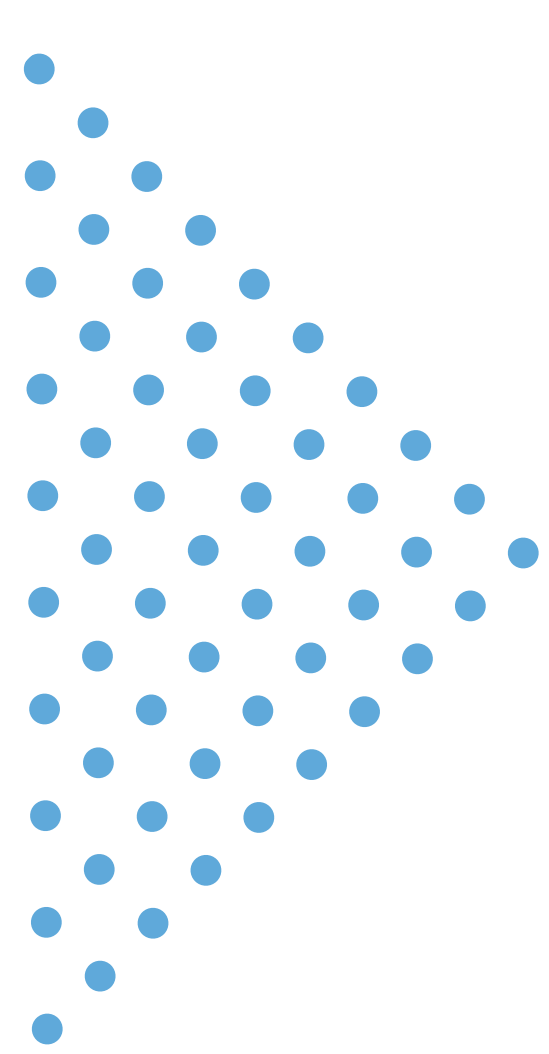
**Medical**

**Social**

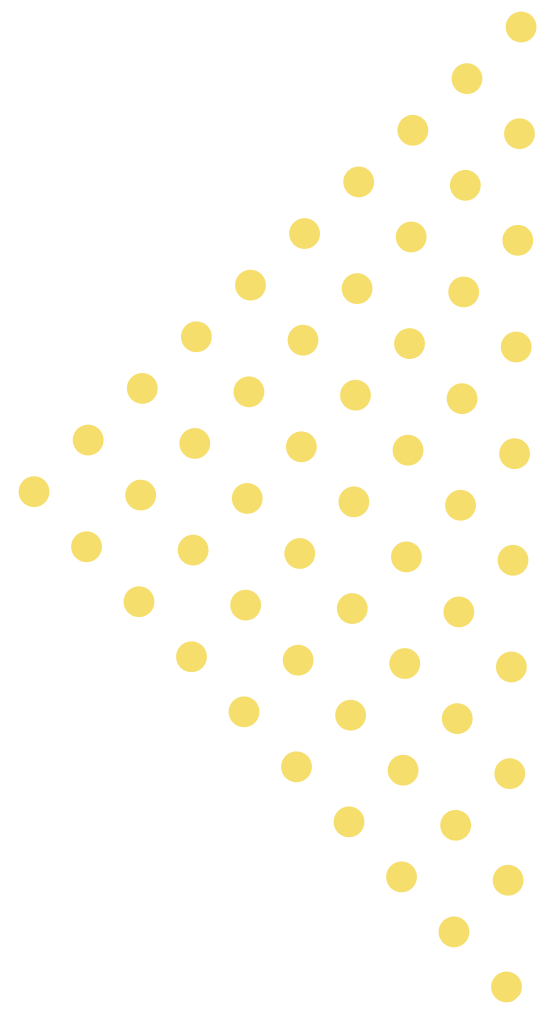
**Moral**

**ARE PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES WELCOME  
AT THE TABLE?**

“Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here those who are poor, those with disabilities, those who are blind, and those who are limping” (Luke 14:21 NASB).



Religious entities are exempt from Title III of the ADA that requires businesses and nonprofits to be accessible to people with disabilities.



# HOW TO WELCOME

- Is the location accessible?
- Is transportation available?
- Is an interpreter provided for the deaf?
- Have the needs of people with intellectual disabilities, autism, or learning differences (and their parents) been considered?



# ERIK CARTER

## *Dimensions of Belonging*

Wheaton Center for  
Faith and Disability









**ARE PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES WELCOME  
TO SERVE IN THE  
CHURCH & MISSIONS?**

“Do we simply accept [people with disabilities], saying, ‘Well done for getting this far’? Or should we **expect** to see them, and ask where they are when they don’t appear?”

John Lindenwood  
quoted in Deuel and John 2021, 75

# EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLE

- Moses (Ex. 4:10)
- Jacob (Gen. 32.31)
- Elijah (1 Kings 19:4)
- David (Ps. 13, Ps. 31)
- Paul (Gal. 6:11)



# **REASONS FOR SENDING & SERVING**

“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (1 Cor. 12: 21-25 NIV).



# ACCOMMODATIONS

- Technology
- Location
- Travel
- Finances
- Schedule

“We encourage church and mission leaders to think not only of mission among those with a disability, but to recognize, affirm and facilitate the missional calling of believers with disabilities themselves as part of the Body of Christ.”

Cape Town Commitment  
Lusaunne Movement 2010

**HOW CAN WE MEET THE  
NEEDS OF THE  
DISABLED COMMUNITY?**



# **PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS**

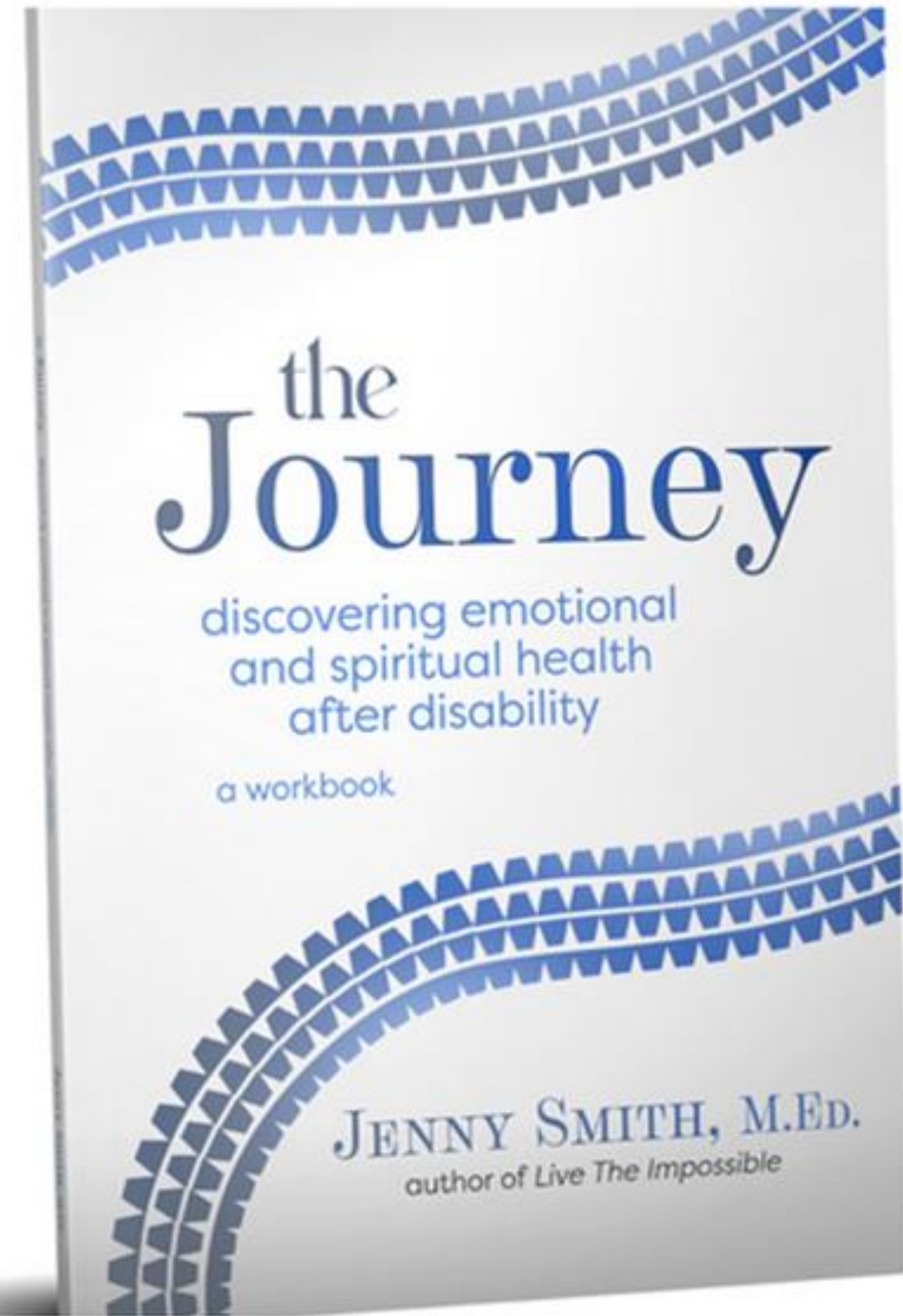
- Access to public buildings and transportation (see CRPD, Article 9)
- Access to adequate housing (see CRPD, Articles 19 and 28)
- Access to mobility aids (see CRPD, Article 20)
- Access to education (see CRPD, Article 24)
- Access to employment opportunities (see CRPD, Article 27)
- Access to health care (see CRPD, Article 25)
- Access to recreational activities (see CRPD, Article 30)



# **EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

## Topics include:

- ▶ Reflecting on Your Story
- ▶ Naming Your Losses
- ▶ Navigating the Journey of Grief
- ▶ Experiencing Change and Transition
- ▶ Living in Paradox
- ▶ Coping with Stress and Trauma
- ▶ Refilling Your Emotional, Physical, and Spiritual Resources
- ▶ Finding Meaning and Purpose in Life

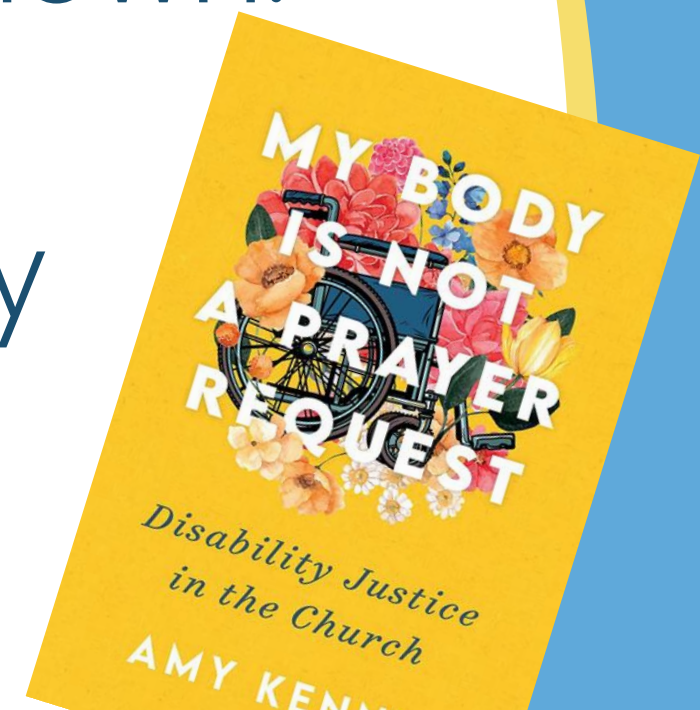







# **FINANCIAL NEEDS**

Being disabled is expensive. The world charges us an additional price of admission. Imagine if instead of trying to pray away my body, Christian communities invested in making sure they didn't bankrupt me. Imagine if churches insured that no disabled person in their community paid the crip tax alone. Imagine if we were invested in one another's thriving enough to pick up the bill.... It's a way to undo the systems that keep disabled people down. It declares that we do not have to pay for the consequences of an inaccessible society all by ourselves.... It proves that you really do understand that you have been [#blessed](#).



- 
- Personal care
  - Respite care for caregivers
  - Wheelchair ramp and house modifications
  - Maintaining service animals
  - Modified vans
  - Accessible housing

<https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/extra-costs-living-with-disability-brief.pdf>



We are neither Jews nor Gentiles,  
slave nor free, male nor female,  
disabled nor abled. For all of you  
are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

## RESOURCES

*Disability in Mission: The Church's Hidden Treasure* edited by David Deuel and Nathan John (2021).

*Disability and the Church* by Lamar Hardwick (2021)

*My Body is Not a Prayer Request* by Amy Kenny (2022)

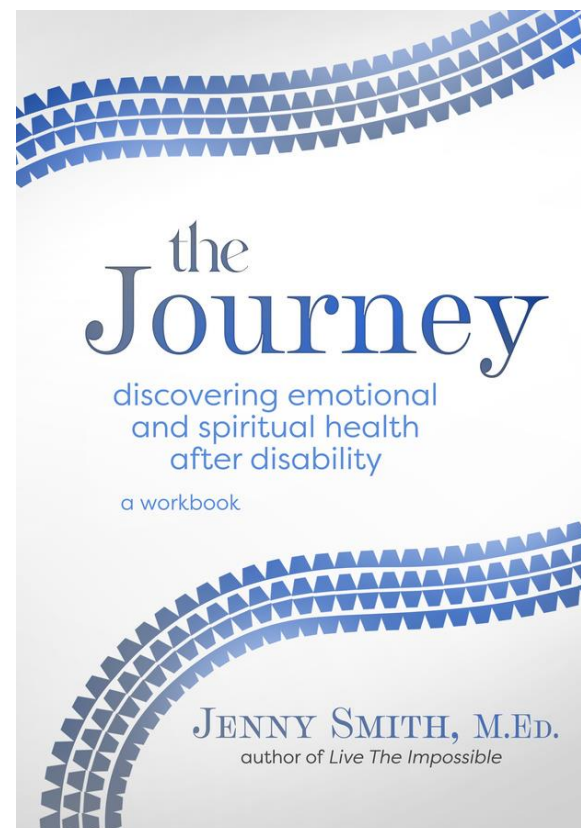
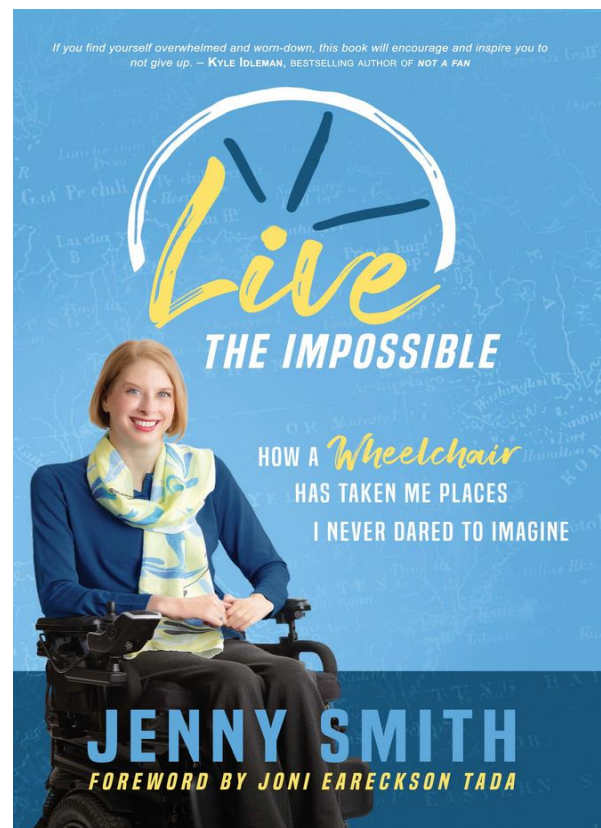
Smith, J. "Room at the Table: Welcoming People with Disabilities in Church and Missions" in *Global Member Care Vol. III*, edited by K. O'Donnell and M. O'Donnell (2024).



Global Missions  
Health Conference



**Please submit your evaluation:** Each evaluation enters you into a drawing to win GMHC prize pack that is worth over \$400.



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