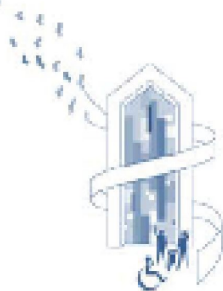


**Invite.
Embrace.
Include.
Empower.**



FAITH4ALL

Inclusive Times

First Edition:

We will introduce **Faith4All** and its mission.

Issue No. 1

July, 2020

The First Edition of The Inclusive Times

Contained herein is the **first edition** of the **Faith4All Inclusive Times**, a quarterly e-journal which will highlight the efforts and accomplishments of **Faith4All**, a not-for-profit interfaith organization which aids communities of faith to better invite, embrace, include and empower individuals and families living with a disability into active lives of faith in their community. We intend to distribute this e-journal in the months of January, April, July, and October. In keeping with our ethic of broad inclusion and accessibility, we intend that readers using text-to-speech programs or refreshable Braille displays will be able to read this e-journal easily.

Our organization, **Faith4All**, is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization registered in the state of Colorado as a public charity under federal and state laws pertaining to religious not-for-profit organizations. Donations to our organization are tax-exempt under IRC Section 170 and our taxpayer identification number can be provided to anyone wishing to donate to our organization. If interested in making a tax-deductible donation to further the efforts of **Faith4All**, please contact Kevin Pettit via email (kevin@Faith4All.org) for details.

Dr. Pettit and the origins of Faith4All


The origin and impetus of the organization **Faith4All** was Dr. Kevin Pettit's experience in churches in Colorado and in Minnesota following the severe Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) he survived on October 27, 1998. Although his family and the family of his in-laws received a full measure of support from their churches for the eleven days while Kevin was in a coma and though he was given an adequate level of spiritual support while he was an inpatient at [Craig Rehabilitation Hospital](#), his experiences at churches following his injury showed him how people with disabilities are often subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) made to feel unwelcome in houses of worship. This surprised him because, like most everyone, he presumed that churches are a helpful place for people in a crisis, difficult life situations, and even disability. Although most faith communities offer considerable support and prayers for a family experiencing a broad range of difficulties in life, these institutions wrestle with welcoming people who live for people live with a long-time or permanent disability. It is for this reason that several studies have determined that people with disabilities are considerably less likely to attend religious services than those people who are temporarily able-bodied.

When Dr. Pettit's disabilities were more apparent than they are today, he found that people avoided speaking with him in the fellowship time after church. Conversations with friends who live with disabilities have evidenced that this situation is rather common and is one reason that many people living with disabilities choose not to attend church. (In fact, the executive assistant of [Faith4All](#) was even told by members of a church she attended that relocated to a venue that was inaccessible for her wheelchair "there are churches for wheelchair-bound people like you"!) With the hope of finding a way to help integrate people living with disabilities (PWD) into the life of faith communities, Dr. Pettit decided to attend the Iliff School of Theology where he attained a Masters of Arts in Specialized Ministry in 2010. His attendance at this school was made possible by considerable grants from the [First Congregational Church](#) in Boulder and the United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministry ([UCCDM](#)), as well as grants from the [Iliff School of Theology](#). His life's goal is to help both those PWD and the temporarily able-bodied to find and create faith communities filled with a passion for justice, much love, and great concern.

Dr. Pettit has chosen to understand the reason for his incredible recovery to be so that he can help people living with disabilities by helping faithful institutions learn to better invite, embrace, include, and empower people with disabilities into active faith community life.

[Faith4All](#) works to ensure that all houses of worship and religious communities of all faiths will be places that have addressed specifically their inclusion of people with disabilities through community workshops or discussions, will regularly assess the welcome (both physical and attitudinal) that is offered to visitors and members who might presently live with any sort of disabling condition, and will always make considerable effort to welcome and include individuals who presently live with a disability into their fold.

As an organization, [Faith4All](#) holds these core values:

- We believe that all people, including those people with disabilities, must be allowed to participate in any faith community in as fully a way as they desire and are able.
- To deny the ability of anyone to participate in a community of faith, or to place limitations on the way in which they might participate, is not acceptable. This denial does seriously, if silently, degrade the truth of human justice for which such a community should stand.
- Though on the surface humans differ widely in appearance, ability, and culture, on a fundamental level we each bear a profound resemblance to one another – we are all deeply connected human beings. This fundamental fact highlights the injustice of any limitation imposed on a person who has a disability in their approach to or worship of the source of all being. Such barriers are logically and rightly disallowed. 

Please expect this e-journal quarterly. Our next edition will be delivered in October (hopefully at the beginning of the month, not the end of it!)

Note: Upcoming topics to be addressed in the [Inclusive Times](#) include the effect of rationing healthcare in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 30th Anniversary of the [ADA](#)!

*Any questions or comment regarding this e-journal or this organization can be directed to kevin@Faith4All.org.

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FAITH4ALL

Inclusive Times

Second
Edition:

We will discuss
disabilities and
this pandemic.

Issue Number 2

October, 2020

Living with a disability during these pandemic times

By Kevin Pettit

Many of us these days are feeling restless. We've been staying in our houses (if we are able to work from home), only venturing out with our protective masks (if we can obtain any), and finding many stores closed since mid-March when the first of the statewide COVID-19 restrictions were put into place (in Colorado, at least). If we have the technology and skills, Zooming into business meetings, appointments, and church services have become somewhat stressful and very unsatisfying. Even if we haven't had to self-quarantine, we feel burdened by the restrictions placed on us by the pandemic. And many of us may now be gathering with friends, some of us even without those cumbersome face masks, risking infection.

Indeed, these are frustrating times for most of us! We're all becoming more appreciative of human contact; however, for some people in today's world **every day** is like this, even without the pandemic. Not all, but many people with disabilities (PWD) must live with restrictions of their movement, sensory input, diet, memory, or thinking process all the time. Add to that the restrictions due to the COVID-19 that we all face. While surely this time is more difficult for many PWD than before the pandemic, many of us had already determined how to live successful and comfortable lives with the restrictions imposed on us by our disabilities. Many PWD have done this despite being members of the poorest division¹ of US society!

Of course, while we should always wear masks and maintain the appropriate precautionary measures because of the pandemic, we each might want to check in with our friends who live with disabilities to learn how they have adapted their lifestyle while living with the restrictions imposed by their impairments. Now would be an excellent time for teaching and sharing, a time when we can all learn of each other's skills and adaptive techniques for dealing with the restrictions imposed on us!

For many PWD, their disabilities have prepared them for life in pandemic times. For example, computers are just one device used by people with certain disabilities to extend their reach and interactions with the world. Fortunately, using computers we are able to speak to others by emailing, chatting, or video conferencing. Many of us are aware of how the internet extends our ability to shop for essential items and also to spend more money than we'd like on non-essentials 😊 !

People with disabilities have limitations or impairments that require them to find alternative ways to accomplish everyday tasks. Very broadly speaking though, a common quality that unites different people who live with different disabilities is the quality of **creative adaptability**.

Discovering and determining an approach to solve challenges encountered in commonplace situations because of one's disability often requires flexibility, adaptability, and creativity to a degree that is foreign to many people!

For many, trying to live isolated from others has highlighted the value of human contact to us all. This feeling is not unlike emotions some PWD may feel because of rejection, exclusion, and neglect by others. The feelings of rejection and the avoidance by others, in my experience at least, is similar to the sad, sometimes lonely, feeling many people have as a result of the stay-at-home ruling and other pandemic restrictions; although the common use of Zoom calls and work from home requirements, if we are asked or required to follow these prescriptions, can be sometimes relaxing 😊 !

While this problem points to ways that our society can change to more fully welcome PWD into active community lives, it also points to the fact that many PWD have learned to cope with loneliness and rejection.

Because these survivors who live with disabilities often feel rejection from the rest of society, many have learned the importance of finding a group of friends who accept them for who they are, people who will listen to their struggles and joys with compassion, a group of true friends, a support group. COVID-19 has normalized this need and awareness of health concerns!

Living with a disability has taught me of the importance of support groups, highlighting that we all live as members of a community and rely on others for help and encouragement as we live our lives to our fullest. Perhaps, in this time of COVID-19, we can **all** learn the importance of close friends who give us support and help us to find joy in these trying times. Could this also be an opportunity to reach out to others unlike ourselves, learn from them, and expand our community of friends?

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¹ For more information poverty, disabilities, and their correlation, see this article: <https://talkpoverty.org/2014/09/19/disability-cause-consequence-poverty/>.

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