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The Rev. Brian Krause Sermon Intro

About the Rev. Brian Krause

The Rev. Brian Krause earned his Master of Divinity degree from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. in 2009. Pastor Brian has a mild form of Cerebral Palsy and he understands the challenges of growing up and living with a disability. Pastor Brian discovered his love of disability theology while serving on his internship in Kenyon, Minn. Since then he has worked to break down the barriers in the church that often lead to the exclusion of people with disabilities. Pastor Brian began the Nebraska Synod D.R.E.A.M. Team in 2012, which works to promote ministry with people who have disabilities in the Nebraska Synod and he continues to serve as the team's chair. On the national level, Pastor Brian was a preacher and Bible study leader at the 2012 Definitely-Abled Youth Leadership Event in New Orleans, La. Pastor Brian has spoken at several other events promoting ministry with people who are disabled. Brian currently serves St. John's Lutheran Church in Marquette, Neb.

Pastor Brian's Notes on Preaching the Sermon

This manuscript is a starting point for delivering a sermon on including people with disabilities into the life of the congregation. This sermon plays with the idea of stigma. We all bear some kind of stigma based on our abilities, our gender, our age, our station in life and so on. To help the congregation enter into this sermon, it might be helpful for the preacher to add an additional name or two to the first half of the sermon that the people in the congregation might identify with. Show the congregation that in this old sinful world we all bear labels and those labels lead to divisions, but in Christ the labels are removed. In Christ the walls that divide people, including the walls of unfair stereotypes, are being broken down and God is creating one people out of the many groups.

This sermon was originally delivered at the ELCA Definitely-Abled Youth Leadership Event in New Orleans as part of the 2012 national youth gathering. When I delivered the sermon, I used name badges for the various names/labels. I used a red sharpie for the negative names and a black sharpie to write the names given to us by God. As I preached the first half of the sermon I took each of the red name tags in turn and put it on my shirt. When I got to the point where Jesus takes away the negative labels by which we have been labeled I peeled off the name badges. Ideally you would have a large wooden cross that you could transfer the name badges to in order to symbolize Jesus taking away our stigma and our labels. In the second part of the sermon, I took the name badges written in black ink and placed them on my shirt. At the end of the sermon, it would be ideal if you had a large stack of pre-made Godly name badges and a few volunteers to go out into the congregation and place those names on each person gathered for worship. We did this in New Orleans with the D.A.Y.L.E. participants and it was a powerful image of all of the people in the room having been claimed by God and given a new identity. If possible you may want to deliver the second half of the sermon at the baptismal font to show how our new identities are given to us in baptism.

While I can claim some of the ideas of this sermon as my own from my own life experience, I cannot claim them all. I got the negative labels of "angel" and "devil" from Kathy Black's book *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to rethink how we talk about the disabled and how we interpret the healing passages in the Revised Common Lectionary.