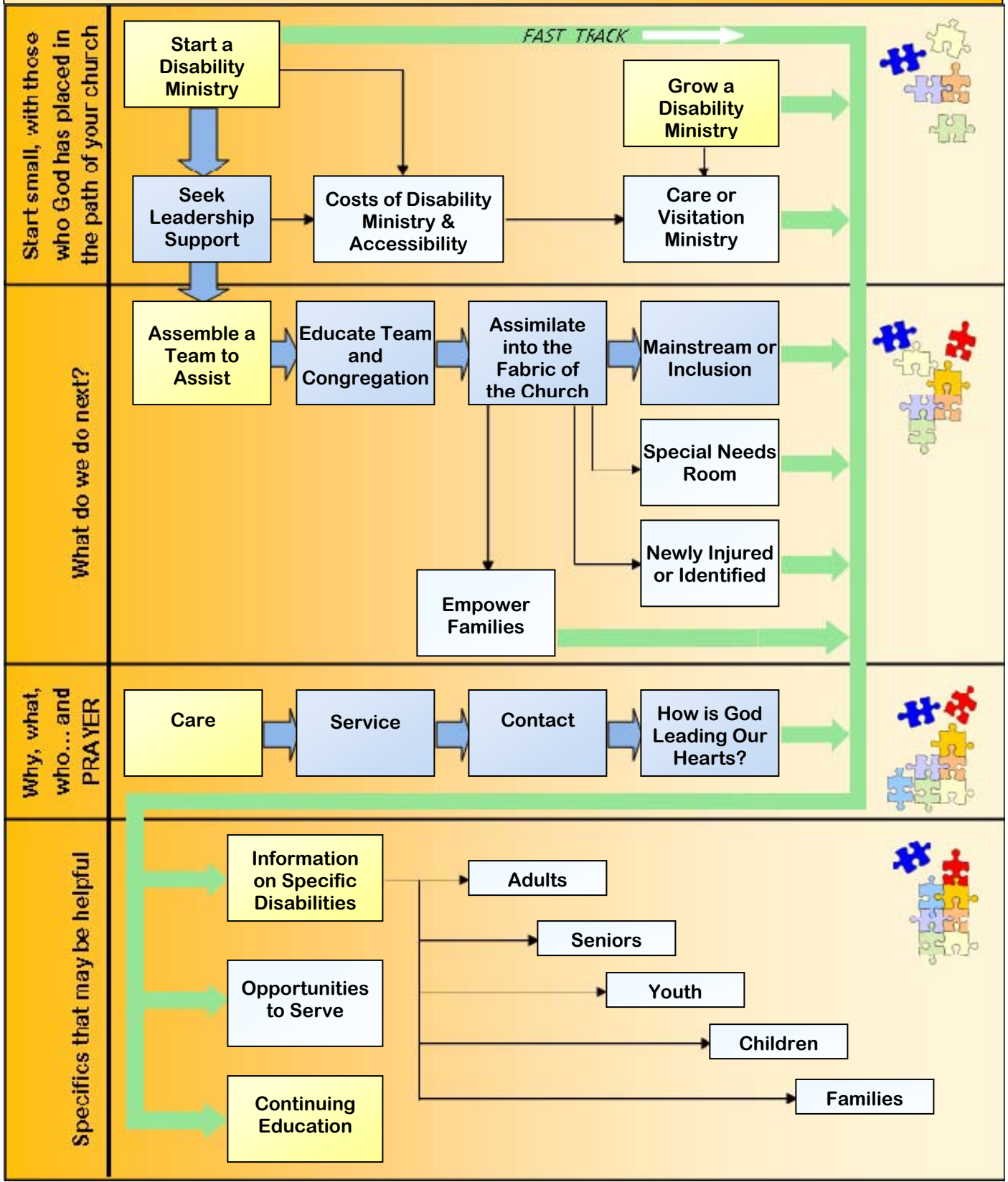


# Starting a Church Disability Ministry



**First Steps:** Pray! Look at this process below, see where you are then click on the box for information or ideas on the specific topic. Yellow boxes are typical entry points. If not you're not sure what to do next, follow the blue arrow path. **Don't know what to do next, click here**



## HOW TO START A CHURCH DISABILITY MINISTRY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW FOR  
DETAILED INFORMATION ON EACH TOPIC

A. How do we start a Disability Ministry?

- [How can we start serving the people God places in our church's path?](#)
- [How can we get the support of our leadership?](#)
- [What are the costs of Disability Ministry and Accessibility?](#)
- [Should we offer care and visitation ministries?](#)

B. What do we do next?

- [Should we assemble a team? How?](#)
- [How can we educate the team and the congregation?](#)
- [How do we assimilate those with disabilities and their families into the fabric of the church?](#)
  1. [Deciding on Mainstreaming or Inclusion](#)
  2. [Creating Special Needs Classrooms](#)
  3. [Newly injured or identified](#)
- [How do we empower families whose loved ones have a disability?](#)

C. Why? What? Who? And prayer

- [Why should we care about people with disabilities?](#)
- [What should we do to serve families affected by disability?](#)
- [Who should we contact to help us with our special needs ministry?](#)
- [Prayer -How is God leading our hearts?](#)

D. Where can we find information on specific disabilities?

- [Adults](#)
- [Seniors](#)
- [Youth](#)
- [Children](#)
- [Families](#)

E. [How can we help our disability ministry grow?](#)

- [Should we offer care or visitation ministries?](#)

E. [Are there other opportunities to serve the disability community?](#)

F. [Where can we find continuing education?](#)



### Don't know where to start or what to do next?

- Contact the [local Joni and Friends Field Ministry Office](#) and they will be glad to help you analyze the resources the Lord had provided and the challenges you face in getting or growing a disability ministry. Enter you zip code in the box and then contact (call or email) the Field Ministry office near you.
- Typically the YELLOW SHADED BOXES (in the [diagram above](#)) are the most common starting points to begin a disability ministry. The BOLD BLUE ARROWS often lead to the next step(s).
- If you have only one person that your church wants to accommodate, follow the green FAST TRACK arrow to information for specific disabilities, serving opportunities and continuing education. You don't have to have a full blown disability ministry to get started. Meeting the needs of the one person the Lord has placed in the path of your church is a great place to start.
- You can also click on any of the boxes for information on that particular topic; you don't have to follow a pre-defined path.
- And remember pray, pray and pray!

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## How Do We Start a Disability Ministry?

- Contact the [local Joni and Friends Field Ministry Office](#) . They will be glad to help you analyze the resources the Lord had provided and the challenges you face in starting a disability ministry in your church.
- “[Special Needs Smart Pages](#)” - You’ll find advice, answers, and articles about teaching children with special needs. This is a comprehensive resource providing churches with tools for reaching out to children with special needs.
- Review in the Gospels the example of Jesus and how He treated disabled persons. Ask several Christians to pray for you as you endeavor to reach out to the disabled in your community. Read “[Successful Models of Disability Ministry](#)” to see how others have been successful in starting a disability ministry.
- “[The Father’s House](#)” - Welcoming and Including People and Families Affected by Disability  
This DVD for church use presents 10 practical ideas for becoming a disability friendly church. Also helps churches address fears and misunderstandings that are common when beginning disability ministry.
- [Disability Sunday Kit](#) - Tools, video, curriculum and instructions for having a disability awareness Sunday in your church. This is a great way to get the congregation excited and involved in starting a disability ministry.
- Look for upcoming [Disability Ministry Training Events](#) sponsored by some of our [Field Offices](#). These events are great opportunities to meet others interested in disability ministry, network with other churches and gain valuable information on starting and growing disability ministry.
- “[Christianity with Sleeves Rolled Up](#)” booklet- Discover your spiritual gift and how to use it to start ministering to others.
- “[Through the Roof](#) – A Guide to Assist Churches in Developing an Effective Disability Ministry” - This manual will explain how to prepare for a disability ministry and outreach. Includes a ministry worker's training course, plus a myriad of recommended resources
- “[Exceptional Teaching](#)” by Jim Pearson - Helping children with special needs reach their full potential has been the lifework of Jim Pierson. Now, with this book, he shares his knowledge so that you can become the exceptional teacher.
- “[Practical Pathways](#) – Reaching and Training Volunteers for Ministry with Special Needs Children - This invaluable resource is designed to help church leaders inspire and involve volunteers in disability ministry.
- [So That My House Will Be Full](#) – A Guide to Including People with Disabilities in the Church” - This resource presents ideas for inclusion in areas such as evangelism, baptism & communion, worship, children's ministry, and church leadership.
- “[All Things Possible](#)”- Calling Your Church Leadership to Embrace Disability Ministry” - Here is a discussion of the scriptural basis for disability ministry, a thoughtful look at a Christ-like posture and purpose that will call your church leadership to action that will transform your church.
- “[Give Them Jesus](#)” – Evangelizing Children with Special Needs” – audio from Joni and Friends 2009 Summit - How to help children grow in their faith • About evangelizing children with various disabilities
- “[Responding with Compassion](#)” – Ministry Models for Families Affected by Disability” - Every family is precious to God, but those affected by disability go to church with unique needs.

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## What about Leadership Support?

- Questions to answer
  - a. Have you talked with your pastor or minister? This is so important! You need your pastor's support and approval, someone to turn with questions and for help.
  - b. Have you talked with any other governing board(s)? This also so important! You want enthusiastic support from your church board.
  - c. How does a disability ministry fit the mission of your church? Review your church's mission statement.
  - d. Follow the normal protocol for starting a ministry at your church. There maybe several times in the process that you need to seek leadership approval.
- Disability Outreach: "[Helpful Tips for Pastors](#)" by Joni Eareckson Tada
- Family Retreat DVD link (interview with pastor Dale Maedor form Bear Creek Church)
- "[The Father's House](#) DVD - Welcoming and Including People and Families Affected by Disability This DVD for church use presents 10 practical ideas for becoming a disability friendly church. Also helps churches address fears and misunderstandings that are common when beginning disability ministry.
- [All Things Possible](#) - Calling Your Church Leadership to Embrace Disability Ministry. by Stephanie O. Hubach - Do you have a passion to see people with disabilities and their families embraced and included in the life of your local church? Would you like to share that passion with those in church leadership? Here is a discussion of the scriptural basis for disability ministry, a thoughtful look at a Christ-like posture and purpose that will call your church leadership to action that will transform your church.
- Review "[In His Image](#)" DVD - Families affected by disability need the support of a caring church family. In this DVD, you'll see how one church is reaching out to serve children with disabilities. You will hear from parents who want God's best for their children and discover how God is drawing them into a faith community. This is a great promotional tool for recruiting volunteers in your church
- *Through the Roof* Introduction video by Joni
- "Amsterdam 2000" video by Joni
- Luke 14 mandate (paper from Dan'l)
- Luke 14 Video (closed captioned)

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### What about the cost of Disability Ministry and Accessibility?

- [“Five Myths of Starting a Ministry to Those with a Disability”](#)... It’s easier than you might think!
- [Accessibility Checklist](#) – Ideas on how to make your church disability friendly.
- [Christian Fund for the Disabled](#) - is a grant program of Joni and Friends, designed to meet the spiritual needs of families affected by disability and, partnering with churches, to demonstrate Christ’s love through meeting practical needs.

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### How can we help our Disability Ministry grow?

- Upcoming [Disability Ministry Training](#) Events - link to information about your local Field Office events.
- [“Successful Models of Disability Ministry”](#) booklet - Great ideas on how to become involved in Disability Ministry
- Contact [local Field Ministry Office](#) - They will be glad to help you analyze the resources the Lord had provided and the challenges you face in starting a disability ministry.
- [Special Delivery](#) link – Partnering with churches, we provide training and inspirational materials to bring hope, encouragement, and the promise of a genuine relationship with God to those who are hospitalized, homebound, and institutionalized.
- “Welcoming the Differently Able to the Church” Power Point presentation
- Getting others involved:
  - [Family Retreats](#) link - to break past the ‘fear barrier’ with some hands on time.
  - International opportunities
    - [Wheels for the World](#) - aiming to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the disabled around the world by providing wheelchairs and sharing the love of Jesus Christ.
    - [Two by Two](#) medical outreach teams to help serve people with disabilities around the world
    - [Total Access Teams](#) – work with our international partners to help meet accessibility needs
    - [Christian Literacy](#) – teaching those who are not literate to read
    - [Family Retreat](#) - break past the ‘fear barrier’ with some hands on time.

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### Should we have a Care or Visitation ministry?

- Not only do people affected by disability or their families come to your church, there are probably many more people the Lord has placed in the vicinity around your church. Those recently injured or diagnosed at hospitals and doctor's offices, and some in long term care facilities like nursing homes, convalescent homes, intermediate care facilities and the like, that are located near the church. As the Lord provides the resources, you can reach out to these people affected by disability that may not have yet visited your fellowship and earn the right to share the Gospel.
  - [Special Delivery](#) link - Partnering with your church, we provide training and inspirational materials to bring hope, encouragement, and the promise of a genuine relationship with God to those who are hospitalized, homebound, and institutionalized.
  - "[Barrier Free Friendships](#)" by Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Jensen - Joni and Steve show you how to build mutually fulfilling relationships based on insights into how Jesus related to individuals with disabilities. She also offers stories of hope and joy of those who've crossed the barrier.

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### Should we assemble a Team? How?

- “[Through the Roof](#)” link - The *Through the Roof* program provides disability awareness, [training](#), [disability ministry tools](#), [resources](#), and [support](#) for churches, ministry leaders and workers as they develop, maintain or expand their disability programs.
- Follow the example of other churches in your area. Go to “[Churches with Disability Ministries](#)” to find a church in your area that already has a disability ministry. Ask for their advice in getting a team together.
- Gather a core leadership team to assist in the process of developing a ministry to people affected by disability.
- Where do you start
  - Take a look at who God has placed in the path of the Church
  - What are the existing ministries of the church?
    - Do you have any outreach ministries?
    - Do you have any inclusion ministries?
  - What resources has He provided your church?
  - What does the congregation know about people affected by disability?
  - What training is needed for you, your team and/or the congregation?
    - See [next page](#) for some training resource ideas

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### How do we educate the team and the congregation?

- “Hearts in Motion” bible study – A four lesson Bible study, “Hearts in Motion”, will equip you with eyes that see, hands that help and hearts that care for those affected by disability. [Participant's Guide](#) and [Leader's Guide](#).
- [Joni Eareckson Tada – Her Story](#) – Be inspired by Joni as she struggles with loss and finds hope and peace through her faith in Jesus.
- “[Camp Lean on the Lord](#)” Vacation Bible School curriculum - At Camp Lean-on-the-Lord, children learn to be a compassionate friend through hands-on activities, Bible stories, songs, and crafts.
- “[On a Roll for Jesus – Mission: Unstoppable](#)” Vacation Bible School curriculum - As special agents on Mission: Unstoppable, kids learn to understand and include people with disabilities. Includes an inspiring missions project to help send wheelchairs to those in need around the world.
- Link to [resource page](#) in the Joni and Friends web store
- Survey of the congregation to find out the unknown needs within the congregation
- “[Family Retreats](#)” link (to break past the ‘fear barrier’ with some hands on time.)
- “Flying Lessons” DVD – contact local Joni and Friends [Field Ministry Office](#) for a presentation
- [Joni and Friends TV](#) episodes (click on “Episodes and Offerings” to preview)
- International opportunities
  - [Wheels for the World](#)
  - [Two by Two](#) medical teams
  - [Total Access Teams](#)
  - [Christian Literacy](#)
  - [Family Retreat](#)

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### How do we assimilate those with disabilities and their families into the fabric of the church?

- Joni and Friends [Family Retreat](#) information
- ["Access to God"](#) by Joni Eareckson Tada
- Joni and Friends Recommended [Books on Disability Ministry Tools](#)
- [Disability Ministry Curriculum/Training Materials](#)
- Check the [Joni and Friends list of churches](#) in your area that can help with respite care
- [Sibling support](#) audio and ["Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends"](#)
- ["Responding with Compassion](#) – Ministry Models for Families Affected by Disability"

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### How do we empower families who's loved ones have a disability?

- Check the [Joni and Friends list of churches](#) in your area that can help with respite care
- ["Christianity with Sleeves Rolled up"](#) booklet
- [Family Retreat](#) information
- ["Ministering With the Family Experiencing Disability"](#) by Dr. Jim Pierson, CCFH Ministries

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### Newly injured or identified

- [“From the First Moment”](#), When Disability Strikes Your Family - booklet
- [“Why”](#) tract by Joni Eareckson Tada
- [“Ministering with the Family Experiencing Disability”](#) by Dr. Jim Pierson
- [“When the Doctor Has Bad News”](#) by Al B. Weir, M.D.
- [“Helping Those Who Hurt”](#) by H. Norman Wright

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### Creating Special Needs Classrooms

- [Building Accessibility Resources](#) Links to Joni and Friends web resources on subject
- The Americans With Disabilities (ADA) [Resource List](#)
- Copy of Sensory room video from Debra P.

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### Deciding on Mainstreaming or Inclusion

- Audio of "[Teaching Children with Special Needs](#)" from the 2009 Summit in Pasadena, CA
- "[Helping Kids Include Kids With Disabilities](#)" by Barbara J. Newman
- "[Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities](#)" by Erik W. Carter
- "[Pocket Guide to Special Needs](#)" - Quick Tips to Reach Every Child

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### Pray, Pray and more Prayer

- The title says it all
  - a. What is God laying on your heart?
  - b. Jot that down to share with your church leadership
- ["Helping Those Who Hurt"](#) by H. Norman Wright
- ["Prayer"](#) on the Joni and Friends website under Resources

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### Why should we care about people with disabilities?

- “Created in the Image of God” booklet (or PDF) (coming soon)
- [Disability Information and Statistics](#)
- [“Beatitudes for Friends of People with Disabilities”](#)
- “Heart’s in Motion” bible study [Leader](#) and [Participant's Guide](#)
- Joni and Friends [“Christian Institute on Disability” brochure](#)

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### What should we do to serve families affected by disability?

- [“So my Father's House Will be Full”](#)
- Joni and Friends [Ministry Resource Catalog](#)
- [Three Key Components to Launching Disability Ministry](#)
- Attend a [Family Retreat](#) to gain some experience working with people having disabilities

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### Who should we contact to help us with our special needs ministry?

- Link to Joni and Friends web page, [enter zip code for local Field Ministry office](#)
- [Churches](#) doing disability ministry
- [Organizations](#) doing disability ministry
- [Individuals](#) doing disability ministry
- [Family Retreat](#)
- International opportunities
  - [Wheels for the World](#)
  - [Two by Two](#) medical teams
  - [Total Access Teams](#)
  - [Christian Literacy](#)
  - [Family Retreat](#)

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### How is God Leading Our Hearts?

- What do we have a passion for?
- What makes our heart's cry out to God?
- What things make us 'angry' enough to take a stand?

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**Where can we find information on specific disabilities?**

- [Information and resources](#) on the Joni and Friends web site – see the drop down lists
- Recommended [books on specific disabilities](#) on the Joni and Friends web site
- [Resource Listing](#)

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### Adults

- [“Including Adults with Disabilities in the Life of the Church”](#) –audio- workshop from the Joni and Friends 2009 Summit
- [Employment Resource List](#) – Joni and Friends link to resources on the web
- [Financial Assistance Resource List](#)

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## Seniors

- [“The Life and Death Dilemma – Families Facing Health Care Choices”](#) - Here, Joni offers practical encouragement, realistic perspective, and scriptural insights to families tackling the hard question about disability, death, or terminal illness.
- [“Compassionate Caregiving”](#) by Lois D. Knudson
- [Joni and Friends Recommended Books on Alzheimer’s](#) - Joni and Friends web resources
- [Alzheimer’s](#) – Joni and Friends link to other resources
- [Hard of Hearing Resource List](#) – Joni and Friends link to other resources
- [Joni and Friends Recommended Books on Elder Care](#) – resource list
- [Financial Assistance Resource List](#)

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## Youth

- Joni and Friends [Family Retreats](#)
- “[All Gods Children](#)” by Joni Eareckson Tada and Gene Newman
- “[Beyond Limits](#)” Lessons in Discipleship from the book of Matthew
- [Camp Resource List](#) – Joni and Friends link to resources
- “[Cause 4 Life](#)” Disability Ministry Leadership Internship Program

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### Children

- Links to Joni and Friends [web resources](#) on subject
- “[Special Needs For Special Ministry](#) – For Children’s Ministry”
- “[Let All Children Come to Me](#)” a handbook of information and inspiration
- “[What you need to Know about Autism](#)”-audio- workshop from the Joni and Friends 2009 Summit
- “[Special Needs Smart Pages](#)” a great resource for providing churches with tools for reaching out to children with special needs.

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## Families

- Joni and Friends [Family Retreat](#) information
- List of [community resources and ideas](#)
- [Financial Assistance Resource List](#)
- ["In His Image"](#) DVD – see how one church is reaching out to families with children who have disabilities

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**Are there opportunities to serve the disability community?**

- Coaching or mentoring people affected by disability for ministry/leadership positions
- Ministry roles provided
- Leadership roles

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### Where can we find continuing education?

- [Churches/Organizations with Disability Ministries INFORMATION CARD](#)  
(Copy of this needs to go to the local Field Ministry office so they are aware of who is being added to the CDM list in their area.)
- Brochure: Serving People and Families Affected by Disability
- Joni and Friends Newsletter
- *Wheels for the World* brochure
- Joni and Friends Internship [Cause 4 Life](#) information
- [TV](#) and [Radio](#) info on the website
- [Certificate in Disability Ministry](#) – [Johnson Bible College](#) and other like resources

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