

You add.
God multiplies.



Peggy Goetz

Returning Stroke Survivors to Church

After a stroke, people often have difficulty reintegrating into the life of their church.

At first, the church family and others are very involved. But once the person begins adjusting to life beyond the hospital and rehab, attention wanes, said Peggy Goetz, a Calvin College communication arts professor who has researched stroke survivors.

Because they can't speak easily, some stroke survivors lose their friends. Typically they aren't chosen to serve as ushers, speakers, or servers of communion in church.

"If you think of church . . . it's about communication in so many ways," Goetz said.

Goetz recently landed a \$25,000 grant to study how stroke survivors with communication disorders experience Christian communities.

Along with student researchers, she will interview and attend church

with the survivors. They will also interview friends and caregivers.

At the conclusion, they will host a special worship retreat. "I hope to have that service led and planned by stroke survivors," Goetz said.

Rather than fitting the accepted idea of normal, she said, many people with disabilities—people with communication disorders included—would like to have society changed in various ways to give them access.

"Peggy's project gives people who have significant communication issues post-stroke a voice to express important church-inclusion issues near and dear to their hearts," said Judith Vander Woude, the director of Calvin's speech pathology and audiology program. "The work Peggy is doing is cutting-edge in disability studies." ■

—Myrna Anderson,
Calvin College

Sharing God's Love with a Scientist

Jerry (not his real name) was a highly accomplished scientist who thought very logically and did not believe in God.

"You can imagine, then, how difficult it was when he developed MS—multiple sclerosis," said Rev. Stan De Vries, a hospice chaplain in Minnesota for the Christian Reformed Church's Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

When De Vries began to visit Jerry as his hospice chaplain, he was totally bedridden and fearful.

"Jerry grew up in a Jewish family, but his scientific mind had long ago concluded that you cannot prove or disprove God's existence," said De Vries.



Stan De Vries

Still, Jerry loved to talk about anything and everything, including his fears. He began to reconsider his scientific assumptions about the existence of a God.

At one point, Jerry said: "Time is short and I have one last chance." He tried to formulate a prayer to God but couldn't find the words.

De Vries said to him, "Are you requesting to know that there is a God who cares about you and will not let you suffer for a long time." His reply? "I think you hit the nail on the head."

De Vries asked if he needed the assurance that God accepted him with all his brilliance and faults. He agreed.

As he spoke of God's forgiveness and acceptance, the chaplain said, "When God forgives us, there is nothing left to condemn us."

Jerry replied, "I hope so."

Jerry didn't want De Vries to leave that day. The chaplain stayed awhile longer. Then he touched his forehead and gave him a final blessing. ■

—Chris Meehan,
with information from Rev. Stan De Vries