

We are a church with one mission: to grow followers of Jesus through grateful worship, genuine community, and generous service to each other and our world. We believe by loving God and loving people we can have an impact that really matters, and would like to tell you more about that. If you are interested in being a part of what God is doing with us, or just have some questions, **fill out the contact card** or ask the person next to you. **Please feel free to call or email too if you have any questions.**

FAMILY NEWS AND NOTES

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GOD'S FAMILY TIMES

BIBLE CLASSES
Building—9:30 am Sunday

WORSHIP
Building—10:30 am Sunday

GROWTH GROUPS
Grose's -- 6 p.m. Sunday
Irwin's -- 6 p.m. Sunday

BIBLE CLASSES
Building—7 pm Wednesday

Dinner before Class: THIS Wednesday March 29th at 6 p.m. Last chance to sign up on the bulletin board if you plan on attending and what food item you can bring to share.

Congregation Meeting: Thursday April 6th at 7 p.m. at the building

Family Covered Dish Dinner: Sunday April 9th after services.

Bridal shower luncheon to honor Alexis Stutzman: Ladies mark your calendars for Saturday April 22nd at 1 p.m. at the building. Please sign up on the bulletin board if you plan to attend.

Dinner before Class: Wednesday April 26th at 6 p.m.

An update letter from Nathan and Anna is in your mailbox. Their team's proposal to serve in North Africa has been approved. Their family will be moving from Lyon, France to North Africa in July. God has been faithful in His provision of teammates and a place to settle.

Two men from "Healing Hands International" will be at the Whitehall church of Christ in Pittsburgh on April 9th at 6 p.m.

Happy Birthday

3/28 Ron Duriez &
Alexis Stutzman

4/5 Bruce Niehenke & Joshua Canose

4/8 Ashley Canose

4/19 Ray Rusnak

4/20 Trina Flamm

4/27 Jason Bracken

4/28 Rodrick Anokye

4/29 Marilyn Magas

Happy Anniversary

4/2 Ezekiel & Mary Fasanya

4/7 John & Gail Gromley

FAMILY MATTERS

Indiana

Church of Christ

724.463.7240

March 26, 2017

Why We Need 'Useless' People

Babies with Down syndrome are aborted all over the world for being 'a burden to society.' Here's how we can advocate for them.—By Amy Julia Becker

My daughter Penny is in the fifth grade. She just went away for the weekend with her best friend and her family for the first time. She wears glasses. She feels nervous around dogs. She loves reading and spelling and recently asked her Prayer Buddy at church to pray for her about learning how to add fractions. She is responsible, smart, talented, and loving. She also has Down syndrome.

Today (March 21) is World Down Syndrome Day, a day to celebrate the approximately six million children and adults around the globe who have Down syndrome (also known as trisomy 21). Any website or book devoted to this topic lists a set of physical features, medical concerns, and potential disabilities common among people with Down syndrome, but it is hard for me to think in these generalities anymore. Rather, I am drawn to portraits of people with Down syndrome that demonstrate their distinctive traits. I love reading stories about their different interests, abilities, and friendships. And yet most people in our world still see Down syndrome as something both monolithic and negative—a condition to be eradicated rather than a group of individuals to be welcomed and loved.

Historically, people with Down syndrome were pushed to the margins of our society through institutionalization. In more recent years, with the advent of prenatal screening tests that indicate the likelihood of trisomy 21 in fetuses, more and more women have chosen to pursue those tests and, in many cases, to terminate pregnancies accordingly. Although the number is tricky to calculate, in the United States, the rate of babies aborted with Down syndrome is around 50 percent and is likely to rise with the increased use of these prenatal tests.

A similar story can be told in developing nations around the globe. According to recent reports in Iceland, not one child was born with Down syndrome between 2008 and 2012. In Denmark, with universal access to prenatal screening, one source estimates that 98 percent of the babies conceived with Down syndrome are aborted. The statements by public officials and medical providers throughout Europe overwhelmingly argue that people with Down syndrome cost too much and pose a burden to society.

This argument relies on utilitarian logic: If babies with Down syndrome are not going to be economically productive, it follows that they're not worth bringing into the world. Moreover, if babies with Down syndrome are going to suffer, they should be aborted. As Jean Vanier, founder of the L'Arche community, writes, "Our desire to alleviate perceived suffering in the name of compassion easily leads to the destruction of people whom God has created and loves beyond all things."

Arrangements for family news can be

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Nathan Irwin and family as they are in Lyon, France for language training and are preparing to move to North Africa to serve there in July.
- For Mary Fasanya's asylum request to be granted and for the girls as they are in the USA without their husband and father. Also for Ezekiel as he is in Nigeria without his wife and daughters.
- For Mayleen Niehenke's visa approval to come to the United States from the Philippines and for a co-sponsor so that the procedure can be quickly expedited.
- Bill Tonkin who is at Indiana Square Personal Care Home, 1703 Warren Road. Lois says cards and visits are always welcome.
- Louanne Brown for healing of her vision in her right eye which has been impeded by at least 50%. Also for peace and acceptance that the eye may never get back to "normal" since it is no better or worse at this time.
- Nick Ruffner, John & Gail Gromley's step grandson, who had another round of chemo in his treatment for leukemia in January.
- Janet Anoyke's mother in Ghana who recently suffered a stroke.
- Jay Stenman, Louanne Brown's husband, who suffered a concussion the week of January 15th.
- Hailynn Magas has been diagnosed with Type1 Diabetes. Pray that the family can learn and adjust to a new diet and insulin testing and injections.
- Linda Biller Post, Jimmy Biller's mother, whose leukemia is no longer in remission. She will be receiving chemo treatments.
- Cliff Brown was recently hospitalized. He came home March 5th but still deals with heart problems.
- Karen Plowman, Brenda Antonio's cousin, for healing of broken bones in her leg due to a recent fall.
- Marilyn Magas who still is "not up to speed" as she adjusts to her new medications.
- Jason Canose for healing as he continues physical therapy and thanksgivings for successful surgery to remove his gall bladder on March 15th.
- The family of Fran Mumau, Teri Brown Mumau's mother-in-law and Tyler Mumau's grandmother, for comfort and peace as she passed away this week.
- Dixie Kirk, sister in law of Dan & Debbie Kirk, whose testing of her lung showed no spots. She continues to heal from pneumonia.
- Chuck Sickles, a friend of Don Baker, for God's will to be done for his recovery or peaceful eternal rest.
- Dan Fitzgerald, a friend of Bob Reininger, for healing and recovery from a very serious operation on March 20th.

Prayer requests can be added to the family prayer book

It's tempting to respond in kind by using this same utilitarian logic. I can detail the accomplishments of people with Down syndrome (including my daughter) and in so doing argue that women should bring babies with Down syndrome into the world because they will bring us happiness, foster friendship and community, and contribute to the workforce. But the terms of the argument are the problem. Utilitarianism presupposes that our accomplishments determine our worth. It relies on a consumer culture of buying and selling—of putting a monetary value on human beings—rather than on a kingdom culture of giving and receiving, where grace and love are the bedrock truths of the universe

Even though I am the mother of a child with Down syndrome, I often find myself defending my daughter's skills and abilities rather than her inherent worth. In so doing, I play into the idea that I, too, am only worthy of life because I contribute something productive in the world. I devalue myself and everyone else around me when I start to see human beings as products to be measured.

What harm have we done to the image of God within each of us by placing a price tag on human life? And what's the alternative model?

In a recent NPR interview with host Krista Tippett, the Irish poet Michael Longley made the statement, "Poetry is useless." He waited a few beats before he explained, "Poetry is without use, but it is valuable." As I listened, my mind moved from poetry to people. I thought of the many individuals who do not contribute in any measurable economic way to our society. Useless, others might say. A burden. A drain. And from a purely material, utilitarian way of thinking, they might be right. But anyone who believes in a purposeful Creator God would say that many human beings are indeed "useless," and yet those same human beings bear inestimable value. In that way, people with disabilities are indeed like the words of a poem: Although they might not provide or produce clothing or shelter or food, they nonetheless convey beauty and meaning, truth and transcendence. They teach us what it means to be human.

While the Judeo-Christian tradition provides the foundation for our understanding of human dignity and ethics, Christian history also offers models of how these ethics might inform everyday life. There are many examples of countercultural, intentional communities like L'Arche, where people with intellectual disabilities and typical adults live together. More contemporary efforts include Friendship House—a new movement in which seminarians live with adults with intellectual disabilities. These communities and many others bear witness to the value of understanding our common humanity through relationships of mutual and reciprocal giving and receiving.

Of course, not everyone is called to live in an intentional community among people with intellectual disabilities. But we are all called to recognize the inherent worth of every human being we encounter and to live in a way that honors and fosters the image of God in others. Those in power, especially, need to adopt a posture of humility and vulnerability in order to be open to the gifts of those considered weak and useless in the eyes of the world. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27).

"The mystery of people with disabilities is that they long for authentic and loving relationships more than for power," writes Vanier in *Living Gently in a Violent World*. "They are not obsessed with being well-situated in a group that offers acclaim and promotion. They are crying out for what matters most: love. And God hears their cry because in some way they respond to the cry of God, which is to give love."

On World Down Syndrome Day, I will not proclaim the usefulness of my daughter and the millions of other men and women with intellectual disabilities around the globe. But I will proclaim their value. In so doing, I proclaim the value of every human being created in the image of God.