

Caring for Families with Disability: Reflections on Using Podcasts in Ministry

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In articles focused on the theme of “Formation and Supervision in a Digital Age” in volume 31 of *Reflective Practice*, various authors offer valuable insights as they respond to questions that have been raised in regard to the effective application of new technologies in the formation and supervision of the teaching ministry and in ministry itself.¹ In the “Editorial on Perspectives” in the same issue of the journal, Herbert Anderson correctly points out that “the impact of rapidly changing technology on how we shop, solve problems, or create and sustain relationships” cannot be fully anticipated.² And he asks an important question: “How will the digital capacity to determine communities of interest affect membership in religious communities?”³

This essay attempts to offer a partial answer to this question of how we can use a new technology within our ministry of pastoral care. First, I will describe the workshop I gave at my church and several podcasts that were both particularly designed for use by parents of children with disabilities. I will reflect on the strengths of podcasting that contribute to the future use

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of podcasts as a medium of ministry, and I will acknowledge its drawbacks. The traditional church setting, such as the liturgical space, as well as the still prevalent understanding of disability as a stigmatized illness as presented in the Bible, do not adequately address or respond to people who have physical disabilities or mental illness and their families. I will argue that, in such cases, the new medium of podcasting can be beneficial because it offers the distinctive feature of limited interpersonal encounters and allows for anonymity, which can provide emotional and spiritual support. To this end, I divide my essay into three parts: (1) an introduction of podcasting as a new medium and the specific context in which I conducted my workshop, (2) the content and the philosophy of the workshop, and (3) my reflections on the use of podcasting as ministry.

As part of the coursework for the class Justice in Spiritual Care offered in the spring of 2016 at Claremont School of Theology, students created a spiritual or pastoral care model and practiced using it in ministry in their own communities. I designed a two-day workshop for parents of children with mental disabilities and presented the workshop in an adult education session at my church, Claremont Presbyterian Church in Claremont, California. After the workshop, I was invited to be the guest speaker on a Korean Christian podcasts in order to present the same content. It is important to note that in designing the workshop for parents of children with mental disabilities, I focused more on the common experiences of family members of children with mental disabilities and less on their distinctive contexts of gender, religion, ethnicity, culture, and society, which will be important topics for further research. For this reason, I use the term 'pastoral care' rather than 'spiritual care' in this article, following the definitions of pastoral care and spiritual care used by Carrie Doehring and the distinction she draws between them. According to Doehring, spiritual care refers to a situation or activity in which one is able to engage with different faith traditions, whereas the meaning and image of pastoral care originates from within the Christian tradition. The group for which I designed the workshop and the places where I practiced the workshops are within the Christian context; the meaning of pastoral care provided by Doehring deeply resonates with the ministry that I am trying to elucidate in this article. By this I mean a form of supportive care offering a "spiritual presence that comes alongside people in an ongoing way," during "strategic moments" and "life-altering events," and "sustains people through the losses and gains of life transitions."⁴

Some families might have experienced disability in their family as a life-altering event, whereas others might have walked alongside their family member. This distinction must be addressed in further pastoral theological studies; however, I do not discuss it here given the limited scope of this article. Participating podcasts twice with the content that I created unexpectedly opened up a discussion online and became a public—and a sacred—space that invited listeners to share their experiences with family disabilities that had previously been hidden. One creates a podcast by recording the podcast and uploading it, which normally takes one to two hours; after it has been uploaded, listeners can make comments through a website or an application on a smartphone. The unique combination of the content (the issue of disability) and the medium (a podcast) created unexpected dynamics. The purpose of this essay is to constructively and critically reflect on this podcast workshop and to examine the drawbacks and advantages in order to evaluate whether podcasts will be a helpful way to provide ministry in the future.

INTRODUCTION TO PODCASTING AND THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT IN WHICH I CONDUCTED THE WORKSHOP

Philip Hefner asks a question that can help us to see the growing attachment between human persons and technology and how interactions between these two may affect our humanness. He notes that the question is no longer “What are we doing with our technology?” but rather “What are we *becoming* with our technology?”⁵ This is because, as he further explains, “The digital revolution has created a new culture with new language and seemingly infinite possibilities.”⁶ This strongly resonates with Marshall McLuhan’s famous phrase, “The medium is the message,” implying that the medium refuses to remain solely a tool for conveying information but strongly influences the message by creating a new way of establishing communication and community.

Specifically, the changes in how we understand authority have been considered to be among the notable outcomes of the communication revolution brought about by the computer and the Internet. The invention of the printing press enabled Martin Luther to “spread his ideas widely and quickly” using the new medium of print. Anderson points out that through this change of such great magnitude, “an unknown monk from Wittenberg,

Germany, became a revolutionary icon and spiritual authority overnight.⁷ Through the medium of print, which enabled an “unknown monk” to spread his message, the reigning authority that had previously stood above the individual in the hierarchy was overridden and a new voice rose to become an authority. This shows the intricate relationship between the nature of media and authority. In the same way, digital technology, including the Internet, by allowing “universal access to information and easy dissemination of ideas,”⁸ much as the printing press did in Luther’s time, contributes to our understanding of the authority of religious leaders and allows us to question the legitimacy of contemporary religious authority.⁹ This has impacted how we relate to religious as well as secular authorities.

Another aspect of the rapid change in technology is the new manner of communication made possible by digital media. Anderson points out that “very personal information is exchanged without thinking much about the consequences of public exposure.”¹⁰ In addition, this form of communication “gives the appearance of intimacy without either physical or emotional presence,” and “it is, after all, impersonal technology that makes it happen.”¹¹ He cautions that in cyberspace it is difficult to balance “the benefits of openness or transparency” and “the security risks of broadly-shared information.”¹² This is a particularly important issue in pastoral care, formation, and supervision because, as Anderson says, we may be “left more isolated and vulnerable than we expected by these ‘connecting technologies.’”¹³ Hence, Anderson rightly calls for the need to come up with “new criteria for evaluating the fluidity of personal boundaries in social networks.”¹⁴

We can find both of these aspects of change—the shifting of authority and a new manner of communication—in podcasting. A podcast is “a program (as of music or talk) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet.”¹⁵ A podcast also has the distinctiveness of being a recent technological development, similar in impact to the development of printing in the time of Martin Luther. Because of the ease of creating and uploading digital files, unlike radio broadcasting, podcasting allows people not only to speak for themselves but also to spread their voices through the Internet. This innovation can be seen as a grassroots movement due to its accessibility. Anderson notes this and says that just as when the printing press first appeared, “digital technology is changing how we understand authority.”¹⁶ On an even larger scale than that of the origin of printing, there is a blurring of “the boundaries between experts and ama-

teurs"¹⁷ and an "easy dissemination of ideas."¹⁸ The availability of podcasts regardless of time and space also contributes to the broad dissemination of knowledge. Unlike radio broadcasts, where programs are scheduled at a set time, a listener can hear a podcast whenever he or she wants. This unbounded nature of the interaction between uploader and downloader, at a time determined through Internet forums and email, has made possible a space where people can communicate and create community.

The specific podcast community I was invited to speak to after I conducted my workshop at my church is a community that is led by two male Korean pastors who are PhD students in a U.S. seminary. It was aimed at a Korean audience, so it was conducted in Korean. The presenters remained anonymous because the aim of the program was to provide sound theological insights by offering criticism, at times harsh, of Korean Christian churches in contemporary South Korea. For this reason, in order to respect their purpose, I have decided not to disclose the exact title of the program or the identity of the participants. This online podcasting is part of their ministry.¹⁹ One of the pastors said that he looks forward to a future in which they can meet and discuss social and theological issues in person and become an in-person community.²⁰

The two pastors generally meet once a week to record a podcast, and they focus on specific issues such as current events in the United States or South Korea or topics related to the Bible or Christian theology. The recording usually runs an hour and a half. Each presenter starts with comments and questions raised through the online chat room and identifies the topic for the day. After they upload the recording, usually on the same day it was recorded, people are free to post comments about what they heard. The number of listeners averages about 100 people, which varies only slightly each week.

The importance of self-reflexivity cannot be emphasized enough when it comes to providing pastoral care. This is even more true in the context of disability, which still carries a heavy stigma. First of all, I need to note again that the context in which this podcast was presented was contemporary Korean society. The stigma against people with disabilities, whether physical or mental, is still strong in Korea, even in the Christian context, as was described by a guest speaker who participated in my podcast, a person who is an older sister of a physically disabled person.

In order to provide more context, let me share some autobiographical information. I am a female South Korean who is an international student in a PhD program at Claremont School of Theology, and I have been educated primarily in private schools, both in South Korea and the United States. I have never experienced a disability personally, nor has anyone in my family. Thus, I admit that I cannot fully understand what it means to have a disability or to be related to a disabled person. I also have not experienced raising children, so I am somewhat limited in my understanding of what it means for parents to raise a child. However, I hope that my distance from knowing disability experientially can help me to have a perspective that is fresh and to offer insights that have been neglected. When I was young in South Korea, I had a few friends from school who were diagnosed with epilepsy. Through that experience, I learned how young people who have physical disabilities can be bullied and hurt by both intentional and even unintentional jokes. Given this limited experience, I have to say that my knowledge and concern, although well intended, cannot be sufficient. For this reason, through the workshop my intention was to provide a space for the voices of parents who are caring for children with disabilities.

My own eyes were opened to the issues faced by parents of children with disabilities during an interview that I did in the fall of 2015 for a class in ethnographic research methods at Claremont Graduate University taught by Professor Paul Faulstich. Several news articles about suicides of Korean parents of children with disabilities led me to wonder about the stories behind these families with disabled children, and I started to wonder what it is like in the American context. Through conducting ethnographic research on American parents of children with disabilities, I have realized the stigma and taboo attached to disability and have learned that some, although not all, parents have internalized these social oppressions. In the process of recruiting parents of children with disabilities as well as during the interviews, most of the parents shed tears, and the need for pastoral care loomed large. Although I became aware of the pastoral needs of the parents of disabled children, I found it difficult to know specifically what such pastoral care would look like. I thought that without actual and practical social support, including changes in the legal system and insurance company policies along with changes in public awareness, the suffering of disabled children would remain the same regardless of the pastoral care their parents received.

The class entitled Justice in Spiritual Care at Claremont School of Theology, which was taught by Professor K. Samuel Lee in the spring of 2016, gave me the opportunity to think concretely about what I could do in my current position. I came up with the idea of a workshop for mothers of children with disabilities and discussed my concerns with the senior pastor at my church, Claremont Presbyterian Church. Fortunately, the church has a program of adult education every Sunday morning. I was assigned sessions on two Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 9:45 a.m., on May 15 and 22. After the adult education program, I was invited to speak about the same material via podcasting.

PHILOSOPHY AND CONTENT OF THE WORKSHOP

Philosophy of the Workshop

I designed the workshop at my church for parents who have children with disabilities or who are interested in understanding this particular issue. It was developed as a component of liberative action, based on critical theory and disability theology. The major objective of the workshop was to provide a space to reflect on the meaning of disability and to be able to reimagine its meaning through examining the ideas of three theologians who have based their theology on their experience of disability. I introduced Nancy Eiesland, Stanley Hauerwas, and John Swinton, each of whom have theologized about disability. Through sharing their life stories and their theology, the workshop provided a safe space for parents to have an opportunity to reflect critically on their lives and on their personal theologies and to reconstruct their views.

Integration of Critical Theory

Critical theory was developed in the 1970s for application to law and was known as “critical legal studies”; it began at the same time as the rise of feminism, critical race theory, and queer theory. As a result, a new field known as critical disability studies also emerged. Critical theory questions and challenges social assumptions and analyzes the political structure of disability. Two key political insights undergird critical disability studies: powerlessness and context. The main questions raised are in regard to “social values, institutional priorities, and political will” and “who and what gets valued, and who and what gets marginalized.”²¹

When society wants to enforce an oppressive condition of powerlessness, it presents the condition as a natural phenomenon. In that way, everyone, including the victims, accepts the inferiority of certain individuals as the norm. As Lee Anne Bell puts it,

Oppression not only resides in external social institutions and norms but lodges in the human psyche as well. Oppressive beliefs are internalized by victims as well as perpetrators. The idea that poor people somehow deserve and are responsible for poverty, rather than the economic system that structures and requires it, is learned by poor and affluent alike. Homophobia, the deep fear and hatred of homosexuality, is internalized by both straight and gay people. Jews as well as Gentiles absorb anti-Semitic stereotypes.²²

At the workshop, after explaining the concept of internalization in relation to a brief introduction of critical theory, I led a discussion to help parents critically reflect on what they had internalized in experiencing disability through their children. For example, I asked, "Where do we draw the line between the able and disabled body?" Through such questions, parents might be able to see what is unjust in the social reality that they have experienced and be able to come up with their own achievable alternatives. Proceeding in this vein, the process of gaining awareness and of differentiating between the social environment and themselves (the parents and their children) itself became a liberative praxis, particularly if they had internalized the accepted social understanding of their children's disability. Introducing the parents to a summary of how the notion of disability was constructed through the lens of critical theory also helped them distance themselves from society's way of looking at disability. In addition, by analyzing the term *disability*, I aimed to broaden the participants' understanding of disability to "beyond the image of someone in a wheelchair or a person with a visual or hearing impairment in order to recognize that disability is a vast category; a category that includes an infinite number of possible experiences and realities that may or may not be visible to others."²³ In one way or another, every human falls short of human perfection. We are all limited, wounded, and/or handicapped. In some people, we can see the limitation; in others, the limitation is internal.

Relevance of the Project to Pastoral Care

The workshop included both an examination of critical theory and the practice of pastoral care. Before I introduce the workshop's relevance to the project of pastoral care, it should be noted that there are areas where the distinctions between the two practices become blurred, particularly given the self-reflexive nature of each practice. Both critical theory and pastoral care regard the activity of self-reflection as essential in their field.

Compared to the great need for pastoral care of parents of children with disabilities, the resources and the channels to assist parents are quite limited. Parents are used to speaking for their disabled children because children with mental disabilities are often unable to speak for themselves. They have learned to mediate between their children and society. For example, one of the largest nonprofit organizations for people with mental disabilities in the United States, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), was founded by parents who were not able to find sufficient resources or systemic support for their children. Because all their time and energy are focused on caring for their children, these parents seldom seek care for themselves, nor do they see themselves as subjects of their own stories. Having an opportunity to reflect on their own stories helps them release some of their stress. In addition, the workshop gave them an opportunity to reflect on their faith in healing and health, whether theirs is a life-giving faith or one that blames them and thus increases their stress.

*Contents of the Workshop: Integration and Use of Theological Resources**Nancy Eiesland's The Disabled God²⁴*

Sociologist Nancy Eiesland, who died in 2009 at the age of 44, was a person who had a severe physical disability.²⁵ She used a wheelchair for most of her life. Her primary concern was theologies that oppressed people with disabilities. For example, she realized that often in Christianity, disability is associated with "the themes of sin-disability conflation, virtuous suffering, or charitable action."²⁶ Eiesland pointed out that these images lead disabled people "to view the church as 'a city on a hill'—physically inaccessible and socially inhospitable."²⁷ So, she began to examine the meaning of God for herself. In this regard, her theology emerged from her own experience as a disabled person. In her words,

My epiphany bore little resemblance to the God I was expecting or the God of my dreams. I saw God in a sip-puff wheelchair, that is, the chair

used mostly by quadriplegics enabling them to maneuver by blowing and sucking on a straw-like device. Not an omnipotent self sufficient God, but neither a pitiable, suffering servant. In this moment, I beheld God as a survivor, un pitying and forthright. I recognized the incarnate Christ in the image of those judged “not feasible,” “unemployable,” with “questionable quality of life.” Here was God for me.²⁸

Eiesland’s personal experience of God led her to reinterpret the Scriptures, especially Luke 24:36–39.

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? *Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.* (Luke 24:36–39 NIV, italics added)

Eiesland offers a different concept of God when she suggest that we see “God who is truly disabled in physical impairment and social exclusion.”²⁹ In this passage, her purpose is to symbolize and reconsider the God whom we worship as one who, like us, also experiences pain and impairment. Eiesland intended to break down the barrier that prevented people with disabilities from being seen (by themselves and others) as being created in God’s image, and therefore she hoped to end the exclusion of people with disabilities from participation in worship.

Stanley Hauerwas’s Concept of the Human as a Relational Being

Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas, in his recently published autobiography, disclosed his own family story. Hauerwas’s first wife suffered severely from bipolar disorder. Hauerwas and his son accepted the task of taking care of her. During the caregiving process, Hauerwas observed that life with a disability can raise an important question about the virtues pursued in modern lives, as Swinton quoting Hauerwas.

To be a person means that one must be able to live one’s life, develop one’s potential and live out a purposeful life-course without any necessary reference to others. Such things as independence, autonomy, and intellectual skill have become primary social goods and fundamental markers with regard to what a good life might look like.³⁰

The experience of disability challenges these modern notions and raises the question of what it means to be human. Hauerwas raises this question

and proposes an opposing theological meaning of the human person: “We are created and, as such, inherently dependent.”³¹

John Swinton’s Insights Learned from His Experiences with People with Disabilities

John Swinton is the chair in Divinity and Religious Studies at the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. Before he pursued his PhD in practical theology, he was a registered nurse who worked with people with learning disabilities and mental illness and was also a mental health chaplain. He works in the field of practical theology, especially in the areas of mental illness, learning disabilities, and dementia. Swinton proposes that by listening to the stories of people with disabilities, our understandings, perspectives, values, and expectations can be changed and enriched. Swinton writes,

A couple of years ago I was teaching a course on pastoral care. It was a distance-learning course, which meant that some people were in a classroom in Aberdeen and others were on the telephone throughout the United Kingdom. On that occasion the class was made up of people with differing backgrounds and perspectives. Among these was one person who had no sight and another who was profoundly deaf and spoke through an interpreter. At one point in the class, people were sharing their various spiritual experiences. The woman who was deaf, Angela, began to tell us about a dream she had. In that dream she had met with Jesus in heaven. She and Jesus talked for some time, and she said she had never experienced such peace and joy. “Jesus was everything I had hoped he would be,” she said. “*And his signing was amazing!*”³²

Angela’s understanding of heaven did not imply she was being healed of her deafness. “Rather, it was a place where the social, relational and communication barriers that restricted her life in the present no longer existed.”³³ In this story, we can see our definition of disability being transformed. What we perceive as disability is to Angela not a disability but part of her whole being. In this vein, Swinton suggests that we can learn these insights by being willing to listen to the stories of those who have disabilities.

REFLECTIONS ON USING THE NEW MEDIUM OF PODCASTING IN MINISTRY

One of the obvious drawbacks of using podcasts in ministry is the possibility that pastors will engage in a monologue during the broadcast be-

cause they are unable to speak directly with their listeners. Conversations that take place during the time of recording will simply be the pastors' conversations with themselves if the pastors don't make the intentional effort to look at the website for comments and ensure that their listeners are actually made a part of the program. Since the online chat room consists of a board for comments and is the only space where pastors and listeners meet, and since only about 15 percent of the listeners post comments, it is difficult for the pastors to know what the other 85 percent of their listeners are thinking. In addition, this lack of communication means that the pastors cannot fully engage with people's body language or visual cues or their social location, including gender, race, ethnic, age, and other identities.³⁴

For all of these reasons, it can be problematic if podcasting is used as the only form of one's ministry, as Stephanie Paulsell pointed out in her article "Technology and Ministry."³⁵ Ministers who consider using podcasts as a medium for providing pastoral care must use this technology to complement traditional forms of ministry so that it can become a useful tool. For example, what is normally perceived as disadvantages of technology, such as anonymity and lack of interpersonal interaction, can be an advantage, specifically in relation to issues of disability in South Korea, where the stigma on disability is strong. Podcasting, especially its ability to allow conversation without an in-person encounter and its ability to provide anonymity, encourages participants to disclose their stories more openly than would be possible if they had to disclose their social locations and names. This aspect of podcasting significantly helps families involved with disability issues. First, it assists families to give voice to their experiences and their social location, and second, it creates a sacred space and a support community within the realm of the Internet.

Giving Authority to the Voices of Social Minorities

The medium of podcasting as a ministry has become an effective way to discuss issues associated with stigma both in and outside the church. This is because this medium provides an opportunity for disabled persons to voice their experiences and their thoughts, something they rarely have a chance to do in public spaces, including churches. Most of the time, people with disabilities and their families are at the margin, not only in society but also in the church. Being on the margin, they have not been in a position to speak about their experiences, nor to do so in their own voices.

This was true for Rose, which is the pseudonym a woman used during the podcast recording and in the chat room. After listening to two sessions via podcast, Rose contacted one of the hosts indicating her interest in being a guest on the program. During the podcast, she shared stories that are different from how the churches at large has represented people with disabilities and described the way she hopes churches will begin to support people with disabilities. One example she shared is as follows:

Because of my brother's severe disability, when the church published its magazines, my brother was often on the front page. I mean, of course, we were thankful and grateful to have volunteers to serve people with disabilities so that they can go on picnics and do outdoor activities, which is almost impossible without volunteers' help. But seeing the church people using my brother's picture to advertise their church and emphasize that they are God's good servants hasn't been a pleasant memory for me.³⁶

She continued by sharing another episode at her church:

Another reason why I feel the church is not understanding us is because of the fact that my brother is severely disabled. When the church has a big event, my mother is always invited to give a speech on how grateful she is for the love of God. I mean, it is okay to ask us, but why do they keep pushing us to say certain themes, such as God has given me grace through the hardship of a disabled son or that God gave me a hardship that I can overcome. As I said, this is not being considerate of us but is instead being rude and using our experiences for the sake of the church.³⁷

Rose said that these experiences with the church disappointed her and caused her to decide to no longer be involved in any church activities, although she says that she still has faith in God. Furthermore, these experiences could not be adequately addressed within the church.

One of the examples of a theological misunderstanding of disability that Rose shared is that whenever she goes to church, she has to listen to church people trying to instruct her by saying that her brother's disability is due to her parents' lack of faith in God. They tell her that her parents need to ask for forgiveness for their sin in order to mediate her brother's discomfort due to his disability.

Rose's experience, as the two pastors in the podcast agreed during the recording, was due to the church's lack of understanding of what disability means, which also indicates a lack of transparent communication between the church and the family with a disabled family member. When the pastors

asked Rose how people might have shown better support for her family, she said, “to be there accepting the disability itself,” which, in her experience, the church did not do adequately.

Creating a Safe Space in Online Chat Rooms Based on Shared Experience

One of the strengths of podcasts is their ubiquitous nature.³⁸ For example, the podcast in which I participated was heard by South Koreans who live in different places, and it can be replayed whenever the listener wants to hear it again. Richard Nysse, in his article “Learning from ‘Digital Natives,’” pointed out that this aspect of technology eliminates the need to find an agreed-upon time and place to meet.³⁹ It allows people to connect to each other beyond their physical location. Again, in Nysse’s words, the “speed and breadth” of digital technology open the door “to access to conversation.”⁴⁰ In addition to the feature of anonymity, podcasts contribute to the building of community through the online chat room linked to the podcast, a place where families of people with disabilities can share their stories. It also provides a space for those who do not have disabilities to deepen their understanding of what having a disability means.

After the podcast was released, especially the third episode in which Rose, the sister of a disabled person, shared her stories, listeners made several reflective comments. One listener disclosed his own family story that he would not otherwise have revealed. Others offered thoughtful comments on their previous ignorance on the issue of disability. These are excerpts of the comments.

Y: I was touched by the story of Rose and at the same time feel jealous of her confidence in sharing her brother’s story, and I had a sense of guilt. I had an older brother who had a severe disability, and he committed suicide because he didn’t want to be a burden to my family. My older sister later had a stroke and followed my brother by committing suicide. This is my family story.

S: Dear Rose, I thank you for the honest sharing of your story. You have this bright and positive energy. It made me reflect on myself, asking if I did any kinds of service just to advertise myself or if any of the words I spoke to comfort others were spoken out of arrogance. Did I really understand people with a disability, or did I pretend or lie to myself that I understood their discomfort? Regardless of the disability, I felt ashamed

of myself, thinking of the moments that I thought I comforted others with my words. It all makes me think about myself, thank you.

Rose: It was a time for me to look back as well. It seems like this conversation has helped many people to reflect on themselves. I believe this is another beginning.⁴¹

As is evident from the conversation that took place in the online chat room, listeners' disclosure of their hidden pain associated with disability deepened the conversation. It also guided people to the activity of self-reflexivity and to reconsidering their understanding of service to others. As such, I believe this is a safe space for ministry, a place where people can begin to open up their hearts to be healed and to be able to better understand the pain of families of children with disabilities.

As I mentioned earlier, the limitation of this essay, due to the limited scope of the research, is that I was not able to give special attention to cultural sensitivities and gender, which is certainly an important topic for future research in order to enhance the sociocultural understanding of the pain of those who are disabled and of their families and thereby to enhance the subtlety of the care offered to them.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have reflected on the use of podcasts as a helpful form of ministry in offering care for the families of people with disabilities. I have shared my experience of creating a workshop for parents (although I designed the workshop having parents in mind, it appeared as the workshop had impacted to siblings of people with disabilities as well) of children with disabilities and also as a guest speaker in several podcasts on this ministry, focusing on the specific context of participating in a podcast and adding comments on self-reflexivity. Then, in the hope that the material that I offer might be helpful in ministry to people with disabilities and their families, I presented the philosophy and the content of the workshop. Lastly, I have reflected on my experience of the podcast workshop and identified two effects: giving authority to the voices of members of a social minority and creating a safe space, an online community, based on listeners' shared experiences through the podcast chat room.

NOTES

- 1 I thank Professor K. Samuel Lee for the class Justice in Spiritual Care (Spring 2015) and his advice on this essay.
- 2 Herbert Anderson, "Perspectives: What Are We Becoming with Our Technology? Implication for Religious Leaders," *Reflective Practice* 31 (2011): 7.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xxii.
- 5 Philph Hafner cited in Ibid., 6; italics added.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 "Podcast," *Merriam-Webster*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/podcast>, accessed August 20, 2016.
- 16 Anderson, "Perspectives," 2.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., 7.
- 19 Personal communication, April 28, 2016.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Lee Anne Bell, "What Is Social Justice?" in Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, Carmelita (Rosie) Castañeda, Heather W. Hackman, Madeline L. Peters, and Ximena Zúñiga, eds., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 22.
- 22 Ibid., 23.
- 23 Carmelita (Rosie) Castañeda, Larissa E. Hopkins, and Madeline L. Peters, introduction to "Ableism," in Adams et al., *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 461.
- 24 Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

- 25 John Swinton, "Who Is the God We Worship? Theologies of Disability; Challenges and New Possibilities," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 14 (2011): 282.
- 26 Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, 73.
- 27 Ibid., 24.
- 28 Ibid., 283.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., 295.
- 31 Ibid. Here I am using Swinton's citing of Hauerwas.
- 32 John Swinton, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2008), 13.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Carrie Doehring, "Teaching Spiritual Care Online: Using Online Spiritual Care Chats," *Reflective Practice* 31 (2011): 73.
- 35 Stephanie Paulsell, "Technology and Ministry," *Reflective Practice* 31 (2011): 24.
- 36 "Rose," interviewed by two pastors in a podcast, Claremont, CA, June 16, 2016. The name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Robert S. Fortner, "Shifting Sensibilities: Some Consequences of Digital Technology," *Reflective Practice* 31 (2011): 35.
- 39 Richard Nysse, "Learning From 'Digital Natives' Forming a New Generation of Religious Leaders," *Reflective Practice* 31 (2011): 17.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 To preserve confidentiality, I will not disclose the address of the website.