

**John Swinton (King's College, Aberdeen) and Hans S. Reinders (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam) announcing the Inaugural Conference of the European Society for Theology and Disability:**

When was the last time you participated in an academic conference on theology and disability in late August that was organized as a "summer camp" and that made you stay as the guest of a farm where people with developmental disabilities live and work? Never happened before? Well, here is your first time opportunity!

Over the past few years theologians, ethicists, and scientists from across Europe have been meeting together for a series of exciting and fruitful conversations revolving around issues of theology and disability. We now think it is about time to bring our work in this area together in order to enhance theological thinking and practical involvement in the effort to ensure the meaningful presence of people with disabilities within our communities. Therefore we propose to form a *European Society for the Study of Theology and Disability*. This organization, (ESSTD), will draw together the various branches of the field of 'disability theology,' in order to ensure that this vital dimension of human experience is taken seriously at all levels – theology, policy, practice, attitudes, ethics and values. The Society's provisional mission statement is as follows:

*The European Society for the Study of Theology and Disability seeks to stimulate and support theological reflection on the lives of people with disabilities and their families. It confesses that the Christian Church and its theology often have not used their valuable sources to support such people. It therefore seeks to include people with disabilities in its own activities. It believes that rigorous theological thinking has much to contribute positively to the understanding of social and cultural processes that currently shape their lives. It is particularly concerned with tendencies that target "disability" as a problem to be solved, and that approach it within the framework of liberal individualism and its obsession with consumer choice. The Society brings together people who are committed to support the increasing participation of people with disabilities in Christian communities and in society at large through their research and writing.*

**Conference Theme**

Apart from an Inaugural Address by Hans Reinders, the conference program will consist of the presentation of submitted papers by delegates focusing on the particular theme of the conference: *Disability, Church and Society*. The primary focus for contributors will be on addressing the role of religious communities in enabling and supporting people with disabilities in their continuing struggle to achieve meaningful participation within society. Critical reflection on this central point is particularly timely and important given that our society is showing significant signs of disintegration and has substantial difficulties in integrating people from marginalized groups. The sociological literature – in particular from disability studies – shows consistently the continuing force of cultural mechanisms of exclusion. Against this background the question arises what people with disabilities may expect from religious communities.

**Participants**

The conference will bring together academics, ministers, church officials, and interested lay people. The language will be English. Wheelchair accessible accommodation is available; other needs, when timely known to the organizers, will be met within limits of financial resources.

### **Conference Location**

We will be hosted by Scorlewald which is a community where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live and work in the tradition of Rudolf Steiner (akin to Camp Hill communities). Scorlewald is located in Schoorl, a small village at the seaside in the North-western part of The Netherlands. Travel and transportation will be your own responsibility.

### **Lodging**

Lodging, meals, including refreshments and drinks will be provided free of charge. We will have a summer camp on "de Noorderhoeve" which is a small, but fully equipped campground on a farm where people with developmental disabilities live and work. Tents will be provided. People need to bring their own sleeping bags and mattresses. For participants who for personal reasons need other accommodation, a limited number of hotel reservations will be available. Delegates' families are welcome on the camping facility on a 'first come first serve' basis depending on the availability of places. **Places are limited and bookings for the conference will be required to be with us no later than July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.**

### **Dates**

The conference will be held from Wednesday 29 till Friday 31 of August. Since we plan to do a lot of work while a tempting beach is in walking distance, we offer you a free stay after the conference on the campsite during the following Saturday and Sunday (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of September) to relax and enjoy the seaside in good company.

### **Program**

Wednesday August 29

6.00 P.M.	diner
8.00	Public Lecture
9.30	Reception
10.30	closing

Thursday August 30

9.00 A.M.	papers
12.30	lunch break
2.00 P.M.	papers
5.30	closing
6.00	diner
7.00	social program
9.00	drinks
10.00	closing

Friday August 31

9.00 A.M.	papers
12.30	lunch break
2.00 P.M.	business meeting
4.00	drinks
5.00	closing

### ***Paper presentations***

Three sessions for 8 paper presentations of 60 minutes each, including 40 minute for the author's presentation followed by 20 minutes of plenary discussion. **Abstracts must be submitted before June 15, 2007.** Submitted abstracts not exceeding 500 words will be selected by the conveners of the conference when the number of contributors exceeds the available time slots. Papers will **not** be distributed in advance. Publication of submitted papers in the *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* will be considered subject to the judgment of the editor.

### ***Social Program***

An introduction to Scorlewald's workshop for building string instruments. This will be followed by a concert with such instruments by the Scorlewald music ensemble.

### ***Turn on***

Apart from being hosted by a wonderful community, good people, and an inspiring exchange of thoughts: Dutch dunes at the sea and a lovely beach

### ***Turn off***

Scorlewald allows no alcoholic beverages (but the campground does).

**Inaugural Conference of the European Society for  
Theology and Disability.**

*Scorlewald Netherlands from August 29 till August 31*

**BOOKING FORM**

*Registration from (send by email only):*

*Family Name:*

*First Name:*

*Postal Address:*

*Occupation:*

*Special dietary needs:*

*Special needs for accommodation:*

*Accompanied by Family Members or Friends (subject to limited numbers of places):*

Send to [J.S.Reinders@th.vu.nl](mailto:J.S.Reinders@th.vu.nl)

*(in case your message bounces back use: [jsreinders@msn.com](mailto:jsreinders@msn.com))*