

How to Make Your Church Irresistible

In its ongoing efforts to empower and encourage churches to better serve individuals with disabilities in their communities, Joni and Friends International Disability Center is launching a blog and online community, . Free resources will include The Irresistible Church Series of books, including the first, "Start with Hello," which released on the free Kindle list recently, skyrocketing to number one in two different categories.

In addition to these short and practical books, the website will post instructional and inspirational videos, personal stories of individuals involved in disability ministry, and downloadable surveys and instructional guides – anything anyone would ever need to start a disability ministry in their church, no matter the size, budget or leadership style.

"We've just launched and have already received so many comments on the site as to how this is exactly what is needed," said Marc Stein, Vice President of Field Services. "We want to equip church leaders and volunteers to help their churches become irresistible, which we define as an authentic community built on the hope of Christ that compels people affected by disability to fully belong."

"That idea of fully belonging is key, and reassures individuals and churches that this goal is both approachable and attainable," Stein concluded.

New blog posts will run often, and a podcast will launch in the near future. Experts are available to answer questions posted by users, making it a true community online. Many of the individuals involved in the project share their own stories of experience with disability, such as being rejected

by a church because a child with developmental disabilities was “disruptive,” or having their child with dyslexia being mortified to be made to read aloud in Sunday School, or having their child with separation anxiety not allowed to attend worship with his parents. These examples show those who truly desire to become irresistible that sometimes it’s simply a matter of attitude adjustment and flexibility, no large budgets or special equipment needed.

Future “Irresistible Church” series book titles will launch every few weeks, all remaining free to download in pdf or epub formats, as well as on Kindle and 350 other books sites including Barnes and Noble. Future titles include: *Engaging Game Changers: Recruiting and Coaching Volunteers for Disability Ministry*, and *We’ve Got This! Providing Respite for Families Affected by Disability*. Included on the website will be resources such as a church facility accessibility checklist, a guide to disability etiquette and an “Irresistible Church Survey,” as recommended in the first book.

The books are written by both experts in disability ministry and church outreach, with experience in starting such ministries from the ground up. A theological and biblical perspective of disability and suffering will also be explored throughout the series, showing the basis for and the call to engage in such ministry work.

The website is designed to be truly entry level, with different tracks for church leaders, volunteers, and family members and caregivers. It will also list disability ministry events around the country that offer additional training and inspirational opportunities. For those who want to go deeper, the website will connect them with Joni and Friends’ Christian Institute on Disability, which administers the “Beyond Suffering” curriculum as well as other academic and practical training opportunities, such as internships and short term volunteer experiences.

For more than 35 years, Joni and Friends has worked to accelerate ministry to the disability community around the world, offering a wide array of life-affirming ministries, including the Christian Institute on Disability; the International Disability Center; international radio and television programs filled with inspirational stories; and Family Retreats, where families affected by disability learn they are not alone. For more information, please visit