# How Might We?

## A Design Approach for Disability Ministry

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# Queries

- Is there a particular group, even a person, that you find challenging?
- Wrestling with an underlying problem? How might we explore it together?
- Looking for alternative approaches?
- Trying a strategy and hoping for feedback?



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# Modest Beginnings

- One Grant, two emphases
- West Coast, cultivating care with elementary age children through worship and prayer practices (a regional strategy)
- Kansas City: expressing care with autistic children through the same practices (a city network)







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# Surprising Turn





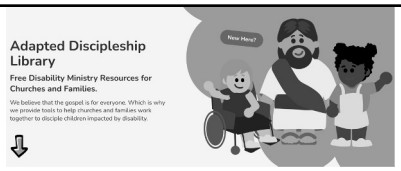






- Kansas City growth in Congregations
  - Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas
- Nashville Expansion
  - Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky
- Presentations
  - NNU PALCON, ONU PALCON, TNU PALCON, New England, Missouri, Sacramento CA, Oklahoma City

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## New Initiatives

- Curricular resources for neurodiverse and deaf children
- Ministry to parents through respite and counseling
- Worship & Prayer resources
- Preaching resources from Preacher's Conference
- New resolution to incorporate Disability Ministry in CotN Manual







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## An Explosion of Ministry Possibilities

- Disability ministry, including ministry with autistic children, could be a game changer
- There are more than 70 million Americans with disabilities—one in four adults.
- Nearly one in six children under 18 receives special education services in local schools
- 1 in 30 kids by age 8 defined autistic in 2022



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## A real conundrum

- Garbage Can approach
- Trying to be inclusive feels like a major challenge
- Tendency to ”outsource” to sensory room
- Or Tendency to ignore need



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# Designing your Way




- Design Thinking
- Begins with empathy with the ”saint” in your church
- Avoid the mindset of “should” or “must”
- Instead ask, “How might we?”
- Posture of invitation rather than a perspective of compliance

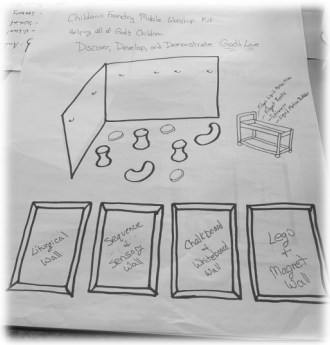
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## Usually follow a similar process

- Someone in mind?
  - Draw upon a specific person and use empathy cues
  - Say, Think, Do, Feel (Experiences, Hopes, Challenges, Concerns)
  - POV: Point of View of person (used at different points in process)
- Itch to scratch?
  - Presenting problem that you would like to explore
  - Usually unpack the deeper underlying "why?"
- Creativity
  - How Might We? (Divergent thinking)
- Prototype (with 5-minute pitch)
  - Ministry Canvas (Convergent Thinking and Testing)

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## So, who are the "saints" in your church?



- Begin where a church lives
- Are there people who, through their neurodivergence, challenge the church to be "better?" (original purpose of the sainthood)
- What if we merely begin with naming their presence (with permission) and ask how they might mirror worship and prayer for rest of church?
- Reality is that many neurodivergent people willing to accommodate as much as possible (even kids)
- Can we create space for these saints by adapting and appreciating their presence?

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**POV:**
**Point of View of the person**



# Do you know your Saint?

**Experiences they have had**

**Hopes and Expectations they might hold**

**Kids & Parents**

**Concerns or Questions about the journey**

**Challenges they might face going forward**

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# Creative Problem Seeking

- Sessions focus on both exploring the underlying "why" to find a "wicked-good" problem worth exploring
- Churches work together then to ask "how might we?" work on solving the problem through activities that fit our context and offer small changes that may make big differences



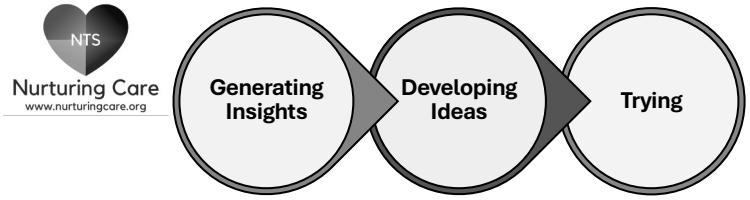




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# Think Creatively




- Design thinking brings together divergent/convergent thinking with one question
- What if we build…?
- Prototyping allows you to ”try” and “test” the ideas concretely
- Learning from the saints (kids, parents, adults)
- Not a Strategy to Implement but an idea to explore

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# Results

- If you met one kid with autism…
- If you have met one church interested in disability ministry…
- Permission to try and fail
- One rule: Do No Harm, Do “Care”
- Sensory Spaces
- Adaptive Changes
- Empowered through Learning









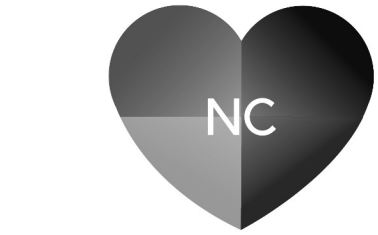


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