



## Global Access Conference: where disabilities and possibilities meet

Jonathan Chua<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Manager, International Outreach, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

February 17-20, 2015: Calvary Community Church  
Westlake Village, CA, USA

The Global Access Conference was a significant step forward in the mission of Joni and Friends to communicate the gospel and equip Christ-honoring churches worldwide to evangelize and disciple people affected by disabilities. Over 1000 people from 39 states across the USA and 54 countries around the world heard from more than 100 speakers over 4 days in 10 plenary sessions, 9 panel discussions, and 48 workshops. Among the attendees were the representatives of 330 churches, 123 were individuals with disabilities, and 470 were leaders in ministry.

The main goals of the conference were to: *edify* participants with practical knowledge and resources to accelerate their ministry; *engage* participants in a global network of like-minded people and organizations; and *encourage* the worldwide mission of the body of Christ through people with disabilities. The topics covered at the conference spanned four major categories: Leadership Development and Biblical Counseling, Ministry in Sensitive Cultural Contexts, Mission and Disability Ministry, and Technology and Disability.

One of the highlights of the conference was a 17 by 6.5 foot mural painted live during the conference by artist Hyatt Moore. The mural captured an artistic rendition of the banquet described in Luke 14 where the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame were invited in by the master. This passage is one of the central motivations of Joni and Friends to do ministry with

people affected by disabilities around the world. The mural depicts people of various nationalities in traditional garb—some with disabilities and some typically abled—partaking of a heavenly banquet.

Association was launched as a continuation of the effort to edify, engage, and encourage those involved in the global disability ministry movement. Four hundred fifty participants signed up for the association. Speaking about the association, Joni Eareckson Tada said:

The world's 1 billion people with disabilities are desperately crying out for help and hope. This is why the Global Access Association is critically needed. We simply must resource, network with, and help one another reach for Christ this global population!

Participants of the conference also had the opportunity to attend a pre-release screening of "The Drop Box," a documentary about Pastor Lee Jong-rak in South Korea who cares for unwanted infants—many with disabilities—who are left in a "baby box" that he created. Joni and Friends also released a short film, "Ebenezer," that celebrates the distribution of the 100,000th wheelchair delivered by the Wheels for the World program.

The conference was followed up by a Lausanne Movement Consultation called Ministry Access led by Dave Duel, the Senior Associate for Disability Concerns for Lausanne. Thirty disability ministry leaders from various countries and organizations gathered on February 21<sup>st</sup> to discuss the obstacles that people with disabilities face when it comes to taking on leadership roles in the local church and Christian organizations. The participants

included Lausanne Young Leaders, leaders engaged in disability ministry around the world, and leaders from Joni and Friends, who hosted the event. The passage that set the tone for the discussion was “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord” (Lev

19:14, NIV). Ministry Access focused on addressing these stumbling blocks so that individuals are enabled to take on leadership roles based on their calling and gifting and not false perceptions of their leadership abilities.

---

Competing Interests: None declared.

Correspondence: Jonathan Chua, Joni and Friends, United States. [jchua@joniandfriends.org](mailto:jchua@joniandfriends.org)

Cite this article as: Chua J. Global Access Conference: where disabilities and possibilities meet. *Christian Journal for Global Health* (Nov 2015), 2(2): 82-83.

© Chua J This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are properly cited. To view a copy of the license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

---

[www.cjgh.org](http://www.cjgh.org)

