



# BrightThreads

MINISTRIES

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## **BRIGHT THREADS MINISTRIES CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY!**

On December 1, Bright Threads Ministries marks the end of a successful first year and starts the clock ticking on an even better year to come. Our ministry has offered help to churches and to families with loved ones who have intellectual disabilities to truly become one body.

Like any one-year-old, we have had our growing pains, but God has smiled on our infant ministry, and it has been a year full of surprises and encouragement. Executive Director Evelyn McMullen has made many new contacts and friends for BTM and offered her services as a consultant. She also began a series of public workshops (see below) that are designed to help churches better understand how to include children and adults with intellectual disabilities into their worship, learning, and service.

Jesus welcomed the sick, the outcast, and the most vulnerable people into his fellowship, and for the past year, BTM has helped churches follow his example. We could not have reached this milestone without the generous and faithful gifts of many people. We are grateful for your support, and in the year to come, we ask for your prayers, your encouragement, and your help to carry on.



## **TEN LOCAL CHURCHES REPRESENTED AT FIRST PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

Children's ministry leaders representing 10 local churches came to the first public workshop organized by Bright Threads Ministries on September 26. The workshop, "Let the Children Come: Supporting Kids with Special Needs in Learning and Play," was a true partnership effort, hosted by First United Methodist Church of Lakeland and jointly sponsored with the Central Florida Autism Institute.

The workshop was the first of several planned within the next year that will invite congregational leaders with particular roles to learn more about people with intellectual disabilities and how to better include them in worship, learning, and service.

Dr. Evelyn McMullen of BTM and Terry Millican of CFAII led the workshop, which included such topics as Partnering with Families, Supports Needed to Adapt Children's Ministry Materials and Techniques, and Behavior as Communication. The participants represented Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, and independent churches. One said afterward, "I learned simple ways to include everyone in every activity."

Watch the Bright Threads Ministries website [www.BrightThreadsMinistries.org](http://www.BrightThreadsMinistries.org) for information about future workshops!





Working **Side by Side** at a fundraising event.

## What's Next? Workshops for YOUTH and VBS Leaders!

Following the success of the “Let the Children Come” workshop for children’s ministry leaders, Bright Threads Ministries will offer workshops for ministry leaders of other groups. Upcoming workshops will focus on youth ministry and Vacation Bible School.

When children with varying abilities reach the threshold of adolescence, inclusion in typical youth ministry groups presents unique challenges. On **March 5**, Bright Threads will help youth leaders and volunteers discover the challenges and gifts of teens with intellectual disabilities. “**Side by Side**” will include both instruction and an interactive mission project in the community. Youth leaders will learn and serve side by side with teens who have “awesome abilities.”

Just in time for **Vacation Bible School**, a workshop in **May** will help leaders prepare for children of varying abilities to participate in VBS. Buddies or helpers may also attend the workshop.

Check the What’s New tab on the Bright Threads website in January 2016 for registration information. These workshops will be offered in Polk County, Florida, but Dr. Evelyn McMullen can come to your church or community. Next stop: Tallahassee, FL. Write her at [BrightThreadsMinistries@gmail.com](mailto:BrightThreadsMinistries@gmail.com) to find out more!

### MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Bright Threads Ministries welcomes two new board members, joining the Rev. Jean Cooley, chair, Mr. J. Michael Tracy, and Cindy Thielemann.

**Kathy Nall** is a recently-retired teacher of special education. She and her husband are licensed to offer respite care in their home. They often bring their “weekend children” with them to worship at First Presbyterian Church of Auburndale. They have three adult children and a new granddaughter!

**Shari Richard** also brings valuable experience as an educator. She teaches at Roberts Academy, a school for children with dyslexia. In several public schools, Shari has been an inclusion teacher and a special education teacher. Shari and her husband are members of North Lakeland Presbyterian Church. They have two college-age daughters.

### BTM BOARD SETS 2016 GOAL OF \$15,000

In its first year of operation, Bright Threads Ministries received \$7,750 in donations. Encouraged by the response to the ministry’s outreach, the Board of Directors has set a goal of \$15,000, doubling the income of Bright Threads Ministries in 2016.

“It is an ambitious goal but one that we realistically feel we can reach,” said the Rev. Jean Cooley, chair of the board. “We are discovering how much families and church leaders need the kind of support and training that we offer. Please join us by investing in this expanding ministry!”

Bright Threads Ministries offers two simple ways for donors to support its work. Checks may be written to Bright Threads Ministries and mailed to 1323 Timberidge Dr., Lakeland, FL, 33809. Or, take advantage of the new Donate tab on our website ([BrightThreadsMinistries.org](http://BrightThreadsMinistries.org)).

Thank you for your tax-deductible gift to support our work of bringing people of all abilities into the full life of the church.

*Weaving people of ALL abilities into the fabric of congregations*

**Dr. Evelyn Worth McMullen, Executive Director**

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

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