

Extras

Friendship
MINISTRIES



ANOTHER NEW CLASS HAS BEGUN!

September 7, 2003, saw the beginning of a new ministry at Prairie Flower Baptist Church [Bloomingdale, NJ]—a Friendship Bible Study. After much prayer and research, ten volunteers began teaching and mentoring a group of adults with special needs. The group meets on Sunday evenings at the church and uses the new Friendship Bible Studies. **Their group is truly a community effort:**

- One person, along with an assistant, leads the singing.
- Volunteers take turns teaching the Bible lesson.
- Each mentor is paired up with two special friends during the review session.
- One person serves as the “prayer warrior” and “birthday lady,” sending out cards to each friend on their birthday.
- Church members provide refreshments.

The Lord has blessed this group! Seven special needs adults attended the first session. Now, the average attendance is 15-17 friends, ages 21-70, plus the ten mentors. Participation is very enthusiastic; everyone enjoys learning together from God’s word. The church Christmas program saw the debut appearance of the **Friendship Bible Study Singers!** Thirty people sang “Joy to the World” and enjoyed a warm response from the audience.

A challenge with the Friendship Bible Study—as well as with the special needs population at large—

is transportation. Most of the mentors transport people to and from the meetings in their own vehicles, while the group home usually provides rides for their residents. Each Saturday afternoon, someone calls each special friend’s residence to make sure they have a ride to the Bible Study on Sunday evening. They say, **“If a large van or bus were available, it would be easy to fill it with special needs adults who want to attend Friendship Bible Study.** It will be exciting to see what the Lord will do through Friendship Bible Study in 2004!”



Aletha Snider with her mentor, Carol Collings

"We believe everyone is created in God's image and can relate to God. We also

A GREAT EXAMPLE OF INCLUSION



The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leacock, KS, has a wonderful ministry to young adults with mental impairments. Their special needs ministry, called *Matthew's Ministry*, serves young adults between the ages of 20 and 30.

This group meets weekly on the same evening as their *Young Adult Ministry*, which includes a praise band and classes for adults ages 18 to 35. The special needs adults join their peer group for 30 minutes of praise and worship. Then they leave for an hour of Bible study in a separate classroom.

The young adults with special needs love to be included in the Young Adult Ministry, and their pure joy and their love of music enrich the worship experience for everyone. They also love their Bible Study, which is using the new *God, Our Father* materials. They especially like the take-home papers.



CONGRATULATIONS, WILLMAR!

The Friendship Club in Willmar, MN, and one of their members—Roger—were recently recognized by a local group home and received their FACES (Friends and Community Experiencing Success) award.

The nomination form states: "Roger came to Willmar about 12 years ago. The church welcomed him with open arms. They provide Roger and others with transportation to and from church for both morning and evening services. They also started Bible Studies for Willmar area consumers, which have grown over the years. They now must have two nights of Bible studies to accommodate over 100 consumers.

"Roger now goes to church (sometimes twice) on Sundays and also enjoys Bible studies on Tuesday evenings. He has met members of the church who enjoy taking him out for Sunday dinner on occasion. Roger has also interested a housemate into going to Bible Studies with him. These independent-of-staff activities help both of them gain confidence in themselves and encourage them to meet others."



34 YEARS AND COUNTING!

We are always happy to hear from people around the country who are involved in the ministry of sharing God's love with people who have mental impairments. We recently heard from Swanet Warren, who has been leading a Friendship class in New Jersey for 34 year!

I have often thought of writing you to tell a bit about our Christian Ed group which the students names "Saturday School" because we meet every other Saturday morning from ten to noon. **Our group was formed 34 years ago.** At the time there was very little curriculum available. As the years went by, we started using the Friendship program, which we

have found to be a valuable tool in teaching the students.

We have between 15 and 20 students at each session, a few who have been attending for 34 years! We are an ecumenical group, but are all one in Christ's love, and we see this love in them.

We have several faithful staff members, but we are no longer in the prime of life. **We range in age from 60 to over 80.** Our prayer at this time is that God will supply others for this work, so that this outreach will continue. Please pray for guidance and wisdom for all of us!

I don't know. Is this a record? Is there anyone out there who has been involved for more than 34 years?



believe salvation is a gift that is not dependent on a certain level of intelligence.”

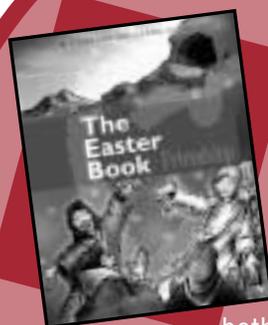
COME SEE US IN INDIANAPOLIS!

The annual Friendship/CCPD conference called **THAT ALL MAY SERVE** is coming up soon! It will be in the Adams Mark hotel in downtown Indianapolis on April 23-25. Come to learn, to be refreshed, to share your joys and challenges with others who are involved in the ministry of sharing God's love with people who have disabilities. The conference highlights:

- an opening concert by an award-winning singer Ginny Owens
- an engaging keynote address by Rev. Bill Gaventa
- 30 workshops, including 10 specific to people who have mental impairments
- interactive worship service on Sunday morning

Early-bird registration (before March 23) is \$70.00 per person (\$50.00 each for 3 or more people coming together. Regular registration (after March 23) is \$90.00 per person (\$70.00 each for groups of 3 or more). You will be receiving a conference brochure very soon. Otherwise, you may register on-line at www.ccpd.org.

We'll be there, and we're eager to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones. We really need to support each other in our ministries!



EASTER IS COMING!

Remember that the new Easter Book is available. It includes plans for two weekly group sessions, one on Palm Sunday and one on both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. It also includes praise and worship activities, as well as dramas, celebration ideas, craft ideas, service projects, and more. It contains many reproducible materials, which you can use over and over.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Ralph and Carol, volunteer representatives for Friendship Ministries, recently visited a Friendship class in Edgerton, MN (a class which is in its 18th year), in order to encourage them and to learn from them. Their visit, as well as the class, was featured in the local newspaper, complete with pictures and lots of good publicity about Friendship.

Ralph recently retired from his teaching career and has entered a

second career along with his wife Carol of going around the country sharing their passion for Friendship Ministries. He and Carol make frequent trips in their new motor home, purchased especially for this purpose. (As we write this article, they are on their way to California)

If you would like someone to come to speak to a group of interested people about the joys and challenges of sharing God's love with

people who have mental impairments, give us a call. They obviously can't zigzag back and forth across the country to speak to everyone, but we will try to work out an efficient schedule for them so that they can reach the greatest number of people.



from the director

Do you need some motivation during the winter doldrums? Joan Cornelison, a chaplain for Hope Network, a large organization which serves the needs of people with disabilities in West Michigan, recently wrote an inspiring article for Hope Network newsletter. I agree with her wholeheartedly, so—rather than trying to say the same thing in my own words—I am simply excerpting her article here. Thanks, Joan!

During this cold season, there is a wonderful virus out there. Watch out—it's pretty contagious! The virus floods a person's being with divine love and compassion and a need to respect all human beings because they are made in the image of God. Those who have studied this virus even have a name for it—"Friendshipuenza." Actually, the common term is just Friendship.

There are many models for ministering to people with special needs, but the **Friendship model, which**

requires a one-on-one interaction, seems to me to reap the best results. This model allows the teacher and student to get to know one another at a deep and personal level. During the interaction, the roles become fluid, and then there are just two human beings, learning and growing together through this human encounter made divine by the presence of Christ. Through this model, people with disabilities are integrated into the worship life of the whole church.

Churches all over are beginning to recognize this fact, thus the current excitement regarding new and existing Friendship classes. **It seems to me that very soon churches without a ministry to persons with special needs will be the exception rather than the rule.** God is moving the hearts of congregations, and the response is exciting!

Check out our website for our newly adopted abuse guidelines.



JESUS, OUR SAVIOR

(New Testament) will be available this July. We're excited about it. The lessons are great; they all emphasize how Jesus' teachings and miracles, as well as death and resurrection, apply to the lives of our friends today. And we're very proud of the artwork; it is not only lovely, it is also authentic as the artist actually researched clothing of Jesus' day.



Friendship
MINISTRIES

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