

# Extras



Friendship  
MINISTRIES

## Tears of Joy

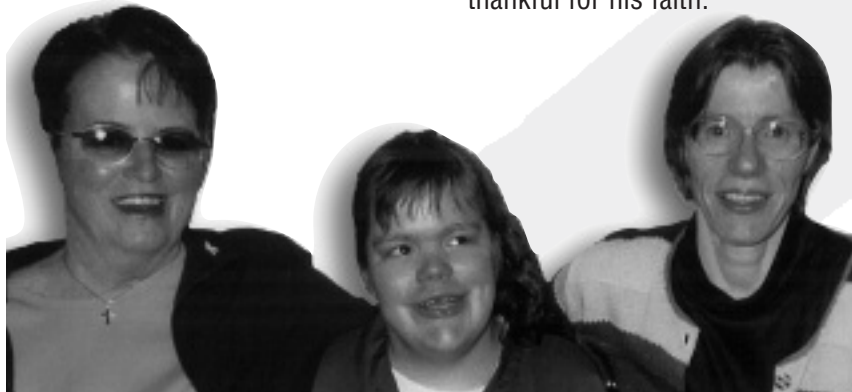
Thank you to group leader Jackie Nunez of the **St. Theresa REX** Friendship group in **Federal Way, Washington** who answered our call to share stories about friends who are expressing faith in Jesus and becoming church members. Let the stories of Jamie, Chris, and Rachel inspire you as you think about which friends in your group may be ready to take this important step!



Rachel and Chris after their baptism, with altar server Kimberly (center).

### Chris and Rachel

The process that led up to baptism for Chris and Rachel was not only an important faith step but also an opportunity to form relationships with others in their church. Each of them had a sponsor for this process and also made friends among the people going through the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) program at St. Theresa's. Jackie tells us that Chris's faith was so strong that when he was baptized, he responded with **tears of joy**. She adds, "Everyone in the church Easter vigil was so touched by him. He loves all and is so thankful for his faith."



Jamie (center) on the day of her baptism, with group leaders Jackie and Carol.

### Jamie

Jamie began to really express her faith and asked to be baptized when she was eighteen years old, after having participated in the St. Theresa REX Friendship Group for about five years. She was baptized in 2004. Jamie tells everyone she meets that she prays for them and that Jesus loves them. When she received communion a few months ago, she responded with the words "Thank you *Jesus*." Jackie explains, "See, she knows that Jesus is in all she meets."



## TIP

**Thinking about using the new *Expressing Faith in Jesus* materials with friends in your group?** You may want to consider working through the Friendship Life Study *We All Have Gifts* in conjunction to help your friends discover and articulate the gifts they have to share with the church.

**Have some of your friends recently become church members?** Consider following up by using the *Growing Closer to God* Life Study to continue nurturing the faith of these new members.

*“We believe everyone is created in God’s image and can relate to God. We also*

## ON THE ROAD...

Will one of us be in your neighborhood? Give us a call or send us an email if you’d like to meet!

### **Nella:**

**Sept. 20-24:**

Alliance for Full Participation, Interfaith Disability Pre-Summit, and National Council of Churches Committee on Disabilities, Washington, DC

### **Ralph & Carol:**

**Sept. 15-17:**

Midwest Conference on Ministry to People with Disabilities, Walworth, WI

**Oct. 19-Nov. 6:**

Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts

**Dec. 12-31:**

Georgia and Florida

### **Tony & Diana:**

**Nov. 5:**

Circle of Support, Woodbridge, VA

### **Nella and Gwen:**

**Oct. 1:**

Friendship Groups Canada, Bowmanville, ON

### **Elizabeth (Amistad):**

**Aug. 28-Sept. 3:** Colombia

**Oct. 6-14:** Puerto Rico

**Oct. 19-23:** Mexico

# How Can I Reach My Friends Who Have Low Ability Levels?

**T**hank you to Carol Honderd, a longtime mentor and volunteer Friendship consultant, for sharing these tips. Watch for more information on this subject at [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)

## Overall Goal

- **Primarily determine to model and share God’s love.** Those who have low ability levels will learn to recognize and love God through the faces, actions, and love of their mentors and friends.

## Guiding Principles

- **Include your friend in all group activities.** It is important that she feels *valued* and a part of God’s family. The others will be a source of *stimulation* for her, and her involvement can be an *inspiration* for others.
- **Don’t give in to preconceived notions or first impressions.** Many friends understand far more than we suspect. Be open to suggestions from others and watch for cues displayed by your friend.
- **Know your friend.** Discover what he knows and understands. Talk with parents and caregivers and learn what clues to watch for. Watch your friend’s eyes, mouth, and movements, and keep a journal of what you’ve learned.
- **Don’t focus on immediate results—be patient.** Change will occur but not necessarily in ways that we expect or recognize. God’s ways are not our ways, and we do not have a complete understanding of how the Spirit works.
- **Create a bright, joyful environment.** Warmth, interest, and sincere love will elicit positive responses.
- **Develop a routine that includes repetition and reinforcement.** Repeat familiar songs, images, and concepts, and fill any substitute mentors in on the structure and methods you use.
- **Creativity and flexibility.** Communicate in a variety of ways, using your eyes, tone of voice, body language, and emotions. If something isn’t working, stay relaxed and go on to something else.
- **Keep it concrete and hands-on.** Use the same visuals used in the group lesson when possible, making sure that you use concrete, touchable examples.

## Useful Tools

- **Kinesthetic prayer** with very simple signing.
- **Prayer songs.** Sing a prayer to a simple tune.
- **Rhythm instruments** such as tapping sticks to help remember a concept or to follow along with a song.

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

# Calling All Artists!

## Announcing an Art Contest for Friendship Groups

We are looking for original works of art created by friends using techniques such as painting, pastel drawing, oil crayon drawing, collage, and scratch-board. Winning entries will be used to create Friendship postcards on themes including “happy birthday,” “thank you,” “congratulations,” “with sympathy,” and “get well soon.”

The deadline for entries is **December 1, 2005**. For further details and entry forms, please visit [www.friendship.org/artcontest](http://www.friendship.org/artcontest) or call us at 888.866.8966.



*Sharon and Ryan paint a banner for their group's worship space.*

## AS YOU PREPARE FOR FALL

### Leader Tips

- Think about how best to pair the friends in your group with mentors, taking age, gender, and interests into consideration.
- Keep your church's abuse guidelines in mind and see the abuse guidelines provided by Friendship at [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)

### Mentor Helpline

- Be sure to prepare for one-on-one time with your friend by reviewing steps five and six in the Bible Study leader/mentor guides.
- If you mentor more than one friend, it is especially important that prep work is done in advance so that mentoring time can be used meaningfully.

## Conference Opportunities

The **Alliance for Full Participation**, a collaboration of ten national organizations and networks that work in the area of developmental disabilities, is sponsoring a national disability summit with the theme “Many Voices, One Vision” this *September 21-23 in Washington, DC*. For more information, visit [www.allianceforfullparticipation.org](http://www.allianceforfullparticipation.org)

In conjunction with this, a number of faith-based organizations, including Friendship Ministries, are sponsoring a **pre-summit gathering** entitled “Where there is No Vision, the People Perish” on *September 20* to

discuss key issues and to strengthen collaboration. If you are interested, contact us here at Friendship Ministries.

**Friendship Groups Canada** warmly invites you to join their two fall conferences. The first will be held *Saturday, October 1 in Bowmanville, ON* and will focus on the theme “Freedom in Christ.” The second conference, “Called to Belong,” will take place in *Calgary, AB on Saturday, October 15*. For more information, visit [www.friendshipgroupscanada.org](http://www.friendshipgroupscanada.org), write to [info@friendshipgroupscanada.org](mailto:info@friendshipgroupscanada.org), or call 888.649.5555.

## Amistad Update

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for all your donations to *Ministerio Amistad* (The Spanish-language version of Friendship). Thanks to your generosity, we have recently helped 11 groups in 5 different countries including Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Chile, and we will continue to provide support and materials for *Amistad* groups. Thank you very much, and I invite you to continue to support this worthy cause!

May God Bless You,

Elizabeth Rodriguez  
*Amistad* Representative



## from the director

This *Extras* issue focuses on making preparations for your Friendship program as fall approaches. Even if you met over the summer, now is a good time to take a step back and think about what has been working and what could use some change.

I'll use the example of music to get at some principles to remember. First, our friends' **participation in leadership** is important. If you know that Julie loves a particular song, have her come forward and help lead. Helping may mean just her presence up front, or it may mean giving her the microphone. Experiences like these will prepare her for assisting in other worship services.

Remember, the song leader in your group does not need to be musically gifted! In fact, it is my musical inadequacy that encourages my friends to assist me. We lift our praises to God together, knowing that he loves each of us for what is in our hearts, not for the perfection of our singing.

Second, **repetition is key to learning**. *Repetition of songs* is vital to helping friends—and mentors—gain confidence in singing. I usually figure it takes about three months to learn a song well. *Repetition of the motions* is also important. Motions do not need to be official sign language, but they should be meaningful, helping friends remember the words or allowing them to participate if they are not able to sing.

Third, **reflect on the variety of forms participation can take**. One man in my group was unable to actually speak or sing due to "frozen" facial muscles. The obvious conclusion was that he couldn't participate. But eventually I realized that although I couldn't hear his singing, I could *see* it. When a song really touched him, tears would flow down his cheeks. *The tears were his song!* Once I understood this, I received a powerful gift each time I saw him sing.

Matt is a young man who recently joined my group. He had not been in church before, so the songs were

unfamiliar to him. I have found that walking up and singing directly to him while my other friends continue to lead the group helps him respond. He doesn't actually sing words, but his face and body movements tell me that the Spirit is touching him in ways I cannot fathom. His response gives me chills. And it shows that I need to encourage each one of these image bearers to respond in the ways they can.

So as you gather in your groups this fall, think about how you can encourage each friend to participate and to lead. Consider starting the year—and each meeting to follow—with a welcome song, like "Circle of Friends" in the *God, Our Father* Bible Study Series, "Hey, Come Along" in *Jesus, Our Savior*, or "Ha La La La" in *The Spirit, Our Helper*. As your friends learn the songs and lift their praises, each one in a unique way, prepare to be blessed.

*Nella Uitvlugt*



### The Spirit, Our Helper

The third Friendship Bible Study series, *The Spirit, Our Helper*, will be available for use this fall. The CD for this series includes **sound effects** of a storm, Pentecost wind, and Pentecost voices.

Check it out!



**Friendship**  
MINISTRIES

**We would love to hear from you:**

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