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Sharing God's *Love* with People who have Cognitive Impairments

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WHAT DOES TUESDAY NIGHT HAVE TO DO WITH SUNDAY MORNING?

Practical Ideas for Enhancing Worship

Does the way you worship in your Friendship group blend seamlessly with your church's Sunday morning worship? Is everyone in your group able to follow along with the way the congregation sings, prays, and enjoys fellowship? If so, give thanks!

But if you're like most groups, you've experienced challenges in this area. Some members of your group aren't able to fully participate on Sunday mornings. It may be that they have things to learn, or it may be that the rest of the congregation does. Most likely, it's a combination.

Here are a few suggestions to help ensure meaningful Sunday worship. Share them with your pastors and worship planners!



David sings a song about listening to God

- ① **Music:** Find out what's planned for the future. Teach some of these songs in your group, but also ask that appropriate songs your friends already know be included.
- ② **Repetitive phrases:** Ask your worship planners to use repetitive phrases. This gives friends something to participate in and enhances the service for everyone. Ex., "The Lord be with you / And also with you."
- ③ **The Lord's Prayer:** Why not pray it on a regular basis? That's the only way children, friends, and those who are new to church will learn it. Use

Friendship's Life Study "Learning the Lord's Prayer" to teach the concepts in your group.

- ④ **Preparation:** Think about other elements of your church's worship or culture that may be unfamiliar to friends and teach these in your Friendship gatherings.
- ⑤ **Mentoring:** Pair a new friend with a mentor. The mentor can greet the friend at the door, make sure there are no barriers to participation, sit with the friend during worship, remind the friend of the meaning of worship elements, and introduce the friend to people after the service.
- ⑥ **Appropriate behavior:** The congregation may need to become accustomed to behaviors they're not used to, and friends may also need to learn to which behaviors are not appropriate. If a friend has this challenge, pair the friend with a mentor who knows how to help.



...continued from page 1

- ⑦ **Change:** If a friend has difficulty with change, make sure a mentor prepares her for the change ahead of time.
- ⑧ **Readability:** Are lyrics and other materials readable, or is the PowerPoint too far away or obscured by a pretty picture? Should the type in the bulletin be larger?
- ⑨ **Opportunities:** Do friends have regular opportunities to participate as readers, greeters, candle lighters, etc.? Don't wait for a special Sunday once a year!
- ⑩ **Fellowship:** Invite your pastor and other church members to worship with your group. The better you know each other, the richer your worship will be—any day of the week!

One final tip: as you talk over ideas with your worship planners, help them understand that the changes you are proposing will benefit many people in your church. For example, one church tells us that increased lighting in the sanctuary has been helpful not only to friends with visual impairments but to senior citizens as well. ■

Read more on this subject in "From the Director" on page 5.

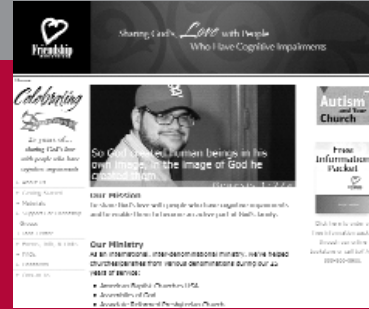
Share what works in your church!
888.866.8966
friendship@friendship.org

ARE YOU TAKING ADVANTAGE OF FRIENDSHIP'S ONLINE RESOURCES?

www.friendship.org

Pay us a virtual visit for:

- **Free downloads, like:**
 - ▶ *What Friendship Mentors Need to Know*
 - ▶ *Abuse Prevention Guidelines*
- **Book ideas from our staff, like:**
 - ▶ *The Elephant in the Playroom* by Denise Brodey
 - ▶ *Light from Lucas* by Bob Vander Plaats



- **Art projects, like:**
 - ▶ Promise Plaques
 - ▶ Painted Banners
- **Tips to nurture your group, like:**
 - ▶ How to avoid leader burnout
 - ▶ Where to look for financial support ■

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

Nella

April 4-5: Accessibility Summit, McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA

Tony & Diana

April 4-5: Accessibility Summit, McLean Bible Church, Vienna, VA

Ralph & Carol

February: Chicago area
April: OH, PA, MD, VA, NC, SC

Elizabeth (Amistad)

May 15-20: Expolit, Miami, FL





FRIENDSHIP FAMILY

NEWS

Welcome to the family!
Join us in welcoming
the following groups:

- Abundant Life Worship Center of Nuttley, NJ
- Calvary Chapel of Melbourne, FL
- City Fellowship Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga, TN
- Crossroads Presbyterian Church of Mequon, WI
- Fairway Christian Reformed Church of Jenison, MI
- Grace Lutheran Church of Tampa, FL
- King's Way Baptist Church of Concord, NC
- Kinston First Pentecostal Church of Kinston, NC
- Mountain Springs Church of Colorado Springs, CO
- Palm View Assembly of God of Whittier, CA
- St. Joseph Catholic Church Bread of Life Community of Erie, PA

PUBLICITY FOR FIRST FRIENDSHIP GROUP IN UTAH

Congratulations to the Friendship Club of **Grace Baptist Church of Bountiful, UT** for being profiled in *The Salt Lake Tribune*. They are the first Friendship Group in Utah, and this is a wonderful opportunity to get the word out to other area churches! ■

Know of a group that's not on this list?
Has your group or someone in it received an
award? Or appeared in your local newspaper?

If so, let us know! Contact Renee at 888.866.8966
(ext. 3) or buistr@friendship.org



Notas DE AMISTAD

¡Muchas Gracias!

We are so grateful for gifts given to the **Mary Louters Fund**, which provides *Amistad* Bible Study materials to financially needy *Amistad* groups. Thanks to these gifts, in 2007 we were able to provide free materials to: **503 students in 34 Amistad groups in 9 countries!** (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, México, Perú, Uruguay, Venezuela)

Here's what one group leader had to say: "Thanks to this material our students have received Jesus as their Lord in their hearts and our little ones learn of God's Love." --Ana Núñez Joyo, Love Me Ministry, Lima, Perú.

The **Mary Louters Fund** was established in memory of Mary Louters, a member of the Palos Heights (IL) Christian Reformed Church Friendship Program for many years. Her friends in the group still remember how she would arrive, raising her arms in the air and saying as loud as she could, "Here I am!" They also remember the Sunday she stood in front of church and professed her faith in Jesus Christ. As part of her profession, she sang "Jesus Loves Me."

Thanks to gifts to this fund, the Good News that brought Mary so much joy is being shared with more of our Spanish-speaking friends in Latin America. If you would like to contribute, please contact us at 888.866.8966 or friendship@friendship.org ■

A member of an *Amistad* group in Perú learns about Jesus' healing love.



For reflection

Faces of God

“ In seeing every person as a face of God, we have a basis for great respect for every living person. But this great store of respect has a way of getting out of balance. We forget to divide it evenly... We overly honor some, so that we make fools of ourselves, and we snub others, so that we make fools of them. When we learn to neither tremble before the high nor to scorn the personhood of the lowly, but view all with an open face, we are learning a sense of cosmic balance. ”

--from *Faces of God* by Gordon and Gladis DePree (©1974 by Gordon and Gladis DePree. Published by Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 10 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10022.)

Nella for President?

You may remember that in the last issue of *Extras* we told you that Friendship's Executive Director, Nella Uitvlugt, had become President-Elect of the Religion and Spirituality Division of AAIDD (the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities). We're pleased to announce that Nella is now officially President of this AAIDD Division.

Members of the AAIDD benefit from professional connections to others serving people with cognitive impairments. Membership also includes free newsletters and subscriptions to the journals *AJMR* and *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, as well as a discounted subscription to the *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*.

The AAIDD's Religion and Spirituality Division provides additional resources, including a certification process for chaplains and lay persons working in ministries with people who have cognitive impairments. ■

If you're interested in knowing more, please be in touch with Nella!
Tel: 888.866.8966 ext. 2—1
email: friendship@friendship.org

CHECK OUT THESE PRACTICAL NEW RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

Building a Developmental Disability Ministry

A Manual for Congregations
(Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services / product #116013 / \$25.00)

A resource manual for congregations reaching out to people with developmental disabilities, this tool draws upon Bethesda's 100-plus years of Christ-centered services for people with developmental disabilities. The chapters guide leadership teams through various ministry-building stages: from **planning** to **implementation**, **evaluation**, and **ongoing ministry development**. Written from a Lutheran perspective but helpful for all churches.

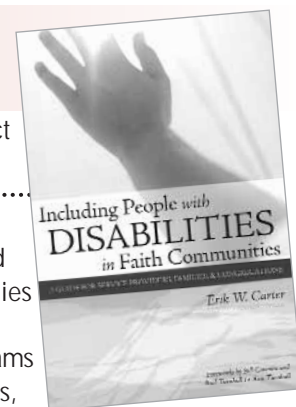


Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities

by Erik Carter (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. / product #300672 / \$24.95)

This practical guide is meant to help readers:

- reflect on how welcoming their congregation is—and could be—for people with disabilities and their families
- break down barriers to inclusion
- develop meaningful, inclusive religious education programs
- discover and actively support the spiritual preferences, strengths, and needs of people with disabilities
- plan, fund, and implement bold communitywide inclusion efforts
- and more! ■



Call us at 888-866-8966 to order!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

HOW DO YOU THINK OF YOUR FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM?

IS IT EDUCATION?

When the Friendship program in my church began twenty-some years ago it was part of the church's educational programming. That makes sense—learning Biblical stories and concepts is a big part of what we do together. A lot of our friends who come to the program didn't go to Sunday School as children. They need to learn as much as they can about who God is and what this means for our lives. Teaching biblical concepts in ways that are understood nurtures our friends' faith and also enables them to participate more fully in the life of the church.

But what happens when we gather in our church basement is more than just education.

IS IT WORSHIP?

Definitely! In fact singing and praying together is what many Friendship participants look forward to most. A member of our group says "Worshipping with our Friendship group is the most joyful and free worship I've experienced—it gives me a thrilling glimpse of what heaven must be like."

One aspect of the worship that takes place in Friendship programs is that it enhances worship with the rest of the congregation on Sunday mornings. Friends and mentors with little church background deepen their understanding of prayer and learn the songs of the church during Friendship meetings. This in turn helps make Sunday morning worship more meaningful for them.

*Bit by bit,
we're looking
more like the
kingdom of
heaven.*

But it goes the other way, too! When members of Friendship programs worship with the rest of the

congregation on Sunday morning or invite the congregation to worship with them at another time during the week, the worship of the whole church is enriched.

For practical ideas about how to enhance worship in both your Friendship group and your congregation, read the article on p. 1 of this issue.

IS IT EVANGELISM?

Evangelism is another strong component of Friendship programs. Many of you have told me about a faith commitment made by a friend. Friendship programs have been the catalyst for helping people with cognitive impairments become full members of the church. What a joy it is to be a part of this process!

It's not just friends—entire families have joined your churches because they know their son or daughter has a place to belong beyond the Sunday service. These families have watched you as leaders and mentors and they have seen your heart. The same goes for caregivers who have attended Friendship gatherings.

IT'S THE BODY OF CHRIST!

Through all of this, relationships within the body of Christ have been built. When we learn together, worship together, pray together, reach out to one another, we form deep and enduring relationships. The relationships between mentors and friends are models for other members of the congregation. Over time, the whole church is changed.

Don't be discouraged if your church has not yet totally embraced your friends. After twenty-plus years I still see areas to work on. But progress has been made. Bit by bit, we're looking more like the kingdom of heaven. ■

Thanks be to God.

Nella Vitolug



front row: Renee and Nella; back row: Gwen and Casey; not pictured: Marie

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!



Friendship Ministries staff would love to help you with:

- Starting a new ministry
- Tuning up an existing group
- Recruiting volunteers
- Overcoming challenges in your group
- Activities to enhance your group
- Questions about Friendship materials
- Consultation on inclusive worship
- Full church membership for our friends
- And more! ■

Give us a call: 888.866.8966
Or send us an email: friendship@friendship.org

Did You Notice the New Guy in the Photo?

That's **Casey Kuperus**, Friendship's new Program Communications person. We're thrilled that Casey has joined our staff and that he brings first-hand experience as a Friendship mentor and storyteller to the role. His work will also be enriched by his experiences growing up with a sibling who has cognitive impairments, as well as by previous work with an organization serving people with cognitive impairments.



Casey will be working with Friendship groups to find out how we can better serve you, so don't be surprised if you get a phone call or email from him. He would also love to hear from you! Tel: 888.866.8966 ext. 2—2 / email: kuperusc@friendship.org ■



Friendship
MINISTRIES

We would love to hear from you:

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• **Gwen Penning Genzink**
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• **Casey Kuperus**
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Special Gifts



We are grateful for the generous donations we received in 2007 from individuals, churches, and organizations. Without them—without you!—Friendship Ministries would not be able to carry out our mission *to share God's love with people who have cognitive impairments and to enable them to become an active part of God's family.*

We give special thanks for **gifts received in memory** and **gifts received in honor** of people whose lives have intersected Friendship in various ways.

In memory of:
Mary Louters
Annetta Tupper

In honor of:
Marian Joling

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