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

## "YOU CAN'T RETIRE— YOU'RE IRREPLACEABLE!"

by Nella Uitvlugt

**A**s Friendship Ministries celebrated 25 years of service last year, it was with awe that we heard from leaders and mentors who had been with their programs the entire time. But what happens when group leaders are ready to retire? If new leaders are difficult to find, programs may be at risk for closing, leaving friends feeling abandoned.

How will you replace yourself? From what we hear about the hours and the passion that many of you dedicate to leading your groups, it's clear that you are irreplaceable! But even so, you can take steps to ensure that there will be people in place to take up the reins of leadership. **Here are a few ideas:**

1. Let your pastor and church leadership know about the need. They may have helpful suggestions.
2. Begin to divide up the duties that you consider most important to keep your program going. If the jobs are more manageable, people will be more open to giving them a try. *continued on page 2...*



George and Josh, who served as storyteller while he was a seminary student.

### WAYS TO DIVIDE AND CONQUER LEADERSHIP TASKS:

- The **group leader** is the organizer, scheduler, contact for parents and group homes, contact for Friendship Ministries staff—and distributor of the Extras newsletter!
- The job of the **story teller** could be shared by several people, each of whom take a unit or two.
- The **song leader** organizes and leads the worship part of the session.
- The **activity leader** organizes events like picnics.
- The **craft leader** makes sure supplies for one-on-one time are available.
- The **set-up crew** makes sure that all items needed for the session are in place. (My husband is president of the church board, but on Tuesday nights he and a friend are the "setter-uppers" of the banners, overhead projector, etc.)



...continued from page 1

3. Think about the skills needed for each job. Are you looking for an organizer, a good speaker, a creative thinker? Is there someone in church who is a paraprofessional or teacher?

4. Recruiting requires excitement -- tell stories about how Friendship has changed members of your group. Make sure you tell stories about mentors as well as friends.

5. Remember that no one will do the job the same as you. Allow new leaders to develop their own style and encourage them to be creative. (Yes, it can be hard to let go of what you have built up over the years!)

6. Try being absent once in a while and let others sub for you. This will help them--and you--gain confidence that the program will do just fine without you!

7. Have mentors in the program give you suggestions of people who might serve in a position you need filled. They may know people in church that you don't--or know them in ways that you don't.

8. Some programs benefit greatly by partnering with another congregation. This increases your opportunity for finding more volunteers, and in some cases financial assistance. ■



## GO GREEN

with Friendship's Reusable Materials

Are you aware that we design Friendship materials with the idea that you'll reuse them -- perhaps several times?

The Leader/Mentor Guides and the Group Leader Packets are fully reusable, so be sure to collect them when you're done so that you can use them again in the future. You may want to consider organizing them in boxes or crates so that you can easily retrieve them when the time comes. Of course, you will need to reorder the take-home papers, but fortunately they're the shortest and least expensive pieces. Reusing is not only green, it's economical too!

As a group leader, you may feel resistant to redoing a lesson that you've done before, but remember that repetition is a key to learning. We hear from friends and mentors alike that they enjoy revisiting stories they've heard before. Not to mention the fact that you may have new friends and mentors who have never heard the stories. Plus, there are alternative ideas in each session, and you can certainly add your own creative ideas to make the sessions unique each time. If that's not enough to convince you, consider letting a new storyteller have a go at a lesson that feels tired to you. ■

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



### **Nella**

**November 6-8:** The Arc National Convention, Albuquerque, NM

**January 5-9:** Children's Pastors' Conference, Nashville, TN

**January 28-31:** Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, San Antonio, TX

### **Tony & Diana**

**November 8:** Circle of Support, Arc of Greater Prince William, Woodbridge, VA

### **Ralph & Carol**

**November 19-December 31:** OH, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, TN

### **Elizabeth (Amistad)**

**November 20-22:** Amistad workshop, Ciego de Avila, Cuba



## Notas DE AMISTAD

### Connect with Spanish-Speaking Churches

Do you have a relationship with a Spanish-speaking church nearby in your neighborhood? Or faraway in another country?

If so, help us spread the word about *Ministerio Amistad* (the Spanish-language counterpart to Friendship Ministries)! There are now two Bible study series available for *Amistad* groups: *God, Our Father*, and a new version of *Jesus, Our Savior*. These are the only materials of their kind for ministering with Spanish-speaking people who have cognitive impairments. **If you're willing to share this ministry opportunity, please send an email to Elizabeth Rodriguez at [info@ministerioamistad.org](mailto:info@ministerioamistad.org)** She will happily send you a packet of information to pass along. ■

*Gracias!*



Elizabeth Rodriguez, Amistad Representative

## FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



## Welcome to the family!

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

- Briarwood Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, AL
- Chester United Methodist Church of Chester, VA
- Fredericton Christian Reformed Church of Fredericton, NB
- Mosaic Christian Church of Rockland, CA
- Prince of Peace Catholic Church of Chesapeake, VA
- Speedway United Methodist Church of Speedway, IN

### Surprising Connections

We received the following note from Steve Nyenhuis, a Friendship group leader at **Anaheim Christian Reformed Church in Anaheim, CA**, who explains how connections made via this newsletter column brought a new friend to his group from **St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Tucson, AZ**:

"Recently I received your newsletter, *Extras*. I was surprised to see the name of our church in the list of new churches using your materials. Then I was really surprised this past Friday to get a call from a woman in Tucson, Arizona whose church also uses these materials. She explained that one of their students had recently moved to southern California and one of the things he really hoped for was to find a new church home which was also using Friendship. She had received the same newsletter I had received, saw our church name, and contacted your office to get our phone number. I spoke with her Friday evening and told her we'd be glad to have Kevin join us. **Well, he was in our class this morning!** The rest of the class welcomed him, and he said he's coming back next week." ■

### Do you have a story to share?

Contact Gwen at 888.866.8966 or [genzinkg@friendship.org](mailto:genzinkg@friendship.org)



# TRY THIS!

## :: Tap Local Talent

On the second Sunday of each month, the Friendship group at **Hope Presbyterian Church** in **Richfield, MN** will have a guest leader who will demonstrate a skill and lead the group in a project. One guest will demonstrate wood turning, after which the class will stain and varnish a wooden box. A painter will demonstrate watercolor painting, and the class will paint canvases to display in the church. Other guests include a potter and a director who will lead the group's Nativity pageant.

## :: Offer Tangible Thanks

This past year, the local Knights of Columbus provided funds for the REX Friendship group at **St. Theresa's** in **Federal Way, WA** to purchase the Friendship Bible Study *The Spirit, Our Helper*. The group decided to thank them by inviting them to a special party at which friends and mentors presented skits from the Bible study and shared posters that showed what the group had learned about the Holy Spirit. The party also included a cake with red and orange candles to represent the Holy Spirit.

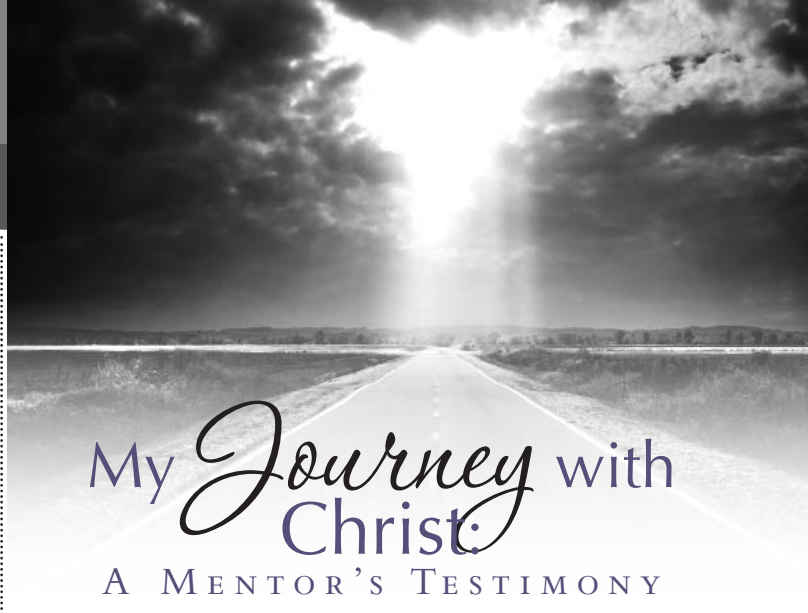
## :: Start a Snack Buffet

At **Bethany Baptist Church** in **Sault Ste. Marie, ON**, all of the friends and mentors are put on a list to bring snacks, with several people bringing the snack of their choice each week. This is a simple way for everyone to participate and to share a variety of different tastes.

## :: Perform an Encore

The dramas included in many Friendship materials are a favorite activity for many groups. Of course, there's not enough time for weeks of rehearsal! Consider doing each drama twice: the first time to get the basics down, and the second to reinforce the message. ■

**Share Your Ideas!** Every Friendship group is unique and has creative ideas to share. Call us: 888.866.8966 or send an email: [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)



## My Journey with Christ: A MENTOR'S TESTIMONY

“ I had just recently returned to the church after a 20+ year absence. I had always known Jesus, but now I was ready to embrace His love and grace. God directs our paths and He knows what is in our hearts. So I know that it was God's plan to send me to Friendship Bible Study at my church. Since I was new to the church, I wanted to join in and participate in Bible studies and other church activities. I saw the announcement of a Tuesday night Friendship Bible Study meeting and what name could be more inviting than Friendship, so I went to the meeting.

At first, I was surprised who was in the group--mostly women volunteers and men and women with developmental disabilities. It didn't take me long to feel welcome within the group. Everyone is so warm and loving with a genuine love of Christ. We sang songs of praise, listened to a Bible story complete with acting roles for the guests, had snacks and took requests for individuals' prayers. Each prayer was heartfelt and was asking God to help someone they loved with a couple of prayers going out to the group home staff and fellow workers they knew.

This had been my first steps on a journey that has been so fulfilling. I thank Jesus Christ our Savior for showing me the path and walking with me. ”

**Mark Brandt** is a mentor in the Friendship group at Carmel Lutheran Church of Carmel, IN and coordinator of its Friendship Saturday Respite program. He is also a regular volunteer in LDM's SonRise Retreat and HandyCamp programs. ■

**Mentors share your experiences!** We'd love to hear from you: 888.866.8966 or [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## FRESH FRIENDSHIP FINDS

This was the title of the workshop I gave at the conference "One Body Together in Christ" in September (read more about this event on page 3). During the workshop we talked about **creative ways to use Friendship materials.**

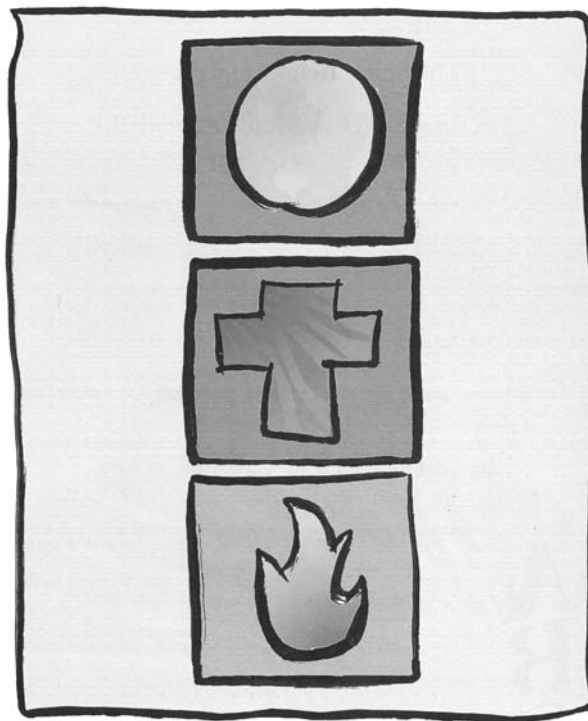
### For Group Leaders:

For example, you could use the fourteen sessions outlined in the *Expressing Faith in Jesus* Resource Kit to do a **study on the Trinity.** The fourteen sessions come from the three Friendship Bible Study series (*God Our Father, Jesus Our Savior, and The Spirit Our Helper*), so if you've completed these series, you already have all the Leader/Mentor Guides you need for this. Plus, the *Expressing Faith in Jesus* Resource Kit contains a Trinitarian song with signs and an art project that will help reinforce the idea of the Trinity.

You may also want to consider the different ways you could use the new *Living God's Way* study on the Ten Commandments. You could do it after completing the *God, Our Father* series on the Old Testament. Or take a year to think in terms of "living God's way," and follow the Ten Commandments study with some of the Life Studies that focus on how to live, such as *Helping Each Other* or *We All Have Gifts*. One of the implications of "living God's way" is that we have each been given gifts

to share. This means not only helping each person discover their gifts, but also making sure they have opportunities to use them within the church and the other communities of their lives.

Another idea is to take the visuals from Unit 1, "God Created the World," in the *God, Our Father* series and use them alongside the Life Study *Caring For God's World*.



Try a simple art project as part of a study on the Trinity ::

If you create a theme that works well, send it to us! We know many of you have really creative ideas.

### For Church Educators:

Church educators may be interested in taking a look at our curriculum overview, which lists the scripture and lesson concept for every session available from Friendship Ministries. This would be a fabulous resource for helping you adapt your regular Sunday school materials to better teach a child with cognitive impairments. For example, if you're studying Noah, you could supplement your materials with the Friendship lessons on Noah.

Since Friendship materials feature many more people with disabilities, they can be a great example of inclusivity. The youth take-home papers for the Friendship Bible Studies have stickers and would be appropriate to use in an inclusive setting. ■



Download the curriculum overview at [www.friendship.org/support](http://www.friendship.org/support)

Nella Vitellugli



# Landmark Event Inspires and Teaches

By Nella Uitvlugt

September 17-20 was a momentous time for Friendship Ministries, as several organizations that we affiliate with came together at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI. For the first two days members of the Committee on Disabilities of the National Council of Churches in Christ met to share ideas as well as concerns about budget cuts within denominations.

On Thursday and Friday the Friendship Ministries Board of Directors held their fall meeting, which was marked by an official resolution accepting the joint ministry agreement between Friendship Ministries Canada and Friendship Ministries USA. We also

thanked Gary Mulder, director of Faith Alive Christian Resources, for 24 years of service on the board. He will retire in November.

On Friday, the Regional Advocates for Disability Concerns of the Christian Reformed Church held their annual training.

There were some joint activities as well, including chapel. Worshiping together with people of different denominations and disabilities was a glimpse of heaven on earth. Residents of the Friendship House at Western Seminary (a unique housing option where people with cognitive impairments and seminary students live together) served communion. Later in the afternoon everyone joined together to tour the Friendship House and listen to a panel discussion of what it is like to live there.

On Saturday, the "One Body Together in Christ" conference brought together 200 people from the area with participants from the other conferences. Ginny Thornburgh and Bill Gaventa of the NCCC Committee on Disabilities, along with local speakers, provided a rich assortment of learning experiences.

A huge thank you goes to Matt Floding of Western Theological Seminary for all he did to make sure this was a wonderful melding of several organizations. The hospitality was incredible! Blending so many organizations was a bit scary, but with so many people pitching in it turned out to be a landmark event. ■

Read "From the Director" on p. 5 for tips from Nella's workshop.



## Friendship Gifts:

It may seem a bit early to be thinking about Christmas, but it is just around the corner! Wow, amazing how fast that sneaks up on us!

We know that many friends and mentors like to purchase gifts for one another at Christmastime, and we wanted to help you out this year. How about purchasing a **Friendship Ministries T-shirt, sweatshirt, or teddy bear?** Many colors are available for the clothing, and you can choose a white logo or a red-and-black logo. Bears are light brown with red shirts and a white logo. They're \$10 each.

Please call Casey at 888.866.8966 (ext. 2--2) for additional information on ordering and for pricing for the clothing. Discounts are available on larger orders. **We would love to have orders for Christmas by November 21.** ■

**In addition to getting a great gift, your purchase will help support Friendship Ministries!**



We would love to hear from you:

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