

INSIDE THIS ISSUE ▾

Poetry	p.2
Friendship Family News	p.3
Try This	p.4
A Peek Behind-the-Scenes	p.5
<i>...and more!</i>	

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

## FIVE MEN EXPRESS FAITH IN JESUS

Group Enthusiastic about Continuing Discipleship Program



Pat, Brad, Barry, Bill, David and their mentors display their banner

**S**unday, January 11 was a remarkable day for **Brooklyn Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, MI** and the five men who expressed their faith publicly to the congregation that morning.

In preparation for this important day, each of the men was matched with a mentor. The group met together several times from September through January to discuss what it means to be a Christian.

Using the Friendship resource *Expressing Faith in Jesus*, they studied topics such as 'God Made the World,' 'I Believe Jesus is My Savior,' and 'The Spirit Helps Me to Believe.'

They also worked together to create a painted banner on a 3' x 5' piece of canvas. The images are visual expressions of what they believe about God Our Father, Jesus Our Savior, and The Spirit Our Helper.

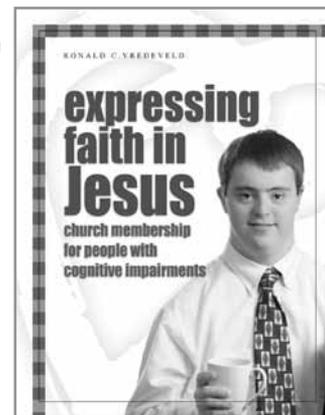
When the time to publicly profess their faith arrived, two of the men

carried the banner to the front of the sanctuary. Another of the men led the congregation in singing "Jesus Loves Me." Then the two others described what the banner means. One of them explained that the flame is like a fireplace, only it is a spirit.

The five mentors came to stand behind the men as they made their official profession. Then they presented them with shirts by which to remember the day.

A celebration with cake and lots of congratulations followed.

The five men, their mentors, and the group leader agreed that this was such a wonderful experience that they couldn't stop here. The group will continue to meet monthly to grow in their faith together. ■



*Create*  
your own version of the banner using the instructions in *Expressing Faith in Jesus*.

### WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR "Expressing Faith in Jesus" STORIES:

Has someone in your group become a full member of the church? Have you tried the art project?

Let us know! Tel: 888.866.8966 / email: [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)

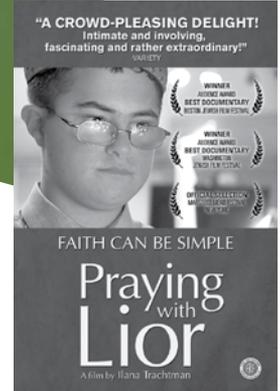


*Jesus*

## PAID IT ALL

By Beth Slater, a member of Calvin Friendship Ministries, Muskegon, MI

Jesus paid it all on the cross for me,  
 He paid the ransom for my soul a place called Calvary,  
 So come to the father he is waiting for you,  
 To ask him in so why not let him enter in because  
 he is in love with you,  
 So come to the place where sins can be forgiven,  
 To those who believe that he died for me and came  
 to love us unconditionally,  
 For there is a precious father that loves you every day,  
 And he wants you to know that you are loved in every way,  
 For there is a presence among us that we cannot even see,  
 For the spirit of the lord is in the room with me,  
 He is watching and waiting for us as we kneel before his throne,  
 As for his grace and mercy they comfort me,  
 For all that come to praise the lord,  
 he will show his love forevermore,  
 Jesus paid it all and all to him I owe  
 For my sins have been washed white as snow,  
 If you come to the father he will give you rest,  
 Peace and joy will come to you at last,  
 So come to the father he is in love with you,  
 His love and mercy will reflect on you,  
 Love can move mountains skies and seas,  
 His love and mercy is abundant and free,  
 So come to the savior he is waiting for you,  
 To ask him in your life and as we read the word of truth,  
 His love is patient everywhere I go,  
 And I know he loves me because he told us so. ■



Watch *Praying with Lior*, a funny, heartbreaking, and brave documentary film, and you'll have the privilege of meeting Lior Liebling. Lior has Down syndrome -- and a gift for exuberant prayer. As he approaches Bar Mitzvah, his community explores difficult questions. Is Lior more spiritually gifted than other people? What will his future hold?

Even if his faith tradition is different than yours, Lior's story will resonate with our common human experiences of faith, loss, family, and community. ■

For a schedule of places the film will be shown, or to schedule a screening or purchase a DVD, visit [www.prayingwithlior.com](http://www.prayingwithlior.com) or call 212.791.1567.



## On the

# ROAD

**Y**ou may have noticed that we're traveling less this spring and summer. Some events we normally attend have been canceled for economic reasons; others we have decided not to attend due to our own budget concerns. We would still love to connect with you, so **please don't hesitate to call or send an email if we can support your ministry in any way.** That's what being part of the Friendship family is all about!

**NELLA**  
**June 10-12: Annual Meeting of AAIDD (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities), New Orleans, LA.**

**ELIZABETH (Amistad)**  
**May 14-19: Expolit, Miami, FL.**

Expolit is the International Spanish Evangelical Book Fair and International Spanish Booksellers Convention; in other words, the most important Christian book exposition for Latin America. ■

This year's theme is "Enviably Lives." One of the areas to be discussed is "Life Connections," which includes spirituality. Do you know someone attending this event? If so, suggest a visit to the Friendship Ministries booth or the Religion & Spirituality Division Forum on Friday morning. ■



# Notas DE AMISTAD



**O**n this occasion I wish to highlight the silent but hard work of many people in Latin America who are generally located in remote areas far from major cities. These people have been called, and have the commitment in the midst of many



Members of the Amistad group in La Pintada, Colombia

limitations, to bring the teachings of God's love to people with special needs. Such is the case of Marco Aurelio Vargas Agudelo, a rural school teacher in a small town called La Pintada in the state of

Antioquia, northwestern Colombia. Professor Marco Aurelio, who attends the

Missionary Movement Worldwide church, obtains funds for people with special needs through the sale of pies and cakes in his community. Thanks to the Mary Louters Fund, *Ministerio Amistad* has donated material for this group, and now they are receiving the Gospel of the Lord. What a blessing!

Another special case is Benita Chimal, a member of the Holy Spirit Presbyterian Church in Tizimin, a small village in the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. From an early age Benita was called to evangelize children, especially those with special needs. Even through the loss her father when she was nine years old, Benita learned more about love and evangelism. At present she is developing the *Amistad* program in the middle of a poor community with many limitations. *Ministerio Amistad* is so pleased to be able to support her ministry.

God is using tools like these beautiful people and many others to develop this very special ministry. And God is using people like you who help us through your donations to continue God's work in places that perhaps we will never know. ■

*God continue to bless!*  
Elizabeth Rodriguez  
Ministerio Amistad

## FRIENDSHIP FAMILY NEWS

### Welcome to the family!

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

- Aldersgate Free Methodist Church of Kansas City, KS
- Ben Davis Christian Church of Indianapolis, IN
- Brooklyn Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, MI
- Cornerstone Church of Skippack, PA
- Friendship Church of Gaylord, MI
- Mile-0 Evangelical Fellowship or Grimshaw, AB
- St. John's Lutheran Church of Depew, NY
- Westwood Presbyterian of Hamilton, OH

Is your group new to the Friendship Family? We would love to send you a **welcome packet**. Contact LaVonne at 888.866.8966 ext. 2--3 or [carlsonl@friendship.org](mailto:carlsonl@friendship.org)

### FESTIVAL FOR FRIENDSHIP GROUPS IN ONTARIO

Friendship groups within an hour or so of Milton, ON are invited to a day of fun and games Saturday, June 6 from 10 am to 2 pm. Cost is \$2 per person. Please register the names of all friends and volunteers with Marlene Nirula at [lene@sympatico.ca](mailto:lene@sympatico.ca) by May 22. For more information contact Herb Goodhoofd at 905.878.0575 ext. 241.

### FRIENDSHIP GROUP'S RED CARPET EVENT MAKES NEWS

When the Friendship Group of **Clearview Christian Reformed Church of Oakville, ON** received an evening of royal treatment, their local newspaper, the *Oakville Beaver*, was there to capture the story.

After returning from a limousine ride, friends exited onto a red carpet, where they were introduced to waiting fans and 'paparazzi' from the church family. They were then welcomed into the church, where they enjoyed refreshments and hors d'oeuvres while waiting for the rest of the group to arrive for activities.

One of the group leaders, Marlene Nirula, said that the goal of the event was to make each person feel like a superstar. "Everyone is unique and deserves to be celebrated," she said. ■

**Have you considered sharing your Friendship event with a local newspaper? It's a great way to help spread the word!** We would love to hear from you, too: contact Gwen at 888.866.8966 ext. 2--4 or [genzinkg@friendship.org](mailto:genzinkg@friendship.org)

# Try This!

## ASK AGAIN

Is there someone in your group who sits in the back and never seems to get involved? Commit to inviting her to participate in some small way this week. Audrey Roorda, coordinator of the **Brantford Friendship Club** in **Brantford, ON** tells this story: "One of our friends comes regularly to our meetings and sits in the back in the same place with a coffee. During one of the stories I asked him specifically if he would like to come up and hold a poster for me while I told the story. He nodded yes and came up and held the poster. I thought nothing of it at that point. After the meeting his staff worker came up to me and asked if I knew that a breakthrough was made tonight. She went on to explain that he had never ever done something like that in public before. This was so totally out of his normal routine that she was very surprised that he actually agreed to do it. I make sure I occasionally ask him to do things. Sometimes he agrees and sometimes he doesn't, but either way he looks pleased to be asked." ■



Kathy, Nancy, Linda, and Brenda gather donated socks

## FILL A STOCKING WITH...

It's a Christmas tradition for the **Drenthe Christian Reformed Church Friendship Group** in **Zeeland, MI** to give a donation to a local food and clothing pantry. This past year, they decided to collect pairs of socks, which they stuffed into a giant Christmas stocking for delivery. ■

## MAKE GRADUATION A TRADITION

Members of the **St. Andrew Friendship Group** in **Shreveport, LA** look forward to graduating--every time they finish a Bible Study unit. During each review session, members of the class receive a certificate that includes their name, the Verse to Remember, the Bible stories and songs they learned as part of the unit, and an object to remind them what they learned. Examples include a necklace with the world painted on it ("God Created the World," Unit 1 of *God, Our Father*) and a rainbow-colored stole ("God Makes a Promise," Unit 2 of *God, Our Father*). As each person's name is called, they come forward to receive their certificate and be photographed. One member has framed each certificate he has received, and they are the first thing he shows visitors to his home. ■



Belva celebrates graduation

**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)

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

We often get questions about how we produce Friendship materials. Here's a behind-the-scenes glimpse at what it takes to deliver high-quality materials for your group.

**1 TOPIC SELECTION.** Before we rewrote the Bible Studies, we conducted a survey. More recently, we asked a number of leaders whether they would like a study of the Psalms. The response has been enthusiastic. (Oops--the secret is out!)

**2 FIRST STEPS.** For the Psalms project, we brought together 10 people last August to generate ideas about what the study should look like. Since then, the project manager and I have worked to refine these ideas. We also spent an entire day hammering out the key Biblical truth, focus, and goals for each session with our theological editor.

**3 COST ESTIMATE.** In order to get a cost estimate, we must make decisions about the physical shape of the project, from the number of pages, to the size of posters, to any multimedia elements. Even the weight of the paper and whether there will be perforations or staples must be taken into account. All this affects how the pieces will stack in inventory, travel to your door, and store in your closet.

**4 TEMPLATE.** Our next step: create a template that includes the session focus and goals, the biblical background written by our theological editor, and the session structure. This is sent to potential authors who flesh out the session to show us how they would approach the project.

**5 AUTHOR SELECTION.** Once we read the samples, we select an author or a team of authors. We also find people to help with music and art activities.

**6 INITIAL EDITING.** When we receive the finished manuscript, the project manager and I edit it to ensure that it will be understandable to the wide variety of groups who will use the material.

**7 DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION.** Next the project goes to a designer for layout and to an illustrator. The illustrator

receives detailed instructions for each image, ex. "Hispanic adult male in hospital bed; attach IV and oxygen clip to right arm; expression on face should be one of trust." We are sometimes asked why we don't use photographs. If we used a photographer, actors, lighting, and costumes to stage every scenario, you would not be able to afford the materials! Because the illustrations are computerized, we can tweak them inexpensively. The background may need to be lighter so that the text is readable, or the expression on a character's face may need to be changed. For example, the illustration of Jezebel in *Living God's Way* originally portrayed her with a pleasant smile. We asked the artist to make her look nastier!

**8 OTHER © MATERIAL.** At the same time, we purchase the right to use music from various copyright holders. Yes, all the materials are copyrighted, except where they are labeled reproducible.

**9 PROOFS.** When first proofs come back, copy editors ensure that everything is in order from page numbers to spelling to consistency in the way a character is depicted. The final proof is in color, and it is our last chance to make sure we get things right.

**10 PRINTING.** Once everything has been printed and collated, the materials are placed in inventory and ready to be shipped to you.

By this time, more than 20 people will have worked on the project. It is this attention to detail, in addition to the model of one-to-one relationships, that makes Friendship materials unique. We pray that they will be effective tools so that each member of your group grows as a disciple of Jesus. ■

*Nella Vitale*



From:  
Leslie VanPortfliet

To:  
Friendship Ministries

Subject:  
Hi Friends!

Message:

Just an update on the t-shirts we ordered, as well as our fundraiser. Everyone loved their t-shirts and are wearing them to each meeting. They look awesome as a group in their bright colors.

The first week we decorated piggy banks, and we have decided the money we raise will go to Friendship Ministries. **We thought it would be great to help start another Friendship Group like ours.** Two of our friends brought in their banks to empty the second night, and one had over \$40 in it! Wow, we are off to a good start!

God bless,  
Leslie



**W**ould your group or your church take an offering to support the mission of Friendship Ministries? Or would you like to support us through our Church Partnership Program? Please be in touch with Nella at 888.866.8966 (ext. 2--1) or [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)

A huge thank you to our current Church Partners:

- Bowmanville Friendship Group of Bowmanville, ON
- Calvary Christian Reformed Church of Edina, MN
- Covenant Christian Reformed Church of Appleton, WI
- Plymouth Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI
- Remembrance Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI

## HOW IS FRIENDSHIP FUNDED?

**M**any of you may wonder how Friendship Ministries receives funding. Does it support itself on sales of study materials alone? The answer to that question is a resounding “no.” Sales of Friendship study materials fund approximately 12% of our operating budget. The remainder is met through private donations from dedicated donors. These donors are extremely important to this ministry; we cannot continue our work without them.

You will notice that there is always a return envelope included with this newsletter. Many of you regularly mail it back to us with a contribution--thank you! If you haven't mailed this back to us before, please consider doing so today--no gift is too small! ■



**Friendship**  
MINISTRIES

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

**Nella Uitvlugt**  
Executive Director  
tel: 888.866.8966 (ext. 2 -- 1)  
email: [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)

**LaVonne Carlson**  
Administrative Assistant  
tel: 888.866.8966 (ext. 2 -- 3)  
email: [carlsonl@friendship.org](mailto:carlsonl@friendship.org)

**Gwen Penning Genzink**  
Marketing Communications  
tel: 888.866.8966 (ext. 2 -- 4)  
email: [genzinkg@friendship.org](mailto:genzinkg@friendship.org)

**FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES USA**  
2215 29th Street SE #B6  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

**FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES CANADA**  
POB 1636 Stn LCD1,  
Burlington, ON L7R 5A1

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