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Sharing God's *Love* with People who have Intellectual Disabilities

## FRIENDS BAPTIZED

### Process customized for each person



Deb is baptized

industrial fan in an effort to grasp the Spirit's presence.

They also talked about what it means to be a part of the church and to share in its joys and sorrows. A final meeting provided an opportunity for a small group of elders to meet with the friends and hear their testimonies.

A mentor walked alongside each friend through this process, and when it came time to share testimonies with the congregation on a Sunday morning, mentors stood beside friends in support. The group had created a banner representing Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and two friends, Julie B. and Sharon B., answered Pastor Steve's questions about this as a way to share

*continued on p.2*

**D**uring the course of the last year, Friendship group leader Nella Uitvlugt (who is also Executive Director of Friendship Ministries) began to reflect on the growing faith of several friends who had been attending Friendship and Sunday morning worship at **Plymouth Heights Church in Grand Rapids, MI.** She decided to approach them about becoming full church members. Six of the friends were eager to join the church, and the next step was to contact their families or guardians for permission.

Since the friends had completed the three Friendship Bible Study series, Nella and Pastor Steve DeVries used the resource *Expressing Faith in Jesus* as a guide to design a three-session review of what they had learned. During the first meeting, they talked about how God created the universe, using a "creation walk" to bring the

concepts to life. Next they reflected on how Jesus saved us, and they pounded nails into a wooden cross as a way to meditate on this sacrifice. As they discussed the work of the Holy Spirit during the third session, they lit candles and listened to the sound of an

### *Testimony:*

I've never been a member of a church. Jesus loves me. I've been at this church for almost four years. I will be praying on its behalf. I want to be baptized, and put money in the offering. I love the church family. I want to become faithful to the church. I will be a sister in Christ. I believe Jesus Christ is my savior. I am ready to be a member. When Pastor Steve preaches from the Bible, I write in it. Jesus is in my heart. My favorite verse is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." And I love my friends here at church.

-April P.



continued from p.1

their testimonies. Pastor Steve interviewed Jack R., encouraging Jack to share what he'd told the elders, "I want to join Plymouth Heights because I want to help other people." Pastor Steve took him up on this immediately, asking Jack to help the friends being baptized by offering them a towel.

Three other friends prepared written testimonies that they shared with the church family. Debbie R. shared, "I want to be baptized because I love Jesus. I trust Jesus with all my heart.... I love him; he loves me." David B. said, "...I want to be a good example for my friends, community, and family." April P.'s testimony appears in its entirety in the sidebar on p.1.

Five of the six friends were baptized; another who had been baptized as an infant shared his Profession of Faith. Each friend received a certificate (from the *Expressing Faith in Jesus Resource Kit*) and was added to the church directory as a full member. The entire congregation celebrated with fellowship--and cake. ■

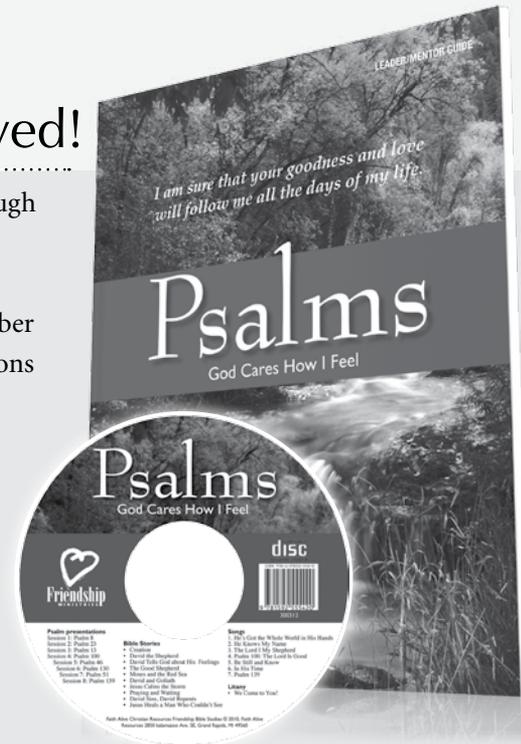
If you would like to talk with Nella about how to facilitate a process like this in your church, please be in touch with her at 888.866.8966 ext.2--1 or [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org).

## Psalms study has arrived!

By journeying together through this study of eight beloved psalms, group members will become familiar with a number of key psalms and the emotions they express, realize that God invites and accepts honest expressions of emotion, and express their own feelings to God more freely.

In addition to a **Leader/Mentor Guide** and **Take-Home Cards**, *Psalms: God Cares How I Feel* includes exciting new multimedia options to make the ten sessions come alive in a more sensory way.

Leaders can choose between a **DVD version** or a **CD & Print version** of the **Group Leader's Resources**.



The **Psalms Devotional CD** contains psalm readings, Bible readings, and music to encourage spending time with God at home. ■

To learn more or view a sample, visit [www.friendship.org/psalms](http://www.friendship.org/psalms) or call 888.866.8966.



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

### NELLA

**October 22-25:** Christian Educators Fellowship, Louisville, KY

**October 29-30:** Friendship Workshop, Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch, ON

**January 12-15:** Children's Pastors' Conference, Orlando, FL

**March 15-18:** Children's Pastors' Conference, San Diego, CA

### RALPH & CAROL

**Late October - early November:** MI, OH, TN, FL

### TONY & DIANA

**November 6:** Circle of Support, Arc of Greater Prince William, VA



# Notas DE AMISTAD

## New material in Spanish!

My Dear Friends,

I'm happy to announce that we will soon have two new Spanish translations available: the *Friendship Program Guide* and *What Friendship Mentors Need to Know*. These resources have been much sought after among Christian leaders of the Hispanic community, and they will be of great guidance to churches who are interested this ministry.

If your church, or a church you know, would like to learn more, please be in touch with me at [info@ministerioamistad.org](mailto:info@ministerioamistad.org)



Elizabeth Rodriguez  
Ministerio Amistad

# FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



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

- Clinton Alliance Church of Rhinebeck, NY
- Cross Creek Church of Palmyra, NY
- Faith Assembly of God of Poughkeepsie, NY
- Faith Lutheran Church of Cedarburg, WI
- First Christian Church of Anna, IL
- First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, SC
- First United Methodist Church of Carbondale, IL
- Grace Community Church of Noblesville, IN
- Grand Island Evangelical Free Church of Grand Island, NE
- Lighthouse Twin Falls of Twin Falls, ID
- Mountain Springs Church of Colorado Springs, CO
- Puna Covenant Church of Kea'au, HI
- Redeemer Lutheran Church of Arkansas City, KS
- Royal Palms Baptist Church of Phoenix, AZ
- St. George's Anglican Church of Epsom, Auckland, New Zealand
- St. John United Methodist Church of Anchorage, AK
- St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mercersburg, PA
- St. Paul Lutheran Church of Durango, CO
- St. Paul United Methodist Church of Las Cruces, NM
- Stonebridge Community Church of Simi Valley, CA
- Sunshine Ministry of Auburn, WA
- Valley Evangelical Free Church of West Des Moines, IA
- Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Northville, MI
- Woodburn Missionary Church of Woodburn, IN
- Zion Lutheran Church of Seymour, IN

## FRIENDSHIP IN THE NEWS

Congratulations for the groups at **First Lutheran Church in Columbus, IN** and **Kings Way Baptist Church in Concord, NC** for being featured in their local newspapers.

Would someone you know be willing to pitch a story about your group to your local news to spread the word? ■

What's happening in your corner of the Friendship family? Be in touch! By phone: 888.866.8966, or email: [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)

# Top **11** ways to recruit volunteers

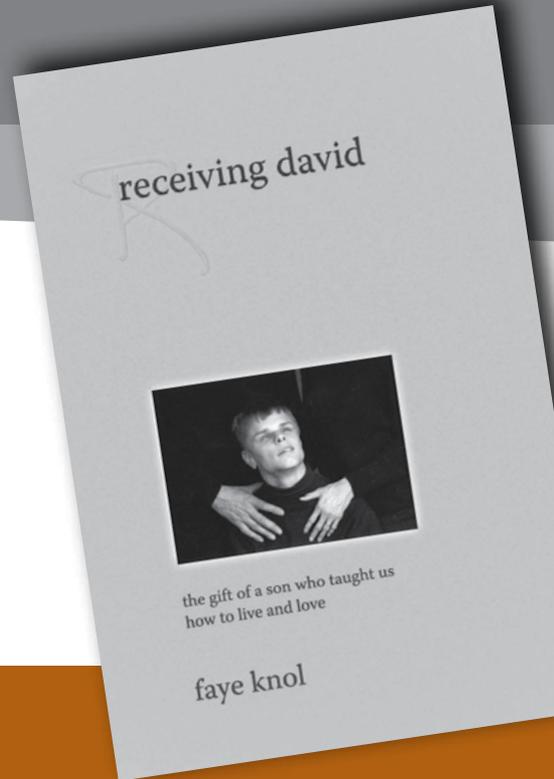
By Nella Uitvlugt

Perhaps you've discovered, like I have, that bulletin announcements don't do much good when it comes to recruiting volunteers. So what next? I'd like to share a few of the ideas that have worked for me over the years:

- 1 Ask your pastor and church board to pray for you as you search.
- 2 Look for people in the congregation that may be overlooked by others. Hint: they may be back-row sitters, or up in the balcony.
- 3 Ask them to come to one meeting, just to visit. When they see the program, it will help them overcome their fears.
- 4 Tell stories. Share about the difference Friendship has made in the lives of mentors, friends, families.
- 5 Once you have one volunteer from your congregation, ask that person to find one more volunteer. And so on.
- 6 Write about what you are doing in the group for your church newsletter. Visibility = volunteers.
- 7 If any of the friends attend worship on Sunday, see if you can find a family for each of them to sit with. That means no more

than one person with a disability per family. The family will get to know the person, and then you can ask them to be a mentor-- or they may beat you to it and volunteer!

- 8 Is there anyone in the congregation that is a Special Ed teacher or a social worker? Ask them to visit, and ask whether they have ideas for volunteers.
- 9 Be very enthusiastic. If you act like this is the greatest possible opportunity, someone will catch your vision.
- 10 Sometimes I find volunteers from other congregations. If a friend comes from another church, ask that church to find a mentor from their congregation. I tell the church that I am not interested in gaining a member for our church but that I do want to build a bridge between the Friendship group and their church. Mentors in your group may also have family or friends who don't belong to your church but would like to volunteer.
- 11 Show the Friendship video, which is posted at [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org). Sometimes this encourages people to know that the program is not intimidating. ■



## BOOK RECOMMENDATION

### *Receiving David: The Gift of A Son Who Taught Us How to Live and Love*

By Faye Knol  
Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010

We highly recommend this memoir about the life and death of David Knol, written by his mother with great tenderness and insight.

David was not expected to survive when he was born prematurely. Yet he lived to overcome many obstacles and to teach the people around him about love, the value of life, and the beauty of relationships.

A bonus for our readers is that David was a member of the Friendship group at Plymouth Heights Church in Grand Rapids, MI, and the book includes references to his experiences there. ■



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### PRAYER PARTNERING

As your group begins another year, you've no doubt faced many important decisions: What materials will you use? How will you recruit the volunteers you need? How will you ensure the safety of your friends as they come and go? When you get a moment to step back and catch your breath, I encourage you to think about how your group can be steeped in prayer this year.

We hear from many of you that prayer is one of the most important parts of your group's time together. Prayers range from personal requests and expressions of gratitude to intercession for things group members have heard about in the church service or read about in the newspaper. Prayer is also a meaningful part of one-to-one time.

But have you thought about enlisting others in your congregation to support you in prayer? **The Pennway Church of God in Lansing, MI** has done this. Recently we heard from Vivien Denniston, a co-leader of the program, who told us about the prayer e-mails sent out by Shirley Reed, Prayer Support Team Leader. Here's an excerpt from one of her e-mails, asking for prayer for the group leaders and mentors:

*"We need to keep praying over the summer as the leaders do their planning and potential volunteers make decisions to join in this ministry.*

*When the story teller and the mentors are talking with their friends, they can't give glib answers as we so often do. They must understand God's gifts on a basic level so*

*they can explain it thoroughly. We must pray for the volunteers that they have this understanding."*

I am sure you have specific needs in your program. Getting prayer support will increase your sense that you're not in this alone. It will also enhance your congregation's awareness of what is happening in your Friendship program.

As I think about how I could ask my church's prayer team to pray for our Friendship group, a few things come to mind:

- For health of friends and mentors
- For people who live together to get along with each other
- For the health and strength of the direct support professionals serving our friends
- For new ways for us to encourage our Friends to use their gifts
- For employment for our Friends who need it
- For enough mentors for our programs
- For ways to reach out to families and staff

No doubt your Friendship program is a place for fun, friendship, and laughter. But it is also a place where people come to share their burdens and to be transformed by God's love. When we hear stories about a care provider becoming a Christian, or a friend being healed from cancer, we know that God is working in our midst. ■

*Nella Vitolug*

**Prayer Need:**  
New groups often request prayer. Would your group consider praying for the programs welcomed on p. 3?



## HERE'S THE *Lovely* COUPLE

We mentioned to you last time that, in lieu of cutlery and towels, a bride and groom decided to ask for donations to Friendship Ministries. Well, they got married, and we thought you would like to see a photo. Thank you, Chris Streeter and Mark Bransdorfer, for the support and awareness you generated for this ministry through your generosity.



Chris participates in ministry with people who have intellectual disabilities at **Genesis United Methodist Church in Grand Rapids, MI.**



**CHURCH  
PARTNERSHIP  
PROGRAM**

## THANK YOU CHURCH PARTNERS

Your support is vital  
to this ministry.....

### **New Church Partner**

- Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Woodstock, ON

### **Renewing Church Partners**

- Bowmanville Friendship Club of Bowmanville, ON
- Brookfield Christian Reformed Church of Brookfield, WI
- Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Hamilton, ON
- Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI

To learn more about the Church Partnership Program, please contact LaVonne or Nella at 888.866.8966.



## *Special Gifts*

**We are grateful for gifts in honor of:**

- Peter Kuperus, on his birthday
- Chris Streeter & Mark Bransdorfer, on their wedding day

**And for gifts in memory of:**

- George Hoekstra
- Susan VanderWal

**As you consider your giving, is there someone whose life you could remember with a donation to Friendship Ministries?**

Is there someone you would like to honor with a gift supporting our ministry?

Please also keep Friendship Ministries in mind when planning your will or bequests.

If you have questions, contact Nella at 888.866.8966 ext.2--1



**Friendship  
MINISTRIES**

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

**FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES International**

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