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

TOM'S TESTIMONY

Tom has been a member of the Friendship Group at Trinity United Methodist Church in Erie, PA for 14 years. Group leader, Diana, recently interviewed Tom about what the Friendship Group means to him.

Diana: Why do you like to come to Friendship group?
Tom: To learn about God.

Diana: What have you learned about God in the group?
Tom: A little bit of everything. I like to hear all of the Bible stories again. I like to follow along in my own Bible.

Diana: Are there any favorite stories that you learned in Friendship?
Tom: I like the Ten Commandments. They are worded different but they are the same. My favorite is "Love God and Love Others." Some people don't want to hear that.

Diana: Do you want to love God and others in your life?
Tom: Oh, yes. I love God through the Holy Spirit in my heart. I can't see Jesus, but I have the Holy Spirit in my heart. Some people ask me, "Where is Jesus?" I tell them, "Jesus is in my heart."

Diana: How do you love others, Tom?
Tom: I like to be a helper. At Friendship I help people find their places in the Bible. I help set-up. I pray for people. I do volunteer work, too. I make up turkey Thanksgiving Baskets and serve Thanksgiving dinner at the City Mission.

Diana: What are your favorite parts of the Friendship Ministry?
Tom: Bible and music.

Diana: How important is Friendship Ministry in your life? A little bit important or very important?
Tom: It takes my life over. Before I didn't have it, now I do it on Monday nights. It is one of my favorite things.

Diana: Would you recommend Friendship Ministry to others?
Tom: Oh, yes. ■



Tom with his friend, Nathan, and one of the tablets they used to study *Living God's Way*

Christmas GIFT IDEAS



Are you looking for unique, meaningful gifts for your friends and family this Christmas? Friendship items not only fit the bill, they also support our worldwide ministry. Check out our handmade **“Wear Your Heart”** jewelry and other gifts at www.friendship.org/accessories.



In memory of my friend

This past summer, one of our dear Friendship students passed away from cancer. Her name was Cindy. Cindy had been coming to Friendship for many, many years. When I heard Cindy was receiving hospice care, I visited her home to say my final goodbye. When Cindy saw me, she wondered where her Friendship booklet was. She did not understand why I would come to see her without bringing a Friendship lesson to share.

At the funeral, Cindy's dad thanked me for mailing her the Friendship booklet. He explained that many times over the last few weeks, Cindy would look at her Friendship booklet over and over, often writing things on the pages, like we do at Friendship Bible Study. The morning Cindy passed away, she looked up at the sky, hands upward. Cindy knew that Jesus loved her, and she knew where she was going. ■



❖ Cindy was a member of the Waupun Friendship Group for 27 years.

Cindy had been blessed by Friendship, and I am so thankful that God placed me here to be blessed by Cindy. I will never forget her.

--Mary Brower, Friendship Group Coordinator, Waupun, WI

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

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

January 19-20: Triumph Foundation, St. Simons Island, GA

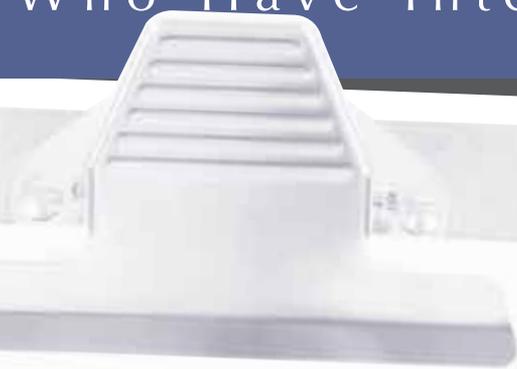
January 27-29: Calvin Symposium on Worship, Grand Rapids, MI

February 2-5: Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, Albuquerque, NM

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

RALPH & CAROL

March: AL & northern FL

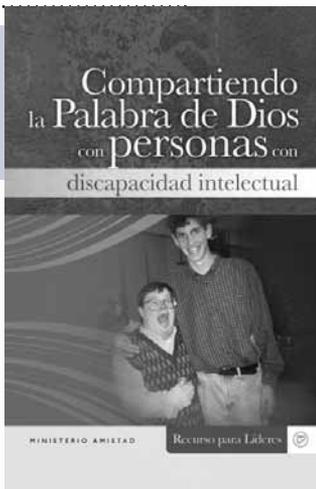


Notas DE AMISTAD

New guide available!

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to announce a new resource in Spanish. *Compartiendo la Palabra de Dios con personas con discapacidades intelectuales*, (which means “Sharing the Word of God with people with intellectual disabilities”), is a practical guide for anyone who wants to be involved in ministry with people who have intellectual disabilities.



This new book is a translation and adaptation for the Hispanic community of the resources that we already know in English as the *Friendship Program Guide* and *What Friendship Mentors Need to Know*.

It provides guidance for starting and developing this ministry in your community, and it emphasizes the importance of having a big heart to serve Jesus Christ and make friends with people who have intellectual disabilities.

For more information, or to order, contact me at info@ministerioamistad.org

God bless you,
Elizabeth Rodriguez



Ministerio Amistad

FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



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

- Bethpage Assembly of God of Bethpage, NY
- Calvary Chapel Eastside of Colorado Springs, CO
- Church of the Cross of Fairview, PA
- Community Christian Reformed Church of Demotte, IN
- First Methodist Church of Fullerton, CA
- First Presbyterian Church of Estherville, IA
- First United Methodist Church of Williamsport, PA
- Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church of Jacksonville, FL
- Hope Christian Reformed Church of Houston, TX
- Parish Presbyterian Church of Franklin, TN
- Puna Covenant Church of Keaau, HI
- Redeemer Lutheran Church of Austin, TX
- Sparta Evangelical Free Church of Sparta, NJ
- Timber Lake United Methodist Church of Lynchburg, VA
- Valley Evangelical Free Church of West Des Moines, IA

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

Psalms tip

The Friendship Group at Trinity United Methodist Church in Erie, PA is studying the brand-new Friendship materials on *Psalms* this fall. They've decided to glue the "Psalms symbols" to wooden craft sticks in order to make them more durable. ■

Share your Psalms ideas!
888.866.8966 or
friendship@friendship.org
facebook.com/FriendMin



NOTEWORTHY

In her role as president of the AAIDD's (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) Religion & Spirituality Division, Nella presented the Henri Nouwen Award to David J. Morstad during a plenary honoring Eunice Shriver at the AAIDD's 2010 annual conference. David was recognized for his ministry with people who have intellectual disabilities through Bethesda Lutheran Communities and the Bethesda Institute. ■

What's your opinion?

We want to know what you're thinking about...

Webinars: What topics would you like to see covered in future webinars?

Life Studies: We're working on a plan to retire some, revise some, and perhaps create some studies on new topics. If you've used the Life Studies, we'd love to hear your two cents! ■

Send an email to friendship@friendship.org or give us a call at 888.866.8966.

We're here to help



Friendship/Amistad staff: Heather, LaVonne, Nella, Gwen, & Elizabeth

Please give us a call with your questions, ideas, and suggestions. We'd love to know how we can support you in your ministry! ■



FROM THE DIRECTOR



Friends: Debbie, Nella, & April

“A friend loves at all times. He is there to help when trouble comes.” (Proverbs 17:17, NIV)

Recently I have been thinking about the **tremendously life-enriching friendships** I have experienced through Friendship Ministries. There are people all over the world, from Canada to New Zealand, from the United States to Uganda, whose lives have touched mine through our shared ministry. And there are the relationships formed in the Friendship program I attend on Tuesday nights.

Seeing each other weekly in a Friendship program means I spend more time with these friends than with others. Watching the relationships that have developed over the years in our program is incredible. I think of Tom and Patrick. Patrick recently came in beaming--he and Tom had been out shopping and for dinner to celebrate Patrick's birthday. Or Ryan and Amos. Ryan was all smiles at our first meeting of the year because he was back in Friendship with his friend Amos. And Amos was all smiles as we congratulated him on his recent wedding. That night Ryan led us by doing the motions to a song for the first time ever.

But friendship is more than companionship and is not to be taken lightly. The two verses from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes remind me of what happens in Friendship programs around the world. **We pick each other up; we need each other.**

I like to think about the gifts that pick me up each time I am at Friendship. A gift to me is often an unexpected moment that takes me by surprise. It may be a prayer request that is profoundly moving, or evidence of the progress a friend has made over time. Ryan leading us in song was one such gift. Just before the singing we had been reminiscing about a friend who had died and who we were missing. He picked us all up by doing that.

Next time you are in Friendship look for a gift from your friends that will pick you up--especially if you take time to ponder it. And in response, are you giving your all to your friend? Are you thinking of ways to build your relationship? Are you prepared for your session? Have you thought about visiting with your friend at his/her house? Or even in the hospital, like Mary did for her friend Cindy (see p.3)? Our friends often have times of trouble we don't know about unless we make an effort to find out about their lives beyond Friendship. **Are you that kind of friend? ■**

“Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do. Suppose someone falls down. Then his friend can help him up. But suppose the man who falls down doesn't have anyone to help him up. Then feel sorry for him!”

(Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10, NIV)

Nella Vitellug



Friendship Ministries Needs Everyone's Support!

Like most charitable organizations we depend on donors for support. We serve more than **17,000 friends worldwide**. It costs about \$18.00 a friend to nurture existing programs and to begin new ones. This is a bargain if you think about it!

We do this by keeping our staffing levels extremely low and contracting for services as we need them rather than hiring staff. **At this time we do not even have a fundraiser on staff.**

What do we spend money on? Salaries--yup, we do pay staff a modest amount. Other items are computers (ours are four years old), utilities, travel to conferences and to meet with churches, and marketing materials like catalogs and curriculum planning guides. The website is also an important awareness tool, and it costs money.

Have you considered giving a **monthly or quarterly donation**? This would help stabilize the ministry financially. Another great way to support

Friendship Ministries is through a **bequest**. Friendship Ministries is a member of **Barnabas Foundation** in the USA and **Christian Stewardship Services** in Canada. Both of these organizations are available to assist you with financial planning.



Services they will provide you from a Christian perspective include:

- Tax-efficient Planned Gifts
- Administration of Charitable Trusts and Annuities
- Gift opportunities through a Donor-Advised Fund

Their services are both confidential and free to you! ■

If you would like to make use of either of these organizations, contact Nella at 888.866.8966 ext 2--1, and we will arrange to have a representative call you.

What is the CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM?

Friendship Ministries depends on the financial support of many congregations in order to reach more than 17,000 people in more than 1,100 programs worldwide. And there are so many more friends who have not yet been embraced by a church family!

Would your church partner with us by taking an offering or making a contribution at one of these levels?

- Sustaining Partner: \$250 per year.
- Growing Partner: \$500 per year.
- Expanding Partner: \$1,000 per year.
- Global Outreach Partner: \$2,000 per year. ■

To learn more, or to request a brochure, contact LaVonne or Nella at 888.866.8966.



Special Gifts

We are grateful for gifts in memory of:

- Traci Pigg
- Albert VanBeek



We would love to hear from you:

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