

# FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Tips & Tools to Include Our Friends

SECOND QUARTER 2015



A Publication of  
Friendship Ministries

 **Friendship**  
MINISTRIES



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My good friend was recently describing her experience of getting new prescription glasses. As she talked about her new glasses and how eager she was to see things more clearly, I couldn't help but think about how the proverbial analogy of "vision" and "corrective lenses" works so well with our understanding of disability ministry.

We have seen with our own eyes and have been aware of differently-abled people all of our lives. While some of us may always have had nothing but a heart of love for people with disabilities, others of us may have started from a place of mistrust, pity, or even fear of the differences we saw. But over time, God has given us "corrective lenses" to see and understand not only the things that make us different, but also the ways we are the same. Our vision and understanding have been impacted and illuminated through lenses of meaningful relationships, personal experiences, books, articles, inclusive churches and communities, Friendship programs, and of course, God's enlightened Word and the Holy Spirit.

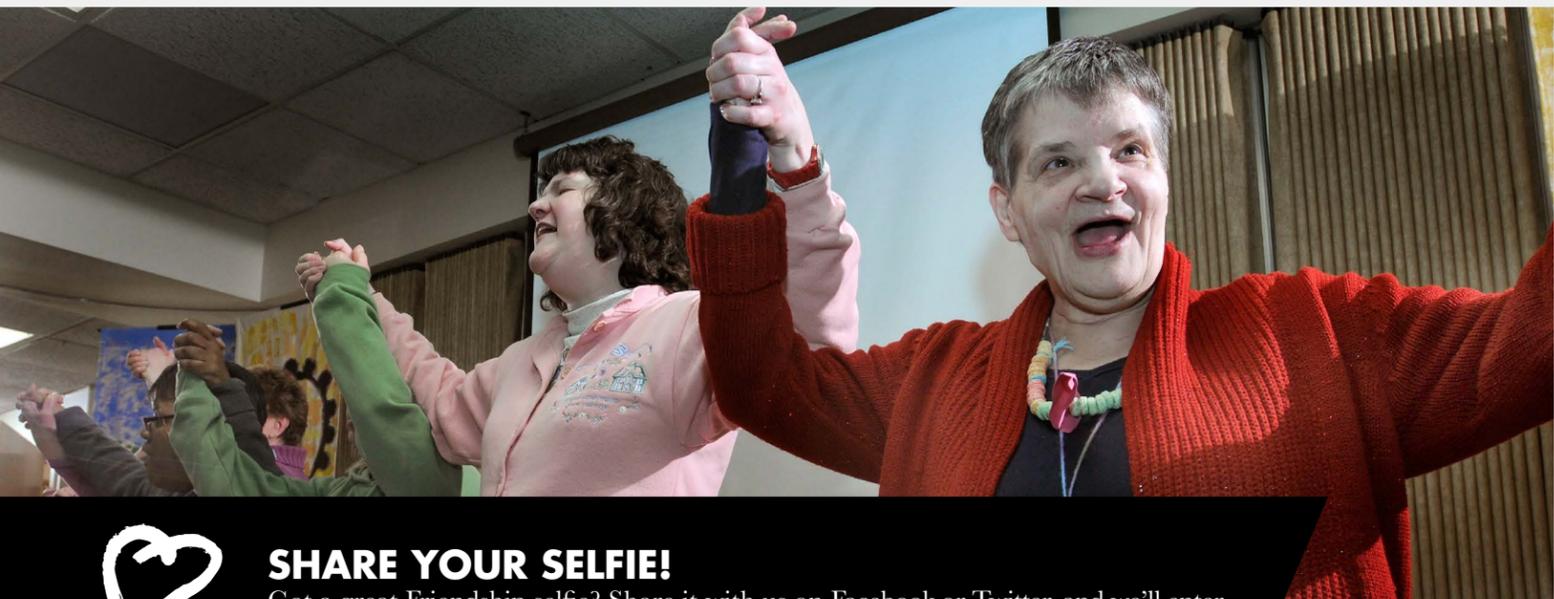
God has used Friendship Ministries and its powerful—and once innovative—curriculum to impact and change the lives of thousands of friends and mentors alike. But our vision has adjusted over the years, and

now it's time for some new glasses for Friendship Ministries. We are working on a new approach to our curriculum—one that will make it more affordable, adaptable, and accessible. Our prayer is that we will create a new lens that will help the Church change the way the world sees our friends. We pray that God will continue to transform us into caring, compassionate brothers and sisters in Christ who are constantly searching for new ways to serve God. And we pray that the Church will grow ever more complete as we walk with dignity and grace alongside those who have different abilities.

May we continue to seek the Light of the World for His true and perfect vision.

In Him,

**Tom VanWingerden**  
Executive Director, Friendship Ministries  
[tomvw@friendship.org](mailto:tomvw@friendship.org)  
888.866.8966



### SHARE YOUR SELFIE!

Got a great Friendship selfie? Share it with us on Facebook or Twitter, and we'll enter you into a drawing for a free t-shirt!



## NEWS FROM MINISTERIO AMISTAD

Dear friends,

I am very glad to introduce the following Amistad groups, who joined us in the last few months:

### Argentina

Iglesia Casa de Oración (House of Prayer), located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. María Rosa Paretti is the director of an Amistad group with 7 friends.

Iglesia de la ciudad (City Church), Grupo Elegidos, Ministerio especial, (Elected, Special Ministry Group), located in Chaco, Argentina. Silvana Paredes is director of this Amistad group with 20 friends.

### Honduras

Iglesia de Dios (Church of God), located in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Leonel Diaz is the national coordinator of missions; this Amistad group has 8 friends.

### Puerto Rico

Iglesia Una luz en la montaña (One Light on the Mountain), located in Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. Aleida Ortiz Santana is the director of this Amistad group with 5 friends.

### USA

St. Rose Parish located in Santa Rosa, California. Olive Murphy directs this group related to the church's religious education ministry.

Plus, a very special thank you to Community Christian Reformed Church located in Ontario, Canada. This group sent an important donation to Amistad that supports our groups in Central America.

May God bless you,

**Elizabeth Rodriguez**  
Ministerio Amistad  
[info@ministerioamistad.org](mailto:info@ministerioamistad.org)  
954.514.7960

## 5 THINGS I LEARNED FROM CANADA'S FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

by **Heather DeBoer**

During the first few months of 2015, Heather DeBoer, our Friendship representative in Canada, escaped the confines of her cubicle and hit the road to visit a number of Friendship groups throughout Southern Ontario, Canada. She had some beautiful experiences meeting and participating in several groups. Below are a few of her observations:

It's true! Canadians are really friendly! I was so warmly welcomed by all of the groups I visited. It was a joy to be in communion with these people.

Size and shape don't matter. From one extreme—90 friends at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines—to another—3 friends at Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Flamborough, from a weeknight meeting to a Sunday afternoon, mentors make the groups work. Their enthusiasm is contagious and oh-so encouraging. Friends in all groups were learning and loving and having a terrific time!

I learned that our friends are eager! They love their Friendship groups so much that even bad snow storms or extreme cold can't keep them home.

I learned that mentors are terrific friends. They laugh, joke, guide, and listen. What a blessing to have such wonderful people involved with this ministry.

I learned that I have a great job. Who wouldn't want to visit groups, meet terrific people, and bless those we serve? Or is that the other way around? Yup! Probably is most of the time!

**What have you learned in your own Friendship group? Or in one you've seen? We'd love to hear from you! Email your stories to [admin@friendship.org](mailto:admin@friendship.org).**



## LETTERS FROM FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Friendship Ministries receives phone calls, emails, and letters from Friendship groups across North America and the world on a regular basis. They are often filled with encouraging and uplifting stories of friends and mentors being salt and light to those they know and love. This letter reminded us how important the work of Friendship Ministries is and inspired us as we move forward in ministry. Hopefully it inspires you too.

Dear Friendship Ministries,

I attend Grace Christian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario, where there is a well-loved Friendship program. I am writing to you because I wish to share a story and give a donation. The Friendship program here fills an important role in the life of the students. It is church that they are excited to attend, but also a community formed in love and with a desire to serve and know Jesus.

Last fall, my aunt passed away at the age of 75. She was born after a traumatic delivery and was likely oxygen-starved, which resulted in brain injury. All of her life, language was difficult for her. However, her ability with numbers was outstanding, and she became a skilled textile worker, making weavings, ceramics, and more.

The connection here is that Friendship is precisely the church program that my aunt would have loved to attend. She lived, however, in Southern Iowa and not near any churches that offer a program. But she was always very welcomed by the Methodist church in her hometown and found many ways to serve there, such as knitting prayer shawls.

*At my aunt's funeral, the minister focused his message on how the loss of a differently-abled member is a tremendous loss to all. As he explained, when a member passes away that fulfills "typical" church responsibilities, many people step in to take over that role. But when we ourselves become servants to those who are differently-abled, we are then called to serve and to become more Christ-like in that action. We, the congregation, then grieve the loss of that individual because of the unique roll they filled.*

*I would like to make this donation in the memory of Miss Karen Mendell. Perhaps it will be used for books, training, etc., but know that it is given in love for one of Jesus' lambs.*

Sincerely,

Kathy DeKoter



## CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Heartfelt thanks to these new and renewing members of our Church Partnership Program.

### Sustaining

Community CRC of Brinston, ON  
First CRC of Vancouver, BC  
Hebron CRC of Whitby, ON  
Luctor CRC of Prairie View, KS  
Sylvania United Church of Christ of Sylvania, OH

### Growing

Ancaster CRC of Ancaster, ON  
Faith CRC of Burlington, ON  
Faith Reformed Church of Dyer, IN  
First CRC of Ripon, CA  
Friendship Group of Beamsville, ON  
Woodlawn CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

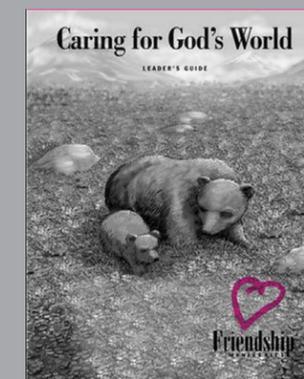
### Expanding

Bethel CRC of Waterdown, ON  
Calvary CRC of Edina, MN  
Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, ON  
First CRC of Hamilton, ON  
Friendship Bible Hour of Chatham, ON  
Gateway Community CRC of Abbotsford, BC  
Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON  
Immanuel CRC of Caledon, ON  
Maranatha CRC of Calgary, AB  
Providence CRC of Beamsville, ON  
Waterloo CRC of Waterloo, ON

### Global Outreach

Community CRC of Kitchener, ON

## PRODUCT HIGHLIGHT



Caring for God's World

It's spring! The perfect time to learn about the wonderful world God has given us to live in. This course teaches that God created the world and wants us to take care of it. It includes tips for using the material with individuals with a wide range of disabilities.

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

## WELCOME TO FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

Abundant Living Family Church of Rancho Cucamonga, CA  
Austin Ridge Bible Church of Austin, TX  
First Free Evangelical Church of Lincoln, NE  
Harbourtown Community Church of Vermilion, OH  
Hope Presbyterian Church of Memphis, TN  
New Life Community Church of Altoona, PA



FRIENDSHIP STORIES ARE POSTED  
REGULARLY ON OUR BLOG! [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### The Orange Conference

April 29, 2015, Atlanta, Georgia

It's Just a Phase... Orange is a conference for entire family ministry teams, including an extensive Special Needs Ministry track. This year, Tom VanWingerden, our executive director, will be there (upstairs, next to the free coffee) to share Friendship Ministries' vision for a Church that includes everyone.

### Summer Institute on Theology & Disability

May 26, 2015, Atlanta, GA

The Summer Institute on Theology and Disability brings together academics, theologians, practitioners and others—people with and without labeled disabilities—to explore the inclusive intersections of theology and disabilities.

Founded in 2010, the Summer Institute is led by Bill Gaventa and a group of core faculty including Hans Reinders, John Swinton, Tom Reynolds, Amos Yong, Erik Carter, Darla Schumm and Julia Watts Belser. Presented by Bethesda, this international and increasingly multi-faith annual event creates a significant space for thought-and-practice leadership in the growing arena of theology and disability.

### Friendship Festival

June 6, 2015, Oakville, Ontario

Join friends across Ontario for our annual Friendship Festival. The Festival will be held at Clearview Christian Reformed Church. Registration begins in late March.

### Friendship Ministries Golf Outing

June 29, 2015, Byron Center, Michigan

Join us for the inaugural Friendship Ministries Golf Outing at Railside Golf Club. Friends will join us on the course for a unique spin on the traditional golf outing.

Learn more about each of these events at [www.friendship.org/events](http://www.friendship.org/events).



**HAVE YOU READ OUR BLOG? THE TIPS & TOOLS CONTINUE EVERY WEEK ONLINE AT:**  
[Friendship.org/blog](http://Friendship.org/blog)



## WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

- 888.866.8966
- [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org)
- [www.friendship.org](http://www.friendship.org)
- [www.friendship.org/blog](http://www.friendship.org/blog)

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## SUPPORT FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

**Your financial gifts enable us to carry out the work of this ministry.**

**Give online at:**

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

**Mail a check to:**

Friendship Ministries  
2215 29th Street SE, Ste. B6  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

OR

**Mail a cheque to:**

Friendship Ministries Canada  
PO Box 1636 Stn LCD 1  
Burlington, ON C7R 5A1



## IN MEMORIAM

We are thankful for gifts received in celebration of the lives of:

**Karen Mendell  
Nella Uitvlugt  
Win Wood**

## IN HONOR OF:

**Bill Postma's 60th Birthday**



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