

FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Tips & Tools to Include Our Friends

THIRD QUARTER 2015



A Publication of
Friendship Ministries

 **Friendship**
MINISTRIES



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Last week I had the privilege of attending an open house for a good friend who is retiring. As the event was winding down, a few of us were seated at the dining room table and talking. We pondered the past and wondered about the future, when another friend asked the new retiree what was on his “bucket list” of “must see” or “must do” during his retirement. Listening to his list, I couldn’t help but be profoundly moved: not by the question itself, nor by his answers, but by who was asking the question.

You see, the person who asked about the bucket list has been battling cancer for many months now. She has faced numerous chemotherapy sessions, surgery, probable radiation therapy, and has been miserably sick for most of the past year. Looking across the table at this woman of grace who has shown faith and perseverance throughout her trials, I couldn’t help but wonder what was going through her mind as she asked her question. She undoubtedly has thought about God’s plan for her not only in the next days but for the future as well. I have heard her talk about her pain and sadness, but more often, about her trust in God and her faith that He will be with her through it all. What a powerful testimony and lesson!

I’ve planned for a while now to introduce our new curriculum’s theme of Courage to you in this newsletter. I thought I would be talking about the subjects in our series—Moses, Joshua, and Caleb—as they showed great courage against all odds and trusted that God would be with them at all times. But I have also been reminded that God teaches us about courage through many of the people who surround us, people we know or have known, who have led us to Him through their own courage, faith and grace.

As we embark on this new curriculum series, as we look for ways to share God’s love with all of His people regardless of their ability or disability, and as we find new ways to communicate through new formats to facilitate belonging and true inclusion, may we look to the God of Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and so many people right in front of us, to see His love and never ending promise that He will be with us regardless of the challenges or obstacles.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” *Deuteronomy 31:6*

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden

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NEWS FROM MINISTERIO AMISTAD

Notas de Amistad Friendship Ministries in Cuba

¡Yes! Tom VanWingerden, director of Friendship Ministries, and other brothers and sisters from his church visited Cuba in June. The goals of this trip, organized by Pastor Steve DeVries of Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church, were to visit la iglesia reformada de Cuba (CRC Cuba) located in Jagüey Grande, Matanzas, Cuba, share with Amistad groups, and bring more Amistad resources that are much needed in several churches in the island.

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COURAGE

A new Friendship Bible study

We are so excited to announce a new unit of Friendship curriculum, coming this fall! Through this study, Barb Newman (author of *The Easter Book* and *Autism and Your Church*) will help us dig deep into the courageous lives of Joshua and Caleb as they follow God’s commands.

But this isn’t any ordinary Bible study. We are going to publish two parallel tracks of curriculum. One will look very much like our current materials, which is appropriate for most of our currently active groups. The second is designed to support the formation of small groups that include people with and without disabilities. The topics will be relevant to both populations and will contain appropriate supports to enable the full participation of all. See the chart [on page 4] for a full description of both tracks.



continued on the next page

Following this new vision requires some courage on our part! Although we have received positive feedback for this two-track idea, we want to ensure that it will really work. That's where you come in. We need people to try out this new Bible study approach (both the large and small group versions) and let us know what you think.

Therefore, we will provide *Courage* FREE of charge to the first 30 groups who ask for it! All we ask in return is that you let us know how you liked it when you're done with it. If you are interested in trying out this new curriculum, please visit www.friendship.org/courage to fill out a request form.

Courage is only the first step on this path. If all goes well, we have plans for a full year of studies to be released in the fall of 2016, with topics including *Meeting Jesus*, *Finding My Purpose*, *Prayer*, and more. A second year, coming in 2017, will include *Living with Pain*, *Living in Community*, and *Beauty*, among others. We will also release shorter units on Christmas, Easter, and dealing with death.

This is a huge undertaking, and we are simultaneously exhilarated and a bit anxious at the prospect. We welcome your prayers—and your suggestions!—as we move forward with this exciting new curriculum.

“Traditional” Friendship study

Small group study

Basic Description

A large group Bible study series written for people with and without intellectual disability gathered in community to worship, pray, study, and serve. It is very similar to Friendship's current curriculum, though it will include more electronic components (slide shows, video clips, etc).

A small group Bible study series written for people with and without intellectual disability gathered in community to study and pray together. It is designed to enable the small groups that are common in many congregations to intentionally include and empower people with intellectual disability to fully participate.

Target Audience

- Current Friendship groups that want new material
- Congregations interested in a large group/worship component to their ministry
- People whose level of cognitive functioning requires a more supportive environment
- Congregations seeking to minister with a small number of people with intellectual disability
- Congregations that have adopted a small group model of ministry
- People who are not well served by Friendship's current materials because of their high level of cognitive functioning.

What Is New?

- Increased use of electronic media
- Electronic distribution
- Enhancements based on changes in special education over the last 15 years
- Increased focus on moving congregations and individuals towards full participation for everyone

What Stays?

- A firm commitment to produce high quality curriculum that is affordable, accessible, and adaptable, and simple but not watered-down
- An insistence on viewing people with disabilities as, first and foremost, people with gifts.

What Goes?

Four-Color posters and “childish” take-home papers



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 PROGRAM

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

Sustaining

- Ada CRC of Ada, MI
- Aylmer Friendship Club of Aylmer, ON
- Bethel CRC of of Lacombe, AB
- Ebenezer CRC of Leota, MN
- Friendship Bible Ministries of Wilmar, MN
- Maranatha CRC of Cambridge, ON
- Neland Avenue CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

Growing

- Crosspoint CRC of Brampton, ON
- First CRC of Thunder Bay, ON
- Maranatha CRC of Woodstock, ON

Expanding

- Covenant CRC of Woodstock, ON
- First CRC of Hanford, CA
- First CRC of Red Deer, AB
- Friendship Club of St. Catharines, ON
- Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON
- Inglewood CRC of Edmonton, AB
- Smithville CRC of Smithville, ON

Global Outreach

- Immanuel CRC of Hamilton, ON

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHT



Would you like to try our new curriculum for FREE?

We're looking for groups who will test the first unit and give us feedback. The first 30 groups to sign up at www.friendship.org/Courage or admin@friendship.org will receive free material.



BARNABAS FOUNDATION & CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SERVICES

Make a Lasting Impact

For the past several years, Friendship has partnered with the Barnabas Foundation in the US, and with Christian Stewardship Services in Canada. These organizations help people plan their giving – both in the present and for the future – to make maximum impact.

Living generously is an expression of God's love. To learn more about how to express God's love, plan your estate, and plan your giving, please visit www.barnabasfoundation.com or www.csservices.ca.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Denim and Daises *Save-the-Date*

October 17, 2015, Oakville, Ontario

Join us for a great night of dinner and a concert at Kings Christian Collegiate in Oakville. Bring your Friends! Bring your wallet! The Momentum Choir from Niagara will be providing us with their great selection of music and some very special soloists.

Day of Encouragement

October 17, 2015, Hamilton District Christian High, Hamilton, Ontario

The Christian Reformed Church Diaconal Ministries hosts its annual day of training for anyone in leadership in the church. Join Tom VanWingerden during the lunch break to hear about the new curriculum that is in the process of being developed.

Learn more about each of these events at www.friendship.org/events.



WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

- 888.866.8966
- friendship@friendship.org
- www.friendship.org
- www.friendship.org/blog

- [facebook.com / friendmin](https://facebook.com/friendmin)
- [@FriendsMins](https://twitter.com/FriendsMins)

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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

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

OR

Mail a cheque to:

Friendship Ministries Canada
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IN MEMORIAM

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

- Allyson DeJongh**
- Devin Fertal**
- Sharon VanKalker**



HAVE YOU READ OUR BLOG? THE TIPS & TOOLS CONTINUE EVERY WEEK ONLINE AT:

Friendship.org/blog



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