

FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Tips & Tools to Include Our Friends

THIRD QUARTER 2016



A Publication of
Friendship Ministries



Friendship
MINISTRIES



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As I write this, Friendship Ministries has just launched its much anticipated online Bible Study curriculum called TOGETHER. We have been eager to unveil this new curriculum not only for our existing Friendship groups, but also as a new approach to support the formation of small groups that include adults with and without disabilities. The new themes and topics are all relevant to both populations and present excellent supports to enable the full participation of all.

With this excitement, I can't help but think about one of my favorite lessons in our new Choose Courage unit called Into the Water. The story takes place just as it is time for the Israelites to cross over the raging Jordan River at flood stage, to finally reach the Promised Land. As the Lesson Focus states:

“God told Joshua to have the priests take the ark and stand in the river. Joshua assured the priests that if they obeyed, the waters would be cut off and would “stand up in a heap.” If the priests did what he said and the waters did not immediately stop flowing, they and their precious ark would be swept away by the flooded Jordan.

“... The [priests] made their way down the treacherous bank as best they could and plunged their feet into the water, and the water from upstream stopped flowing. The waters did not part so that the priests could enter. The waters parted after the priests entered. The priests acted with courage, based on their trust that God would be with them.”

This story is much like what is happening at Friendship Ministries. We have “stepped into the water” with our new Bible study curriculum. We believe that with God’s direction, we are now standing in the raging water and trusting that we have followed God’s direction, praying that God’s name will be glorified through this, and hoping that the waters will subside (i.e., that funds will start to flow from donors and sales). We want to cross over to the other side so that we might honor Him and be fulfilled by His promises. Our hope and prayer is that God’s Spirit will work in and through these materials, that He will breathe life into our attempts to honor Him, and that He will see fit to use these tools to not only bring us closer to Him, but also to one another.

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden
Executive Director, Friendship Ministries
tomvw@friendship.org
888.866.8966



Joshua 1:9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

We are pleased to announce that we have received a \$100,000 matching gift donation to help pay for development of this new curriculum. Our budget calculations indicate that the cost to create 3 years’ worth of material will total over \$400,000. As you can see, this matching gift has come at the right time to help us kick-start our campaign to raise the funds to create and support the curriculum. Our donor will match every gift made, up to \$100,000 total. Would you please consider a gift to Friendship Ministries to help us continue on this journey?



NOTAS DE AMSTAD

Many Blessings!

I am very glad to introduce the following new Amistad groups:

Argentina:

Iglesia Jesús te llama, Jesus Calls you Church, located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. María José Baez is the director of this Amistad group with 7 friends.

Cuba:

Special thanks to Minnie Herfst, coordinator of Friendship group from Burlington, Canada. This group has donated Amistad material to the following groups located in Cuba:

- Group “**Venga la Esperanza**” (*Hope Comes*) Santiago de Cuba, 32 Friends
- Group “**Ensueños y Esperanza**” (*Reveries and Hope*) Ciudad de Camagüe, 8 Friends
- Group “**Esperanza Viva**”, (*Living Hope*) Ciego de Ávila, 11 Friends
- Group “**Sueños y Esperanzas**” (*Hopes and Dreams*) Villa Clara, 22 Friends
- Group “**Puertas de Esperanza**” (*Doors of Hope*) Cienfuegos city, 9 Friends
- Group “**Tejiendo la Esperanza**”. (*Weaving Hope*) Habana City, 8 friends

Chile:

- Amigos de Jesús (*Friends of Jesus*), located in Araucanía, Chile. Patricia Retamal Hernández is the director of this group with 20 friends.

El Salvador:

- Ministerio Torre Fuerte (*Strong Tower Ministry*), located in San Salvador, El Salvador. Raul Castillo is the director of this Amistad group with 12 friends.
- Ministerio Manos que hablan (*Hands Talking Ministry*), located in San Salvador, El Salvador. Raquel Gallardo is the director of this Amistad group with 45 friends.

USA:

- St Agatha Catholic Church, located in Los Angeles, CA. Teresa Amezcua is the Faith Formation Director.
- Christ Cathedral Parish located Garden Grove, CA. Candy Gonzalez is the director of religious education.

May God Bless You,

Elizabeth Rodriguez

Ministerio Amistad
info@ministerioamistad.org
954.514.7960

CANADIAN CORNER

Change...It's a God Thing

by Shellie Power, Board Chair, Friendship Ministries Canada

There has been significant change in the way our society embraces people with disabilities. Over the last 50 years we have moved from institutionalization to inclusive community living. What do these changes mean for those of us who are part of disability ministry? Are our Friendship Groups affected by change and are we willing to embrace change in order to meet spiritual needs?

Change is very difficult but it is very necessary for growth. I would like to encourage all FM leaders to take some time to reflect on the following ideas.

1. **Make sure you are actively recruiting new members for your group's leadership team.**

Having new people join existing teams is a great way to 'shake things up' as it provides time to reflect on 'why we do things this way'. It also means that existing leadership teams need to make room for additional members. With new additions to the team you can expect new ideas, perspectives, experience, and questions.

2. **Intentionally look for a variety of hands on activities that will engage friends of a younger generation with a variety of interests.**

Object lessons, science experiments, and silly games may not be for everyone, but they do engage people in a way that is different from arts and crafts. Perhaps it would be helpful to begin using a planning chart that has headings such as drama, game, object lesson, art activity, group game, guest speaker, etc.

3. **Look for ways to involve your church's youth/ young adults.**

It is important for any church ministry to think about sustainability and to ensure that the younger generation is involved. Given some guidance, youth groups or young adult groups could host an evening for your friends. It would allow them to make connections and will also open your group up to new ideas.

4. **In your planning, incorporate feedback and interests from your friends.**

The opinions of your friends matter! What are they involved in outside of Friendship Group? Why do they enjoy attending? What are they hoping to learn more about? The perspective that they offer is vitally important. Friendship Ministries at its heart is about ministry 'with' not 'for' and the only way this can happen is to engage your friends in the planning.

canada@friendship.org
800.730.3490 x 4279



LET THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH

Encouragement, Advice, and a Call to Action from Ralph & Carol Honderd

Ralph and Carol Honderd met a young couple several years ago at a conference for those who serve individuals with disabilities. The couple was leading worship throughout the course of the two-day conference - and they were doing it spectacularly. Ralph later learned the young leaders had two small children with severe mental and physical disabilities, and he wondered: How could they manage? Given the severity of the disabilities? Given the complexity of care? Given the time and energy required?

Ralph decided to ask the question.

This is the couple's story, shared by Carol:

The mother's eyes filled with tears as her husband began to tell the story.

A little more than a year ago their pastor had called them into the church office and, very bluntly, asked if they desired to remain members of the church. Immediately the couple suspected a fellow church goer had complained about being uncomfortable around their children - and that they were being asked to find a church better suited to their family's specific needs.

But the pastor explained that - if they were to remain members of the church - they had to agree to two non-negotiable things:

1. They had to teach members of the congregation how to properly care for their children. This would allow them to go on a two-hour date night one evening per week - and for the church to coordinate the care. The couple tried to protest, noting the severity of their children's disabilities, but were asked, "What don't you understand about non-negotiable?"
2. They had to agree to use their musical gifts for the Glory of God—and that meant participating in a two-day conference for those who serve individuals with disabilities. Or leading worship at churches or conferences or wherever opportunities arose. And that the church would be available to care for their children.

The young mother and father were nearly speechless and left the pastor's office, thinking the weight of the world had been lifted from their shoulders.



Let the church be the church. That's the lesson here, the point. The church is a place for believers to do life together, to celebrate each other's joys and to bear each other's burdens. Even burdens that can be challenging or feel too personal to share. Just like this church did. Because anything less falls short of the call. The church - and the Church - is only complete when it includes and supports all of God's children, regardless of ability or disability.

What if this couple was kept from serving God and neighbor due to their responsibilities at home? What if this church was kept from experiencing the joy these two young children offer because they were too fearful to help out?

For this young couple, "let the church be the church" means the peace of allowing the church to do what it is designed to do, so that they can do what they were designed to do.

For all of us, "let the church be the church" means a call to actively build church communities that reflect, celebrate, and support the full body of Christ.

Let the church be the church.

It is a gift of encouragement, and it is a call to action.

The Honderds have spent the last 14 years traveling extensively on behalf of Friendship Ministries. They have visited countless Friendship classes, churches, seminaries, and conferences, with the goal of empowering churches to share God's love with people who have intellectual disability and to enable them to become an active part of God's family. When speaking to groups, the Honderds share how they have seen God work in and through their daughter, Karyn, and other persons with intellectual disabilities. Throughout their ministry, they have especially emphasized the need for churches to surround and support families of people who have intellectual disability.

Ralph and Carol are retiring from this work this year. The entire Friendship Ministries team - past and present - is grateful to them for their commitment to this life-changing work and all they have done to further the mission and vision of Friendship Ministries. What a gift you have been to this organization and the people it serves.

HOW TO "LET THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH"

Tips from the Honderds, after 14 years of ministry and service

Let the little children come.

Find a way for all children to attend church in your community. Create opportunities for them to feel comfortable, to feel wanted, to feel welcome.

Get a vision.

If starting a Friendship group seems overwhelming, visit another Friendship group nearby. You'll likely discover it's not that hard. In fact, it's joyful and fulfilling!

Make it personal for volunteers.

Recruit volunteers personally, rather than through a bulletin ask. Request that they commit to coming four times before becoming a full-time volunteer. It usually only takes that long!

Delegate.

Find individuals with varying talents and let them do what they're good at, whether it's music, technology, or leading the group. Utilize people's gifts and make it a team effort.

Speak it out.

Ask your pastor to do a sermon about the importance of disability ministry and truly being the body of Christ.



A NEW BIBLE STUDY CURRICULUM

TOGETHER

by Friendship
MINISTRIES

AVAILABLE NOW

This is not your ordinary Bible study series! TOGETHER'S innovative, online approach provides learners of all abilities with an important set of tools to help us all participate fully in the body of Christ. To learn more and review a sample session, visit www.togethersmallgroups.org



WHICH UNIT WILL YOU DO FIRST?

CHOOSE COURAGE

A STUDY OF JOSHUA AND CALEB

Following God is not for the faint of heart! In this study, we will discover what it meant for Joshua and Caleb to follow God's command to "be strong and courageous." We will also explore what it might mean for us to choose courage as we choose to follow God's lead.

JESUS: FACE TO FACE

Jesus reveals himself to us in many different ways. Through this study, we will see how several people in the New Testament encountered Jesus face to face, and we will consider some of the ways that we encounter him in our own lives.

TOGETHERSMALLGROUPS.ORG



CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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

Sustaining

Calvin CRC of Millgrove, ON
First CRC of Guelph, ON
Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON
Luctor CRC of Prairie View, KS
Maitland River Community Church CRC of Wingham, ON
Maranatha CRC of Cambridge, ON
Medicine Hat CRC of Medicine Hat, AB
Neland Avenue CRC of Grand Rapids, MI
Palos Heights CRC of Palos Heights, IL
Racine CRC of Racine, WI
Willowdale CRC of North York, ON

Growing

Barrhaven Fellowship CRC of Nepean, ON
Beaverdam CRC of Hudsonville, MI
Clearview CRC of Oakville, ON
Covenant CRC of Woodstock, ON
Ebenezer CRC of Leota, MN
First CRC of Kingston, ON
First CRC of Thunder Bay, ON
First CRC of Vancouver, BC
Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON
Inglewood CRC of Edmonton, AB
Maranatha CRC of Woodstock, ON
River Park CRC of Calgary, AB
Sussex CRC of Sussex, NJ
Trinity CRC of Edmonton, AB
Williamsburg CRC of Williamsburg, ON
Woodlawn CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

Expanding

Aylmer CRC of Aylmer, ON
Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, BC

Ebenezer CRC of Leduc, AB
Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, ON
Fellowship CRC of Brighton, ON
First CRC of Red Deer, AB
Hope CRC of Brantford, ON
Immanuel CRC of Caledon, ON
Immanuel CRC of Langley, BC
Maranatha CRC of Bowmanville, ON
Palmerston CRC of Palmerston, ON
Peace Reformed Church of Middleville, MI
Smithville CRC of Smithville, ON
Stratford CRC of Stratford, ON
Waterloo CRC of Waterloo, ON

Global Outreach

Community CRC of Kitchener, ON
Ebenezer CRC of Leduc, AB
First CRC of Hamilton, ON
Immanuel CRC of Hamilton, ON
Plymouth Heights CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

WELCOME TO FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

Baptist Church of the Covenant of Birmingham, AL
Broadmoor Baptist Church of Madison, MS
Hope Community Covenant Church of Strathmore, AB
New Covenant Fellowship Church of Germantown, MD
Traders Point Christian Church of Whitestown, IN



GOLF OUTING RECAP

Golfers, friends, and volunteers alike had a fantastic, sunny day out on the course at the second annual Friendship Ministries Golf Outing at Railside Golf Club. More than 80 golfers and 30 volunteers and friends came out to fellowship, celebrate, and support Friendship Ministries.

Thanks to the wonderful turnout—and the generosity of several sponsors—**nearly \$20,000 was raised** to support the ongoing work of Friendship Ministries. What a blessing.

We are already looking forward to next year's event, and would love to have you join us! Please save the date for **August 14, 2017, at Railside Golf Club.**



UPCOMING EVENTS



Life to the Full

Friday, October 28-30, 2016

Marriott Gateway on the Falls

Niagara Falls, ON, Canada

Friendship Ministries is excited to host an exhibit and present a workshop at the Life to the Full 2016 conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The workshop will focus on our new curriculum, “TOGETHER.” Come and see first hand the content, the delivery system, and so much more.

The conference will feature ministry leaders and notable organizations that will equip attendees with practical resources for accessible ministry and education. We hope to see you there!

Register at: www.lifetothefull2016.org



WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

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

Friendship Ministries Canada
PO Box 1636 Stn LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 5A1

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

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Mail a cheque to:

Friendship Ministries
PO Box 1636, Stn LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 5A1

Have you read our blog? The Tips and Tools continue every week online at friendship.org/blog.

We Are Thankful For Gifts In Honor of:

George and Amy Hart's 40th Wedding Anniversary

In Memory of:

Jerry Lee Bouwkamp
George Hoekstra
Robin Santman
Nella Uitvlugt



FRIENDSHIP STORIES ARE POSTED REGULARLY ON OUR BLOG!

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