

FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Tips & Tools to Include Our Friends

FOURTH QUARTER 2016



A Publication of
Friendship Ministries

 **Friendship**
MINISTRIES



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As I look back on another year, I am struck by how busy my life has become. Between work, church committees, grandchildren, upkeep on a house, etc., etc...the opportunities to stay busy seem to be endless.

On Tuesday night at Friendship, I am reminded of the joy of relationships and the blessing of gathering as friends to share experiences, good news, concerns and prayers together. I am forced to stop and drink in the joy of slowing myself down, of being present and of sharing lives with others. Good friends have a way of doing that. Good friends help us put our lives in perspective and see the beauty in the world around us. God knows what is good for me, and he knows how essential it is for me to look at life through different lenses at times.

Seeing things differently also reminds me about the huge task that Friendship Ministries has taken on with our new on-line Bible study curriculum called TOGETHER. The purpose of this bold, new Bible study approach is to help us see things differently, to think about how we learn, communicate and share our lives with one another.

If you have not had a chance to see what this new curriculum is all about, I would strongly recommend that you take a look. See how God can use your time and willingness to listen, to be present, and to find ways to build the full community of friends and supporters in our busy, busy lives.

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

www.togethersmallgroups.org

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden

Executive Director, Friendship Ministries

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NOTAS DE AMISTAD

Many Blessings!

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

Colombia

- Instituto Cadena Las Playas, Cadena School, located in Apartadó, Antioquia, Colombia. Ruth Emira Garcés Albornoz is the director of this school with 61 friends.
- Comunidad Ministerial Presbiteriana, Presbyterian Community Ministry, located in Ibagué, Tolima, Colombia. Pastor Julián Andrés Marín Acosta is the director of this group with 5 friends.

Guatemala

- Asociación Guatemalteca de Síndrome de Down, Guatemalan Association of Down Syndrome, located in Ciudad de Guatemala. Marissa de Salguero is director of this Ministry with 15 friends.

México

- Iglesia Centro Cristiano Calacoaya, Calacoaya Christian Center Church, located in Atizapán de Zaragoza, Estado de México, México. Leticia Estrada is director of this group with 15 friends.

Venezuela

- Fundación Lluvia de Bendiciones, Rain of Blessings Foundation, located Cumaná, Sucre, Venezuela. Judith de Sousa is the Foundation Director with a group of 10 friends.

May God Bless You,

Elizabeth Rodriguez
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CANADIAN CORNER

Beatitudes for Friends and Family

(author unknown)

Blessed are you who take time to listen to difficult speech, for you help us persevere until we are understood.

Blessed are you who walk with us in public places and ignore the stares of strangers, for we find havens of relaxation in your companionship.

Blessed are you who never bid us to “hurry up,” and more blessed are you who do not snatch our tasks from our hands to do them for us, for often we need time rather than help.

Blessed are you who stand beside us as we enter new and untried ventures, for the delight we feel when we surprise you outweighs all the frustrating failures.

Blessed are you who ask for our help, for our greatest need is to be needed.



A NEW BIBLE STUDY CURRICULUM

TOGETHER

by Friendship
MINISTRIES

TOGETHER

Is an innovative, inclusive Bible study that is designed to enable us to create a more collaborative community where all can participate fully as part of the body of Christ.

AVAILABLE NOW:

CHRISTMAS SESSION:

MARY, GIVING BIRTH TO GOOD NEWS

Take a fresh look at Christmas through the eyes of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This single session will walk your group through Mary's story from the angel's announcement to the shepherd's visit and will help you celebrate together the birth of our King.

COMING SOON:

UNWRAPPING YOUR GIFTS

God has showered all of us with gifts—but sometimes it's hard to recognize what they are! Through this study, your group will explore biblical and contemporary stories and examples that will help all of you unwrap and use the gifts God has given you.

TOGETHERSMALLGROUPS.ORG

SHAWNEE PARK LEARNS TOGETHER

LaVonne Carlson

It took a while to get started, as these things often do. Back in the spring of 2015, when Friendship Ministries started discussing the new idea of an inclusive small group Bible study series, I thought to myself, "Wow, that would be really fun to do with Kate!"

Kate is a fiftysomething woman in my congregation who has Down syndrome. Her speech is hard to understand, and she has to be prompted to remember her own last name, but her emotional intelligence is off the charts. She was one of the first people to welcome me when I first started attending Shawnee Park Church, with a huge smile and a handshake that felt like a hug. She never forgets that my father, who passed away almost ten years ago, is in heaven with her mother.

We finally had our first small group meeting a couple of weeks ago: Kate, Johnny, Sherrie, and me. I wasn't sure how it would go. Would we all be engaged? Would we "gel" as a group? Would the discussions lead anywhere?

By the end of the first Bible study video, my fears were relieved. We all watched and listened intently. And when (spoiler alert) we got to the picture where the paralyzed man stood up, Kate cheered out loud. "He's happy!" she said. She certainly understood that. Furthermore, the discussion questions that followed allowed Johnny, Sherrie, and me to go deeper, while still keeping Kate in the loop.

What Friendship Ministries is trying to do with the new TOGETHER curriculum is not easy, but I think we are finding a balance that will allow people at all levels of intelligence to engage and learn, and most importantly, to grow in faith and community together. Is there someone with a disability in your church whom you would like to get to know better? TOGETHER could be a good way to begin.



CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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

Sustaining

Georgetown CRC of *Georgetown, ON*
Hagersville Community CRC of *Hagersville, ON*
Kelloogsville CRC of *Kentwood, MI*
Rock of Life CRC of *Willmar, MN*
Trinity CRC of *St Catherines, ON*
Westwood CRC of *Kalamazoo, ON*

Growing

Community CRC of *Demotte, IN*
Crosspointe CRC of *Brampton, ON*
Drayton CRC of *Drayton, ON*
Fellowship CRC of *St Thomas, ON*
Goshen CRC of *Goshen, NY*
Rehoboth Fellowship CRC of *Etobicoke, ON*
Riverside CRC of *Wellandport, ON*
Sherman Street CRC of *Grand Rapids, MI*
Westmount CRC of *Strathroy, ON*

Expanding

River Park CRC of *Calgary, AB*

WELCOME TO FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

Agape Bible Church of *Willits, CA*
Cornerstone Church of *San Francisco, CA*
Evangelical Covenant Church of *Lafayette, IN*
First Baptist Church of *San Francisco, CA*



Matching Gift Opportunity

Make your gift count double! A generous donor has offered to match the gifts we receive toward helping us develop the new TOGETHER curriculum, up to \$100,000. Please take a look at togethersmallgroups.org, and give as you are able to help create even more units of this amazing new approach to Bible study. (Be sure to designate “curriculum” on your check, so we know to match it!)





UPCOMING EVENTS

Break Forth Canada

Friday, January 27, 2017
Edmonton, Alberta

Religious Education Congress

Friday, January 24, 2017
Anaheim, California

That All May Worship

Friday, March 10, 2017
Virginia Beach, Virginia



SUPPORT FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

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

Give online at:

www.friendship.org/give-usa

www.friendship.org/give-canada

Mail a check to:

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

Mail a cheque to:

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

We Are Grateful For The Gifts We Have Received:

In Honor of:

Pam Brunsting

In Memory of:

Jessica Hunse

Mary Louters

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

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The Friendship Ministries 2016

12 days of Christmas

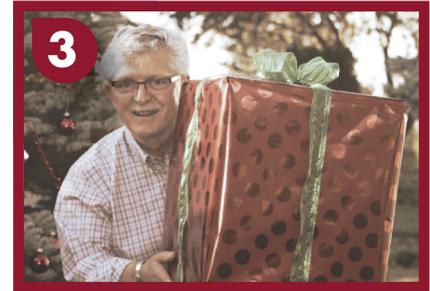
Here are 12 ways you can help us share God's love with people who have intellectual disability.



1 Tell someone you know about how Friendship has blessed you.



2 Try out one of the TOGETHER sessions with your Friendship group or small group.



3 Make a donation in honor of someone who appreciates the work FM does.



4 Sponsor an Amistad group in Latin America.



5 Like us on Facebook and share our page with your friends.



6 Pray for groups that are using the new TOGETHER curriculum.



7 Share a copy of our Newsletter with your pastor, elder or deacon.



8 Tell us a story or send a picture from your Friendship group.



9 Pray for the TOGETHER authors, developers, and editorial team.



10 Ask your church to take up a collection for Friendship Ministries.



11 Pray for Tom as he works to raise money for curriculum development.



12 Pray for a spirit of true inclusiveness to sweep the nation and the world.

Learn More

Friendship.org

Donate

friendship.org/give-usa

Connect

Friendship@friendship.org

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