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

## ADVENTURES OF A NEW FRIENDSHIP GROUP

“Great things are happening in our Friendship Club. We are so grateful to God! We are also grateful to Nella for her encouragement at the very beginning. In the spring of 2009, we had dinner with Nella and Rhonda Cattle. Rhonda’s Friendship group at the Evangelical Free Church in nearby Newbury Park, CA had inspired us. We were soon ready to go: our Friendship Club at **Calvary Chapel in Oxnard, CA** began in April 2009 with nine friends. We now have thirty-three and counting!

This has been such an amazing journey. We love the relationships that have blossomed. We love the Friendship Bible Studies. We are amazed by the spiritual growth we’ve seen in our friends. Our faithful and loving mentors serve with obvious joy.

We have been blessed with the constant support of our church family.

The Senior Pastor is “sold out” for special needs. One of the elders came to observe at one of our dinners and decided to help in the kitchen. The church body has reached out to us by inviting us to the Women’s Retreat, by generously supporting our fundraisers, and by increasing our budget. We’ve also formed a successful partnership with our American Heritage Girls, who helped make centerpieces, take orders, and serve tables for our Thanksgiving Celebration Dinner. We’re planning on the girls assisting at other events throughout the year.

This fall started off well after a summer break. Our first September meeting was full and enthusiastic. This was our longest break so far, and we were concerned that everyone would not return. To the contrary! The good turnout was in no small part due to a volunteer who sends reminder postcards before each session.

Our summer outings were an asset as well. Our annual Fishing Day, sponsored by the West Coast Christian Anglers, includes fishing on a local pier and a beach barbecue afterwards. Our annual Swim Party is hosted by

three of our mentors, and members of a men’s group cook for us. After swimming or hanging out by the pool, we play bingo for prizes and enjoy a summer meal together.

This fall we were able to do a service project that folded really nicely into our study of the Friendship Bible Study unit “God Cares for His People.” Each year our church participates in



•• Angelica, Jenn, & Stephanie enjoy pool party fun



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**"This has been such an amazing journey. We love the relationships that have blossomed."**

Operation Christmas Child through Samaritan's Purse. We helped this year by packing shoeboxes full of small items for children affected by war or natural disaster. We sent letters and photos as well. What a fun way to be the "hands and feet of Jesus."

As far as our regular meetings, we are seeing such heartfelt worship that we are continually getting goose bumps. Members of one of the men's groups (who graciously move upstairs for us when we need the Fellowship Hall for our meetings) say we "rock the house" when we worship! Many more friends are assisting with prayer times and offering prayer requests. We sure have some prayer warriors! In addition, as we increase times of Bible reading, friends are becoming more comfortable with their Bibles.

It's hard not to spill over with excitement! The Friendship Club has been a blessing to our community, our church, to us leaders, the mentors, friends, and parents, as well as many others. Thank you God! Thank you Nella and Friendship Ministries!" ■

*--Scott and Susan Hewer, group leaders  
In His Image Friendship Club  
Oxnard, CA*



**D**esigned especially for Friendship mentors, this webinar provides helpful tips for including friends who may be non-verbal or have a higher level of needs. Webinar leader Heather DeBoer, Friendship Ministries Canada staff member, shares the insight she has gained through her relationship with her sister who has a disability, as well as through her work in group homes and in Friendship groups.

Both practical and inspiring, it's a must for all Friendship mentors. Because it's recorded, you can tune in whenever it fits your schedule.

**Check it out at [www.friendship.org/support](http://www.friendship.org/support)**



Will one of us be in your neighborhood? Give us a call or send us an email if you'd like to meet!

**Nella**

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

**February 9-10:** The Triumph Foundation, St. Simons Island, GA

**March 4-5:** Sunday School Institute, Mt. Olive, NC

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

**March 17-20:** Religious Education Congress, Los Angeles, CA

**Elizabeth (Amistad)**

**March 17-20:** Religious Education Congress, Los Angeles, CA

**Ralph & Carol**

**March:** AL & northern FL



# Notas DE AMISTAD

## Testimony

Dear Friends,

One of the many blessings I have in my job is seeing the immense love of God reflected in the testimonies I receive from



Amistad groups. This time I want to share a testimony from a brother of a friend, who is glad his church has started an Amistad program for his sister. I've translated it into English for you:

"Dear brothers of the Friendship Ministry. I want to talk about the wonderful things God is doing in my little sister Loyda, who has Down syndrome. She attends my church, where we have been instructed in the word of God since we were very young. To this day, she continues to hear the word of God, but sometimes she has refused to listen because she felt bored and liked to play with her classmates. I do not have the words to describe the beauty of having a person 'different' at home. We have a good relationship. Here I send a picture of her. Blessings." ■



Elizabeth Rodriguez  
Ministerio Amistad

# FRIENDSHIP FAMILY



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

- Grace Evangelical Church of St Joseph, MO
- Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of Brampton, ON
- Long Branch Baptist Church of Etobicoke, ON
- Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church of Port Hawkesbury, NS
- The Orchard Evangelical Free Church of Barrington, IL
- Trinity Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI

## Ontario Friendship Festival

Saturday, May 28, 2011

**Y**ou're invited to attend the **3rd annual Friendship Festival**, to be held at E.C. Drury High School in Milton, ON. This fun event is for all Friendship club members, but individuals not associated with a club are also welcome. The activities will run from **10:00am until 2:00pm**, and the cost is **\$5 per person**. Parents, family members, residential staff, and family friends are also invited. The Clearview Church Friendship group in Oakville is the host club.

To register, send a list of people to Marlene Nirula at [lene@sympatico.ca](mailto:lene@sympatico.ca). Indicate if the person attending is a friend, mentor, volunteer, caregiver, or parent. **Given space restrictions, we are accepting the first 150 friends.** For more information, contact Herb Goodhoofd at 905-878-0575 ext 246. ■

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

# VARIATIONS ON A THEME

## Ideas for re-using curriculum throughout the year

Did you know that we design our study materials to be saved and reused rather than tossed or recycled? This is in part because we know that repetition and reinforcement are keys to learning. It's also because we know that groups value stewardship of resources.

If you ask mentors and friends how they feel about studying *God, Our Father* for the second or even third time, most are perfectly fine with that. On the other hand, group leaders, who interact so closely with the materials, may be looking for fresh ways to use the studies.

Here are some examples of sessions that could be used to reinforce a theme or to focus on an event in the church calendar. We're sure that you could come up with many more by

browsing our Curriculum Overview (available for download at [www.friendship.org/support](http://www.friendship.org/support)).

**Baptism:** *The Spirit, Our Helper* Unit 5, Session 1. Session concept: We are baptized to show that we belong to Jesus and to his church.

**Lord's Supper/Communion:** *The Spirit, Our Helper* Unit 5, Session 3. Session concept: When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we share in what Jesus has done for us.

**Advent/Christmas:** *Jesus, Our Savior* Unit 1, Session 1. Session concept: God kept the promise to send Jesus, our Savior. (See also the *Friendship Christmas Book*.)

**Holy Week/Easter:** *Jesus, Our Savior* Unit 6, Sessions 1-4. Sessions on Palm Sunday, Passion Week, Good Friday & Easter, Doubting Thomas. (See also the *Friendship Easter Book*.)



**Ascension Day:** *The Spirit, Our Helper* Unit 1, Session 2. Session concept: Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he promised that God would send the Holy Spirit.

**Pentecost:** *The Spirit, Our Helper* Unit 1, Session 3. Session concept: Jesus' promise came true when the Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost.

**Stewardship:** *God, Our Father* Unit 1, Session 3. Session concept: God said, "Take care of my world."

**Giving:** *The Spirit, Our Helper* Unit 4, Session 4. Session concept: We give to show our thanks for all that God does for us. ■

## Try This!

## 10 Commandment Prayer Journals

The Friendship group at St. Joseph's in Erie, PA includes a number of members who enjoy writing. As they wrapped up their study of *Living God's Way* (on the 10 Commandments), they decided to further explore what they'd learned by starting "10 Commandment Prayer Journals." They purchased and decorated composition books, and at the top of each page they glued ideas (provided by their group leader) to work on at home. If you have group members who like to write, check out these sample activities to trigger ideas for your group:

### Session 3: Speaking respectfully about God

Write down some loving words about our Holy God. Tell Him how great He is. -OR- In large letters, write down the Holy Name of Jesus. Decorate it with beauty.

### Session 4: Honoring God; taking time to be with God and His people

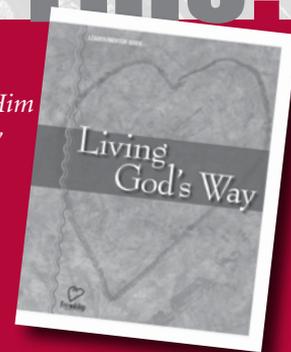
Tell God all of the things you like best about going to church or Friendship.

### Session 5: Showing respect for those who care for you

Write a prayer of thanks for the people who take care of you. Ask God to bless them.

### Session 6: Respecting life; treating people as you want them to treat you

Write down the name of a person who has hurt you in some way. Now draw a heart around their name. Copy these words: I choose to love, not hate. ■



# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## THANK YOU

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

--Philippians 1:3-6

The holidays are over, the New Year has begun, and the end-of-year annual appeal is being calculated. We at Friendship Ministries want you to know how sincerely grateful we are for all of you who promote and support this ministry in one way or another.

When I think of all that is being done to serve over 17,000 friends in 22 countries worldwide, it makes me sit back and see that God is moving mightily.

Here are just some of the ways you are contributing to Friendship Ministries:

- We have more than 1,000 donors who support the ministry financially.
- Some donors give monthly.
- Countless mentors volunteer in the 1,100+ Friendship groups.
- Many pastors encourage Friendship groups within their congregations.
- 27 congregations have supported Friendship through the Church Partnership Program.
- The Listowell, ON Friendship Program is providing funding to a new Friendship group in Kenya.
- Stone Church Vineyards will host a fundraising event in Niagara Falls, ON this summer.
- Group leaders serve with passion, and share their ideas with the wider Friendship family.
- Prayer partners intercede for specific needs that come to our attention.
- Many friends--yes, Friendship friends--contribute financially to the ministry.

- Families designate Friendship Ministries for memorial gifts when a loved one dies.
- Members of the Friendship Ministries Board of Directors give time, talent and treasure.
- Friendship Ministries Staff give way beyond what they get paid for.
- Many churches understand that the local program will not survive if they don't support the international efforts.
- Some donors are underwriting the cost of some of these Extras newsletters.
- Several volunteers donate their time and expertise to represent Friendship at conferences, seminaries, and individual churches.
- In 2010, with about one donor per 1,100 Friendship groups, we helped start 92 new groups and supported the existing programs. Think about what could happen if we had 2 donors per group!

Our challenge in this New Year is to increase the number of those giving monthly as well as annually so that we can spread the word about Friendship to more countries, more communities, more churches, more individuals.

Each and every child of God needs to know about God's love and to share their gifts with the family of God.

**Are you someone who could help support this vision in the year to come? ■**

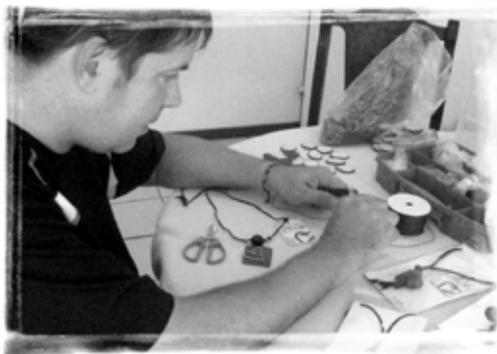
*Nella Vitaleugh*



# Jewelry *artist* shares his heart



We at Friendship Ministries and Ministerio Amistad are hugely thankful to jewelry artist Daniel Waterfield, who has created the line of “Wear Your Heart” jewelry you may have read about in this newsletter. The jewelry items are handcrafted in Daniel’s Bucaramanga, Colombia studio from natural materials including tagua seeds and gourd shells, and all the proceeds support the work of our ministry.



**Thank you, Daniel,** for channeling your passion for our ministry in this beautiful, concrete way. Not only has the jewelry raised significant funds, it has also spread the word about Friendship each time someone asks where that beautiful necklace or keychain came from! ■

To see and purchase Wear Your Heart jewelry, visit [friendship.org/wearyourheart](http://friendship.org/wearyourheart)

Heartfelt thanks to the newest members of our



CHURCH  
PARTNERSHIP  
PROGRAM

**Sustaining Partners**

(\$250 per year):

- Lima Baptist Temple of Lima, OH
- Racine Christian Reformed Church of Racine, WI
- River Terrace Church of East Lansing, MI

**Growing Partners**

(\$500 per year):

- Graftschap Church of Holland, MI
- Orland Park Christian Reformed Church of Orland Park, IL

**Global Outreach Partner**

(\$2,000 per year):

- Providence Baptist Church of Cleveland, OH

To learn more about the Church Partnership Program, contact LaVonne at 888.866.8966 ext.2—3 or [admin@friendship.org](mailto:admin@friendship.org)



## Special Gifts

**In memory of:**

- Edna Goobie
- William Joling
- Craig Spidell
- Terry Van Kalker

**From the estate of:**

- Mrs. Gertrude Vanderkloet

**In honor of:**

- Jesus Alaiya & Emilio Rubio
- Ralph & Carol Honderd’s volunteer service to Friendship
- Charity Jourdan
- Clarence & Irene Menninga’s 7 children, their spouses, & 13 grandchildren
- Trinity Reformed Friendship Group in Lethbridge, AB
- Woodlawn/St. Paul Friendship Group in Grand Rapids, MI ■



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