

FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Faith. Friendships. Belonging.

SECOND QUARTER 2018



A Publication of
Friendship Ministries





FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have had a Bible verse from I Chronicles 4:10 taped on the bottom edge of my computer screen for the last 4 years. It's a prayer from Jabez, a somewhat obscure Old Testament character. It reads like this:

Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh that you would bless me indeed and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm...." And God granted his request.

I posted this prayer when I started working with Friendship Ministries, and specifically, when we began to revamp our current curriculum into a brand new concept with a new digital, online approach.

I know that Jabez wanted to succeed and increase his sphere of influence for God, but I must admit that for me, there was a bit of selfishness involved as I prayed this prayer each day, wanting to succeed in my new job and to achieve recognition as an innovative and courageous leader. God, however, quickly shut the door on my pride as I learned how very little I knew about leading a production project involving writers, editors, theologians, creative design for digital applications, and raising money to pay for all of the above. My inadequacies were evident.

After this humbling realization, my new prayer changed to this: "Oh that you would bless US indeed and enlarge OUR territory! Let your hand be with US, and keep US from harm."

When my prayer shifted from an inward focus to a Kingdom focus, God provided Friendship Ministries with a team full of leaders, writers, editors, theologians and passionate individuals who have dedicated their talents to create an amazing, inclusive approach that exceeded all of my expectations! The result is a versatile, online Bible study that is easily adaptable: a tool to help ALL people grow in faith, whether in large group settings or in smaller, more intimate Bible study groups. Even though we stepped into this project in faith and were hopeful for its success, I couldn't help but think about the quote from Bruce Wilkerson in his book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, "Attempt something large enough that failure is guaranteed...unless God steps in!"

Truly God has stepped in and has blessed us.

As we look at the past with the myriad of innovative tools that Friendship has produced over the last 35 years, we are grateful that God has "stepped in" and blessed thousands of people with opportunities to gather as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now, with a new Bible Study format, we are pressing forward into the future of inclusive ministry. We appreciate the role that our past materials have played, but now it is time to fully embrace the new tools that we have created.

Please join us in our prayer for increased "territory" as we create new curriculum, look for ways to market these wonderful new tools, and of course as we look for ways to finance this project, knowing that God's hand is with us and that "He will bless us indeed!"

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden

Executive Director, Friendship Ministries
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NOTAS DE AMISTAD

Canadian Friendship Group Sponsors Amistad Groups in Argentina

A beautiful example of generosity has been given to us by members of the Friendship group of the Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church located in Trenton, Ontario.

Anne Neerhof, who is part of this Canadian group, shared the interest of her friends in contributing to a startup group. They desired to donate Amistad materials to new Amistad groups located in Latin America. All the Friends have collected and sent the contribution to Friendship Ministries Canada.

Thanks to their contribution, we have already sent the first donation of Amistad materials to a new group located in Salto Grande, Santa Fe in Argentina, and the second donation is for a new group located in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

We want to thank all our Friends from the Ebenezer CRC Friendship group for all their generosity, and we invite you to continue supporting this beautiful ministry.

May God bless you,

Elizabeth Rodriguez

Ministerio Amistad
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UPDATE ON ANA SOFIA

We were delighted to share Ana Sofia's story in the fourth quarter 2017 newsletter, and her mother recently provided us with a testimony of how the curriculum has helped her daughter learn more about God and faith during their first year of using it together.

It has been a year since we have started with the Classes of Amistad program with Ana Sofia and she has learned, and keeps in her mind, her heart and her spirit tremendous principles of God's Word. For example, we asked Ana *Where is the heaven that God has made?* And she raises her little arm and points up.

And I ask that question at any time during the day, and she responds correctly - Hallelujah!

Then, I ask *What are the trees like?* And she raises both arms because they are tall. GLORY TO GOD!

I firmly believe that this Amistad Material is backed by the Holy Spirit doing a work in the hearts of those who have different abilities. I see it in my DAUGHTER!

Many Blessings to Friendship Ministries and Ministerio Amistad.

Monica de Herrera (Ana Sofia's Mom)
Mendoza, Argentina





THAT'S WHY I DO FRIENDSHIP

Heather DeBoer

Sometimes I wonder why I do what I do. Why do I drink so much coffee? Why do I always sit in the same pew at church? Why do I procrastinate? I don't have many answers to those questions...it just is. However, I do know why I do Friendship: I have a passion for my Friends and for anyone living with a disability.

I wonder sometimes why our Friends come every week. Habit? Passion? Coffee? Maybe all the above? One Friend, Zach, attends my group at ClearView CRC in Oakville, ON. He's been coming for 10 years or so. He happens to live with Down Syndrome. I love having Zach in our group, despite his wanting to sit by himself, despite his aversion to doing group work. Certain songs have him up front and dancing, his prayer requests are often for his mom and his siblings, and to me, it just seems like he lives a life of gratitude.

But I still wonder why he so faithfully attends. So I thought I'd ask! Here's the interview.

First, can you tell me a bit about yourself?

I like working at Kings Christian Collegiate in Oakville, ON. I clean the cafeteria. I have a family. I have two sisters and one brother. My favorite colour is black. I play soccer in the summer and track and field. On Saturdays I go bowling. Every Saturday after bowling I run a few errands like going to Best Buy, Walmart and the grocery store. On Saturdays I like to go to Subway for lunch. My favorite sub is chicken teriyaki. My favorite restaurant is Fork and Spoon. I love sushi. I like spicy sushi. I like to watch movies. My favorite DVD is Power Rangers. I have a three wheeled bike and I go around the block by myself three times each time. I can walk to church by myself and home. I like to use the treadmill and lift weights.

How old are you?

I am 27, my birthday is Dec. 31.

If you were to invite a friend to come to Friendship, what would you tell him/her?

Friendship is special. You can make new friends. We sing songs every week. I like songs with actions. Sometimes, we dance. I like hanging around with friends. Last week at

Friendship, we had a dance. I like to dance. I like snacks and juice at Friendship. I like the Bible stories at Friendship. I learn lots. We pray for each other.

What's your favourite thing to do at Friendship?

I love to sing songs, my favourite song is "If You're Happy and You Know It."

Zach, we want to make things better at Friendship. What do you think would make Friendship better at ClearView Church?

More dances and play more games.

Do you like the new Friendship lessons? The videos and stuff?

Yes, I like the videos and stories about Jesus.

As you can tell, Zach leads a full life and Friendship is a part of it. He learns, and he feels welcomed and listened to. This is why I do Friendship! I want to ensure the all our Friends truly belong in the fabric of what we call God's family, no matter their ability. I hope each of you will join me in doing just that in your own church communities.

Heather DeBoer

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SHARING TIPS AND TOOLS

Does your Friendship group minister in a unique way? Share your story with us to be featured in upcoming newsletters and spread the inspiration! Please send tips to admin@friendship.org.



Camp Friendship!

“We had a camp night. We set up a fire pit and sang camp songs around it. We had kayaks at the entrance to Camp Friendship. We set up a tent and lawn chairs to make a photo backdrop. We used unlit Christmas trees to create a forest. We did a nature scavenger hunt and had s’mores for snack. It was an awesome evening of fun!”

- Wendy Benckhuysen, Leduc, AB

+ [Read more tips at friendship.org/blog](http://friendship.org/blog)

FRIENDS MINISTER TO MENTORS

This story is a great reminder that ministry is a two-way street - Mentors encourage Friends, and Friends encourage Mentors!

My husband Ed and I began to volunteer at Friendship two years ago. We had hoped that we would be a blessing to them. We had no idea of how much of a blessing they would be to us.

Last month Ed was involved in a work accident which could have made me a widow, but thanks be to God his life was spared. He severely twisted his one leg and was in a lot of pain. The friends missed him each week and when he returned 3 weeks later many ran up to him and squealed with delight, “Ed, Ed, you are here! I prayed for you!”



Ed, filled with emotion replied, “Thank you for your prayers. I am here because of them. God heard your prayers and answered them.”

Friendship is indeed a blessing to all participants; the Friendship friends and the mentors. Together we grow in our faith and give praise to God. Thanks be to God.

- Ruth Kuiper, Guelph, ON



CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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

Sustaining

- Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, ON
- Georgetown CRC of Hudsonville, MI
- Hagersville Community CRC of Hagersville, ON
- Hebron CRC of Renfrew, ON
- Meadowvale Community CRC of Mississauga, ON
- Pease CRC of Pease, MN
- Racine CRC of Racine, WI
- Shawnee Park CRC of Grand Rapids, MI
- Woodlawn CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

Growing

- Blenheim CRC of Blenheim, ON
- Community CRC of Brinston, ON
- First CRC of Owen Sound, ON
- First CRC of Red Deer, AB
- First CRC of Taber, AB
- First CRC of Thunder Bay, ON
- Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON
- Maitland River Community Church of Wingham, ON

Expanding

- ClearView CRC of Oakville, ON
- Community CRC of Kitchener, ON
- First CRC of Hamilton, ON
- Grace CRC of Chatham, ON
- Maranatha CRC of Calgary, AB
- Maranatha CRC of Woodstock, ON
- Meadowlands Fellowship CRC of Ancaster, ON
- Smithville CRC of Smithville, ON

Global Outreach

- Willowdale CRC of North York, ON

WELCOME TO FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

Join us in welcoming the following groups:

- Bethlehem Church of Bethlehem, GA
- Brook Hill United Methodist Church of Frederick, MD
- Central Evangelical Free Church of Courtenay, BC
- Cornerstone Community Church of Harrisonville, MO
- Highland Park United Methodist Church of Dallas, TX
- Kindred Community Church of Anaheim, CA
- Liberty Baptist Church Hampton, VA
- NorthStar Church of Kennesaw, GA
- Southview Alliance Church of Calgary, AB
- The Home Church of Campbell, CA



Retool Your Friendship Group

Friday, April 20, 2018

“MY STUDENTS LOVE THE TOGETHER LESSONS. THE VIDEOS KEEP THEM INTERESTED.”

- JOY S FROM ANCHORAGE, AK

Would you like to give our multimedia curriculum a try, but don't know where to start? We recently hosted a webinar called "Retool Your Friendship Group" that shows step-by-step instructions on how to access and use TOGETHER. You can view the full webinar for free at friendship.org/together.



UPCOMING EVENTS



You're Invited! Golf Outing 2018

August 13, 2018 | Grand Rapids, MI

You'll have a blast at the Golf Outing this summer. All monies raised help Friendship keep on running, developing new curriculum, and promoting inclusive ministry.

Register

friendship.org/golf

Sponsor

Contact Executive Director Tom VanWingerden (tomvw@friendship.org) for information on sponsorship opportunities.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR GIFTS IN MEMORY OF:

Connie Allen
Allen Brunsting
Grace Hunse
David VanHekken
Sandra Wilkening

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

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- friendship@friendship.org
- www.friendship.org
- www.friendship.org/blog
- [facebook.com / friendmin](https://www.facebook.com/friendmin)
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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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FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER
Tips & Tools to Include Our Friends

