

# FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Faith. Friendships. Belonging.

FOURTH QUARTER 2018



A Publication of  
Friendship Ministries



# FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**I'm guessing that the beginning and end of a calendar year is often a joyous, yet humbling, time for most non-profit organizations.** Joyous because the influx of year-end gifts means they will be able to continue their missions, and humbling because of the realization of how many people are relying on them to do well the work they have been called to do.

I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you, the wonderful supporters of Friendship Ministries who send your gifts year in and year out...and sometimes even month in and month out. As I stated when I began this journey, I am truly humbled by the vast number of you who have embraced this wonderful ministry of sharing God's love with our brothers and sisters with intellectual disability. You have demonstrated over and over again your generosity and your love for the family of God.

Thank you for not only responding to our quarterly newsletters, but also to some of our newer initiatives, like the recent Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for a new

Christmas Bible study session. We challenged you with a short time window to help us raise \$6,500—and you did it! What a blessing to witness your faithful support and your willingness to participate in something new and innovative.

In short, you have all once again demonstrated God's wonderful promise of faithfulness, and have humbled me to my knees. I praise God for you all and for this wonderful, collaborative journey and mission of Friendship Ministries.

In Him,



**Tom VanWingerden**

Executive Director  
Friendship Ministries  
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888.866.8966



## THE MAGI: UNEXPECTED GUESTS

We are so grateful to all who supported our Christmas Kickstarter Campaign, which launched the newest TOGETHER study by pledging \$6,500 in 7 days! Check out “The Magi” at [togethersmallgroups.org](http://togethersmallgroups.org).

Bill Gaventa  
Bright Threads Ministries & Evelyn McMullen  
Bruce Buursma  
Danielle Bandstra  
Dick Mead  
Eric Uitvlugt  
Erik and Sharon Carter  
Geri Witt  
Jackie Dangel  
Jana Palcer  
Linda Alderink  
Rev. Matthew Floding  
Richard L Gerlach  
Rob Laman  
Roger Dunlap  
And 29 anonymous backers!

“ **TOGETHER has allowed us to do exactly that... come together and learn about God in an environment that is full of fun, knowledge, and discussion.** We're not a church; we are an organization that serves adults with disabilities, so we work with and serve our participants on a daily basis. This curriculum has opened up doors to have conversations with them about what they learned at Bible study.

The fact there aren't any papers to store anywhere is a huge plus and there is very little adapting that needs to be done because the curriculum is designed for adults with special needs in mind. That's a huge time saver on my part when I'm planning the lesson. TOGETHER is such a blessing to us as an organization and I would be very hard pressed to find anything close to this if this wasn't around.”

**Mike Molettiere**  
Spiritual Services Coordinator  
Village Northwest Unlimited  
Sheldon, Iowa

# NOTAS DE AMISTAD

## New Leadership and New Groups in Nicaragua

I wanted to share with you a wonderful testimony about how a new leader can facilitate great results in ministry for persons with special needs.

*Tesoros de Dios (God's Treasures)* is a non-profit organization that serves children with disabilities in Nicaragua, providing a variety of services to the children and their families.

Daryl Garcia, who works for *Tesoros de Dios*, is the Church Outreach Director. He promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in Christian churches in Nicaragua, providing information and tools needed for inclusive ministry. His goal is to make churches discover how important it is to preach the gospel to people with disabilities and their families.

Daryl offers workshops for the church related to disability and creating inclusive ministry within the church. One of the resources they use is the material that we offer in *Ministerio Amistad*, the Spanish arm of Friendship Ministries.

Through Daryl's job, the *Amistad* program is being implemented in churches where people with special needs attend between 6 and 55 years old, with different types of physical and intellectual disabilities.

**Would you join us in praying for these churches by name?** We lift up the mentors, volunteers, and friends in these Amistad programs. We ask God to make them grow in knowledge and understanding, to be filled with the fruit of their salvation, and that their love would overflow more and more, just as Paul prayed for the Philippian church.

Thank you for supporting these churches in prayer and financial support!

Many blessings,



**Elizabeth Rodriguez**

Ministerio Amistad  
info@ministerioamistad.org  
954.514.7960

## Welcome these churches with new *Amistad* groups in Nicaragua:

**Primera Iglesia Bautista Monte de los Olivos (Mount of Olives First Baptist Church)** with 5 friends

**Iglesia Un encuentro con Dios (An Encounter with God Church)** with 8 friends

**Iglesia de Dios en Serranías (Church of God in Serranías)** with 13 friends

**Iglesia Bautista Nueva Jerusalén (New Jerusalem Baptist Church)** with 7 friends

**Iglesia Bautista Nueva Jerusalén – Extensión (New Jerusalem Baptist Church Extension)** with 10 friends

**Tesoros de Dios (God's Treasures)** with 150 friends





## SHAKE THINGS UP WITH A CHALLENGE

Ah...winter. It might be hard during this dark and frozen time to generate much enthusiasm for anything. But your Friendship group doesn't need to be stuck in a winter chill! Here are some fun ideas you might want to try to keep things lively.

Shake up your routine with a game night, puzzle night, a talent show, show and share, or a 'get to know you' night. I learned of one group in Hamilton, ON, that has a fun ice-breaker activity: at the beginning of a meeting, they hand out a set of questions, like "what's your favorite color?" or "what food do you most like to eat?" to each friend/mentor pair. For the friends who are non-verbal, they ask a caregiver to stay to help answer the questions. Another way to enliven a meeting might be ask one of your main church worship teams to lead the music for a week (maybe they'll have so much fun, they'll keep coming back!!). Keeping things new and fresh is good and healthy, and it helps keep mentors and friends interested and eager to participate.

I'd also like to send out a challenge. It's a language challenge. For some reason, the language around people living with disabilities seems to change at light speed. We've gone from words like 'imbecile' to 'retarded' to 'mentally handicapped' to the current People First language. People First language means that we say 'people with disabilities' rather than 'the handicapped' or 'disabled;' or we say 'he has Down Syndrome' rather than 'he is Downs.' Do you hear how that approach helps you focus first on the person, rather than

their disability?

Our environment has progressed with language too. 'Handicapped' washrooms or parking spaces are now commonly called 'accessible' washrooms or parking. To some, this may seem trivial—but I would encourage you to think about those living with disabilities and how this change in language can build their confidence by recognizing the needs they have without putting them down.

One more note. My mom used to call our friends 'kids.' It did not matter whether they were 20 or 62 years old, if they lived with intellectual disability, to her, they were 'kids.' Do our friends act like children? Sometimes. But it's important to remember that they are not children, and accord them the appropriate dignity. I wonder: is using this language a subconscious way of keeping our friends lower than ourselves, rather than acknowledging them as equals? In the end, our friends who have turned 18 are adults—even the government says so. Adults with child-like faith...what a blessing that is. We can all learn from that.

**Heather DeBoer**  
canada@friendship.org  
800.730.3490 x 4279

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR TOGETHER?

### Plans are in Progress For: Covenant: The Long-Haul God

Promises are easy to make, but harder to keep. Most of us have been hurt by a broken promise at some point in our lives. How, then, do we learn to trust God's promises? This study will examine seven promises that God has made—and kept—through his scripture, and will reassure us of his unfailing faithfulness.



Friends from Hope House in Michigan, USA show off their new-found strength after studying "Choose Courage" from TOGETHER

## SAME CONTENT, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

### Guest Article by Rob Laman

Trying something new can be hard. Whether it's the first day of a new job or trying different food, we often resist because we're comfortable with the way things are, worried we won't like it, or we have doubts that it will work. That's no different when it comes to trying out a new curriculum for your Friendship group.

We're a group of about thirty-five friends with and without intellectual disability based out of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Waterdown, Ontario, and we've recently completed our first TOGETHER unit, "Jesus: Face to Face." The group at our church has been meeting since the Fall of 2002. That's a long time to develop and establish rhythms and routines. It's a blessing – we've developed rich, longstanding relationships, consistency, and continuity. But sometimes you need to try something new, too.

We were a little apprehensive, but we took advantage of a trial offer from Friendship Ministries. I'll be honest – it was a little rough at times. Getting used to a different format, dealing with technology, figuring out how the new material fit into our routines – these were just some of the challenges. But none of these issues were insurmountable and most were based in our own biases, our own cravings for the comfort of the familiar.

The leader's guide for each lesson has the same feel as the printed resources we've been using for many years. There are dramas. Discussion questions. Take home papers. All the things we've come to rely on when leading an evening

with our group. But that content is now available online, complete with videos that accompany the lessons.

It did mean some change to the way we had been doing things in the past, though not so much as we might have thought. There will be more changes to come as we continue with the program and work to establish our new rhythms and routines. But it's simply the delivery system that has changed; the content is still excellent and it's giving us new opportunities to work with our group in different ways. In particular, the emphasis on connecting the lessons directly to our daily lives is powerful.

We also highly encourage you to use the additional support resources provided on the TOGETHER website ([togethersmallgroups.org](http://togethersmallgroups.org)). There are helpful videos and answers to frequently asked questions that address everything from tailoring the program for specific disabilities to dealing with technical issues. It's a thorough set of resources designed to specifically address some of the challenges that come with incorporating this new curriculum into your Friendship gatherings. If your question isn't addressed there, reach out to the Friendship Ministries team. They've probably come across your question before and they're happy to help you troubleshoot your issue.

Go ahead and do something new. Give the TOGETHER curriculum a try. Friendship groups are about building relationships and sharing the Good News, and the new TOGETHER curriculum can help you do both.

# CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Our deepest gratitude to these new and renewing members of our Church Partnership Program.

## Sustaining

Dresden CRC of Dresden, ON  
East Strathroy CRC of Strathroy, ON  
Hope CRC of Brantford, ON  
Ingersoll CRC of Ingersoll, ON  
Kelloggsville CRC of Kentwood, MI  
Luctor CRC of Prairie View, KS  
Maranatha CRC of Calgary, AB  
Pioneer CRC of Cedar Springs, MI  
Trinity CRC of Grandville, MI  
Westwood CRC of Kalamazoo, MI

## Growing

Athens CRC of Athens, ON  
Barrhaven Fellowship CRC of Nepean, ON  
Bethel CRC of Lacombe, AB  
Bethel CRC of Waterdown, ON  
Christian Reformed Church of St Joseph, MI  
Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, BC  
Crosspoint CRC of Brampton, ON  
Drayton CRC of Drayton, ON  
Exeter CRC of Exeter, ON  
First CRC of Vancouver, BC  
Faith CRC of Sioux Center, IA  
Immanuel CRC of Langley, BC  
Meadowvale Community Church of Mississauga, ON  
Rehoboth Fellowship CRC of Etobicoke, ON  
Trinity CRC of Abbotsford, BC  
Trinity CRC of Edmonton, AB  
Wallaceburg CRC of Wallaceburg, ON  
Westmount CRC of Strathroy, ON  
Wolf Creek Community Church of Lacombe, AB  
Woodlawn CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

## Expanding

Aylmer CRC of Aylmer, ON  
Calvary CRC of Flamborough, ON  
Ebenezer CRC of Leduc, AB  
Fellowship CRC of Brighton, ON  
First CRC of Red Deer, AB  
Friendship Club of St Catharines, ON  
Immanuel CRC of Hamilton, ON  
Second CRC of Kalamazoo, MI  
Smithers CRC of Smithers, BC  
Stratford CRC of Stratford, ON

## Global Outreach

Community CRC of Kitchener, ON

## WELCOME TO FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES

We are so excited to welcome the following groups!

Community Life United Methodist Church  
of Gulf Breeze, FL  
Faith Church of Dyer, IN  
Grant Reformed Church of Grant, MI  
New City Fellowship of Grand Rapids, MI  
Rejoice Community Church of Le Mars, IA

## PARTNER WITH US

Is your church considering new ministries in 2019? We would love to talk to you about what it looks like to come alongside Friendship as a partner church. The churches we thank each and every month provide sustaining support to ensure that God's word is accessible to people of ALL abilities.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Symposium on Worship

January 24, 2019 | Grand Rapids, MI

The annual Calvin Symposium on Worship is a three-day conference sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching. Join Barb Newman and special guest Tom VanWingerden in a workshop on Universal Design in Worship.

**Learn More & Register:**  
[worship.calvin.edu/symposium](http://worship.calvin.edu/symposium)

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## That All May Worship

March 8, 2019 | Hampton Roads, VA

The arts—music, drama, and visual media—have long been used to express our deepest and most profound feelings and beliefs. Join Faith Inclusion Network for our 6th bi-annual faith and disabilities conference as we explore the different ways people of faith are using artistic expression to develop community and also how creative and innovative disability inclusion efforts can change the way inclusion is achieved in our congregations so... That All May Worship.

**Learn More & Get Tickets:**  
[faithinclusionnetwork.org](http://faithinclusionnetwork.org)

# WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU:

☎ 888.866.8966

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**Thank you for your financial gifts!**

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[www.friendship.org/give](http://www.friendship.org/give)

**Mail a check to:**

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

**Mail a cheque to:**

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# WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR GIFTS IN MEMORY OF:

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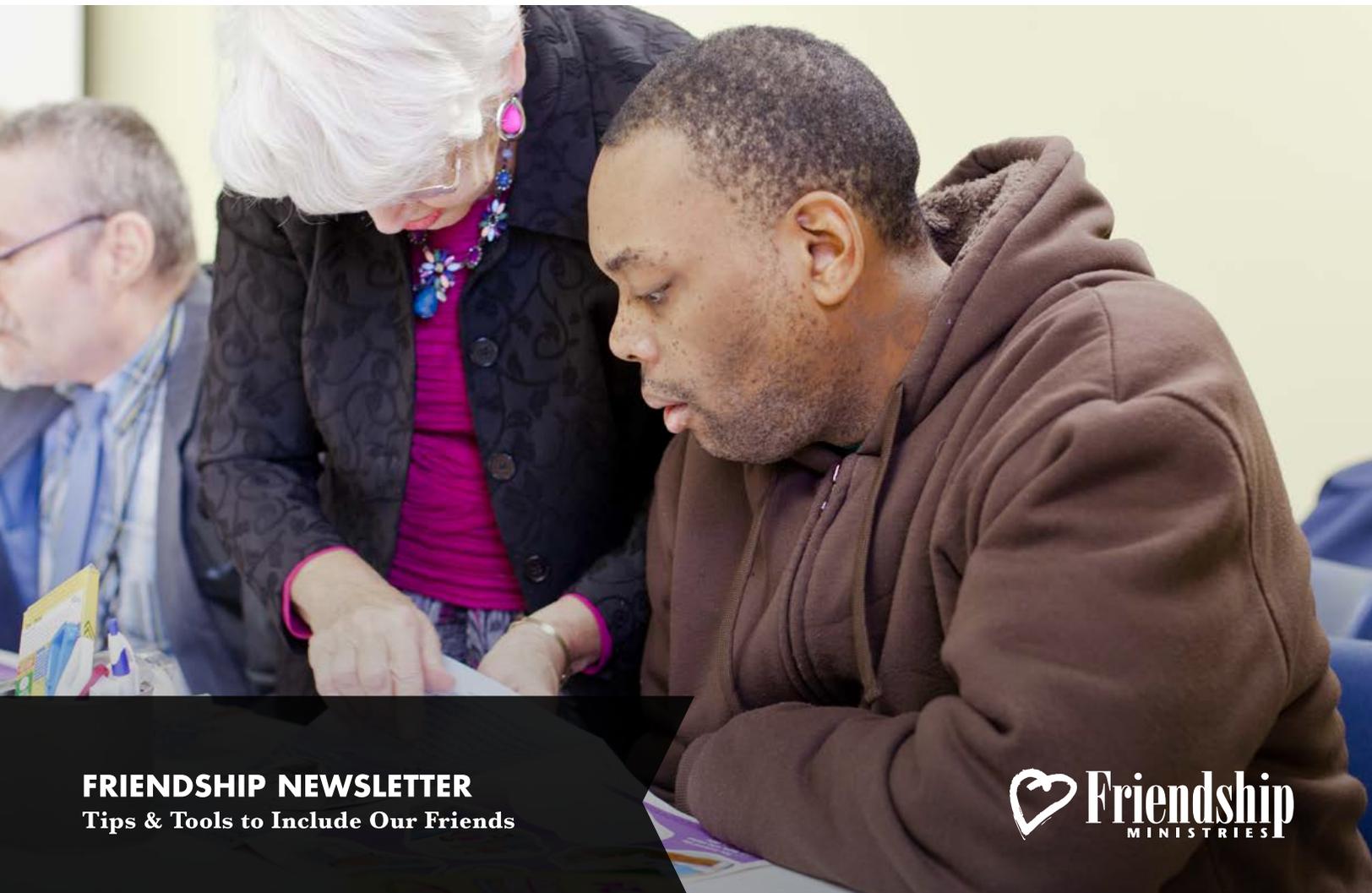
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**FRIENDSHIP NEWSLETTER**  
Tips & Tools to Include Our Friends

