

Faith. Friendships. **BELONGING.**

2019 Quarter 2 Newsletter





From Our EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

No Room for Aisles

A favorite part of our yearly Friendship Worship Service is a tradition which occurs as the service closes and all of the friends proceed from the pulpit area to fill the center aisle for the closing worship song, “My Friends May You Grow in Grace.”

Prior to the closing song, those of us in the pews are either on the right or left side of the worship space with a distinct separation of space, an aisle, between each side. Visually, it could be perceived as two separate groups in the building. But when our friends fill that space, and we join hands to sing, the aisle disappears and the two sides become one.

I usually stand in what was the aisle with our friends; tears fill my eyes, a lump grows in my throat and I find myself unable to sing. My heart and eyes become full of this beautiful vision of all of God’s people coming together in one voice and with one song in our hearts, proclaiming the glory of God as we celebrate the gifts we have and share with each other. There is no separation, nor are there distinctive sides, but only one glorious body of Christ.

What a beautiful vision of heaven on earth!

I wonder whether there will be aisles in heaven. I can’t imagine there will be.

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”

Revelation 7:9

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden

Executive Director

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Inspire 2019

WINDSOR, ON | AUGUST 1, 2019

Inspire 2019 will be an exciting and uplifting three days designed for ministry volunteers and leaders from Christian Reformed and Reformed churches across North America. Come discover new resources that can benefit your congregation. Connect with people who are involved in similar types of ministry. You especially won’t want to miss the workshop by Barb Newman and Tom VanWingerden!

crcna.org/inspire2019



**GRAND RAPIDS, MI
AUGUST 12, 2019**

Registration is now open for the next Friendship Golf Outing! Come join us for food, fun, and friends—all in support of a great cause!

friendship.org/golf



Ride for Refuge

AUGUST 1 - OCTOBER 5, 2019

Walk, run, or bike ride with your Friendship Group and help support inclusive ministry all across Canada! This is our third year participating in the Ride for Refuge. New this year, you can plan your own ride/walk on a day that works for you! Get more details at

rideforrefuge.org/charity/friendshipministries

CANADIAN CORNER

CELEBRATING AT THE FRIENDSHIP FESTIVAL

On May 11 this year, we had the pleasure of attending a super fun-filled day at ClearView Christian Reformed Church in Oakville Ontario, hosted by Herb Goodhoofd. For a number of years now in the spring and the fall, Herb invites Friendship clubs and others living with intellectual disabilities to a day of singing, worship, lessons, entertainment, food and games... and let's not forget the gifts everyone gets to take home!

This spring, the singing was led by Colleen Reinders. During one of the songs, a few of the Friends joined Colleen and did a great job of adding actions to the songs. It was just beautiful. Like lots of groups that run each week, the festival gives a place for our Friends to feel welcome and have the freedom to participate without judgement.

Other guests were dancers from L'Arche (Toronto) as well as Jericalyn (Woodstock) who all did a lovely job of expressing themselves through movement. It was truly a delight.

The focus of the day was on the theme of 'Courage'. What a great action word for the day! Herb invited a fireman as well as a police officer to share their stories of situations where they were called to have courage as a part of their job. They talked about how God was with them when they needed to have courage to enter an unsecure building or rescue people from unknown and unsafe situations. Our police and fire folks are truly full of courage!

Tom VanWingerden and I were able to give a Bible lesson using Friendship Ministries' new TOGETHER curriculum. It was the story of the Israelites wanting to cross the river with the Arc of the Covenant through some really rough water. Using the videos from the curriculum and with the help of some Friends, Tom and I were able to show how God is with us when we need to have courage.

We were really grateful for the opportunity to show off TOGETHER at the Friendship Festival, and hope that more Canadian groups will give it a try!

Are you interested in joining a Friendship group or starting a Friendship Festival like Herb's? Let's talk!

Heather DeBoer

Friendship Ministries Canada

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NOTAS DE AMISTAD

DISABILITY WORKSHOPS IN LATIN AMERICA

Several workshops have been held in 2019 to promote the inclusion of those with disabilities in the church. More than 50 Sunday school teachers from 20 churches have been trained!

New Amistad Groups:

ARGENTINA

7 Friends at Iglesia Misionera Cristiana de Zarate (Christian Missionary Church of Zarate) located in Mendoza, Argentina.

5 Friends at Iglesia Dios es amor de Palmira (God is Love Church of Palmira) located in Mendoza, Argentina.

8 Friends at Iglesia Evangélica Monte Coman (Mount Coman Evangelical Church) located in Mendoza, Argentina.

6 Friends at Iglesia Cristiana Villa Atuel (Christian Church Villa Atuel) located in Villa Atuel, Mendoza, Argentina.

10 Friends at Iglesia Morada de Sion (Home of Zion Church) located in Provincia de Salta, Capital, Argentina.

COLOMBIA

15 Friends at Fundación Restaurando La Simiente (Restoring the Seed Foundation) located in Bogotá, Colombia.

PERÚ

Iglesia Alianza Cristiana y Misionera de Tacna (Christian and Missionary Alliance Church) located in Tacna, Perú.

We are already preparing the next workshops! Please remember that your help is very valuable to continue supporting the churches in this ministry. We appreciate your donations, as well as your valuable prayers for the continued development of Amistad Ministries.

Elizabeth Rodriguez

Ministerio Amistad

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CHANGE? YES, PLEASE!

Are you ready for TOGETHER? We believe it's time.

When Friendship Ministries began 35 years ago, our inclusive Bible study resources were the very first of their kind. At the time, no one was creating materials for our Friends' spiritual growth. There were zero resources, very little education, and a marked lack of curriculum that was accessible to persons with disability.

So we set out to create accessible Bible study curriculum. We began with some great materials on the story of creation and the life of Jesus. With time, the curriculum gained traction and more and more ministries began to utilize it. Friends started to learn about God's love for them! Churches began to reach out not only to Friends but also to their parents and families, offering support. At long last, there were tools for churches to reach out a long-ignored community. The transition was slow, but powerful, with far-reaching effects.

Since our inception, we've also introduced changes in our language and vision. No longer are we using old language like "handicapped" and "retarded." We've introduced

new songs alongside old hymns. And we have embraced the idea that with inclusive ministry it is not "us" serving "them" but rather everyone learning and growing together!

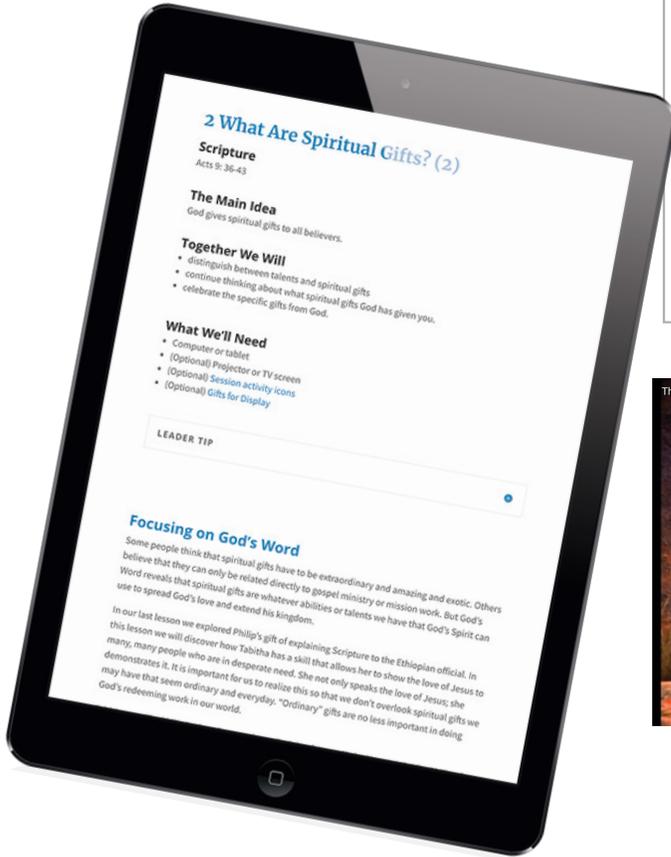
And now, we are encouraging inclusive ministries to continue stretching. We launched a new line of curriculum called TOGETHER that is completely digital—no workbooks, no video tapes, and no paper unless you print it at home. And we've got to admit—this change has been hard for everybody! But we are so grateful for those who have already given it a try. And if you haven't yet—we want to invite you to do so.

As we receive your feedback on TOGETHER, we're continuing to make the materials more user-friendly, more cutting-edge. We've long heard the cry for new materials and we forged forward in faith that our new materials would be accepted and enfolded into the group life of your communities.

So we're asking you to try something new. Check out TOGETHER. Ask us for help. And we pray and trust that God will continue using this ministry to create an environment where people with and without disabilities can grow in faith together.

“It is appealing and wonderful! I love the flow of the lessons; how one simply told Bible story works as the theme for many consecutive lessons.”

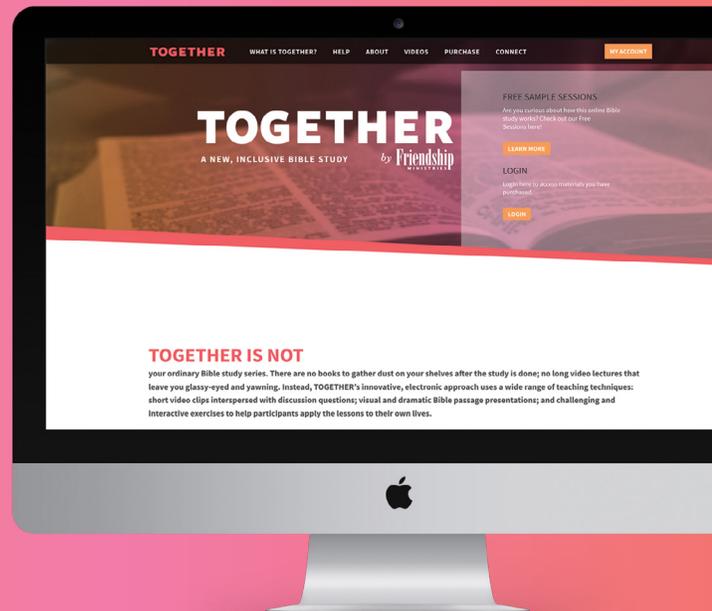
-DIANA in Pennsylvania, USA



TOGETHER groups are multimedia, including favorites like activity sheets and video clips.

HOW TO GET STARTED:

1. Visit togethersmallgroups.org
2. View and buy available studies using the PURCHASE tab
3. Check out free sample sessions by visiting access.togethersmallgroups.org/sample-sessions
4. Access your purchased content at any time by logging in to togethersmallgroups.org/myaccount



CHURCH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

We say a huge **THANK YOU** to these new and renewing members of our Church Partnership Program.

Welcome to Friendship Ministries!
Please help us welcome the brand new **Friendship Group of Boise, Idaho, USA!**

Sustaining

Calvin CRC of Muskegon, MI

Medicine Hat CRC of Medicine Hat, AB

St Albert CRC of St Albert, AB

Woodlawn CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

Growing

Bethel CRC of Lacombe, AB

Ebenezer CRC of Trenton, ON

First CRC of Artesia, CA

First CRC of Red Deer, AB

First CRC of Taber, AB

Georgetown CRC of Georgetown, ON

Grace CRC of Welland, ON

Hagersville Community CRC of Hagersville, ON

Heritage Fellowship CRC of Brampton, ON

Jubilee Fellowship CRC of St Catharines, ON

New Life CRC of Guelph, ON

Shawnee Park CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

Smithville CRC of Smithville, ON

St Albert CRC of St Albert, AB

Trinity CRC - Friendship Class of Abbotsford, BC

Trinity CRC of Edmonton, AB

Expanding

Bethel CRC of Lacombe, AB

Christ's Community Reformed Church of Fort Wayne, IN

Community CRC of Kitchener, ON

Fellowship CRC of Brighton, ON

First CRC of Hamilton, ON

First CRC of Taber, AB

First CRC of Thunder Bay, ON

Georgetown CRC of Georgetown, ON

Maitland River Community Church CRC of Wingham, ON

Plymouth Heights CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

River Park CRC of Calgary, AB

Smithville CRC of Smithville, ON

Trinity CRC of Goderich, ON

Woodlawn CRC of Grand Rapids, MI

Global Outreach

First CRC of Thunder Bay, ON

Maranatha CRC of Woodstock, ON

To learn more about the Church Partnership program, please email friendship@friendship.org.

IN HONOR & IN MEMORY OF

Thank you for your generous gifts in memory of:

Danielle Chiasson

David VanHekken

Ernie VanWingerden

Fred Brunsting

Jerry Lee Bouwkamp

Judy Davies

FRIENDSHIP SPOTLIGHT

EACH QUARTER IN 2019, WE WILL HIGHLIGHT A FRIEND & MENTOR WHO EXHIBIT SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH, FRIENDSHIPS, AND BELONGING.

Neal and Bill *from Michigan, USA*

Nominated by Elizabeth Bajema

This is a picture of these two wonderful friends who are committed to being there for each other—enjoying the gift of friendship. Neal serves as a pastor at a local church and Bill is a resident at Faith House, a neighboring home to mine. We all go to the same Friendship group as Friends and Mentors at our local church. It is a great group and fun to be a part of!



Seeking Nominations

Next quarter, we're looking for a Friend & Mentor who are always making other people feel welcome through their words and deeds. Know someone? Please send their names, church, a short story, and a photo to friendship@friendship.org.

CONTACT US

friendship.org

TOGETHERsmallgroups.org

 888.866.8966

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Second Quarter 2019 Friendship Ministries Newsletter

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**PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT
DISABILITIES GROWING IN
FAITH TOGETHER.**

