

Faith. Friendships. **BELONGING.**

2019 Quarter 3 Newsletter





From Our **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Many Sunday mornings I sit with my friend Bob during the worship service. Bob speaks very few words but is highly engaged in the activities and liturgy of the hour. Bob raises his hands to join the pastor in offering a blessing and calling the congregation into worship. He calls out his “Amen’s” and moves eagerly through the crowd to greet fellow churchgoers with a handshake and a smile (often not just in our row, but also several rows all the way to the front of the church). Bob sings or hums to give praise and opens the Bible as God’s word is read. It’s clear to all that Bob loves the fellowship and blessing of belonging and worship with his church family.

When it’s time for the offering, Bob looks down at my pocket to make sure I remember to pull out a dollar bill for him, giving him the opportunity to participate. As the offering plate passes by, Bob readily places his dollar bill into the plate and looks at me with a very pleased and satisfied look.

I have wondered at times why Bob seems so satisfied in this particular ritual. He doesn’t know or ask how the money will be used by the church. He is satisfied to give. When my money goes into the offering plate, I too am pleased, but usually because I’m thankful that God has given me a career, allowing me to live and share with my community. I’m aware of my blessings, my commitment, satisfaction and fulfillment of duty. I’m not absolutely sure, but I’m guessing most of that is not going through Bob’s head.

But as I think about the dollar bill (which really wasn’t Bob’s for very long), as it easily passes from me through Bob’s hands and is happily placed into the collection plate, I also think about how the money I place in the offering was never mine either, but simply passed on to me from God, a gift meant to be given away. Bob reminds me to focus my mind and heart on the joy of giving.



On behalf of Friendship Ministries, thank you all for your faithful focus of joy, gratitude, and passing along what God has given. We remain in need of your continued financial support to continue this ministry, and now more than ever before, we are grateful for it. To learn about ways you can be more involved in supporting Friendship - through a monthly gift, planned giving, or a long-term partnership, please reach out to me at tomvw@friendship.org.

May we all be as free and unattached to those dollar bills as Bob is!

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 9:7

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden

Executive Director

tomvw@friendship.org

888.866.8966

Photo: August 2019 - Friends and Golf Outing sponsors enjoying a day set aside to celebrate and invest in this ministry.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Community For All

**AT YOUR OWN CHURCH!
FEB 29 - MARCH 1, 2020**

Begin, share, and celebrate the inclusion efforts happening in YOUR faith community. Connect with Faith Inclusion Network to help develop your Community for ALL weekend worship and celebration. Let's help develop the faith and disability movement and make all of our congregations "Community for ALL."

facebook.com/FINcommunityforALL

RIDE OF REFUGE

Thanks to all who made this day a huge success! We had fun riding, walking, and running to raise money for inclusive ministry. Check out photos on our Facebook page at facebook.com/FriendMin



NOTAS DE AMISTAD

Dear brothers and sisters,

It always brings me joy to share the good news of launching another Christian small group in Latin America thanks to your generous support. With your help, people with intellectual disability are being welcomed into the church and are learning about God in new ways and with powerful testimonies!

We have recently received several requests from needy churches in Latin America for donations of the Ministerio Amistad materials. However, as the support of Amistad has fluctuated throughout the year, we currently are not able to meet these requests.

We turn again to your generosity, and invite you to continue supporting this beautiful ministerial work with your donations, and thus continue with the mandate that Jesus left us before ascending to heaven:

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15

Thank you very much for investing in this good work!
If you would like to support the continued work of Ministerio Amistad and provide inclusive Bible study curriculum to poor churches in Latin America, you may send donations to:

Friendship Ministries: Ministerio Amistad
2215 29th St SE Ste B6
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Or give securely online at:
friendship.org/give
May God bless you!

Elizabeth Rodriguez
Ministerio Amistad
info@ministerioamistad.org
954.514.7960

Photo: Amistad Refugio Vida Nueva, Chile / New Life Refuge Friendship Club, Chile

CANADIAN CORNER

LET'S MIX THINGS UP!

Are things feeling stale at your friendship group? Working with our Friends is always an awesome thing, but for some Friends, any “change” in your group can be a challenge. Let's face it, change for many of us can be a challenge!

I've paid visits to many Friendship programs and from time to time I observe how little some groups have changed. They've been singing the very same “playlist” for years or going through the same materials over and over. On the surface, this doesn't seem like such a bad thing, but a closer look reveals some issues.

When your small group becomes stagnant, you will start to lose not just mentors, but Friends also. You'll also start to realize that younger mentors are not volunteering. They're looking for ways to keep up with worship and learning about God in the ways they've become accustomed to - digital media, Youtube, Instagram, or Facebook. How can we compete?

There are ways! But you first need to be willing to change. For example, realize that your Friends will be okay with a new song. They are capable of new songs! Use Youtube to teach you if you don't have a strong music person. Find someone with a computer skill set to help you. I'm not just talking about the Bible lessons and music, but social changes also. Our group is talking with our local residential

services about starting a bingo night at our church on the same night as Friendship.

To me, I see an opportunity for our congregation to join in on the fun in a comfortable and supported way. Yes, it will mean one more night away from typical Bible lessons, but sharing God's love in a different capacity is equally important. And as an added bonus, maybe we'll get some desperately needed new volunteers!

So will you consider change? Perhaps it's time for a new music playlist, Bible study curriculum, or group leader. Have you tried a 'show and share' night? A dance? Let's get creative to mix things up! I promise you that your Friends will not leave your program if you try something new and your volunteers will love it, too.

What stays consistent is the love that is shared each week. Nothing is more awesome than that!

Heather DeBoer

Friendship Ministries Canada

canada@friendship.org

800.730.3490 x 4279

Photo: Friendship Ministries Canada's Heather DeBoer enjoying time with her Friends at the Friendship Festival in Oakville, ON // Courtesy of Geoff Coombs



5 WAYS TO KEEP THINGS FRESH

In John 13:34-35, God proclaims to his people: “Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

When we love others as Christ loved us, this is fellowship. More than just community, fellowship is a deep relationship shared amongst the different parts of the body of Christ, and must extend towards ALL parts of a church community. Our TOGETHER studies are just one way to encourage fellowship in your church! Many Friendship Groups have incorporated creative ways to encourage ‘belonging’ into their own activities.

For fun ideas to inspire your next inclusive Bible study, read on! These suggestions come from some of our very own Friendship Group leaders.



HOST A TALENT SHOW

“We had 25 friends share their talents from dance, piano, and drums, to vocal solos. It was so inspiring to see how they supported and encouraged each other. They performed uninhibited and gave it their all! A yearly highlight for all!” - *Wendy from Alberta*



START A TRADITION

“Our year always starts off with a wiener roast at one of our leader’s homes. It’s a great way to kick off our Friendship year and a wonderful time of fellowship! A highlight of our Friendship year is our annual bowling night. It’s a friendly competition between some of the friends and mentors on who will have the highest score this year! Our local bowling alley supplies us with special refreshments and treats after our games. It’s a favorite night for both friends and mentors!” - *Marianne from Ontario*



INVITE THE COMMUNITY TO JOIN

“Every year we do a Christmas Pageant and invite the congregation and friends & family of our group. After presenting the Christmas story in drama and song we rearrange the chairs, set up tables to enjoy each others’ company, and Christmas treats. This evening was a huge outreach evening.” - *Heather from Ontario*



VOLUNTEER TOGETHER

“Twice a year we sing at the seniors’ home affiliated with our church. We do this at Christmas as a way of caroling and at Easter or Valentine’s day we try and give them all a valentine card showing how much we love them. The seniors love having us come and share with singing and snacks. This is a great way to engage both the seniors and our group in extracurricular activities.” - *Sheila from Alberta*



SERVE THE COMMUNITY

“We gathered lots of warm, wooly socks for men and ladies. At our meeting each friend chose a few pairs of socks and tied them up in pretty Christmas ribbon. It was a fun activity for our group and gave us lots of opportunity to discuss how we can show Jesus’ love to homeless people in our community. There has been an increase in homeless people in our community so each friend had a chance to share about their personal interactions with homeless people.” - *Mary from British Columbia*

Feeling inspired to do something with your group? Send us a picture or story of it at friendship@friendship.org. We’d love to hear more stories of Friendship Groups creating opportunities for belonging.

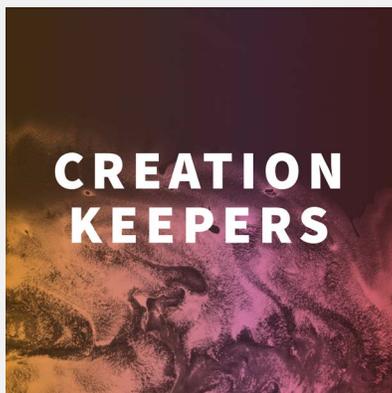
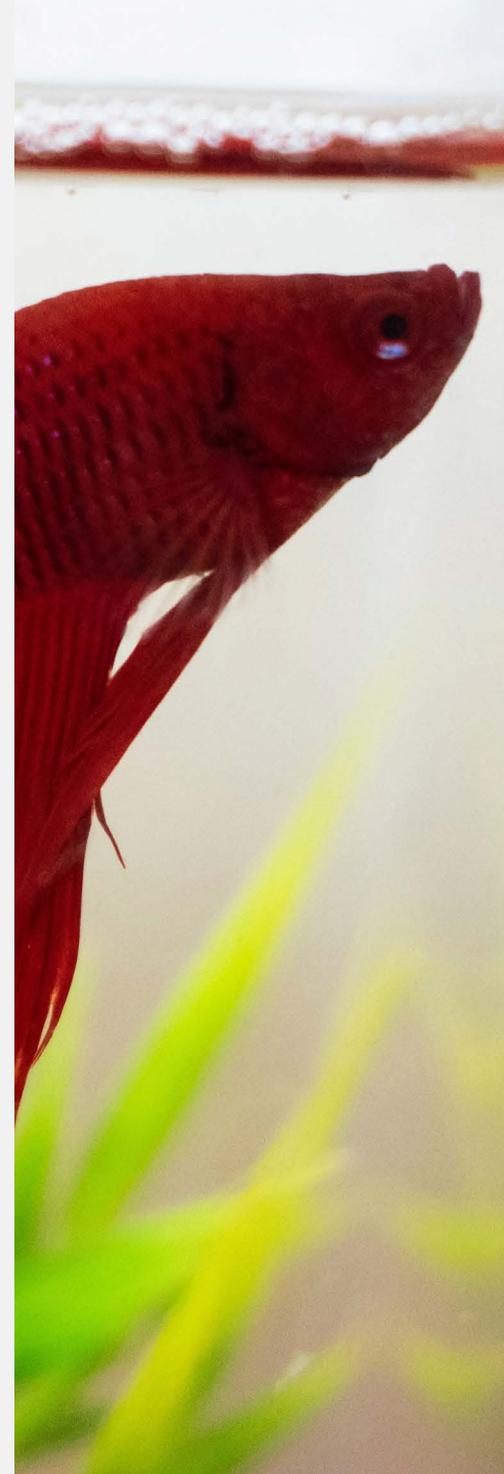
TELLING THE CREATION STORY WITH BOB THE FISH

Yesterday, I bought a fish for Friendship. I call him (honestly, how do you know if a fish is female or male?!) Bob. Maybe you're wondering why I bought a fish. Well, the TOGETHER study told me to! It is was one of the tactile items I used in the first lesson about God's creation.

I was glad I brought some flowers, too; it was great for our one participant who lives with a visual impairment! The video was lovely and brought a round of applause. We even got a chance to create something using pipe cleaners. Although we had some pretty interesting designs, we decided that God is better at creating things. We didn't finish everything in the lesson, so I think we will finish next week as the second video is also so lovely and a little review never hurt anybody!

Three cheers for Creation! Thank you Friendship Ministries!

Heather, Friendship Group leader in ON, Canada



NEW STUDY: CREATION KEEPERS

AVAILABLE NOW at
togethersmallgroups.org

IN HONOR & IN MEMORY OF

Thank you for your generous gifts in memory of:

Jim Aukema

Frank Hollemans

George Hoekstra

Ernie VanWingerden

John and Bernice Hoekstra

FRIENDSHIP SPOTLIGHT

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

Bernice and Tammy *from BC, Canada*

Nominated by Tina Veenstra

Our friend's name is Bernice and her mentor is Tammy. Tammy attends the Smithers Baptist church and Bernice does not go to church, but she faithfully comes to Friendship and only misses when she is sick.

Bernice is a wonderful friend who has a quick smile and loves everyone. She is there for people when they are down and has a hug for you. Bernice loves to sing and one of her favorite songs is Kumbayah. Bernice has a beautiful voice and has used her gift in leading the singing of Kumbayah at a Friendship Sunday Service. Our friends are the most wonderful people to hang out with and Bernice and her friends willingly share the joy of the Lord to others.



Seeking Nominations

Next quarter, we're celebrating the virtue of **GENEROSITY**. Do you know a Friend or Mentor who is quick to give of their time, talents, or resources? Please send their names, church, a short story, and photo to friendship@friendship.org

CONTACT US

friendship.org

TOGETHERsmallgroups.org

 888.866.8966

Friendship Ministries

2215 29th Street SE, Suite B6
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

 friendship@friendship.org

 [facebook.com / friendmin](https://www.facebook.com/friendmin)

 [@FriendsMins](https://twitter.com/FriendsMins)

Friendship Ministries Canada

POB 1636 Stn LCD1
Burlington, ON L7R 5A1



2215 29th Street SE, Suite B6
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
Paid
Permit No. 149
Grand Rapids, MI

Third Quarter 2019 Friendship Ministries Newsletter

What's Inside:

Notas de Amistad pg 3

Canadian Corner pg 4

5 Ways to Keep Things Fresh pg 5

Friendship Spotlight pg 7

**THANKS TO ALL WHO JOINED US AT THE GOLF
OUTING! YOUR SUPPORT CREATES COMMUNITIES
OF WELCOME AND BELONGING FOR PEOPLE
OF ALL ABILITIES. SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NEXT
OUTING: AUGUST 10, 2020**

