

Faith. Friendships. **BELONGING.**

2020 Quarter 2 Newsletter



Betty & Randy work together
on an art project at a
Friendship Club in Guelph, ON.



From Our EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Widow's Offering

Every day at the Friendship Ministries office I walk out to the road to get the mail, head back inside, and open each piece of mail one by one. The bills (yes, bills unfortunately) go into one pile, and the checks (yes!) go into another. While opening the bills is one of those necessary tasks, opening the envelopes with checks from our donors is always a wonderful and humbling experience.

Over the years I have been blessed to see many checks, but there's a particular envelope I always look forward to receiving. Every now and then I will open an envelope without any return address or indication of who it is from. This envelope always has a single dollar bill in it. Nothing else... just a lone, single dollar bill.

Though I often wonder from where this single dollar bill comes, more importantly I am always struck with the beauty of this gift. The story of the widow's offering comes to mind - a gift of love and self-sacrifice, despite its size. And I think about how easy it is to get caught up in the excitement of a large gift, or a significant number of gifts from our many supporters. But with this single dollar bill, I am reminded of God's constant grace, arriving when it is most unlooked for and most needed.

This dollar, mailed with a stamp that cost half its value, is more about sending a message of support, encouragement, and surprise blessing. It underlines the importance of what Friendship Ministries means to the many people who use it and grow closer to God because of what He has led us to do. The purchase value of that single dollar may be small, but the message from God always reaches my heart. I am full of gratitude for the love, encouragement, passion, and appreciation from so many for what is happening through Friendship Ministries.

Thank you and bless you all for your love, prayers, and support (big and small) for Friendship Ministries as we all "grow deeper in our relationship with God and with each other in community together."

To God alone be the glory!

Tom VanWingerden

Executive Director

tomvw@friendship.org | 888.866.8966



Photo: Ryan Quintal on Unsplash

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CANADIAN CORNER

Hey there Friendship Leaders and Mentors,

Wow, what a different world we are now living in. Hm, “living.” That’s a great word and one that strikes me as relevant during this pandemic. I’m not thinking of life or death situations, but rather, what does truly living each day during a pandemic look like? How do we bring out the best of us during a time of heightened anxiety, fear, and isolation?

If the pandemic has left you with more unscheduled time, I want to challenge you to take that time to continue, enhance, and invest in your inclusive ministry. Our Friends fall into a more vulnerable group of people, leaving them in greater isolation than the average citizen. Friends with disability may be frightened to see their caregivers dressed in masks, gowns, and gloves. Their daily activity has likely been drastically changed. Now is a great time to step up our game, reach out in love, and continue to encourage one another in the faith, friends, and belonging that we share!

CONTINUE: Reach out to your Friends and their caregivers to offer encouragement and support. Our TOGETHER materials are quarantine-friendly, and you can use the digital pictures, video, and stories to share and even lead a lesson via Zoom with your Friends. Perhaps you want to send care

packages and words of encouragement - who doesn’t love a card in the mail?

ENHANCE: While church groups are not regularly meeting in person, now is a really good time to take a deep look at your group members, mentors, and leaders. What is working well? What needs adjustment? Ask your church leadership to help you recruit new mentors or “pass the torch” to a new leader. It’s so important to have a good transition from one leader to the next.

INVEST: It is vital that FM continues its work. We have felt the squeeze of COVID-19, and your financial support will get us through. Won’t you please remember to support us? It’s easy to give an online gift through the website; just click “Donate” in the upper righthand corner. You can even sign up as a monthly giver. Thank you for helping us continue to support our Friends!

With you in quarantine... and in Friendship!

Heather DeBoer

Friendship Ministries Canada

canada@friendship.org | 800.730.3490 x 4279

TOGETHER

by **Friendship**
MINISTRIES

In an effort to help everyone continue to receive encouraging lessons – even from home! – we are offering one of our most popular studies, “Jesus: Face to Face,” free of charge for a limited time.

This study illuminates how we can “meet Jesus” in many ways despite our circumstances... we can meet Him when we are not well, when we feel lonely, when we are doubting. What an encouraging reminder for today!

We are praying for you – our Friends, mentors, church leaders, caregivers, and inclusive ministry partners around the world. How blessed we are that despite many cancellations, we can still meet Jesus face to face!

JESUS: FACE TO FACE

To take advantage of this free study, follow these steps:

1. Visit togethersmallgroups.org

2. Add “Jesus: Face to Face” to your cart.

*3. At checkout, use coupon code **INTHISTOGETHER** to receive free digital access.*



RESOURCES FOR INCLUDING FRIENDS WITH ASD

In 2018, the ADDM (Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring) estimated that 1 in 59 children is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. That means that we risk leaving a lot of people behind when we don't make belonging a priority!

Last year, our “Better Belonging” blog series (check it out at friendship.org/blog) outlined specific ways to cultivate inclusion in your church. To supplement the series, we wanted to highlight some other resources to help parents, pastors, and church members create belonging for the individuals with autism.

AUTISM AND YOUR CHURCH

Written by Barb J. Newman, this is a comprehensive handbook for churches to understand ASD. Through *Autism and Your Church*, readers will be enabled to:

- appreciate those with ASD as persons created in God's image
- discover ten strategies for including people with ASD
- develop an action plan for ongoing ministry

AUTISM AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

This 55-minute webinar is given by our former Executive Director, Nella Uitvlugt. The webinar touches on the same principles of *Autism and Your Church*, but it is primarily focused on incorporating belonging into children's ministry.

DOING CHURCH WITH AUTISM

Written for The Gospel Coalition, this article's author, David, is on the autism spectrum. His first-hand experience of autism lends him an accurate and unique perspective on the topic of autism and the church.

FACTS AND TRENDS

This blog post approaches the topic of autism by highlighting how the church can improve. By incorporating personal accounts and data reports, the author touches on the concrete ways the church can improve their inclusion of individuals with autism.

ACCESSIBLE CURRICULUM

Lastly, TOGETHER Bible studies are a great way to ensure nobody is left out of worship. Study everything from creation to Lent TOGETHER.



Access these digital resources by using this QR code - simply take a picture of the code with your smartphone to be redirected to friendship.org

5 BASELINES FOR INCLUSIVE MINISTRY

Enjoy these tips from real Friendship groups!

1

BE WELCOMING OF ALL BACKGROUNDS AND ABILITIES.

Our group averages 10 people from diverse church backgrounds. Everyone wants a relationship with Jesus. That is what brings us together.

Holly, Pennsylvania USA

2

USE ACCESSIBLE WORSHIP & TEACHING TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH “IRRESISTIBLE.”

We love sharing the gospel with families and individuals affected by disabilities! Our prayer is that more churches become Irresistible Churches - an “irresistible church” is an authentic community built on the hope of Christ that compels people affected by disability to fully belong.

Candy, Pennsylvania USA

3

LEARN WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FROM YOUR FRIENDS.

In any given week, our Friends never cease to amaze me with their awareness of God and His plan for their lives.

Peggy, Virginia, USA

4

INVITE EVERYONE TO SERVE USING THEIR GIFTS AND TALENTS.

We are honored to empower and disciple our individuals with disabilities to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to serve their church and their community with their gifts and talents.

Jillian, Georgia, USA

5

DON'T STRESS... JUST BE WHO YOU ARE!

One of our group members said it best: “This group is the best place to learn about God. And you can be yourself!”

Evelyn, Florida, USA

Dear friends,

Due to all the precautions we must take with COVID-19, it has been necessary to change how we promote and organize Ministerio Amistad in Latin America. But despite changes, we are still seeing many people take advantage of these accessible materials to welcome people with disability into God's family!

We are encouraging Friendship Groups to abide by the recommendations of the medical experts and avoid contagion in vulnerable areas. One of the activities affected has been church attendance, as many churches have been temporarily closed and Amistad meetings have been postponed. But this situation has allowed us to increase outreach to individual families - and what could be better than sharing the Word of God at home? Therefore at Amistad we have set ourselves two goals:

1. Promote Amistad classes at home. We do this by reaching all Friends' homes with Amistad lessons. Every week, through the Amistad newsletter, we share an Bible study lesson that includes simple activities that each Friend can do at home. In this way, they can continue working with their group. The response has been very positive with many notes of gratitude from parents and caregivers.

2. Ministerial formation. When developing the at-home Amistad program, some parents, mentors, and Sunday school teachers have asked us for information on how to prepare. So we have started a series of informative articles where we explain how to develop this ministry with people with intellectual disabilities. We are publishing these articles in La Fuente magazine, which is the # 1 Christian magazine on ministerial formation for churches in Latin America. Through these stories we have reached many people in Latin America, including those who did not know about Amistad before!

Thank you for your continued support of this ministry. Our brothers and sisters around the world are in this same situation and we are all encouraged by the continuation of inclusive ministry during this time. Take care of yourself at home!

Elizabeth Rodriguez

Ministerio Amistad

info@ministerioamistad.org | 954.514.7960

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la fuente

Inspira • Equipa • Fortalece

CÓMO TOMAR LAS MEJORES DECISIONES

- * Tipos de personas y decisiones
- * Mitos sobre la toma de decisiones
- * ¿Podemos decidir con seguridad?

5 COSAS PARA AFIRMAR A LOS JÓVENES EN UNA ESPIRITUALIDAD BÍBLICA

2 PRINCIPIOS QUE UNA IGLESIA SANA ENSEÑA A LOS NUEVOS CREYENTES PARA TRIUNFAR

RECURSO PARA DESCARGAR
 EL LIBRO: **INVERSIONES CICLICAS Y CUANTICAS**

CÓMO AYUDAR A TU HIJO A HACER LA TAREA EN CASA

DÓNDE COMIENZA LA ESTABILIDAD FINANCIERA

¡Hay un niño 'especial' en mi clase bíblica!

ESCUELA DOMINICAL

¡Preparamos la escuela dominical para incluir!

IDEAS PARA INCLUIR A PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD INTELECTUAL

S EN TU IGLESIA asisten familias con personas con discapacidad intelectual (los llamamos amigos), es muy importante darles un lugar de participación, y esta labor comienza por medio de la formación cristiana, ya que ellos también necesitan crecer espiritualmente. La primera pregunta que se hace el maestro de escuela dominical es: "¿Cómo incluyo adecuada y positivamente a personas con discapacidad intelectual en mi clase?".

¿Cómo iniciar esta labor?

1. Es preciso identificar los diferentes tipos de discapacidad a incluir: **Discapacidad orgánica** (síndrome de Down, autismo, parálisis cerebral), **discapacidad física** (epina bífida, esclerosis múltiple, etc.), **discapacidad sensorial** (visual, auditiva, de lenguaje, etc.), o **discapacidad de aprendizaje** (dificultad de atención, hiperactividad, entre otros).
2. Asegúrese de que todas las personas que participarán en la clase bíblica (mentores o voluntarios) con personas con necesidades educativas especiales (NEE), sientan amor y preocupación por ellos. No es necesario que tengan conocimiento de educación especial, pero sí es importante ver que todos somos creados a imagen de Dios.

2. Organiza una reunión con las familias de las personas con NEE y los maestros asignados para la clase. Conoce las necesidades de formación cristiana de cada uno, como también sus necesidades físicas durante la clase. Invita a sus familias a las clases, así ellos también recibirán formación espiritual.

Ideas para desarrollar la clase

- **Adaptación:** Usa el sentido común, ya que no todos los amigos necesitan el mismo proceso de adaptación. Si tienes dudas, consulta con la familia del amigo, ellos te pueden ayudar.
- **Participación:** Algunos amigos no pueden desarrollar todas las actividades de la clase. Ayúdalos. Desarrolla estrategias para que todos puedan participar.
- **Sé concreto** con las palabras que usas. Prepara la clase pensando en tus amigos, utilizando ejemplos ilustrativos, expresiones sencillas y fáciles de comprender.
- **Utiliza ayudas visuales:** Esto ayuda a mantener la atención en la clase. Usa ayudas visuales que realmente apliquen al tema que estás desarrollando. Pero no

utilices varias figuras al mismo tiempo, concentra la atención en una sola a la vez. Así se evitará distracciones.

- **Sé sensible con aquellos que no pueden leer.** Si algún amigo es muy tímido o tiene problemas en la lectura, no lo invites a leer. Es mejor hacer grupos de lectura donde todos participen de alguna manera. Otra idea es que todos repitan al tiempo lo que se lee.
- **Comunicación:** Sé abierto a las diferentes alternativas de comunicación, como gestos, expresiones faciales, lenguaje corporal, etc. No olvides mirar a las personas con discapacidad auditiva cuando estas hablando.
- **Diversidad en actividades:** Realiza actividades tanto ruidosas como silenciosas. Utiliza instrumentos musicales sencillos al cantar (unas maracas, las palmas, panderos). Al momento de orar, que todos cierren sus ojos y oren en silencio, y realizando peticiones uno por uno.
- **Repite y practica:** Todos los amigos necesitan de esto, pero en especial aquellos con discapacidades de aprendizaje, discapacidades mentales o con autismo.
- **Prepara el lugar de reunión especialmente para aquellos que tienen dificultades en moverse de un lugar a otro:** que sea de fácil acceso, despejando el camino. Utiliza sonidos, colores o cambio de luz para indicar el camino a aquellos con discapacidades visuales, auditivas, etc.
- **Desarrolla actividades** como manualidades, teatro, representaciones de la lección. Utiliza materiales sencillos y fáciles de usar. Sé creativo!

En Ministerio Amistad, contamos con el material de formación cristiana diseñado para personas con discapacidad intelectual. ¿Dios te bendiga!

Elizabeth Rodriguez
 @ministerioamistad

Nació en Colombia, se graduó en Ingeniería de Mercaderías en 2004 y tiene 2 hijos. Vive en Florida, Estados Unidos. Lleva promoviendo la inclusión de personas con discapacidades intelectuales desde hace ya 20 años, por medio de Ministerio Amistad. El momento más feliz lo experimentó en la publicación de libros cristianos por más de 17 años, promoviendo la Palabra de Dios en América Latina y los Estados Unidos.

ABRIL 2020 | 5

IN HONOR & IN MEMORY OF

Thank you for your generous gifts in memory of:

Joan Darby

Nella Uitvlugt

To give a secure online donation, visit friendship.org/give

Philippians 1:3-5 “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.”

UPCOMING EVENTS



**GRAND RAPIDS, MI
MONDAY, AUGUST 10**

There's food and drinks, free giveaways and contests, and 18 holes of golf with your best friends... all to create opportunities for people of ALL abilities to grow in faith TOGETHER.

friendship.org/golf



**ALL ACROSS CANADA
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3**

Once a year, hundreds of people across Canada come together to raise funds for more than 500 different charities – and Friendship Ministries Canada is one of them! If you are interested in having a fun day and helping a good cause, we encourage you to join us.

rideforrefuge.org

CONTACT US

friendship.org

TOGETHERsmallgroups.org

 888.866.8966

Friendship Ministries USA

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

 friendship@friendship.org

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

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Second Quarter 2020 Friendship Ministries Newsletter

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“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

2 Corinthians 5:1

