



Faith. Friendships. **BELONGING.**

2020 Quarter 3 Newsletter



Friends worship together at
a special Friendship Group
evening in Michigan, USA.



From Our EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Humbled by Generosity

I usually like to start my letters with a story. My story today is about you...our readers, partners, donors, and ministry warriors. I don't typically like to limit my communications to the subject of funding, but I feel that this current campaign requires special recognition.

Last month I sent an appeal to you asking for additional financial support to help Friendship Ministries reach its budget for our June year-end. As of this writing (mid-June) before tallying our numbers, I can say that we are much closer to our goal, thanks to your gifts. Soon after our letter hit mailboxes, your generous support began to arrive. I have never seen a response like this in all of my years of working in the nonprofit sphere. It has been humbling to open the mail each day and experience your blessings of financial support.

God continues His work at Friendship Ministries through your prayers, service, and financial gifts. It truly is HIS work, and we rely fully on Him to complete it.

Thank you and blessings to all of you for supporting our friends in so many ways.

In Him,

Tom VanWingerden

Executive Director

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Leaving a Legacy with Friendship

Crisis provides an opportunity to deepen your faith, step back, and review what is important in your life. Two questions you might ask are:

- What do I have the opportunity to change?
- What are my priorities with the resources God has given me?

Our friends at Christian Stewardship Services recently gave the encouraging message above. Friendship Ministries partners with CSS to facilitate effective planned giving. Supporters of Friendship can choose to include this

ministry in their will, donate a gift of appreciated stock, or explore a myriad of other tax-wise and long-sighted giving opportunities. We invite you to consider a planned giving opportunity as an incredible way to support Friendship Ministries for the long haul and leave a legacy of faith, friendship, and belonging.

For more information, please contact me at tomvw@friendship.org or visit csservices.ca

NOTAS DE AMISTAD

Reaching More Families

During this quarantine I have had the opportunity to write several articles for the Christian magazine *La Fuente*. This is a widely circulated resource for communities of faith throughout Latin America. The Amistad articles have appeared in the Sunday school section, and inform church leaders and caregivers about the need to identify and provide special attention to children with cognitive disabilities. Through these articles we have reached families, pastors, and Christian leaders, explaining how to share the Word of God with people with intellectual disabilities.

The topics covered in the articles are:

WELCOMING A SPECIAL CHILD IN MY CLASS:

We address the problem of why and how Sunday school teachers can prepare to respond to the need to include people with intellectual disabilities.

- Why inclusion? Because we are all sons and daughters of God, created in His image and likeness and worthy to receive the love of God.
- Where to start? Talk to your pastor, church leader, and your family and begin to include them and form the true body of Christ.

PREPARE YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL TO INCLUDE:

In this article, we provide guidelines and procedures to adequately and positively include Friends in the Bible class.

- Identify the different types of disabilities to include.
- Encourage love and concern for all the people who participate in the class.
- Organize a meeting with the relatives of the people with disabilities and the assigned teachers.

HOW TO START INCLUSIVE MINISTRY GROUPS IN YOUR CHURCH:

Here we explain how to start an accessible ministry, like an Amistad group, with people with special needs in the church or in home.

- Organize your group, which could be as few as 3 people or more depending on the number of people of your community.
- Make your class on a different day and time than the religious service, so that way, everyone can participate with the community.

GRUPOS PEQUEÑOS | Serie: Grupos pequeños de educación especial (1/3)



Cómo iniciar grupos especiales en la iglesia

CON PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDADES INTELECTUALES

UNA VEZ QUE SOMOS conscientes que debemos incluir a las personas con discapacidades cognitivas en la iglesia, los cuales llamamos amigos, y tenemos las pautas de cómo realizar esta labor y las personas listas para crear el grupo, entonces, ¿es el momento de entrar en acción! La pregunta es: ¿Cómo comenzar las clases en un grupo con personas con necesidades especiales?

Organizando tu grupo

La forma como funciona cada grupo es única y esto depende de factores como el tamaño del grupo, la iglesia, la comunidad y las personas que lo conforman. Los grupos podrán incluir desde tan solo tres personas hasta cincuenta o más. Algunos grupos son organizados por una sola iglesia; en cambio, otros grupos son esfuerzos mutuos entre varias iglesias de la comunidad. Otros grupos incluyen amigos de otras comunidades vecinas. Es posible que tu grupo combine varias de estas características.

Durante la clase se realiza dos sesiones de trabajo, una grupal y otra individual. En la sesión de grupo, utilizando como modelo el programa de estudio bíblico Amistad, se reúne a todos los amigos y

mentores en un solo lugar. El líder del grupo, ya sea solo o con la ayuda de los voluntarios, dirigirá el tiempo de adoración y oración, y además presentará la historia bíblica de la clase.

La sesión individual se realiza justo después de la sesión grupal, ya que es importante que los amigos y los mentores se reúnan en grupos pequeños, es decir, cada amigo se reúne con su mentor, el cual le ayudará a entender y desarrollar la historia bíblica, teniendo en cuenta el nivel de cada amigo. Juntos van a relacionar la lección con una situación en particular. Los amigos junto con los mentores experimentarán por medio de estas sesiones individuales el amor de Dios de forma concreta.

¿Cuándo debemos reunirnos?

Normalmente, los grupos de estudio bíblico con personas con discapacidad intelectual se reúnen en las noches entre semana o durante la hora de la escuela dominical. Sugerimos que no se reúna durante los servicios religiosos de la iglesia para que se les permita participar con el resto de la comunidad. Al decidir el día, la hora y el lugar donde se reúnan, deben tener en cuenta el tiempo disponible, el espacio del lugar, el número

de voluntarios, las distintas actividades, etc.

A continuación sugerimos un horario para sesiones de 60-90 minutos:

- 5-10 minutos: llegada, conversación, ubicación en sus lugares, anuncios.
- 25-30 minutos: sesión de grupos: bienvenida, tiempo de oración, historia bíblica.
- 20-30 minutos: sesiones individuales: repaso y actividades individuales.
- 10-15 minutos: tiempo para socializar donde se promueve la Amistad. Si es viable, sugerimos acompañar este tiempo con refrescos.

Para tener en cuenta

- Algunos grupos llevan a cabo las sesiones de grupo una semana y luego la siguiente semana realizan un breve repaso y la sesión individual con los mentores o voluntarios.
- Algunas veces, todo el grupo regresa para realizar manualidades, algún proyecto voluntario u otra actividad de grupo hacia el final de la sesión.
- Muchos grupos toman vacaciones, aunque pueda ser que lleven a cabo algún paseo campestre o alguna otra actividad para mantenerse en contacto. Las vacaciones evitan que los voluntarios se saturen y abandonen el programa, y les da a los líderes tiempo para hacer planes para el siguiente año. Algunos grupos también toman vacaciones durante Navidad y Semana Santa.

¡Que Dios te bendiga! ■



Elizabeth Rodriguez

Elizabeth nació en Colombia, es graduada en Ingeniería de Mercados, es casada y tiene dos 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. Al mismo tiempo, ha trabajado en la publicación de libros cristianos por más de 17 años, promoviendo la Palabra de Dios en América Latina y los Estados Unidos.

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12 IDEAS TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS FOR THE GROUP:

In the fourth article we explain strategies on how to add volunteers and mentors for the special education ministry.

- Request prayer in the search for volunteers.
- Look for those people who go unnoticed in your community.
- Invite them to the group, just to visit, so that they know how a class develops.

I am preparing more articles to continue our mission: People with and without disabilities growing in faith together.

Thank you for your support!

May God Bless You

Elizabeth Rodriguez

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COURAGE FOR A LIFETIME

by Matthew Meyer with Elizabeth Bajema in Michigan, USA

My friend Elizabeth is a member of the Friendship Ministries board of directors, and she is also part of our Friendship Class at First Evangelical Covenant Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Our class varies in size from 10-15 members every Sunday. Most come from two group homes sponsored by the Evangelical Covenant Church but it is open to everyone in our congregation. I have been involved in this class for the past 5 years and have worked with special needs students for over 20.

Our class has learned from Friendship Ministries a number of important truths. We have completed the content on prayer and gifts as well as courage. We were just beginning to dive deep into *The Road to Jerusalem*, but due to our current situation we have been unable to meet together. What our group has found is how much what we are learning in class overlaps with what our pastors have been preaching about during the service.

Regarding Choose Courage, our class met this head on. We discussed at length what it meant to have courage. Each member had their own challenge they encountered that required them to have courage. When we looked closely as to how they handled their own journey, they responded that God was always with them. One member said he doubted his own courage because some of the things he encountered seemed to be out of his control. He said he forgot that God is

always with him. This had a calming effect on him and he then said as he looked back at times he was courageous, he sensed God being there with him.

We talked about trusting God when going through a challenging time—going through the water. Many times our group went through things together, which made it easier. I shared with them times when I witnessed their courage—by greeting on Sunday morning, by helping in the nursery, by praying for one another. All things that many of us take for granted but for them require courage.

We talked about having courage for a lifetime. I shared a story about one of our members who has a twin brother (not with special needs). Sam had encountered in his school someone who was being bullied, someone with special needs. Sam immediately confronted the bullies, put himself between the bullies and the other student and told them to back down. Sam never mentioned this incident until asked during a sharing time when he was in senior high (I was one of his youth leaders). When I related that story to our class, each of them had their own story about a time they defended someone else or acted courageously.

My entire class has learned so much this past year using the Friendship Ministries curriculum. I look forward to being able to complete *The Road to Jerusalem* because I know there are going to be a lot of real life examples of staying on the path to Christ.

Get access to digital Bible study curriculum from Friendship Ministries at togethersmallgroups.org. Online resources like take-home papers, videos, and music are perfect for virtual ministry during this time.



Thanks to everyone who has been tuning in to my “Friendship Friday” videos and joining us for Friendship Leaders Connect events these past few weeks! We’ve shared many challenges and triumphs as inclusive ministry has pivoted to adapt to online and socially distant methods.

Here’s a few of my favorite tips from our Friendship Fridays. May you be encouraged to continue reaching out and engaging with your Friends & Mentors.

Tips for Virtual Ministry:

- Try making your video call a lighthearted competition. Give out points for those who tune in, who wear a hat, or who share a prayer request.
- Ask Friends to participate in a “show and share” time as they bring something interesting up to the camera during a video call.
- Create care packages with treats and an encouraging note for your Friends.
- Celebrate a Friend’s birthday by meeting outside their house and singing “Happy Birthday” from a distance on the lawn.
- Email activities like Friendship coloring pages or craft ideas to group homes in your area.
- Make yard signs to place in a Friend’s yard that remind them they are loved and missed.
- Send a hand-signed card to your Friends & Mentors.
- Mix up your video calls - experiment with a TOGETHER video one week and a simple singing and prayer time the next week.

Do you have more ideas to share? Please reach out to canada@friendship.org to share them with me!



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**We created a beautiful
“Friendship Across Canada” video
with participation from more than
a dozen Friends & Mentors from
all over the country.**

**Check it out on our Facebook
page and share the love!**

♥ IN HONOR & IN MEMORY OF

Thank you for your generous gifts in memory of:

Jerry Lee Bouwkamp
Judy Davies

Lambert Hunse
Nella Uitvlugt

Make a secure online donation at friendship.org/give

UPCOMING EVENTS



RIDE FOR REFUGE

**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 • canada@friendship.org

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TOGETHERsmallgroups.org

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Quarter 3 2020 Friendship Ministries Newsletter

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“Each member is a unique individual that contributes to a fabric of believers that has become a beautiful tapestry, illustrative of the one that awaits us in heaven!”

Herman from Washington, USA

