

# Faith. Friendships. **BELONGING.**

Quarter 4 2020 Newsletter





# From Our EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Do the Dishes: Remembering Barb Newman

**Our dear friend Barb Newman passed away in September.** Barb, a member of Friendship Ministry’s curriculum team, lived with her heart and soul open to the needs of persons with disability. Barb lived to serve and in so doing held a myriad of jobs. She was a speaker, writer, consultant, and Director for the Church Services Division at All Belong (formerly CLC Network). She was also the Co-Director of the inclusion program at Zeeland Christian School in Michigan. She traveled across North America equipping schools, churches, and communities with tools to build a vision of belonging for people of all abilities in the family of God.



Barb challenged Friendship Ministries to consider innovative ways to create opportunities of belonging. She authored many Bible study units of our on-line Bible study TOGETHER, thus enabling leaders to better enable Friends of all abilities to discover, praise, and honor God side by side with one another.

Barb left her imprint not only on Friendship Ministries, but also on multiple communities of faith, individuals, and disability ministries with her passion, grace, perseverance and love. We miss her deeply!

**Barry Newman, Barb’s husband, shared a personal story during the memorial service which struck a**

**chord with me.** For years, he “allowed” Barb to wash the mealtime dishes on her own. During that period, he basically forgot how to do them himself. A couple of years ago however, he felt a nudge, a calling from God to get back in the kitchen after each meal and relearn how this task was performed. With Barb at his side, Barry slowly got the hang of mealtime dishwashing and cleanup. Now, with Barb gone, he ably does the dishes on his own.

**Barry noted and stressed that learning to “do the dishes” is much like learning how to lead in the vision of inclusion.** Perhaps many have the tools and gifts, but have chosen to allow others to take on the task. God has been patiently calling us to participate in his desire for belonging, and for many it’s time we hear God’s call, learn, work side by side, and perhaps even venture forward on our own.

May God be in our minds and in our hearts as we learn to “do the dishes”!

Blessings,

**Tom VanWingerden**  
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Barb Newman was a longtime champion of inclusive ministry and education. She shaped and invested in Friendship Ministries and authored several of our accessible Bible studies. She was always teaching that the body of Christ would only be complete when it included ALL members, both those with disability and those without.



## IN HONOR & IN MEMORY

Thank you for your generous gifts in memory of:

Mary Louters


Sharon Van Kalker

Make a secure online donation at [friendship.org/give](https://friendship.org/give)

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# CLOSER TO GOD

## Available Now! “Closer to God”

by Barbara Newman, Jessie Schut, and Ruth VanderHart

Are you hungry for God? That’s the question this unit explores. In six sessions groups will discover and grow in their ability to listen to God, talk to God, spend time alone with God, serve God, and spend time with God’s people.

**This digital curriculum is PERFECT for small groups who are continuing to meet virtually!**

## TOGETHER by Friendship MINISTRIES

### DO YOU NEED HELP ENGAGING YOUR FRIENDS VIRTUALLY DURING THIS TIME?

- Check out our blog with creative ideas at [friendship.org/blog](https://friendship.org/blog)
- Visit our YouTube Channel (search “Friendship Ministries”) for helpful tutorials
- Follow us on Instagram and Facebook for encouragement
- Reach out to us at [friendship@friendship.org](mailto:friendship@friendship.org) for help getting started

# 30 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP... AND COUNTING

## A LONG-RUNNING GROUP IS FINDING CREATIVE WAYS TO REACH OUT TO THEIR FRIENDS.

By Marriet Grootenboer

**I have been involved in Friendship since 1985.** At that time, Friendship Club was held on Sunday during the afternoon service. We would meet for five months at Second CRC (now known as CrossPoint CRC), and leaders from that church would be in charge. Then we would meet for five months at Immanuel CRC and utilize their leadership. I believe we had about eight members, almost all of which were children from our congregations. Immanuel Church burned down about 18 years ago, and we started meeting full-time at CrossPoint.

A decision was made to change from meeting on Sunday to meeting on Tuesday evening in order to better reach our community. **We were richly blessed and our group doubled in size, then tripled, and kept growing.** At one point we had about 40 Friends. With caregivers and mentors also taken into account, it became a bit too large, but we all loved being together and made it work.

Eventually Immanuel Church had their own building again, and one of our leaders started a new group there which met on Thursday evenings. Both Friendship Clubs always celebrate Christmas together with a nativity play in the church. We also host a Friendship Sunday together.

**This past spring and summer I made four rounds of care package drop-offs to encourage Friends and their caregivers.** Our church has been extremely helpful and has photocopied hundreds of coloring pages, word searches, cross words, and stories for inclusion in the packages. It has been a humbling experience for me to find out where all our Friends live. They come from far and near! It takes about 3 hours to drop off all the packages. Of course, that includes talking with the caregivers, who often call their Friends to the door to have a chat with me, which I love.



Care packages delivered to Friends included a fun handmade mask, a handwritten card, and a wonderful fall craft put together by volunteers at the church.

# NOTAS DE AMISTAD

## Dear Friends,

Without a doubt, this year has been a challenge for everyone, but especially for churches and their different ministerial groups. Of course, Christian special education ministry is no exception!

At Ministerio Amistad, we continue to support all of our Latin American groups by sending them monthly newsletters with Bible lessons with activities to do at home. In the same way, we continue to train Sunday school teachers with Christian formation articles.

Although the groups cannot meet yet, we continue to contact them, answering their questions, and send materials in PDF. The most beautiful thing of all is that even though we still cannot attend church, we can continue to learn about God's love from home as a family!

We pray that God in His mercy helps us to eradicate this virus that has affected us all in some way... and that we can meet again to sing, praise, and celebrate the Word of God as a group!

May God bless you and keep you safe!

### Elizabeth Rodriguez

Ministerio Amistad

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An Amistad group in Sucre, Bolivia meets outside.



Pictures from last year's Friendship Club during one of their regular meetings and their Christmas program.

### After learning about the many different living arrangements of our Friends, I started including their roommates even if they didn't come to Friendship.

The caregivers appreciate this so much. My family has gone with me to sing for Friends on their birthday with gifts and balloons. One of our Friends lives nearby and we have gone for many walks. She also joins me on Friday afternoons for a Zoom meeting that another leader organizes. I send a link to our group homes every week so they can join as well. One of our Friends sends me a morning devotion every day—I feel she puts me to shame!

**What do I love most about my Friendship Club?** I stand in awe of how faithful they are. I am impressed at how much they love each other, and us, their mentors. They are so sure of God's love for them, so sure of going to heaven! At a funeral last year, I heard one of our Friends say to a lady in front of her who was crying, "Move along sister; you don't have to cry, she's in heaven!" That sure made me smile. I love that our Friends are never embarrassed to share their struggles with the group. They worship so wholeheartedly. I could go on. It's hard for me to imagine not being part of Friendship Club.

**SEE MORE ENCOURAGING STORIES AT [FRIENDSHIP.ORG/BLOG](https://friendship.org/blog)**



**This fall, we've been met with unprecedented times and have had to be creative about just everything in our lives.** From shopping with masks on, to washing hands whenever we pass a faucet, to visiting with friends and family on a porch instead of in the house. But we do this to stay safe, to keep hospitalizations, down and care for each other.

**Fundraising has also had to become creative.** For the last number of years, Friendship Ministries Canada has collaborated with Ride for Refuge to raise funds to support our Friends and churches running programs in their communities. Usually, the event is riding your bike or walking a certain distance. This year, since we could not gather to do the event, ministries were encouraged to do just about anything they wanted! You could bake, knit, walk, read books or, in my case, go on a vineyard walking tour capped by a flight of tasting—how fun is that! Together, we raised just over \$2,000. Many, many thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

**Friendship Ministries Canada continues to support leaders and churches through this pandemic through video messages and phone calls.** We are hearing that

groups are struggling to maintain contact with Friends during this time of isolation. But connections are possible! Cards, phone calls, and driveway visits are just some of the ideas we are hearing from leaders. Some groups are giving Zoom (or other video call tools) a try with their Friends. Largely this is well received by our Friends; they love to see themselves and their Friends on the computer or tablet screen.

**Caregivers are also deeply appreciative of attempts at outreach.** This pandemic time is not easy for many of them either. The days are long and keeping Friends busy through the day with no support can be difficult, so any interaction with “outside” people is appreciated. We know that Friendship Ministries reaches not just our Friends, but also those who care and live with them each day. Thank you for all that you do to connect creatively with Friends during this time.

**As the pandemic continues, please continue to support Friendship Ministries.** Help us reach those who are even further isolated for their protection. Help us bring a sense of belonging to each and every Friend! Your prayers and financial support are deeply appreciated.



**Heather DeBoer**

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## Tips & Tools

Are you receiving the latest encouragement and support from Friendship Ministries? Sign up for our e-newsletter at [friendship.org/newsletter-signup](https://friendship.org/newsletter-signup).

**[friendship.org/newsletter-signup](https://friendship.org/newsletter-signup)**

# OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FRIENDSHIP DURING A PANDEMIC

By Heather Voskamp, ON

**Right now our Friendship Group looks different and is smaller than normal, but we feel very blessed to be able to connect with each other.** Recently we had our 5th time meeting at the church, with one previous outdoor meeting, and we had our best attendance yet. We had 15 guests in the fellowship hall meeting in person with masks and staying distant, and then 17 connecting online via Zoom logins. We use a hand-held tablet to highlight the faces of those that are at the church for those that are Zooming in.

The technology has been challenging. Recently our meeting was plagued by technical challenges for some trying to connect. Not giving up, a phone call was made to touch base with one member who couldn't get the Zoom link to work. We also used our Facebook Messenger group chat to interact with a group of three whose computer had crashed minutes before the Zoom meeting was about to start. **We are still very much a work in progress when it comes to Zoom, but we keep smiling and plunging ahead.**

We are two lessons into the TOGETHER "Creation Keepers" material. We have been reviewing what we had already covered as we try to get everyone comfortable logging in and coming back to our group. Prayer has been a big part of our group and we have been singing and signing a few simple songs. Singing has been a challenge as we experience a slight lag in our Zoom connection. **Keeping the songs simple and having those on Zoom leading with the actions for different verses helps them feel a real part of the meeting.**

Our next step is to have everyone who has been able to connect so far reach out to those who have not, either by a personal phone call or a greeting card. We will be making care parcels for those who are homebound.

**While we feel a real loss of what used to be, the feedback we have received by those participating in our virtual and socially distant Friendship Group has been very positive.** The synchronous ministry is greatly appreciated. Before the lockdown, I was feeling a bit burnt out. It could have been so easy for me to step away for a while during this pandemic, but your encouragement made it very clear that our Friends need to stay connected.



ARE YOU STARTING A VIRTUAL GROUP?  
FIND TIPS AND TOOLS ONLINE AT  
[FRIENDSHIP.ORG/BLOG](https://friendship.org/blog)

## Quarter 4 2020 Friendship Ministries Newsletter

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**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.**

*1 Peter 4:10*



A group in Oakville, ON welcomed back Friends and their caregivers for a special outdoor pizza dinner.