Friendship Matters

You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn. If you fall, your friend can help you up. But if you fall without having a friend nearby, you are really in trouble.

Eccl 4:9-11 CEV

Dazzlingly white sunlight and warm Santa Ana winds. Verdant gardens under brilliant blue skies. Toes wiggling in silky sand. Still in the throes of our frigid Chicago-area winter (in March!), these memories from the January Clergy Women’s Retreat in Malibu, California, warm my heart. Warmer still are my memories of the time spent with 40 other Church of the Brethren clergy women who gathered at the serene mountainside Serra Retreat Center to reflect, learn, and get to know each other better. In our short time together, we laughed and cried and became close friends.

Friendship matters. This was the “big idea” retreat leader Melissa Wiginton wanted participants to remember from our time together. She emphasized the importance of our relationships and how people are hard-wired to connect with other people.

Friendship matters for human life; for our health and our well-being. Our friendships shape us, calm us, and help us fill in the gaps of our lives. Research shows what Solomon already knew: we truly are better off to have friends.

Friendship matters as both an expression of God and as an experience of God. Through our relationships, we share God with others and we come to know more of God. We are blessed when we are a friend and when we have friends.
Because friendship matters, let us remember these words of blessing when we think of our friends: *I keep you in my heart. You are all my partners in God’s grace* (Phil 1:7 CEB).

~ Kim Ebersole, Director of Family Life and Older Adult Ministries
   Church of the Brethren

**Prayer**

God of Relationship,
We give you thanks for the friends who care for us and support us. Through their friendship, we come to know you more fully. Help us to be the best friend we can be to others, so that they can experience you through our love. Make us partners in your grace, we pray.

Amen

**To Ponder and Discuss**

Retreat leader Melissa Wiginton had participants create a visual “map” of their significant friendships throughout their lives. Being as creative as you wish, make your own friendship map and then consider these questions:

1. Throughout your lifetime, who was holding whom in friendship? How were you being held and supported by your friend(s)? How were you supporting them?
2. “Friends introduce us to worlds not our own.” Review the names of your friends on your map. What new ideas and experiences did they introduce you to?
3. “In our friend’s eyes we see ourselves.” Who are you in the eyes of your friends? Who is she/he in your eyes?

End your time of reflection with a prayer of thanksgiving for your friends and the many ways they have made a difference in your life.

**Suggested Reading**


News from the Denomination

Intergenerational Workcamps

A great service project with your children and grandchildren!

Idaho Mountain Camp ~ June 8-15, 2014  $375/participant
Camp Wilbur Stover, Idaho

BRF ~ August 2-9, 2014  $280/participant
Lewsiton, Maine

More information at www.brethren.org/workcamps

May is Older Adult Month!

Like the seasons, the ocean tide, and our favorite musical compositions our lives have a rhythm—an ebb and flow that accompanies our living.

This May, Older Adult Ministry invites you and your congregation to consider the Rhythms of Life. Resources are available at www.brethren.org/OAM2014.

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