

Friendship Group Information Meeting

A ministry with people with
intellectual disabilities,
their families, and caregivers

connection
ministries



Why is a ministry with people with intellectual disabilities needed?



“But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.”
1 Corinthians 12:18

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’ On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.”
1 Corinthians 12:21-22

Vision

Christian congregations are authentic faith communities that reach out, share the Good News of Jesus Christ, embrace adults with intellectual disabilities, their families, and caregivers, and grow together in their relationship with Christ.



Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer, and gave to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



Brothers and Sisters in Christ

We are defined as children of God. However, sometimes labels are necessary to identify groups of people. For the sake of this meeting, you will hear us refer to each other using;

- A person's name when referring to a specific person
- “Friends with disabilities” or “friends”, when referring to people with intellectual disabilities
- “Companions”, describing those of us that have been called into ministry with people with intellectual disabilities, their families and caregivers.

Group Dynamics

Elements of Your Ministry (Acts 2:42-47)

- Devotion to the Word
- Fellowship
- Prayer
- Worship
- Ministry Together



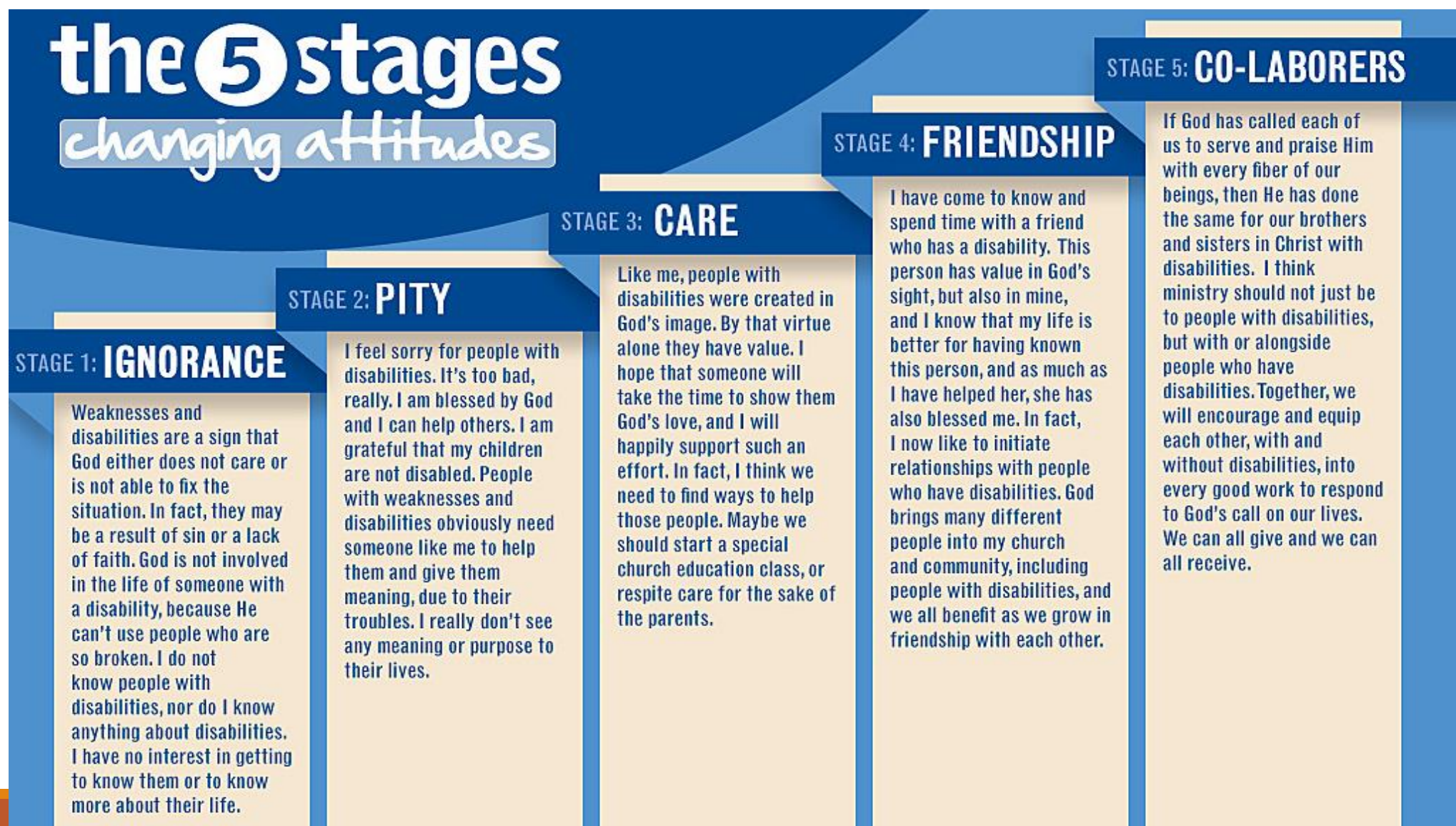
Group Dynamics

- Weekly Friendship Group typically meets midweek from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- Praise and worship; singing songs.
- Group offering (*group can decide where offering goes*).
- Large group Bible lesson led by a teacher using drama and visuals.
- Discussion groups; 2-3 companions and 3-5 friends with disabilities.
 - Lesson discussion
 - Group activity
 - Small group prayer
 - Fellowship time, snacks; time for building relationships.
 - Closing prayer.

Relationships and Commitment

- Friends with disabilities form relationships with volunteer companions.
- You will be missed when you are unable to be with the Friendship Group.
- Consider your ability to make a commitment to the group.
- Find ways to extend your relationships beyond the group.
- Encourage friends with disabilities to consider church membership, if not already a member of another church.
- Look for other ways to engage friends in the life of your church.

Becoming Co-Laborers in Christ



The Role of Connection Ministries



Connection Ministries will be a resource for your congregation.

- Our mission is to equip churches to minister with people with intellectual disabilities.
- **Your** group will be a ministry of **your** church.

The Role of Connection Ministries

Connection Ministries will come along side your congregation to;

- Work with your congregation to raise the awareness and provide education for this ministry among your members.
- Provide the initial companion training (*typically three sessions*).
- Help your church select curricula and train companions to use the materials.
- Facilitate a spiritual gifts inventory to help companions discern what roles God has planned for them in this ministry.

The Role of Connection Ministries

- Training includes information on the various types of intellectual disabilities, communication methods, person first language, hygiene, behaviors, methods of learning, physical, emotional and spiritual attributes.
- During training, there will be role playing of a typical group meeting. This will include practicing teaching Bible lessons, leading small group discussions, leading music and prayers.

The Role of Connection Ministries

- Connection Ministries will help your congregation identify potential friends with intellectual disabilities to participate in your ministry.
- Participate with your group during the first few months to model the various companion and leadership roles.
- Visit your group periodically to observe and consult.
- Follow up with the Leadership team to explore ways to strengthen your Friendship Group ministry.

The Role of Connection Ministries

- Provide training and workshops on topics to improve the effectiveness of your ministry.
- Connect your group with similar groups to exchange ideas and provide mutual support.



The Role of Connection Ministries

- Assist with administration.
 - Process applications for companions and friends with disabilities.
 - Perform criminal background screens.
 - Provide church with electronic group rosters.
- Friendship Groups who complete applications, background checks, and adopt the Friendship Group guidelines will be recognized as part of the Connection Ministries Network.

The Role of the Congregation

- To be successful, your church must take ownership for the ministry.
- Create an environment for developing Christian community.
- Develop proper attitudes through education and participation.
- Provide adequate congregation involvement.



The Role of the Congregation

- Become involved in the lives of people with disabilities in your ministry.
- Build relationships with family members and caregivers for friends with disabilities.
- Provide suitable space and equipment for the group.
- Purchase or obtain suitable curriculum for adults with intellectual disabilities.

The Role of the Congregation

- Promote your ministry in the church and the local community;
 - Community newspapers and electronic media.
 - Church social media, newsletters and bulletins.
 - Include group in the life of the congregation.
 - Host group events and invite the congregation.



The Role of the Congregation

- Administration
 - All companions and friends with disabilities complete applications. Provide copies to Connection Ministries.
 - Keep a current roster (*provided by Connection Ministries*) for companions, friends with disabilities, families, and caregivers.
- Consider financial support for Connection Ministries.



Companion Roles/Points of Entry

- Specific companion role responsibilities will help keep volunteers engaged.

Primary Roles

- Large group Bible lesson teachers (*at least two teachers*).
- Discussion group companions/leaders.
- Music/worship leadership.
- Administrator(s); track registration, rosters, attendance.

Companion Roles/Points of Entry

Support Roles

- Crafts/games/lesson activity planner.
- Prayer warriors (*include friends with disabilities*).
- Technology; setup up and operation.
- Creating/designing costumes for Bible lessons.
- Coordinating social events outside of Friendship Group.
- Hospitality; provide weekly snacks and food for special events.

Companion Roles/Points of Entry

Awareness Roles

- Promote the Friendship Group to the church and the community (*website, newsletters, social media, photos, etc.*).
- Photography and videos of Friendship Group.
- Maintain social media platforms.
- Identify donors in your church willing to support the Friendship Group ministry.

Finding the Right Fit

Spiritual Gift Questionnaire

A spiritual gift questionnaire is a reflective tool that can help you discern how God is working in your life. However, it is not a guaranteed way to discover your spiritual gifts; this tool is based on introspection.



We look at our hearts, experiences, and the feedback we receive from others to uncover insight on how God created us and gifted us for His purpose.

Finding the Right Fit

Spiritual Gift Questionnaire

"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."

Romans 12:3

Questionnaire; <http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com/test/adult>

Definitions; <http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gift-of-faith>

Finding the Right Fit

Spiritual Gift Questionnaire

- You can register as a user and save, print, and email your results. It will have your name on the results. You can use the inventory as a guest, but you will not be able to save the results.
- There are 105 questions, and the test takes about 15 minutes. When you are finished, click the “**Score Test**” button to view your results.
- Email the results to yourself and forward the email to;

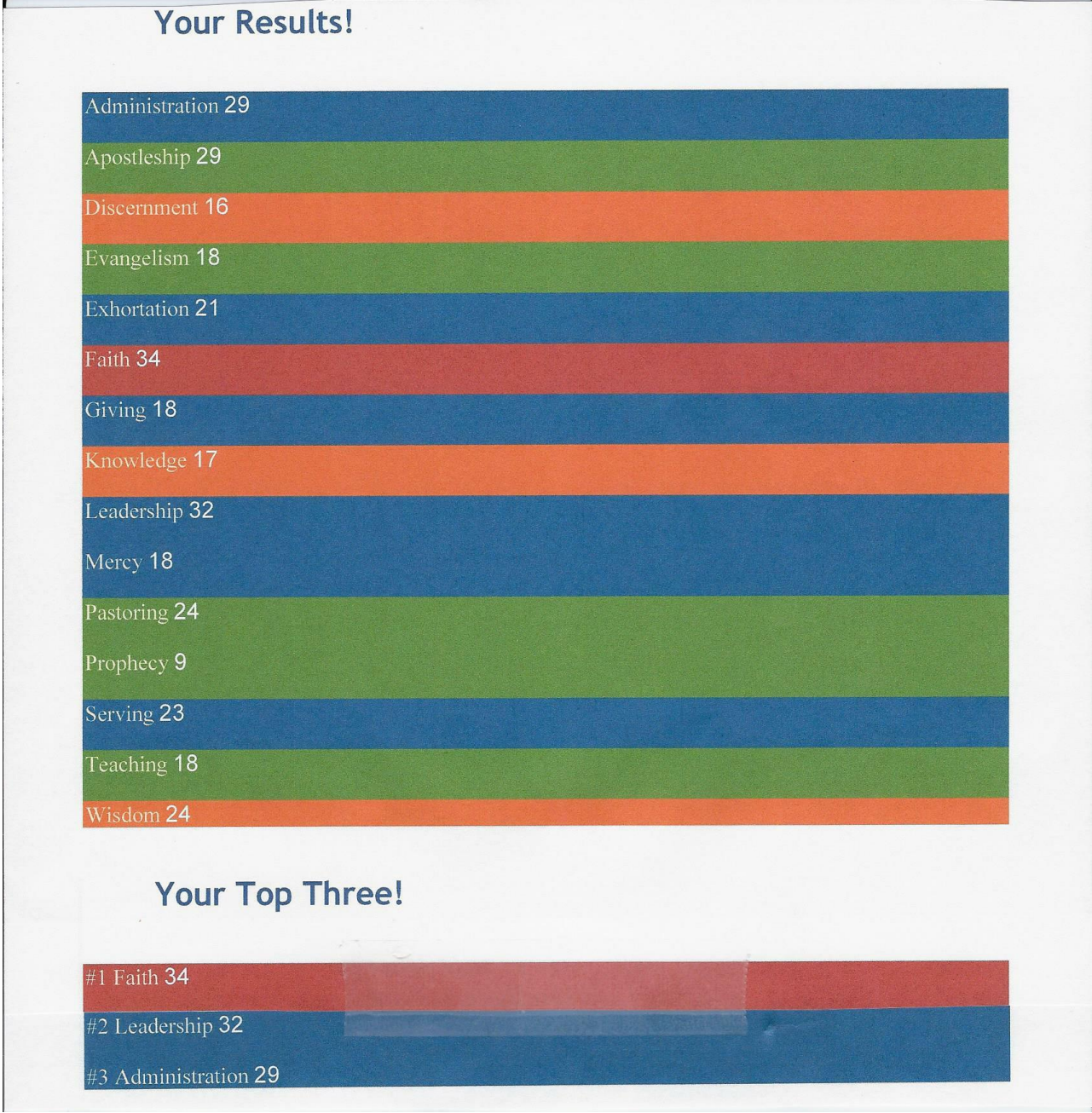
don.boden@connection-ministries.org

Finding the Right Fit

Spiritual Gift Questionnaire

- For the best results, answer each statement according to **who** you are, and not who you would like to be.
- Once you have received the results, ask yourself these questions;
 - How true are these statements of you?
 - What has been your experience?
 - What do others tell you?
 - To what degree do these statements reflect your usual tendencies?

A Sample of the Spiritual Gift Inventory Results



Next Steps

Do you want to be part of this Friendship Group?

- Pray about your commitment.
- Complete the Friendship Group application, and Volunteer Background Screen.
- Complete the spiritual gift inventory, and forward your results to; don.boden@connection-ministries.org
- Attend the three training sessions before Friendship Group starts.