



You've Got a Friend

I'm old enough to remember when the song, "You've Got a Friend," by Carole King was a hit on the radio back in the 70's. While the song was written for a secular audience, I believe the lyrics can also apply to the greatest Friend of all-- Jesus.

*"When you're down and troubled
And you need some lovin' care.
And nothin', nothin' is goin' right.
Close your eyes and think of me
And soon I will be there
To brighten up even your darkest night.*

*You just call out my name
And you know, wherever I am
I'll come runnin'
To see you again
Winter, spring, summer or fall,
All you have to do is call
And I'll be there
You've got a friend."*

In this issue of the newsletter, our focus is friendship. Helen Keller is quoted as saying, "I would rather walk with a friend in the dark than walk alone in the light." Even if we don't have an earthly friend that meets Keller's definition, we have a heavenly Friend who will always walk

with us and brighten up even our darkest night.

Daily Scripture Reading: In this packet you will find a daily scripture reading for the next three months. They all relate to the topic of friendship-- friendship with each other and with God. In April the texts will be on the topic of "Grace," in May the texts will be about "Friendship," and in June the texts will be about "Joy." We need a measure of **grace** in our friendships with others. And great **friendships** can bring much **joy** into our lives. In our relationship with God, we see Him extending to us unending **grace**, which can result in immeasurable amounts of **joy** in our lives as we enjoy **friendship** with Him.

I encourage you to take a few minutes every day to read the daily verse, write it in a journal or notebook and then spend a few minutes praying to God about what that text means to you and how He wants to speak to you through that passage in His Word.

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Laura Worf is the Women's Ministry Leader for the Montana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Campmeeting Social Event!

The Women's Ministry Committee is busy planning a very special event just for women during dinner time on Friday, July 12 during the Montana Conference campmeeting in Bozeman Montana.

Watch for further details in the next newsletter and at www.mtcsda.org.



You won't want to miss out!

From Surviving to Thriving!



*A seminar for women at the
Montana Conference
Campmeeting
July 10-13, 2024
Date and time to be determined
Mt. Ellis Academy
Bozeman, MT
Presented by Laura Worf*

Stress is a fact of life, but it doesn't have to steal our joy. Stress and the associated mental health challenges (anxiety and depression) are at an all-time high in our society. In this seminar we'll learn how to overcome the stress, anxiety, and depression in our lives from a Biblical perspective so we can live the abundant life God wants for each of us!

OUR MISSION: To spiritually nourish and connect the women of the Montana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in a supportive, enjoyable environment, and impact the women in the communities where they live.

OUR VISION: The women in Montana will have a growing relationship with Jesus and each other.

(You've got a friend, continued from page 1)

Woman of the Bible: This month's featured woman of the Bible is Naomi. She is an example of a great friend to her daughter-in law Ruth, despite the pain and bitterness Naomi was experiencing in her own life. As you read this familiar story, please be reminded that God loves you and is there with you in both your full times and your empty times.

Local Women's Ministries Programs: This month we are featuring the women's ministry program from the Billings Seventh-day Adventist church. This is a very active group of women who have learned how important it is to meet regularly and establish deep friendships. Please take a few minutes to read about their program and maybe you'll find some great ideas to implement in our own local women's ministry program. Don't have a local women's ministry program? I encourage you to talk to your pastor and a few of the women from your church and begin to plan a time for the women of your church to meet and develop deeper and stronger friendships.

During April, May and June, I encourage you to be a friend to those around you. I leave you with these quotes on friendship:

"My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me." **Henry Ford**

"Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for his friends."

Jesus (John 15:13 NKJV)

"Through the Keyhole" theme of 2024 Women's Retreat

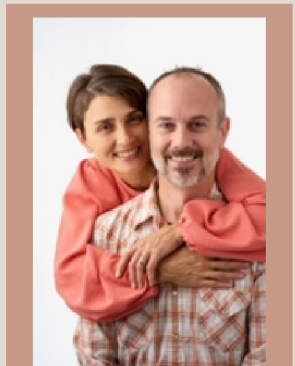


Erin White, Development Director for Adventist Frontier Missions, will be the featured speaker at the 2024 Montana Conference Women's Retreat. The retreat will be held September 6-8, 2024 at Abba's Haven in Lavina, Montana.

Registration details will be in the next newsletter and at www.mtcsda.org.

Date Change

The 2024
Women's
Retreat will
be
September
6-8.



Erin White with husband Chris.

Billings Women's Ministry Program Report

by RiChelle LaChepelle, Women's Ministries Director Billings SDA Church

The Women's Ministries program in Billings, Montana is based on a four-part approach; Spiritual, Physical, Social & Outreach. Each year we have a theme, and the four growth areas follow that theme. We wanted to give our ladies a safe space to develop friendships – friendships that meant in the middle of the week you had someone to call and say, "hey, you want to go shopping with me?" and someone would answer that call.

We meet every Tuesday from the beginning of February to about mid-November. We start at 5:30 p.m. with a light potluck meal. After our meal we have a short devotion and then get into the activity for the evening. We end our meetings no later than 8:00 p.m. We have an ongoing text chain to keep up with the things we wish the whole group to know about or requests for the group during the times we don't meet. Our core group is about 12 strong.

I begin by planning for each year as soon as the

previous year ends. I've found my particular group of ladies really appreciates having a written plan so that they can plan their own personal events to not miss the women's ministry meetings that are most important to them.



For 2023 our theme was Joy and Gratitude and for 2024 our theme is Healthy Prayer, Healthy Me.

Spiritual: Every year we pick a book that fits the theme of the year and one week a month we share our insights about what we got out of the book.

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Social: Each year we concentrate on developing friendships and a large part of that is getting to know each other. We do this mostly by sharing questions that we each answer around the table.

Physical/Health: Sometimes this involves cooking classes or speakers on topics such as health, heart, mind and body. This year we are trying various exercises once a month.

OutReach/InReach: We've done various things to enhance the outreach or inreach of church efforts, from making things to share with church members or the community to filling in needs of the church.

We meet in November to plan our "Cookie Gifts" for members of the church. In December we meet one final time for the year to decorate boxes and fill them with cookies. Then we assign each person to deliver the cookies to either shut ins, members of our congregation whom we didn't see much of in the year, or members who we especially want to thank for all their work in or around the church.



Tools that foster a group atmosphere: At the beginning of 2023 I was able to get canvas totes in a bright turquoise and personalized them for all the ladies to bring their things too and from our meetings. There is a side pocket, so I purchased a \$1 water bottle and attached a vinyl "A Joyful Heart..." on the side to go along with our health message of a joyful heart is good like a medicine.

This tote and water bottle and notebook are ongoing items to be a visual reminder about the power of our women's ministry program.



For the first meeting of 2023 I had each lady bring a 3-ring binder that we decorated to our individual tastes. At the first meeting of each year everyone receives their spiritual book for the year which is provided by the women's ministry church budget.

Tabs for our notebooks included the following:

Directory: names, phone & birthdays for all the regular attendees so that if you needed a friend, you had their contact information.

Schedule: the plan for each meeting so you know what the plan is for the up-coming Tuesday.

Prayer Requests: when someone mentions a need you have a place to write down that need as a reminder to pray for them.

Notes: for all your personal notes or handouts received.

Gratitude Journal: pages to use to write down all you were grateful for during 2023.

Joyful Me: the question pages for the social days in 2023.

In 2024 we've added "Recipe Book," "Exercise," and "Fervent" tabs.

I'm so grateful to the Lord for directing me to this ministry. If anyone, anywhere wants to brainstorm ideas or if anyone wants to use any of the things we have used here in Billings, please feel free to contact me and I'll gladly share.



I hope that sharing our story might help others who maybe struggle to get or keep a women's ministry program in place. I am looking forward to hearing what other women around the state of Montana do to lift up the ladies in their churches.

Yours with Christian Love,

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To read more about the Billings Women's Ministry program go to www.mtcsda.org.



Naomi

Do you find it difficult to stay cheerful and upbeat when battered by life's trials?
If so, you are not alone. Naomi felt that same way.

To say that things hadn't worked out for Naomi would be an understatement. Famine drove her family from their home. Then tragedy struck. Naomi's husband died. Far from home, she was suddenly a widow with two sons to feed and care for. The boys, being young and adaptable, made themselves at home in the culture of Moab and eventually married local girls.

But tragedy struck a second time. Both Naomi's sons died. Without warning, she and her daughters-in-law were three widows in a society where a woman needed a man's protection to survive. Without husbands or sons, they had no income, no status, and no future. Naomi experienced the bitter grief of a mother burying her only two children. She also experienced the powerless feeling of a woman who has lost her role, her identity, and her hopes for the future.

When Naomi decided to return to her home in Israel, her daughters-in-law wanted to come with her. But she urged them to stay in Moab and marry again. They were still young, they still had hopes of starting over. "It is more bitter for me than for you," Naomi told the young women, Ruth and Orpah, "because the Lord's hand has gone out against me!" (Ruth 1:13).

Naomi didn't have a positive attitude. She believed God had turned against her. As far as she could see, her life was a sinking ship and Ruth and Orpah would be smart to jump ship as soon as possible.

Most people--the Hebrews as well as the pagans--believed that if things went well, it was a sign that your gods were blessing you. If you suffered hardship and pain, the gods had turned their backs or were punishing you for your sins.

Naomi certainly subscribed to that popular belief. Famine, exile, loss of her husband and sons--it all added up to a bleak picture. She didn't bother trying to put a positive spin on it. When she arrived back in her hometown of Bethlehem accompanied by her most persistent daughter-in-law, Ruth, Naomi made things pretty clear.

"Don't call me Naomi," she told her former neighbors. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." (Ruth 1:20, 21).

Naomi rejected her name, which means “pleasant.” Names carried a great deal of meaning in her culture, and seeking for a new name that reflected her current circumstances, she chose Mara, which meant bitter. Naomi was bitter. Naomi was negative. She had a bad attitude. By every modern standard of success, Naomi was destined to fail.

But the book of Ruth tells a different story. Back home in Bethlehem, Naomi helps Ruth come up with a plan to support them by gleaning leftover grain from the fields while capturing the attention of Boaz, the rich man who owns the field. Naomi watches over the relationship, encouraging Ruth and giving her motherly advice. By the end of the story Ruth and Boaz are married, the family fortune is redeemed, and Naomi finally holds a grandson in her arms. The women of Bethlehem--who never did get into the habit of calling her Mara--congratulate Naomi on how God has blessed her.

Naomi left Bethlehem full--full of family, full of hope--and returned empty. But the Lord filled her heart and her home once again. And He did it despite her despair and discouragement.

We all have our “Mara” days. Women who have suffered multiple losses, who have survived abuse, who struggle with chronic illness or depression, may find it especially hard to produce that happy, optimistic attitude. And our culture sends the message that if you can’t feel happy, if you can’t produce hope and optimism like a rabbit from a magician’s hat, you can’t be blessed.

Naomi’s story affirms a different truth. Yes, hope and optimism are wonderful things. But they are human things. They depend on transient qualities like our physical and mental health, or our outward circumstances. God’s goodness comes from outside ourselves. God’s blessing depends on His nature, not on ours.

On the days when we feel like “Mara,” when we feel God has turned His back, when we can’t muster an optimistic thought to save our lives--God is still there. He still cares, whether we’re optimists or pessimists, whether we feel like being called Naomi or Mara. Even in our darkest hours, even when we despair, as long as we remain open to His leading, He will still bless.

If you woke up this morning full of life, energy and hope for the future--congratulations! Use that positive attitude to bless others. But if this is a “Mara” day--if you feel discouraged, bitter, even hopeless--don’t give up. You may feel that God has turned His back, but He hasn’t. He’s still there, and He loves you.

Adapted from “Daughters of Grace” by Trudy J. Morgan-Cole





April

The Grace of God

Day 1 – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Day 2 – Ephesians 2:8-10

Day 3 – Romans 6:11-14

Day 4 – 1 Corinthians 15:10

Day 5 – Hebrews 4:14-16

Day 6 – John 1:16-17

Day 7 – Romans 3:22-24

Day 8 – Titus 2:11-14

Day 9 – Colossians 4:2-6

Day 10 – Ephesians 2:4-7

Day 11 – 2 Timothy 1:9-10

Day 12 – Romans 6:1-4

Day 13 – John 1:14

Day 14 – Galatians 2:19-21

Day 15 – Hebrews 12:14-15

Day 16 – Romans 5:1-2

Day 17 – Romans 12:3-8

Day 18 – 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

Day 19 – Galatians 5:4-6

Day 20 – Romans 5:20-21

Day 21 – Ephesians 1:3-6

Day 22 – Titus 3:4-7

Day 23 – Ephesians 4:7-8

Day 24 – 2 Corinthians 8:7-9

Day 25 – Hebrews 2:9-11

Day 26 – 1 Peter 1:13-16

Day 27 – Colossians 1:3-6

Day 28 – Ephesians 1:7-10

Day 29 – Acts 20:32

Day 30 – 2 Peter 3:18





May

Friendship

Day 1 – Proverbs 18:24
Day 2 – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
Day 3 – John 15:12-14
Day 4 – Proverbs 27:17
Day 5 – Proverbs 17:17
Day 6 – 1 Thessalonians 5:11
Day 7 – Romans 12:15-17
Day 8 – Proverbs 27:9
Day 9 – Job 6:14
Day 10 – Proverbs 27:6
Day 11 – 1 Peter 4:8-10
Day 12 – Hebrews 10:24-25
Day 13 – Proverbs 16:28
Day 14 – Romans 12:18-21
Day 15 – 1 Corinthians 1:1-8
Day 16 – Proverbs 13:20
Day 17 – Luke 6:27-31
Day 18 – Proverbs 27:5-6
Day 19 – 1 John 4:7-8

Day 20 – Romans 12:9-10
Day 21 – Proverbs 22:24-25
Day 22 – Colossians 3:12-14
Day 23 – Philippians 2:1-4
Day 24 – 2 Corinthians 13:11
Day 25 – Romans 15:5-7
Day 26 – John 17:20-23
Day 27 – 1 Corinthians 1:10
Day 28 – 1 John 4:11-12
Day 29 – Romans 12:13-14
Day 30 – 1 John 4:19-21
Day 31 – Ephesians 4:1-6





June

The Joy of the Lord

Day 1 – Romans 15:13
Day 2 – James 1:2-4
Day 3 – Philippians 4:4-7
Day 4 – Galatians 5:22-23
Day 5 – John 16:21-22
Day 6 – Proverbs 17:22
Day 7 – 1 Peter 1:8-9
Day 8 – Romans 14:17
Day 9 – Psalm 118:19-24
Day 10 – Psalm 16:9-11
Day 11 – John 15:7-11
Day 12 – Isaiah 55:10-13
Day 13 – Psalm 30:4-5
Day 14 – Proverbs 10:28
Day 15 – Psalm 71:22-23
Day 16 – Nehemiah 8:9-12
Day 17 – Psalm 126:5-6
Day 18 – Psalm 33:20-22
Day 19 – 1 Peter 4:12-13

Day 20 – Psalm 5:11-12
Day 21 – 1 Chronicles 16:25-27
Day 22 – John 16:24
Day 23 – Psalm 51:10-12
Day 24 – Isaiah 61:10-11
Day 25 – Psalm 94:18-19
Day 26 – Isaiah 9:2-3
Day 27 – Habakkuk 3:17-19
Day 28 – Psalm 30:11-12
Day 29 – Colossians 1:9-14
Day 30 – Psalm 100

