**Bearing Fruit – August 15, 2021**

**“Friendship is at the heart of the gospel.”**

We welcome Silentor Thomas Esthil-Henderson to our worship today. Pastor Wendy met Silentor when he was just a shy boy newly arrived from Haiti. He was a camper from the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Davenport, Iowa. Wendy was the chaplain/director for summer camp that week. Each summer over the years their friendship grew, and Silentor’s friendship with God and another camper – Blake Severson from Wendy’s church – grew, as well. Blake became a Presbyterian pastor who now serves at South Park Presbyterian Church in Moline, Illinois. Here is the rest of the story of how friendship is a way to bear the fruit of God’s love.

A shy boy became a man with a mission. After graduating from Iowa State in 2010 with a degree in history. Silentor accepted a well-paying position with “Teach for America” in Little Haiti, Florida. The Lord had bigger and better plans. In July 2010 Silentor had a video chat with his adoptive father, Tommy Henderson, back in Davenport. Silentor was struggling to gather things that were desperately needed by the hundreds of families he was now trying to serve. He then moved his heart’s mission to Haiti, which was the beginning of Mission Starfish Haiti. We will hear more today.

The Youth and their families will be meeting Silentor during their Sunday Pizza & Games tonight from 5:00 to 7:00 outside Fellowship Hall. If you would like to join them, please call our Minister of Youth and Young Adults, Blair Nelson.

We welcome Paul Jeziorski today, who is singing *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* as our Offertory. This song was originally a poem written in 1855 by [Joseph M. Scriven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_M._Scriven) to comfort his mother, who was ill and far away in Ireland while he was in Canada.

Friendships can change the world. The music of Joseph M. Scriven has comforted the world with the message of Christ’s friendship. A male nurse, Tommy Henderson, volunteered in Haiti for a time and met Silenetor. Their relationship is not only as father and son, but one of friendship. Last year, Pastor Blake Severson had planned to take members of his congregation on a mission trip to Haiti in support of Mission StarFish; Covid and political unrest interfered with those plans. Our pastor has been waiting for a long time to introduce her friend, Silentor, to you. How many lives has Mission StarFish touched? We can talk about the number of students helped, but how have their lives touched others? That we cannot count. They are like stars in the sky or starfish in the ocean. Friendship is a way to bear the fruit of God’s love.