

Impact Stories

2023



Stories of what God has done
throughout the year.



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MINISTRY IMPACT STORIES

ATHLETES IN ACTION

AIA Sports Complex

Over the years, AIA has hosted staff and coaches from 37 countries at the AIA Sports Complex & Retreat Center in Xenia, Ohio. Recently, our staff members and several coaches from Zimbabwe brought 45 young men, ages 15-19, to AIA in Xenia for two weeks of immersion in what AIA refers to as the “[Total Athlete Experience](#)”. During that time they focus on developing these athletes physically, mentally, and spiritually.



Xavier leads AIA in Zimbabwe. As he was present with his countrymen through their time in the States, he was able to deepen relationships and further connections that will accelerate the ministry in Zimbabwe when they all return home. Xavier has already been invited to schools in his community to speak and share about his time in the U.S. The trip has opened a lot of doors in schools that have been closed to him until now. Because of the impact this trip has had on the athletes and the way it has accelerated his local ministry, Xavier hopes to make the trip an annual event.

NFL PRO MINISTRY

Earlier this year, the NFL Pro Ministry led a mission trip to Jamaica called “Tackle Life”. As a result of this visit from NFL players and chaplains, God opened doors within the Jamaican American Football Association and the Jamaican Consulate in the U.S. for more sports ministry opportunities. More than 100 athletes and coaches heard the gospel during this trip. Relationships were also built, helping create new pathways for local Cru and AIA staff members to minister in their communities.



CAMPUS

Revival on high school football team

Last year, Cru's high school ministry staff hoped to share the gospel with the Lake Nona Lions High School football team, but the doors were closed. This year, with a new mission-minded coach, the doors were open for staff!

In September 2023, Carlo Palma, one of the team leaders for Cru's high school ministry in Orlando, encouraged four students to share the gospel with their teammates on the football team. "My heart was to see the gospel be communicated organically, and so these boys could share from their hearts," Carlos said.

It was one of the most moving "team talks" he'd ever experienced since serving with the high school ministry. Starting with four football players sharing the gospel with 140 of their teammates, 54 of them accepted Christ that day.

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Carlos continued meeting with students and reading comments from the outreach, he shared that he was honestly shocked by the responses he was receiving. Since the pandemic, students have been more closed off than usual. However, that was not the case this year.

Please continue to pray for these students and the other high schools in the Orlando area as we see God working through our ministry.



CITY

Art and the Bible in Chicago

Abby Thompson, part-time field staff with the City Arts and Culture ministry in Chicago, collaborates with the local campus ministry team. Her heart is to help student leaders express their faith through art while reaching out to students on campus. Last spring, Cru hosted an art showcase called “Selah”. Twenty Christian artists displayed or performed work inspired by their walks with God. This fall, the ministry has seen more than two dozen students in Bible studies. Each Bible study on campus goes through a book of the Bible and then creates visual or multimedia art to explore the themes they learned.



A NEW CHURCH INSIDE A COUNTRY PRISON

When you ask Ron Dooley how he is doing today, he might say, “Well, I get to go to prison tonight, and I’m excited about that!”

Ron has served in City’s prison ministry since 1996. In just the past few years, he has witnessed a significant movement of God.

In 2019, he and his wife, Kathleen met an inmate, Charles (name changed for privacy), after Charles performed in the jail’s Christmas play. Kathleen invited him to Ron’s Bible study, and they began a discipleship relationship.

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When COVID hit, Ron continued to disciple him through correspondence. Ron and Charles began to imagine a church inside the jail, run by Jesus-following inmates. And, even during COVID, the church took off. God started calling new leaders. Two other inmates joined Charles in leading the church—one inmate even led a correctional officer to faith, while still another inmate became the music leader.

The inmates’ church has baptized 60 people since January 2022 and has continued to thrive even as leaders and church members finish their terms or get transferred out of jail. Ron’s Bible study continues to help the church’s leaders develop deeper relationships with Jesus. Not too long ago, Charles was released, got married, and is seeking God’s will for his next season of ministry.

SPARKING A MOVEMENT AMONG NEW ADULTS IN NASHVILLE

A City leadership team of “20-somethings” in Nashville, with connections across different city pockets, was praying and working. They worked to put on small events and outreaches for six months to gather momentum, then they trusted God for an official kick-off event this summer.

The group was blown away when 109 20-somethings showed up, many of whom they didn’t know. The night was led by a 20-something, and they had a great evening of community-building and discussion around their tables.

They’re working to have follow-up community events and larger-scale discipleship groups. City is currently in the process of recruiting the next leadership team to carry the momentum forward.

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION IN THE MONGOLIA MILITARY

Cru Military, Military Ministry globally, reaches service members in militaries all over the world. One cadet in Mongolia was different, he was a Christian and his teacher, a lieutenant colonel, knew it and was not pleased.

“The moment the teacher found out that I was a Christian, he had a bad eye on me,” the cadet said. “He would grade all the other students normally, but he was so picky with me. He did not like me. But he liked his vodka a lot.”

Occasionally, the teacher, Lieutenant Colonel Gankhuleg, would come to class after a few drinks. Gantumur somehow pleased Lt. Col. Gankhuleg enough to pass his classes, graduate and join the army. After his time in the army, Gantumur joined the Military Ministry, but he still thought of that teacher.

“Our paths disconnected for a while,” he said. “But many years later I learned he had come to Christ through the work of the Military Ministry. Because of his drinking problem, he lost his house, his wife was threatening divorce, and he was on the verge of being dishonorably discharged from the military.”

Lt. Col. Gankhuleg went into a clinic twice to get sober, but nothing helped. He was approached by a Military Ministry staff member who shared Christ. Gantumur says, “And it helped. He became very prayerful. He regained his career and retired with honor. His wife didn’t want to divorce him because she could see the changes in his life. And because of those dramatic changes, she came to Christ, too. He got his home back—his whole life was restored.”

“And it helped. He became very prayerful. He regained his career, and retired with honor. His wife didn’t want to divorce him because she could clearly see the changes in his life. And because of those dramatic changes, she came to Christ, too. He got his home back—his whole life was restored.”

Now, that lieutenant colonel has started going out to the regiments and teaching ethics and leadership, and why he came to Christ. People knew he had a drinking problem and how miserable he was, particularly those who graduated later when he was at his worst. Today, they see clear proof of how Jesus changes lives.

Lt. Col. Gankhuleg has a goal to visit all of his cadets from 25 years of teaching to share Christ, that’s more than 10,000 in the military community across Mongolia. “He goes in the cold, in the winter, at all times,” Gantumur says. “He wants to go to everyone he knows. He is one of our key Military Ministry volunteers in Mongolia.”

AN UNLIKELY, GOD-GLORIFYING PARTNERSHIP

City’s Church Movements ministry offers a model of outreach called Table Talk, which invites anyone who wants authentic conversation about spiritual topics to come and speak. Their conversations create a community of trust and curiosity that can break down barriers. Table Talk conversations regularly lead to conversions and baptisms! But sometimes, they advance the kingdom of God in other ways too.

A local immigration attorney, who described himself as anti-Christian, started showing up for conversations. He was so moved that, while he hadn’t yet given his life to Jesus, he kept coming back for more conversation.

Through conversations, the attorney met a pastor in a network of Hispanic Lehigh churches. Now, because of those conversations, Christian families who arrive in the U.S. who find these churches have access to world-class representation.

One Christian family who came to the U.S. for life-saving medical treatment has found a way to stay and get the help they need because of this unlikely partnership. God is softening hearts and making ways for his people to flourish!

DIGITAL STRATEGIES

Expanding Digital Strategies

U.S. Digital Strategy leaders Andre Echevarria and Kevin Geiss had the opportunity to share marketing training during a Cru Digital Summit in Fiji this year.

Watch the follow-up interview with Semesa and Nemia, Cru Fiji Digital Leaders, to learn how God is using this nation-to-nation partnership between the U.S. and Fiji to grow Christ-followers across the globe.



GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Through partnerships around the globe, the U.S. Communications team is seeing articles and resources translated and used in nearly 50 countries as a way to reach online audiences.

In 2023, 40 global digital strategists from Cru and partner ministries from 12 countries in Europe were trained by U.S. Communications strategists on how to use existing and new content to reach even more people with the Good News. The digital strategists who attended are leaders in their home countries and are reaching their countries with the gospel through the Internet. Many of these strategists are one-person teams, often having to wear many hats: writing, translating, planning, and running the websites and social media accounts.

Global digital strategists were trained in writing, editing, and strategy planning for articles and resources alongside opportunities to attend one-on-one trainings to share ideas and help plan new and innovative ways to increase their reach.

Through every session and conversation, your partnership was at work. There was Valentin from Moldova whose team is translating articles and seasonal devotionals the U.S. Communications team created to get the gospel to more people. Eva and Katka from Slovakia, are training Slovak writers and are also translating resources from my team to reach their country.

Alessandro and Sara from Portugal are launching in-country communications to care for staff and bring unity so they can be more effective. Viktors from Latvia now wants to implement the methods my team has used to collaborate with staff in his country to create a cohesive communications plan. Stephan, an expert in marketing and data is leading an evangelism platform in Germany.

“I’m amazed by what your ministry is doing,” he said. Stephan quickly analyzed cru.org and provided a new perspective on what we’re doing well, and ways we can improve.

You are walking alongside Cru staff members and partner ministries around the globe, delivering the good news and love of Jesus to a hurting world.

Thank you for making this happen.

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FUND DEVELOPMENT

Church planted through bible distribution ministry

Partners in Africa received and distributed the Bible in different villages, and as they went the team introduced group Bible studies in each village, spending time teaching evangelism and disciple-making. Believers have been working faithfully for our Lord in making disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of those Bible study groups has grown from three members to 12! In 2023, partners in Africa received more than 250 Bibles and from that distribution, seven Bible study groups have now formed into churches that meet three times a week.

“This brought so much joy because there was no church nearby in the villages,” a Cru partner said. “They used to walk for two hours to find a church. We identified two disciples who had a call to (pastor) to take up the challenge. We pray that these brothers go for further studies so they can shepherd the flock well.”

Join us in thanking God that our partners worked with the village headman who didn’t hesitate to give a piece of land for the church to be built and the locals there who have put up a temporary structure as we believe God for funds to build a permanent structure. This is the first of what we pray will be many churches planted using the Bible distribution strategy of multiplying disciples. Through this, our partners baptized more than 21 new believers after the first church service. Many people are joining the new church in the village.