



# NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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## An Enduring Campus Ministry

Twenty years ago there were three RUF ministries in the Northeast. Now there are twenty-two (including four RUF-I), with seven more under development. What wonderful growth! But why did it take 20 years?

It would be easy to find smart, energetic young college graduates and turn them loose to round up students for fun and fellowship – and it is fine to do that. But RUF seeks to establish professional ministries on campuses which will endure for centuries – and that takes time. It takes years to generate local support and find a man for the campus, and it takes more years for him to establish a ministry which will outlast him.

## Four Growing RUFs

An RUF ministry starts with one. It begins as an RUF minister seeking interested students and slowly building a community. Individual meetings eventually become Bible studies and later Large Group gatherings, RUF's two foundational programs. As the ministry increases in numbers, it also seeks to deepen its members' spiritual maturity through discipleship and training. All RUF ministries share the same vision of fostering students who passionately serve Christ, but the groups appear different as they develop. Here are some glimpses of RUF ministries in different stages of development.

### The First Year: Get yourself settled

With lunch tray in hand Oliver Pierce surveyed the dining hall at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). Spying a student eating alone, Oliver asked to join him. Through these one-on-one meetings, Oliver has found a few students willing to read the Bible with him. Starting a Bible study was one of Oliver's personal goals for this year, but it is not his primary goal. Instead, he must intentionally build a foundation for his future ministry. Fund-raising provides that foundation. If he is fully funded by the end of the first year, Oliver will be free to focus on his ministry next year.

Additionally, Oliver and his wife Kim are settling into their community. They support a local PCA church plant that has been started alongside this RUF work. Recently, they have found a home where they can live comfortably with their six-month-old daughter, Emilia, and they are becoming acquainted with their neighbors.



The first RUF Bible study at Indiana University of PA!

Oliver is now learning the campus, its people, and its administrative systems. He has discovered that IUP has two types of students. Most of the students grew up in the rural communities surrounding the school. However, IUP also recruits lower-income students from Philadelphia. Understanding how to care for students from both backgrounds will be vital to Oliver's success. Soon Oliver hopes to identify leaders that will form the core of a Ministry Team. These student leaders will help RUF receive club status at IUP. As an official club, RUF may reserve space on campus and participate in freshman outreach.

### Year Five: Establish Foundational Programs

Nathan Dicks, the campus minister at Boston University, encountered unexpected resistance when his RUF group applied for club status five years ago. The university finally allowed RUF to become an official club in 2016.



Nathan Dicks preaching at Large Group Meeting at Boston U

Despite its slow beginning, RUF at Boston University has experienced tremendous growth recently. Three years into

Nathan's ministry, RUF consisted of five returning students. Nathan found it challenging to be "on campus" at a university of more than 18,000 undergraduate students scattered throughout the city. But two years later Nathan now has more than 30 students who regularly attend Large Group Meetings.

Intentional freshmen recruiting contributed to that growth, Nathan says. To reach incoming students across a large campus, RUF set up tables at each end of campus. The RUF intern and volunteers from the local church helped greet freshmen.

The increase in student involvement has allowed Nathan to expand RUF's programs. This year RUF holds weekly Large Group Meetings. The Large Group Meeting provides an important time for the students to hear the word of God preached and participate in worship. Additionally, the Ministry Team has expanded to include student Bible study leaders.

**Year Six: Established but Not Stable**

In many ways, the RUF ministry at Millersville is fully established, offering Large Group Meetings and Bible studies, but it has undergone some fluctuations recently. This year, the group's membership fell from approximately 75 students to 40 students.

Millersville is a uniquely challenging campus to serve, says Trip Beans, the RUF minister. Approximately half of the 8,000 students commute from home to the Pennsylvania state school in Lancaster. These students are less involved in campus life and harder to find. Additionally, many Millersville students, including some at RUF, struggle with depression and anxiety.



Some Millersville students at the RUF fall conference

To strengthen the group, Trip and his wife, Joy, are focusing on discipleship and fostering student leadership. Mature students are increasingly given leadership roles and asked to reach out to classmates. During Ministry Team meetings, the students share their success and struggles. They support each other.

Trip hopes these rising leaders will create a strong base for RUF at Millersville. But more importantly, he knows that students who are trained to lead in RUF will be equipped to serve the church later. Trip says, "We tell the students ... I want you to see this as preparing you for your next leadership role in your job, your family, your church."

**Year Eleven: Mature RUF ministry**

Derek Bates at the University of Pittsburgh considers two things vital to developing a mature ministry. First, the students must be growing spiritually through the ministry of the word, preached during Large Group Meetings, discussed at Bible studies, and applied during one-on-one discipleship meetings. Secondly, he strives to identify and train student leaders.

Students at the University of Pittsburgh plan events and service projects, sing in worship, and lead Bible studies. These activities are important, but Derek's primary goal for them is to care for other students well. He longs for them to see how the gospel applies to their lives and their relationships at Pitt.



Ministry Team of Pitt RUF

"One of the hardest things (as a student at Pitt) is making and maintaining your friendships," Derek says. Pitt, a state school of approximately 18,000, is spread throughout the city of Pittsburgh. RUF must compete with the attractions of city life. Even getting to campus is challenging as many students live throughout the city and must navigate crowded roads to get to the Large Group Meeting. However, the group has 80 students whose very attendance demonstrates their dedication. Derek says about competing with the attractions of city and campus life, "We could have Hillsong worship and Tim Keller preaching, but no more than 120 people are coming."

Many of these students are involved in the Ministry Team, which includes all students involved in leading Bible stud-



ies or in other roles of leadership, and Callie Miller, a full-time RUF staff at Pitt. Mature members of the Ministry Team may participate in RUF's Business Team. This team is responsible for organizing events, planning worship, and handling executive decisions. Finally, a few students are invited to join Derek, Callie, and his intern for their staff meetings. Having received valuable training and significant ministry experience, several Pitt RUF students have pursued vocations in ministry.

Derek describes RUF in northern cities as urban gardens. Unlike southern, rural campuses, Pitt may never draw in large numbers of students. Instead, Derek must tenderly cultivate small groups of students, but his relatively small plot has yielded mature fruit. He says, "Pittsburgh is snowy, cold and busy, but beautiful things grow in small places. Including here."

– by *Rebecca Trudeau*

## Stay Connected to RUF!

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## Focus on Matt Terrell

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The Superbowl party was a hit, but the students at RUF City Campus were more excited about the group's Oscar ceremony celebration. Several of these students dream of one day receiving their own Oscar, explains RUF minister Matt Terrell. RUF City Campus serves the approximately 800,000 to one million college students who live in New York City. Most of these students are drawn to the city because they hope to launch their future careers. Ambitious and talented, they seek vocations in fashion, design, finance, journalism, film, music, and theater.

Although City Campus's vision encompasses all students living in New York City, most of its events occur at New York University. As an official club, RUF may use NYU's facilities for Large Group Meetings and Bible studies. However, students attending these events are often enrolled in other colleges and universities, including Parsons School of Design, the Fashion Institute of Technology, King's College, and Pratt Institute. The students find their way to RUF through word-of-mouth, freshman outreach at NYU, or Redeemer Presbyterian Church. A few Bible studies and outreach events are held at Fordham University at the Lincoln Center, which acts as a secondary hub for RUF City Campus.

Christian students come to RUF desperate for fellowship. Many people experience loneliness when they first move to the city, and believers living in New York City feel particularly isolated. Few of their classmates share their faith or values. Additionally, many of their schools have competitive cultures, which may further alienate students from each other. RUF City Campus provides these students with a community of believers and equips them to share their faith with their classmates.

A smaller, but vital, part of Matt's ministry is dialoging with those who have never heard the faith presented in a way that they understood or who have rejected Christianity. Mary is one such student. While raised in a Christian home, she abandoned her parents' faith because it did not seem to explain the world around her. In New York City, she embraced the life of an agnostic, but soon the lifestyle palled. She felt lonely and missed something from her childhood. Was it the community church provided or was it her former faith? As an experiment, she attended Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Through Redeemer, she met Matt in June 2018. Since then, Matt and Mary have been regularly discussing the gospel. Mary has not embraced Christianity, but she is intrigued. Last semester, she asked to expand their discussion to include other non-believers she knows. Recently, Matt, Mary, and several other students meet weekly to discuss a chapter from Tim Keller's book, *Making Sense of God*. In the future, Matt hopes to have more groups for students curious about the faith, including some led by Christian students.

RUF City Campus has two staff members and an intern working alongside Matt. Madeline Francis has served on staff since 2015. She leads a small group and disciples the

junior and senior students. Abbey Slater, an RUF intern, also leads a Bible study and acts as a “social catalyst.” She excels at connecting active members to students on the fringes of the group.

Matt’s wife, Megan, is officially a staff administrator, but her service extends beyond administrative duties. She helps disciple female students, and she excels at creating a hospitable environment for young people to gather. Megan also leads a young mother’s group through Redeemer Presbyterian Church and cares for their three-year-old daughter, Margaret. Matt and Megan’s oldest two children, seven-year-old Eliot and five-year-old Zoey, attend the local public school. The girls are learning ballet, and Eliot participates in soccer and karate.

Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, Matt and his family have embraced the daily adventure of city life. Each day brings new contact with people from diverse backgrounds. The noise is constant. Fire trucks wail, cars honk, and the subway gently rattles their home as it passes underneath. But for Matt, a chocolate chocolate-chip cookie from one of the city’s bakeries compensates for the obnoxious sounds. Additionally, the family has found that they enjoy their city experience more if they can escape to upstate New York at least once a semester. While they vacation in the country, the Terrell family has found a home among the driven and creative students living in New York City.

– by Rebecca Trudeau

## Spring Reflections



“I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”  
*Matthew 16:18*

One of the reasons I love college ministry is the opportunity to work with wonderful and talented people – ministers, staff, interns, and students. These people are amazingly gifted and work extraordinarily

hard. The stories you read in this newsletter would not have happened without the hard work of RUF people. Churches all over the Northeast contribute by supporting this ministry. You have a role, too! Your prayers and donations are part of a huge network of people God has assembled to reach college students with the gospel and equip them to serve God, the university, the church, and

the world.

But we do not build the church. Jesus does. And He doesn’t always do it the way we wish. It is so easy to get caught up in the rush of activities that we begin thinking it we who build the church. Then it is a very small step to thinking it must be done our way, or it will fail. And a small step to burn-out.

The good news is that Jesus will build His church! This is His promise, and it will not fail. We may fail, our ministries may fail, but Jesus will not fail. This means that we can relax and let Jesus do it the way He wants.

One of the deep mysteries of the gospel is that Jesus should use us to do His work. The more clearly we see Jesus, and the more clearly we understand ourselves, we grasp the significance of Jesus’ comment that “We are unprofitable servants” (Luke 17:10). Even with our amazing gifts (which came from Jesus, of course), at our best we are more trouble than we are worth. Yet Jesus uses us – apparently because He *wants* to use us – and builds His church even with us in the way. So we can relax and work hard, knowing that Jesus will use our work, but will not let our weaknesses slow the growth of the church.

I hope you were encouraged by the stories in this newsletter. RUF is growing! RUF is contributing to the growth of the church! This is exciting, and I am glad to be part of this great work. But our greatest joy is knowing that we belong to Jesus, that He is building the church, and that He will make us useful in some way. Praise God!



## NORTHEAST Prayer Requests, March 2019

1. Pray for our new campus ministers as they get settled into their campuses and communities:  
1<sup>st</sup> year: Oliver Pierce (IUP)  
2<sup>nd</sup> year: Brent Kilman (Rowan); Peter Green (WVU)
2. Pray for those ministries with substantial funds to raise:  
Oliver Pierce (IUP)                      Daryl Wattley (Del State)  
Brent Kilman (Rowan)                  Nate Bower (U of Akron)  
Peter Green (WVU)
3. Pray for recruiting and preparation for summer conferences in May.

