



# NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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## Jesus Makes All Things New



I was raised Roman Catholic. I would go to Sunday School only because my parents made me – and because there were snacks. I was an altar server (someone who assists the priest during Mass). I volunteered often and even played piano for Masses.

Now I realize that I was just going through the motions every Sunday and nitpicking at what I wanted to follow and what I didn't want to follow. As the priest would talk, I would sit and doze off and think about other things. I was only at church because my parents brought me there, not because I wanted to be there. I had taken piano lessons for eleven years and volunteered to play piano for Mass. I felt as if I were being paid to go to church because I was paid to play piano. Although I came to realize all of these things, I would still go to church with my parents. I ignored those red flags.

During the summer before my sophomore year I began an internship on a Naval base near my house. A lot of it was spent waiting for my computer access so I could actually do something productive. While waiting I spent a lot of time reading. While reading one day I heard someone walk up behind me and ask, "Is it okay if I sit here? I don't have a cube." I turned and found another intern standing behind me. I figured it would be fine because 1) my cube was temporary for the summer and 2) I didn't want to be rude and say no.

Because the other intern and I were both waiting for computer access, we didn't really have anything to do. For the rest of the summer we spent many hours playing Uno and Connect Four on a white board. He even taught me how to play chess. We got to know each other really well because we had literally nothing else to do. One day while we were counting wires in a lab, I asked him, "What is your stance on religion?" He replied with a long-winded response and then asked me, "What's your stance on religion?" I felt my guard go up and replied, "I go to church." That's all I said. "I go to church." I did go to church. I was an altar server. I volunteered. I was part of the music ministry. I went through the sacrament of Confirmation. I did all of those things, yet I felt so uncomfortable when asked about my faith. I was Catholic after all, right? Another red flag I pushed aside.

Another day he asked, "Are you waiting for marriage? Or are you waiting for the right person?" Before answering, I thought for a moment. My parents had always told me, "Sex is for marriage," but they never explained WHY. My parents never really talked openly about sex. With hesitation, I responded by saying, "Yes," but never clearly answered either question. Deep down, I knew what my answer should have been.

That intern and I started dating. Even though he went to school at Arizona State University, we decided to give it a shot. As we got to know each other more, I learned that he wasn't a Christian. It kind of bothered me in a way, but I only wanted to check off a box so that my parents would like him more. I did not care whether he had an actual relationship with God.

Fast forward to this past January during winter break, I went to visit my best friend who goes to the University of Alabama. Since UA's classes began before UMD's, I spent a lot of time in her apartment and got to talk to her roommate whose faith is strong. I told her about all the red flags I'd ignored and how Catholicism wasn't for me anymore. She told me about the Church of the Highlands, the church she attends. It streams its sermons online. She recommended that I watch their series about relationships.

One of the sermons answered Biblically WHY sex is for marriage. What convinced me was realizing that sex is God-given, therefore it should be God-governed. When sex was originally given, it was within the covenant of marriage – when two become one. Two becoming one cannot be "un-one-ed." If God sent His Son to die for my sins, how could I live under sin's rule a moment longer?

By this time my boyfriend had already gone back to school. I had to FaceTime him to tell him about my “faith crisis.” He was nothing but understanding, patient, and kind. He completely respected my decision to wait and pursue a relationship with God, which I’m so thankful for. After our conversation something in him changed. It’s so hard to describe. Somehow our conversation led him to God because he is now a Christian. I’ve watched his personality shift ever since our conversation in January. He got baptized. At home, we found a church to attend together. God has truly worked in both of our lives.

When this past spring semester started, a good friend of mine helped me do research for Christian groups on campus. She ended up finding RUF’s website. I contacted Chris that same day in an email. We ended up meeting the next day at the Second Look Fair.

I’ve grown so much in my faith within these past nine months. No amount of ‘church going’ will save you. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...” Today, the intern and I are still dating and have made Jesus the center of our relationship. We have worked through various problems and we have built a stronger foundation for our relationship. Although we decided to wait for marriage two years into our relationship, Jesus makes all things new. It’s definitely not been easy. We’ve had many times of weakness but God has strengthened us in times of need.

Looking back, I now see how God has been working in my life. God worked through my boyfriend who challenged my faith. I wouldn’t be here if he hadn’t done so. God drew me to Himself. God forgave me. And God brought me to RUF. I’ve met so many amazing people here who are such lights in this world. Thank you. Remember, “...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13)

*Julia Republica, class of 2020  
University of Maryland*

## Reaching Students for Christ...

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Occasionally people ask if RUF does evangelism. Of course we do! RUF also does a lot of things, like discipleship, preaching, and counseling – but “reaching students for Christ” is central to our mission. Also central is “equipping students to serve,” and part of serving others is proclaiming the gospel. Here are a few snapshots of RUF groups engaging in evangelism.

### University of Delaware

Last spring our Ministry Team spent time thinking about evangelism. Even for solid believers the thought of engaging in a purposeful discussion about Jesus with unbeliev-

ing friends is a bit daunting. There are many reasons for this. One reason is that sometimes we feel like we’re not sure exactly what to say. So to help our leaders, last spring we spent time thinking and practicing what they might say in such conversations. I said to them, “if you have no idea what you’d say to someone about Jesus you likely never will. If you have an idea of how to talk about the gospel with people, it’s not that it won’t be hard or scary, but you’ll be ready in moments where there is an opportunity.” I wanted them to be prepared for such an opportunity.

We thought about the message of the gospel in the scriptures as well as how evangelism happens in the Bible. Toward the end of the spring semester each student prepared an eight minute presentation that they gave to two other leaders, rotating and giving feedback. It was helpful for our students to practice walking someone through one or more passages of the Bible, explaining, discussing, and inviting people to hear and believe in Jesus.

One of our leaders was working on this in her apartment one night and one of her non-Christian roommates asked, “What are you working on?” What an opportunity! She had been thinking about the gospel and preparing for our “practice” at the upcoming Ministry Team meeting and that preparation ended up allowing her to talk with her roommate about Jesus. *Nick Owens, Campus Minister at University of Delaware*

### Brown University/ Rhode Island School of Design

We had our upperclass men’s Bible study last night, studying Exodus 3 – how almighty God called a sinful, weak, and doubtful Moses to be his instrument of deliverance for Israel from Pharaoh. We had a junior in the group share that he ran into an acquaintance of his from freshman year (two years ago), someone he barely ever sees any more. But he ran into her in CVS, and after a moment’s casual greeting, she shared, “I’ve been meaning to reach out to you. I’ve been thinking about it a lot, and I want to know more about God. And I know you’re a Christian. Do you think you could help me?” It was only a chance encounter while running errands, and it caught him off guard. He was surprised. She never seemed to him to be the type of person who’d be interested in the gospel, but lo and behold. He asked us to pray for him to believe more in the fact that God really is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine...to believe more that no one is out of God’s reach... and for him not to be ashamed of the gospel. So we prayed as a group for him and his friend. *Eddie Park, Campus Minister at Brown University/RISD*

### Rowan University

In spring of 2018 I met Josh while doing evangelism on campus. Josh was the head of the Social Justice Center on campus and he was very concerned about issues of equality and representation. I shared with him the gospel

and we agreed to meet again. When we would meet, Josh asked me questions about theology, particularly about assurance. Josh had grown up nominally church and had walked away in high school in the aftermath of a race-based event he witnessed. I told him our assurance is based on Christ's record and not ours, if we believe that he is the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Josh put his faith in Christ and began attending church with me. Then the school year ended and Josh went home. In the Fall he returned and we started talking again and I found that he had not been baptized or partaken of the Lord's Supper. We met with the elders and Josh shared his testimony. In November I baptized him. In the spring he graduated. Just last week he got a job in Baltimore at Johns Hopkins University. Before he moved, he told me, "I'm so thankful that I'm one of those few who walked away from the church but God brought back. I'm grateful to God for RUF and for Mercy Hill Church to share the message of Jesus with me and to teach me what it means to follow him. I'm looking forward to following him as I begin my work and life in Baltimore." *Brent Kilman, Campus Minister at Rowan University*

### Lehigh University

Carter and I sat down over lunch. He had come regularly to Large Group as well as our Thursday night Bible study, but the most recent Bible study had really shaken him. He wasn't sure what to do next. We talked for some time about Jesus and then he said, "What should I do?" I opened my Bible to Acts 2 and read from Peter's sermon at Pentecost.

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

I closed my Bible, looked up from my reading, and said to him "Repent, believe, and be baptized!" He looked astonished. "Now?" he asked. "Yes!" I responded. So we bowed our heads and prayed. Carter was baptized a few weeks later and continues to grow in the LORD.

It had taken 15 months to get to that point. In a post-Christian culture, evangelism generally takes longer. But I wouldn't have changed the wait. It was well worth it. Praise God for his work in Carter's life! *Michael Goodlin, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

## Stay Connected to RUF!

Today I am at Rowan University where students are leading Bible studies and then racing off to study for exams this week. Even in the busiest time, RUF students make time for ministry. You can help reach students for Christ by donating to RUF. Make donations to RUF here:



<https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. ← Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.

Keep up with RUF in the Northeast by visiting our website! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org). And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

## Focus on Brent Kilman



From its beginnings as a student organization in September 2017 as the offshoot of local Mercy Hill Presbyterian Church, itself founded in 2010, Rowan University RUF has grown into an established resource attracting newcomers as well as supporting covenant children seeking to work out their salvation. Christian freshmen entering their first week of

classes as part of the 18,560-member student body in Glassboro, New Jersey initially reported feeling "out of place here as a Christian," RUF Campus Minister Brent Kilman cites. He observes that for the majority of Rowan's students, their world is one "where religious beliefs are [either] personal practices and have no real impact on day to day living, or they are dangerous views held by extremists who should be monitored." For Christian students living in this environment, Rowan RUF provides solid teaching to further their understanding of their faith and what it means to live as exiles in a hostile world. One graduate student who was baptized in November of 2018 testified that against his own expectations, "I'm one of those rare people who left the church but God called back." He went on to credit the preaching ministry and mentoring of Phillip Henry, the pastor of Mercy Hill, as an influential church home to which Rowan RUF moved him. Such a testimony is a commendation for the Reformed University Fellowship model of pastoral ministry: keying college fellowships in to local bodies of Christ who have prayed for them since their conception.

As for the student Kilman quoted as feeling "out of place," the rest of the story goes on to describe her banging on her roommate's bathroom door when she heard Christian music. Although she was unfamiliar with RUF or the PCA

denomination, its reputation on campus was such that she picked out an RUF Bible Study for her and her sister in Christ to attend together.

Rowan RUF's semester is off to a busy start. A Scavenger Hunt and Jeopardy Trivia Challenge are among the outreach activities held so far. The first Large Group Meeting of praise, prayer, and teaching drew 20 students, including a freshman student beleaguered with the social frenzy and expectations of the first week of classes. "He didn't know if he could leave his room to come to a meeting. He came to one of our meetings and was encouraged in the time spent with other Christian students," Kilman reported.

Along with the Large Group Meeting, there are three ongoing small group Bible Studies led by Rowan University students who spent their summers in RUF-sponsored Bible study-focused leadership training. These Bible Studies attract students formerly unaware of RUF as well as students undergoing spiritual decline. Brent Kilman has been shepherding a student through one-on-one coffee dates and, finally, Bible Study attendance who last Spring confessed that "I don't think I'm a Christian anymore." Through the tireless labors of spiritual shepherds such as Brent, these college Christians in-between a solid profession can nevertheless begin "re-engaging our Christian community. Pray for God to continue his work!" Kilman writes.

It's clear there is room for leaders as well as seekers in this community. Some of Rowan RUF's core members have developed interest in theological training after college. The Word-centered teaching from the parables, drawing partly from Kilman's summertime pulpit supply in Vancouver, B.C., as well as from Habbakuk during a recent student retreat has prompted students to re-evaluate (while maintaining appreciation for) the varied Christian traditions of their upbringing.

Brent Kilman asks prayer for his wife Juli and son Eben as they adjust to new settings. Juli recently began a new job as a Kindergarten teacher, and Eben has started 1<sup>st</sup> grade at a new school. While both love their new situations, the business of the first month of the semester can impose on their family time together. Pray for Brent's encouragement as he labors as pastor whose parish is this college, a place with an "oppressive cultural climate" in which he must "spend great amounts of time talking with students, pleading the gospel" and, for a time, "seeing them reject Jesus." Pray, too, for the friendships and fruit produced by the Fall Conference, held from September 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, which

Brent hopes will "bond together as a group and to strengthen our connections as a Christian community on campus at Rowan."

– by Sarah Durham

## Autumn Reflections



"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." *Luke 19:10*

He was a dirty traitor and cheat, and Jesus chose to have dinner with him! People were angry and confused. How could such a good man and wise teacher do such a despicable thing?

Jesus did a lot of things. He taught the crowds, healed the sick, cast out demons, trained twelve apostles, drove merchants out of the temple – and the crowds loved it! But central to His mission was saving sinners – sinners, such as traitorous, cheating tax collectors – the sort of people that decent Jews did not associate with.

Evangelism is a messy business because it involves close proximity to sinners. We long for family and friends to come to Jesus, but sinners – not so much. We would rather not associate with the troubled people in our communities. Jesus would not be deterred by the disgust that good Jews had for sinners. May He give us His love for the lost and His commitment to seek them wherever they may be found.

## NORTHEAST Prayer Requests, October 2019

1. Pray for God to give us a deeper love for sinners.
2. Pray for non-Christian students connected to RUF who are close to the kingdom, but have not professed faith. Pray that God would remove their sinful pride, change their hearts, and bring them to repentance!
3. Michael Goodlin at Lehigh especially asks prayer for David K. to believe in Jesus.
4. Pray that the sermons of RUF ministers would clearly and compellingly proclaim the gospel.
5. Pray for fall training conferences coming up in November.

