



# NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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## The World Turned Upside Down

The spring semester began normally enough. Students returned to classes and RUF Bible studies resumed. New England RUFs went to Newport for their winter conference, and other schools had retreats. The coronavirus was causing havoc in China, but nowhere else. Yet. But by March it was beginning to spread all over the world. RUF canceled all international travel. Within a space of two weeks most universities had sent students home and moved all classes online for the rest of the semester, and RUF had ceased all face-to-face activity. Here are some snapshots of ministry before and after the pandemic hit.

## Gathering on Campus

### New York City

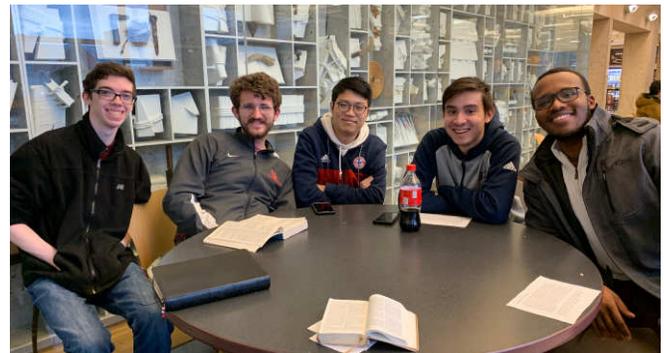
Just before all the COVID-19 chaos began in the U.S., several schools from the Northeast gathered in Newport, R.I. for our annual Winter Conference. On a Saturday afternoon walk along the picturesque cliffs of Newport, Xing (a non-Christian student who had never been to a Christian gathering until a couple of weeks ago) told me with a smile that he'd never experienced anything like the warmth and kindness of the RUF City Campus community. Karli texted me a few days after the conference and said that the weekend was amazing and that it helped her grow closer to God. Maddie said that the teaching over the weekend inspired her to start studying the Bible with her roommate. I've had the opportunity to follow up with each of these students in the weeks since the conference and it is apparent that God is continuing to stir in their hearts even as they've all scattered to various corners of the world. *Matt Terrell, Campus Minister in New York City*



RUF New York City at Winter Conference in Newport, R.I.

### University of Connecticut

This is the last picture of in-person ministry that I have. It is from Thursday, March 12 at our guys' Bible study. We all joked that it might be the last time we see each other for a long time, not thinking that it could actually be true. We continued in our study of James, had a great discussion, and at the end one of the guys said, "We should take a picture of this!" I'm really thankful that he did, because I've grown to love each of these guys as we have studied God's Word together this semester. Spring break is this week and next week we will try to resume things like Bible studies virtually, but it will be hard to replicate the fellowship we've enjoyed this semester. I guess one of the good parts about pandemic and quarantine is that we will all more greatly appreciate the face-to-face interactions that we found mundane just a week ago. *Lucas Dourado, Campus Minister at University of Connecticut*



Men's Bible Study at UConn

### University of Maryland

On March 9th we were anticipating heading to Chattanooga for our Spring Break Mission trip on March 14th-20. That all changed when our university president sent out orders limiting travel, and giving indication that a shutdown was coming, and to practice social distancing. What did that even mean? Would we be able to have Large Group, small groups, one-on-ones? By God's grace we were still able to have our last Supper Club (Large Group Meeting) on March 11th and many students showed up, some visibly concerned and anxious. I preached on Psalm 27 dealing with fear and anxiety and how we are to preach the gospel to ourselves in the midst of fear and panic knowing we have a God who is our light and our salvation. After large group we had students come forward for prayer if anyone wanted special attention. Seniors were visibly shaken and concerned not knowing if this was the last time they would be together on campus with their friends.

A few days later we learned that was the case as the Uni-

versity of Maryland moved classes online for the rest of the semester and graduation was canceled. We are in adjustment mode now, checking in on students via text and messaging and seeking to set up viable ministry times through video chat. Our goal is to help students know that God reigns, He is good and loving and working through this for His glory and our sanctification. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*

## Scattered into the World

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### University of Vermont

Last week Sarah Jayne (intern) and I began reaching out to students and figuring out where they were physically and emotionally/spiritually? Were they at home or on campus? How were they feeling (anxious, afraid, sad, mad, etc.)? Our servant team is meeting tonight via Zoom to check-in on each other; as a team we are asking what does it mean to “connect with Jesus, experience his goodness, and channel his love” in quarantine? And of course, we are in prayer. Even before tonight’s meeting, we have developed plans for what “connecting, experiencing, and channeling” will look like moving forward. We will be starting small groups next week using Zoom, and we will be hosting movie nights (and other social gatherings) using Netflix party and other apps. More to follow. *John Meinen, Campus Minister at University of Vermont*

### University of Pittsburgh

Ministry is not slowing down! On the contrary – we have all the avenues up and running virtually – I had ten calls on Wednesday, including a women’s small group where students were more vulnerable than usual, and some talked more than ever, with great insights into the text!

Our Large Group Livestream – complete with Welcome, Announcements, Prayer by Callie, Music by Val (a grad and upcoming intern at University of Maryland next semester), AV by Zenny, Message by Derek – had more views than ever attended at one time so far this semester, 80+, in some cases with multiple viewers in roommates or families. *Callie Miller, Campus Staff at University of Pittsburgh*



Screenshot of Pitt RUF Ministry Team virtual meeting

### Rowan University

“What RUF at Rowan University is doing in response to COVID 19”

If you didn’t receive an email like this from RUF, you’ve surely received many from companies you’ve had any business with ever before. Like everyone else, we are pressed to come up with innovative ways to stay in touch with students that we may continue our work of connecting students with Jesus Christ and equipping them to serve Him, even and especially in this time of crisis.

RUF at Rowan University is engaging students virtually through continuing our student-led small group Bible studies on *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament*, connecting as a large group for weekly devotional encouragement from pastor Brent, and pursuing virtual social activities led by a different student each week. Everything in our lives has been upturned, but we thank God for His providence that this virus would strike and drive us into quarantine at a time when we have technology available that allows us to use video streaming to reach out to each other visually even while we are practicing “social distancing.” Pray for God’s mercy to deliver us from this pandemic virus and to drive us to connect more deeply with Him and with each other. *Brent Kilman, Campus Minister at Rowan University*

### University of Delaware

I want you to take a moment and imagine students. Imagine students, many who already struggle with loneliness, anxiety, stress, and depression, now at home, by themselves...While our ministry must flex and change to follow the guidelines of University Delaware and what we continue to hear from the CDC, students, perhaps now more than ever, need ministry. They need the scriptures to come alive in their hearts and minds. They need the Spirit to awaken them and anchor their hearts to the only hope that will never fade or perish. They need prayer and the help of the Spirit. Please Pray for Students!!

This week RUF is launching our weekly Wednesday virtual gathering. Our virtual meetings will provide continual encouragement and connection for students. I will still teach, students will still break up into groups to discuss Scripture, care for each other, and pray. This week we will look at Romans 8 together. In Romans 8:26 where Paul writes, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness,” the word *weakness* is in the singular. David Powlison said, “It does not say *weaknesses* as if there were a finite list of sins A-B-C, and sufferings X-Y-Z in your life. *Weakness* singular is a comprehensive description of our human condition. We are perishable. We are mortal. We face a multitude of afflictions in our lives. And we are sinful, bent from the heart towards pride, self-righteousness, fear of man, and a multitude of desires and fears that beset us. The mercies of God meet us in this comprehensive condition of weakness.” *Nick Owens, Campus Minister at University of Delaware*

### Lehigh University

What is a teacher without students? What is a preacher without anyone to preach to? What is a pastor without the people? Due to Lehigh's closure, the work that I love was ripped out from underneath me. No more face-to-face meetings. No more group laughter at Bible studies. No more shared tears over God's faithfulness in difficult circumstances. No more outreach. Or at least, so I thought. It turns out I was more taken aback by Lehigh's closure than my students were!

Not a week into the remote learning protocols, the student leaders were taking charge. "When are we going meet for Zoom Bible studies? Who is going to lead this week? How are we keeping track of everyone? What can we pray for? Their questions kept coming! It is has been remarkable to see my students hunger for God's word and continue His work even in the midst of isolation. Now that our Bible studies are back "online," there seems to be more fervor than before. Participation is up and our Bible studies are growing. Praise God! *Michael Goodlin, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

## Stay Connected to RUF!

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Did you think that closing the universities would mean the end of RUF ministry? Ha! Within hours of the news of campus closing, ministers, staff, interns, and students were researching and installing means of continuing our ministry online. As I type, I am getting notifications of ministers and staff planning an online event tomorrow. We are as busy as ever ministering to students, and we need your support. Please use the prayer card to pray for us. You may make donations here: <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. →Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.



I am posting the latest developments with our response to the coronavirus on our Northeast 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 Nate Bower

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When the members of Reformed University Fellowship at the University of Akron learned last week that they would be moving to online instruction after an extended spring break, it was not only the students that faced an unwelcome break from a busy ministry schedule. Nate Bower,



his wife Naomi, and especially his kids Ruby (6) and William (2) all miss the weekly gatherings of students and ministry teams at their home for meals, mini-retreats, and game nights. They miss fellow believers who have become their friends (as well as favorite baby-sitters!).

Nate has faith that both the campus fellowship and the city of Akron will weather this period of economic and social isolation. An alumnus of the University himself, he and his family still attend Redeemer Church (PCA) in nearby Hudson, a church his parents helped plant in 1995. After graduating with a major in Biology in 2009, Bower interned at Belhaven University in Jackson, Mississippi. In 2011 he returned to Akron – and stayed. It pays to stick around. Nate described one of the most fulfilling experiences as seeing Akron revitalize – after the tire industry was hit hard by the 2008 financial crisis. For a time it became a difficult and dangerous place to live, but recent years have seen an increase in new infrastructure and small businesses. It has given him joy to see people "taking pride in their place again." Nate and his family have put down roots here for good. The coronavirus lockdown has afforded the Bowers plenty of time together outdoors walking, hunting, and recreating at nearby national parks. It has also given them time to regroup as they prepare for the next step. After renovating their current home in preparation for its sale, next on the list is an even bigger renovation challenge. An 1870 farmhouse near the city will soon become their new home, farm animals included. University of Akron RUF students will no doubt enjoy this change!

Nate and his family's commitment to Akron has borne an enduring witness on campus since 2014, the year Nate started an RUF chapter at the University. During normal semester operations, the fellowship offers a large group meeting as well as prayer meeting and Bible studies. This semester there is a seminar on personal responsibility in finances drawing partly from Dave Ramsey's *Total Money Makeover*. On a heavily commuter-based campus, Nate and Naomi's weekly opening of their home to the 20 to 30 members of the Akron RUF is a message in action to the students. Many of them come from varied Christian backgrounds. Although the PCA is not particularly prominent in Ohio, RUF's reputation as a kind, welcoming, and Jesus-centered community has drawn Catholic, Nazarene, and New Mennonite students to its ranks. Still more who attend have no Christian upbringing and are encountering the gospel for the first time.

As a fellowship of intimate numbers and small staff, its members have grown close enough to experience and resolve conflicts with each other. The stresses of balancing the needs of both freshmen and job-searching seniors were not absent this year, and Nate expressed thankfulness in how God used this discovery of human weakness to bring glory to Himself and relational healing. Roughly 65% of Akron graduates, especially those in its prestigious engineering program, are drawn by Akron's corporate opportunities to stay around after graduation. The Bowers' presence and witness is therefore an investment for the long term, with much hope of return.

– by Sarah Durham

## Spring Reflections



"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." *Hebrews 4:12*

...an oft-quoted verse, and beloved by many Christians. But I suspect that many of us really wish it said "the *pastor* is living and active and powerful...discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." When you are paid to do a job and devote your life to a vocation, you want it to *mean* something! You want to matter to people. When you are a

pastor or evangelist, or a parent or teacher, you want to make a difference in the lives of those you are called to serve. And justifiably so. What sort of pastors, evangelists, parents, or teachers would we be if we cared nothing for our people?

Yet the sober truth is that though we are called to serve, we do not have the ability to change others. We are not smart enough, or strong enough, or loving enough to penetrate into the hearts and minds of people, which is where lasting change occurs. So we flirt with manipulation and occasionally retreat into despondency.

The good news is that God changes people! He's been doing it for thousands of years and He is still doing it. God changes people by His word, which *does* have the power to penetrate down to our innermost being and change us all the way up.

We are seeing this right now in college students. Satan can send the coronavirus into the world to disrupt and kill, but he cannot disrupt or kill the word of God. As these students scatter all over the U.S. and the world, the word of God planted in them is active and bearing fruit. It only took a few days for students to begin meeting by video conference for prayer and Bible study. Students are flocking to online RUF meetings where our ministers continue preaching the gospel each week.

How did they know to do this? RUF ministers have been immersing students in the word of God and equipping them to read and study the scripture on their own. We have been showing them that life is found only in Jesus and comes through His word. Our goal is not to have great RUF groups, but to send strong, maturing alumni into the church and the world to serve wherever God places them. We are seeing a small foretaste of that this semester!

*David Green*

Prayer card below.





# NORTHEAST

Prayer Requests, March 2020

1. Pray for God to halt the spread of this coronavirus!
2. Pray for wisdom for leaders in church and state as they seek to limit loss and provide for our well-being.
3. Pray for students whose lives have been upset by campus closure, separation from friends and ministry, and end of campus life such as graduation ceremonies.
4. Pray for fruitful ministry by phone, text, and computer.
5. Pray for God's power to be displayed in our weakness.

