



MID-ATLANTIC NEWS

REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE MID-ATLANTIC

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Strange

Strange. That is the word that keeps coming to mind when I think of this semester. Difficult, surprising, disappointing, encouraging. These words also. And hard. It's terribly hard to minister when university restrictions keep changing from week to week, and when it's impossible to meet most of your students in person. But Jesus promised to build His church – and He is! You didn't think Jesus took a vacation this year, did you? Here is some of what Jesus is doing on campuses around the Mid-Atlantic.

On the Campus and On the Screen

University of Akron

I can't put into words how difficult and strange doing ministry in these conditions is. It is particularly frustrating and agonizing because life doesn't stop. Students can't pause their desire and need for friendship and community. Satan hasn't paused his attacks on the spiritual well-being of students, and their isolation has increased their vulnerability. One freshman I have met with this semester simply broke down in tears when I asked her what the hardest part of her college experience has been so far.

"I'm just so lonely and haven't been able to make any friends."

This is the cry of so many students right now. Would you pray that God would meet them in their loneliness with the hope of the gospel and connect them with a community of believers that would support and care for them? We are trying to reach them and it is hard. Ask God to help us. *Nate Bower, Campus Minister at University of Akron*

Johns Hopkins University

This fall semester I have a chance to teach students from the Gospel of John. Our theme of study is "Discovering Who Jesus Truly is." In chapter 1 John uses several titles for Jesus: the Word of God, the Light, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Son of Man. I asked our students which ones are more meaningful to them and why. One says, "The Light, because Jesus can help me see what I can't." Another one says, "The Son of God, because it shows that Jesus is God." Another one says, "The Lamb of God, because Jesus died as our substitute." Another one says, "The Son of God, because we are children of God, too. We are a family." Another one says, "All of them. All are important to me." :) I can feel that God is surely working in their hearts, as they study His word and try to discover who Jesus truly is. *Jacob Jasin, RUF-I Campus Minister at Johns Hopkins University*



International students at Johns Hopkins learning to make s'mores



Akron Zoom Bible study

University of Maryland

We really believe that your prayers are making the difference during our freshman outreach period and the campus restrictions due to the pandemic. Typically we are able to do all kinds of outreach and giveaway-information events on the campus to meet new students. On a typical year we probably interact with 500 students and get about 100 new contacts to follow up with. But not this year! We started the year not being able to have any in-person events on OR off campus. But in spite of these restrictions the Lord has connected us with about 25 new students! Most of these are new freshmen who found out about us through our website connected to the university's religious club listing. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*



Lehigh RUF Zoom Photo Competition

University of Delaware

“The Asian scholar seems very close to believing in Jesus.” “Our new Middle Eastern friend is ravished with spiritual hunger... She said she will join us for Dinner & Discussion again.” “Rick, would you teach me the Bible?” These words were all written or spoken to me in the last two weeks, as RUF-I’s ministry at UD is now in full swing.

At our Thursday night Bible discussions we are studying the “I AM” statements in John’s Gospel to answer the question: “Who Is Jesus?” Last week 33 participants joined the online study, as we examined Jesus’ claim, “I am the Bread of Life.” Our global guests were challenged by this incredible assertion from our Savior!

As a way to reflect God’s love, RUF-I is providing Free Meal Fridays. In the first two weeks of operation we delivered over 100 delicious dinners to UD international students. It’s a wonderful way to meet and serve these dear friends who are so far away from home. “Thanks for the Peruvian chicken and for the love from your organization,” wrote an appreciative visiting scholar! *Rick Grey, RUF-I Campus Minister at University of Delaware*

Lehigh University

James, a senior who has been a part of the ministry since his freshman year, was shocked. In the midst of isolation, separation, and meetings over Zoom, he described how the Holy Spirit worked to illuminate the passage and watched as the LORD applied the text to students’ hearts through the questions he had developed. “That was the best Bible study I have ever been a part of.”

James wasn’t the only who was shocked, I was too! Given our circumstances, I never would have thought that our Bible studies would be richer this year compared to previous years. But so far they have been. Numerous students have told me how much they have appreciated our Bible Studies.

Praise God for his work through our Bible Studies! *Michael Goodlin, Campus Minister at Lehigh University*

Penn State University

Pedals for a Purpose

This is a drive to provide used bikes for new international students arriving this fall semester. Due to the virus the availability of bikes has seriously decreased. When everyone went into quarantine many families purchased bikes for family recreation. Also, the bike share company has left Penn State campus, creating a greater need for adult bikes in general. This drive has provided us a way to meet new students. Our welcome table is not being allowed this



RUF-I at Penn State bikes for international students

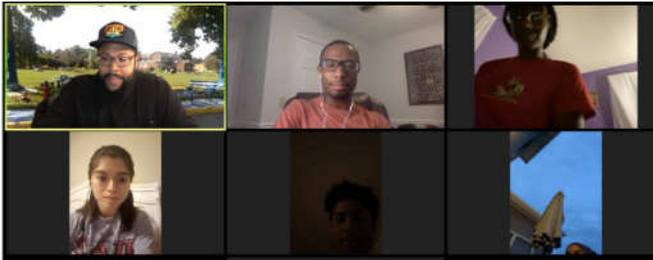
year due to COVID. We asked people in our presbytery to help by donating their used bikes to RUF-International. Since the 12th of August RUF-I has given away over 45 bikes to new international graduate students. The program has been continued until October 15 as bikes are still being donated. This has been a great way to care for the internationals at Penn State and may become a yearly program. *Richard Smith, RUF-I Campus Minister at Penn State University*

Delaware State University

2020 has been a wild ride to say the least! So far we have survived a pandemic, riots, an economic collapse, school closures, the cancellation of everything, masks, church closures and virtual worship and so much more. 2020 is not at all what I imagined it would be, but through it all I always believed God would be there for my family, my students, and myself. Though we have been through great

trials we have also experienced much blessing.

Most recently, we have been given permission by DSU to continue meeting on campus and hold small groups in the dorms. While we are not naive to the dangers of Covid, we are hoping the Lord will protect us as we meet in small groups and take all the proper precautions to keep each other safe. Moreover, we have a fantastic group of student leaders... easily the best we have ever had. They love Jesus. They love DSU. They have enormous character. They also have a great desire to grow and lead others to Christ. I am so excited to see what God has in store for us this semester. *Daryl Wattley, Campus Minister at Delaware State University*



Daryl (top left) leading a Zoom video Bible study

Stay Connected to RUF!

Thanks for your continued interest and support of RUF's ministry on college and university campuses! During a year of tumultuous events and constant changes, we have been powerfully encouraged by the steadfastness of our supporters. We couldn't do this ministry without you!

You can get more current RUF news on our area website. Go to <http://rufmidatlantic.org/> or scan this code →



If you haven't donated to RUF, now is a good time to start! Go to <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. → Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at MidAtlantic@ruf.org. And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at MidAtlantic@ruf.org.

Focus on Michael Goodlin

When Michael Goodlin describes his background and training prior to joining RUF at Lehigh University in 2017, he has a comforting way of tracing God's hand of guidance through each stage of duty and difficulty. At Nyack College in New York he majored in Communications with a focus on Music Business. The former missionary training



college had a "charismatic emphasis and it was my first time being submerged in that sort of environment," but Goodlin says that the Bible classes that underpinned his music business studies were God's way of seeing him "inadvertently being trained for ministry."

Goodlin says he became a Christian "through no fault of my own." When he was a teen, a large tow truck T-boned his '65 Mustang. "Had I been driving any other car, I might have died," he summed up an incident that he said was God's answer to his mother's prayers for him to be brought to faith. After college he learned basic administrative and managerial skills through corporate work before attending Westminster Theological Seminary in Glenside, PA. The seminary training was crucial, but Goodlin says even his sales and management work provided him with "skills necessary for effective ministry in RUF." After seminary, Goodlin completed an internship at New City Fellowship of Lancaster, Pennsylvania while serving the RUF community of Millersville University, finally stepping into the career for which God had been equipping him.

It's encouraging to think how Goodlin's testimony about God's work in his own life has influenced students at Lehigh University, the community he and his wife, Natasha, serve. Lehigh students are facing a mostly online college semester this fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic that, to quote one of Lehigh's own press releases covering student reactions, is "forcing a lot of people to slow down and reflect on their lives." Under normal circumstances, Goodlin characterizes Lehigh's spiritual landscape as a "strange combination of rationalism, post-modernism, and paganism." Lehigh's reputation as an engineering school ensures "a large part of the campus is grounded in enlightenment ideals about reality being something 'out there' that is fixed which we then investigate." But this leads, on one hand, to a view of truth as "something which we find, not, as Jesus asserts, something that has to be revealed to us." On the other hand is the humanities departments, in which, as Goodlin puts it, "Experience is king and truth is superfluous."

Michael and Natasha's prayer is that not despite, but because of the virus, more opportunities will arise for Christ to be preached to students of both tendencies. Lehigh RUF's landing page states that it ministers not only to the

“convinced” but to the “confused and cynical.” This semester at Lehigh might see more and more of those as students battle isolation, three-hour dorm unpacking windows, the cancellation of all sporting, Arts Center, and Greek events, and occasionally the burden of quarantine. (September 29 marked the first on-campus positive COVID case.)

Goodlin is one of the many church leaders who continue to require God’s wisdom and insight into being faithful yet cautious in maintaining their ministry’s reputation during the pandemic. Lehigh RUF has had to adapt to the university’s policy instructing students to “avoid large gatherings including off-campus parties.” “At least 70% of my returning students are remote, and even the upperclassmen living off-campus near the school are not allowed on campus if they are fully remote,” Goodlin explained, which led to Lehigh RUF’s decision to make virtual all of its activities. In light of a recent campus announcement targeted at students swiping in fully-remote classmates into school facilities, it’s clear that a loose adherence to the university’s guidelines could produce immediate fallout for an extracurricular group. “We switched our large group meeting, Bible study, and social events to Zoom. While the students have been real troopers, it’s still a difficult environment for them to work in,” Goodlin observed. Student leaders in Lehigh RUF have been supporting each other as they share their struggle with fatigue, burnout, and isolation, as well as remaining motivated in their mostly online coursework.

Michael, Natasha, and their three children are all part of Lehigh RUF. “Under normal circumstances, we see most of our students at church on Sunday and student leaders are over to our house every other Sunday night. Our kids talk about them all the time,” he shared. Natasha has also been diligent in discipling some of the female students. The summer camp at the end of each school year has traditionally been a highlight for the Goodlin family as well.

The Goodlins’ pandemic hobby is bee keeping: “We had our first batch of honey this August and it was delicious.” They also enjoy dabbling in various types of homemade foods, reading, camping, hiking, and walking in parks. “Reading is a big part of the kids’ bedtime routine. We are currently halfway through the Narnia series.” The kids are currently tackling bike riding: even the 18-month-old has a balance bike!

For Goodlin and his family, he’s found that he “can’t think of a greater opportunity for growth than being on a college campus.” His own words put it best:

College ministry is like working in a laboratory environment or, to use a sports analogy, practicing in a batting cage. All things being equal, you have four years to cut your teeth on the care of souls before a whole new batch of students come in. Since there are so many consistent factors in the college environment (like the pitching machine in a batting cage), you have the opportunity to look at yourself as the variable and ‘work on your swing.’ RUF provides me with reliable, yearly training to do just that kind of sustained reflection and the refinement of my ministerial ‘swing.’”

– by Sarah Durham

Autumn Reflections



““For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ““I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading

throughout the whole region.” Acts 13:47-49

Our pastor pointed out on Sunday that Satan kept changing his tactics during Paul and Barnabas’ missionary journey, but so did Paul and Barnabas! They never adapted the message to the local conditions, but they adjusted their tactics. The message stayed the same, but the methods changed to meet new challenges.

RUF is stubbornly preaching a 2,000-year-old message, but we are constantly shifting our methods. Last spring we learned to hold meetings online. This fall many groups are gathering outside. In some places our small group Bible studies are smaller because of size restrictions. Nevertheless, the word of God continues to spread on college campuses, and everyone appointed to eternal life is coming to faith. Rejoice and glorify God for revealing His salvation to students!

David Green





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Prayer Requests, September 2020

1. Pray for the word of God to keep spreading and increasing!
2. Pray for students who are lonely and discouraged to find a friend in Jesus and fellowship with His people.
3. Pray for campus ministers and leaders who are finding this an exceptionally exhausting semester.
4. Pray for a quick return to in-person ministry.
5. Pray for God's power to be displayed in our weakness.