

20 November 2020 Southern Wisconsin Cru Ministry Update



We've thanked the Lord so many times for warm weather this fall, so we could do so much more of our discipleship, prayer meetings, Bible studies, planning, retreats, and worship outside and in person. While Zoom and Google Meet video calls are super helpful, we see many people still choosing an in-person gathering when possible, even if it's cold and wet.

During a typical year, we arrange a lot of conferences and events to help us in our mission to win, build, and send students and faculty for Christ. This year many have been cut, while others have been adapted.

Instead of our weekend Fall Getaway at a camp, this year we planned a "Fall Get-a-Day" centered on John 15 and abiding in Christ. Everyone was broken up into small groups and released to scenic parks. The Lord provided a beautiful day to journey together, hike the trails, and listen to and discuss talks we had recorded. We created a competition for them to record a creative video as a group and post it online for all the groups to see. There was time for personal reflection and a novel trip on the Merrimac Ferry on the way to a Wisconsin Alumnus's family farm, where we enjoyed live worship for the first time in many months.

We had 11 bon fires scattered around the yard and a cornfield for groups to continue to laugh, play, and encourage one another.

This was the best thing we could have done to help everyone bond together. It's been a hard semester, especially for freshmen hampered by so many restrictions on meeting new people. The long day of good fellowship helped them see they are a part of something larger.

Last weekend, we modified our biennial "Pause" conference designed for southern Wisconsin juniors and seniors to slow down and consider the heart of God, discerning God's will, and vocation. We kept one of our favorite activities of releasing them into a cemetery with their Bibles, a pen, and a guide to help them "hear" what the dead have to say about the brevity of life and living for what endures. It was so encouraging to listen to what God has done in these students' lives the last few years. Their commitment to know Christ and make Him known for a lifetime, wherever they go, whatever they do, was inspiring.

The Cru Faculty Commons staff consolidated their two-day conference to a virtual conference repeated over three



weekends. Professors who participated loved the vision and opportunity to discuss ideas about how to have a ministry on the campus they work. As you may imagine, changing to a virtual format enabled people who wouldn't normally be able to attend to join in from further away. This morning, as our staff team celebrated what God is doing, it was fun to hear that joining the 10 local professors, there were many from around the U.S. and several more from South America and Europe joining this event. With plans to repeat this conference again in January, the audience should expand even more.

Last week, we took a week off of our normal weekly meeting schedule to join in with several other campus organizations in hosting author Jemar Tisby to talk about race and faith. Last spring, when we agreed to help bring him in, we had hoped for a live event in a big auditorium with lots of Christ-followers and nonbelieving friends. While Tisby still made the trip to Madison, the bulk of his audience had to be online and it ended up less evangelistic, but still helpful for the mainly believing audience.



Helping those in our ministry understand and care about this topic is timely and important. To complement the Tisby event, we took a number of our students through three weeks of discipleship on what the Bible says about race and ethnicity. We talked about the Imago Dei and biblical righteousness. As Christians care about brokenness in the world, there are areas of agreement, as well as stark disagreement, with

how today's culture pursues social justice. These can be difficult conversations and believers have varying perspectives. Within these tensions, we want our students to have empathy and discernment, as it is too easy to be passive observers or swept up with some of the misguided loud voices in and outside the Church.



Thank you for your prayer and care for us and this ministry. Much of the demands of life and ministry go beyond our natural abilities. Planning for a hybrid, in-person and online ministry which can change at the drop of a hat by various policy makers' edicts has been challenging. There are times when innovation has paid off and our team is thrilled with the results, as well as moments of disappointment as attempts at reaching new people or planning an activity has ended with hearty effort, yet limited fruit. Even now with just a week away from when the residence halls will mostly shut down, forcing most freshmen back to their hometowns, we are trying to determine how best to maximize ministry opportunities in December and January.

We have awesome students and volunteers involved but feel the weight of the many we have been unable to engage this year. Together let's ask the Lord of the Harvest to mercifully do the work in people's lives that we cannot.

Together for the Gospel,

The Southern Wisconsin Cru Staff Team



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