

Downtown With The Browns: Winter Conference - New Dates!



Happy New Year! We have so many wonderful things to report from the last month!

January 2026



Lao Tzu is famous for, among other things, this quote: "Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow." After decades of running our regional Winter Conference over New Year's, the dates have been strategically moved after New Year's to accommodate more student participation and attendance. We were grateful not only for the extra time to spend with family, but also the fact that **this year, the conference welcomed an additional 200 students!**

Our Lynchburg group had a phenomenal winter conference experience this year. In our debrief time, what was expressed corporately most often was the idea that each individual experienced God in a meaningful and significant way, particularly through worship. One student, Emmanuel (in group photo: top row, fifth from left), said that prior to attending WC, he **wrestled with whether or not he would always be saved**. In the Winter Conference Prayer Room, he had time to slow down, pause, and seek the Lord through prayer and scripture, and after about an hour, he sensed the Lord say "You will always be my child." We praise God for this special affirmation of eternal salvation!



Pictured to the left are Tori and Aminata, students from Liberty. Tori (middle) is a senior considering interning next year (we hope she does because she is phenomenal!). She came into the conference exhausted and depleted from the holidays and previous semester. Just like Emmanuel, she was encouraged to slow down to focus on the Lord. Through the WC talks ministering to her, she was reminded how God has cared for her, and how he will continue to move in her life, and **resolved to prioritize loving Him above all things moving forward**. This is exactly what we hope students will take away from being involved in Cru! Aminata (left) is a third year nursing student, new to Cru, who is quite reserved. We were actually surprised when she agreed to attend so we were thrilled for her step of faith to even attend! She was extremely nervous in particular about going out and sharing her faith in DC – this was the first opportunity she took in her life as a believer in doing so. With the encouragement of her sharing group, **she was able to connect with several people on the National Mall, and even give someone a gospel booklet**. Through that experience, she realized it was not as terrifying as she had made it out to be, and is considering getting involved in our evangelism team at Liberty.



Prayer Requests:

- Pray for Rwanda recruiting! We are hoping to bring 25 students and staff.
- Praise the Lord for the growth that occurred at the Winter Conference!

SMTLC! (...what?)

SMTLC stands for Summer Mission Team Leader Conference! Jena just traveled to Dallas, TX, where staff leading summer missions all over the world were briefed on trip leader expectations. Jena and Dave Michaelian, Bridges staff, will be leading a two week summer mission to Kigali, Rwanda. This is a NEW partnership for us and a two week summer mission where we will be helping the local team with spiritual formation and leadership development. SMTLC is great training for Team Leaders of summer missions both domestic and global international to teach on everything from how to recruit students to in-country risk management and more! In addition to the training, it was a great time to reconnect with staff we have interacted with over the years. It was a joy to see the staff from Chicago Summer Mission who are continuing to bring leadership to an incredible summer mission. Jena even ran into Andrew's discipler from college, Pete!



Jena and Dave, Pete and Jena, Chicago friends

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