



**Jan 2-6, 2012 | 280 Student Attendees | 68 Campuses | 6 Students Accepted Christ**

We all have 'epicenter' moments in our lives--those defining moments that change everything," Bret Ogburn, National Director of Campus Field Ministry, told over 350 students and staff gathered in Albany for the first night of the Epicenter Experience. "But the greatest singular important moment in human history--the 'epicenter' above all--was the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ." The tone for the four-day conference was set as Bret went on to clearly present the gospel and challenge students to consider what other than Christ they might be keeping at the center of their lives.

Students representing 68 different New York and New England college campuses made their way to Albany at the beginning of January for the Epicenter Experience, a brand new Cru winter conference for the Northeast Region. The new conference included many elements similar to those of its forerunner, the Boston Winter Conference: powerful worship by a student-led band, challenging and gospel-centered messages delivered by talented speakers, time for students to learn and practice sharing their faith with others, and space to consider further opportunities to serve the Lord both stateside and overseas.

However, the first Epicenter Experience also brought with it many new advantages: a location more central to the Northeast region (Albany, NY), a centralized hotel/meeting space that allowed for more inter-campus fun and relationship-building, and a name symbolic to the central significance of Christ in the world and our lives--as well to the ways the Northeast is in itself an "epicenter" whose influence is felt around the globe.

A highlight of the week was the region's first ever "Digital Day of Outreach". Students learned how to share their personal story of how Christ entered and

changed their life, and were given the opportunity to record their stories on video. They were then challenged to post their testimony to their Facebook profile, to email it to friends, or to find other creative ways to use media and technology to spark spiritual conversations with others. The digital storytelling was a success, with over forty students recording their stories on video and over 1,000 views of the online student testimonies to date.

At the main sessions, staff members Bret Ogburn, Greg Lillestrand, and Charmaine Lillestrand spoke on God's heart for the world and surrendering our lives to Him. Other highlights of the week included seminars on more specific topics such as godly relationships and the Holy Spirit, open times of sharing within campus groups, and space to connect with God in a fresh way at the multi-sensory Prayer Journey.

The final evening of the conference, Bret shared the story of Jonah and asked students to consider what "Nineveh" God might be calling them to bring His love and message to. He then invited them to come and write their "Nineveh" on a giant wall at the side of the room. The wall was soon completely filled with students' covenants to follow God's leading (see picture at bottom right).

It was incredible to witness the ways God brought the Epicenter Experience together and worked in the lives of the students present. At least six students accepted Christ for the first time while at Epicenter, and dozens more left the conference with a renewed desire to keep Christ at the center and impact their campuses and communities for Him.

**Thank you so much for your prayers and financial partnership with Cru as we work together to fulfill the Great Commission and reach the students of the Northeast with the life-changing message of Christ!**



**I never expected that God could do so much in my life in just one week. I'm now on fire for God! UNH student**

**I had a fantastic time & feel refreshed to go back & reach my campus with God's love. Syracuse student**

**I am sooo happy that I came! I finally surrendered fully to the Lord & I am trusting him with my whole life. UNH student**

**Keep doing what you're doing! Souls are being saved. Thank you so much! NECC student**

**I am forever grateful for Epicenter, especially this year. St. John Fisher student**

## Nelson Bunker Hill Community College

All my life I've always had this inner conflict with myself when it came to religion. I was raised a Catholic, but it felt like something was missing. About a week ago, I went to this conference in Albany, New York called 'The Epicenter Experience'. When I first heard about it, I wanted to go because I wanted to find out more about the Christian religion. From the moment I got there, I'll admit that I was in complete awe **seeing everyone with such a passion for Christ**. For the entire week I still felt confused about the whole thing. On the last day though, this guy Josh, randomly came up to me and we just started talking. We talked about Christ and if I was ready to accept Him. I said yes, because I really did feel like I was ready to accept Him into my life. After we did the prayer, it felt like right away He was working on me and I felt this joy, which I've never really felt before. It honestly feels like God sent Josh my way to help me take this big step.



## Kathy Central Maine Community College

I have known God for many years. Every time I felt God work in my life, it was a result of directly and clearly making my needs known to Him. Although I felt I had a good relationship with God, I never felt worthy, I always felt I would be displeasing to Him. I had read and heard many, many times that as soon as we turn our lives over to God and ask his forgiveness, we receive it. I had done this sincerely. Still, I never felt clean or forgiven. I have felt little shadows slowly clouding my heart for sometime now - little things - which led to fear, anxiety, and a withdrawal from people. I felt alone. Understand I had NOT asked God's comfort nor help with this. On the second day of Epicenter, while standing in worship, the tears began to stream down my face uncontrollably. As I stood amid hundreds of fellow worshipers, God washed over me like a raging storm. As I stood, unable to move, even though I wanted to flee to somewhere where no one might see the state I was in, **God changed my life!** I stood in the center of God's tremendous storm and could feel all the blood rush out of my body. There was no fear, for at the same time the blood flowed out of me with all its pain and heartbreak, He replaced it with His peace. I stood hand in hand with my friends as the tears flowed on. For the first time in my life I felt forgiven. Glory to God.



## Kyle St. John Fisher College

Throughout my youth, I've never truly been happy. Instead of solving the problem, I simply ran away from it and tried to claim that I was happy. My curiosity about the Lord started in September of 2011. My friends in FisherCru helped show me the way and answered my questions. I decided to attend the Epicenter conference two hours before the deadline because I prayed for the first time, and He answered. After the first session and going through the prayer journey, I talked with my roommates about my faith for hours. Then, at two in the morning, **I finally surrendered to Jesus**. Christianity made a lot more sense to me and I was finally persuaded that Jesus Christ died for my sins.



Though there were many highlights from the conference, two really stuck out. The first included spending time with Julia and Amy, two of our student leaders. It was obvious that God was wrestling with their hearts and their futures during the week. Amy boldly used the media outreach day to email her testimony to her estranged father, urging him to seek the Lord in his recent separation from her step-mom.

The second delight was joining the UMaine Lifelines team, connecting with my dear staff friends there and enjoying the company of their students - some of whom came from ministries that Dan and I founded during our years in Maine. It was like drawing my two worlds together, and it was fun to see them all catch a bigger glimpse of the Body of Christ and of God's Kingdom building design. God also brought to my attention my own desire for control and my need for Him to intervene and take over the areas of my life (kid's education, parenting, etc.) that I am trying to "fix" on my own. Like the students, I so needed the reminder that Christ is THE epicenter.

