

November 2024 Southern Wisconsin Cru Ministry Update

Dear Friends of Cru,

Adorned in cardinal red uniforms, the Wisconsin Marching Band is central to Badger Football Home Games. These 305 students share a special camaraderie forged from sweltering August practices, long hours learning songs and formations, and special appearances like their rainy-day Sunday performance at Lambeau field.

The most prominent member of the Marching Band is the Drum Major who gives visible leadership during game day performances, flinging the silver baton high in the air and bending over backward, figuratively and literally, to pump up the crowd. The Drum Major also plays a key role in leading the band outside the game-day hoopla. We are thrilled that Caleb Monge, one of the Cru students leading the band Bible study with notable talent, character, and vision was chosen as this year's Drum Major.



Every time I've talked with Caleb, I've been encouraged by his care for people and soft heart for the Lord. He represents the attitude of Cru leaders scattered across campuses who seek to love those around them.

I thought many of you would enjoy reading his thoughts on the Marching Band:

I've been so encouraged by the way God has sustained the Band bible study in the marching band. It's been an honor to lead the band as drum major this past year, but an even greater honor to have the opportunity to share my faith and engage in discussion of the Bible with my peers in the band.

The Bible study was started by Jim Tanner in 1992 who was a field assistant under Mike Leckrone. Since the pandemic, the group has recruited more and more members, this year involving over 30 students across campus ministries including Badger Cru, InterVarsity, the Navigators, and St. Paul.

Since the three years I've been a part of the Band bible study, I've been most encouraged by how God has used the group to initiate conversations of spirituality and invite non-believers to engage with us.. As our peers enter and exit the dining hall, many stop and ask what group we're a part of. Many reach out over social media or text asking how they can be involved or have initial steps in being a believer of Christ. New this year, we sent out a spiritual interest survey and were pleasantly surprised by the volume of responses we had. The survey asked about individuals' previous encounters with Jesus, consideration for having a relationship with Him, or engaging in spirituality in general. This survey has been a reminder for the volume of students in the band who are open to the idea of hearing about Jesus and our responsibility to be vessels of the gospel. My belief is that Jesus stirs in the hearts of non-believers and so our interaction or invitation to join the bible study composed of their peers may initiate a very practical and energetic response of "yes!"

The marching band has a robust and established social culture. The band brings many positive experiences and teachings of character, comradery, and tenacity. It also comes with a long-standing tradition of participating in party culture and drinking. The band bible study has provided refuge for people in the band who seek a community not defined by that behavior. The band can be a socially isolating environment when you choose to not participate in the majority. The band bible study offers constructive

sober events, social gatherings such as bonfires, potluck dinners, board game nights, movie nights, Easter dinners, Christmas parties, picnics on campus, and much more. We also engage in raw and explicit conversations about combating the culture we're immersed in and how we are called and expectantly equipped to be vessels of light amidst our peers.

Together, we've provided solidarity amidst combatting the challenge of being a student surrounded by a culture that fiercely pursues behaviors and mentalities not centered on Christ. Our purpose is to first serve Jesus by knowing Him better and loving the peers that we serve. Studying the word together, coming together to pray over one another and our peers, and sustaining one another to be vessels of light are the ways we equip the members who join alongside us. In the past four semesters, we've studied Hebrews, 1 John, and Paul's teachings in Galatians, Philippians, and Romans. Each semester, we pick a book of the Bible to read, read a chapter in its entirety each week, and then discuss. Our discussions begin with engaging in smaller conversations in breakout groups before coming together as a whole group to share what we learned. We leaders then ask questions we prepare ahead of time and challenge ourselves and our peers to take a deep dive into the message of the text. To consider how it relates to previous chapters within the given book we're studying, and how it push us to have deeper convictions or a new perspective on what we are learning. Our ultimate goal is that we not only better know the passage and make it familiar but are equipped to boldly share its message with our peers.



Moving forward, our vision for the band bible study is that we remain committed to seeking God, better understanding how to serve Him, study His gospel, build community, and boldly support one another so that we can be sustained as vessels of light in the marching band and spheres of influence on our campus. That our group will continue to reach unreached students in the marching band, will boldly stretch existing believers in the group closer to their walk with God, and that we can be "in-step" with His will.

We ask for prayer that God will continue to sustain this group by emboldening students to join the bible study and step up to be future leaders. That He will sustain the current members to remain committed followers of Him who are not self-serving, but so radically on fire for serving Him and the mission of proclaiming His name and the gospel to every student, life, and heart in our community and campus. That each year, God will continue to call students within the band to join the bible study, that He will sustain the fellowship with Him and one another, and that He will continue to deepen our convictions and ability to witness to others

I can boldly say that my college experience has been shaped by this community. It's been a privilege to be able to do life with these people and navigate a huge community that is the marching band. I'm so proud of the committed followers of Jesus that weekly engage in prayer and intentional discussion. I thank God for the ways He has called the members in the bible study to be vessels of His light amidst our peers.

We are grateful for your prayers and gifts that help us support students and faculty as they reach out to varied and diverse pockets on campus.

Scott Roe Benken

Team Leaders
Southern Wisconsin Cru



262 Southern Wisconsin students joined us for Fall Getaway Weekend