



NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

Volume 10, Number 1

September, 2017

Finding the True Religion

"I need to talk to you," George* said to his campus minister. "It's important." The RUF minister quickly arranged to meet with the international student whose quest for the true religion began ten years ago in his home country.

As a child in the Middle East, George attended a religious school. After two years of immersion in that religion's doctrine and practices, it no longer appealed to him. He noticed that the devout worshiped through memorization and habit, but their hearts seemed untouched. George longed for a deeper faith. While George continued practicing his culture's religion, he began reading about other religions. He researched Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, humanism, and nearly every other religion – except Christianity.

George knew very few Christians until five years ago when he attended a Midwestern university for a one-year English proficiency program. There he first encountered several Christians and was curious about their faith. However, he decided not to study Christianity because he was beginning his formal studies at another university in the Northeast.

Yet his curiosity did not diminish. Instead, the idea of studying Christianity haunted him as he pursued his degree. Finally, near the end of his collegiate career, he decided to learn more about this intriguing religion. One Friday night he and a friend from a neighboring country attended a Christian gathering on campus. They returned the next week and the week after. During the third meeting, George filled out a card indicating his interest in attending a Bible study and soon met the RUF minister. He went to one study.

Then the accident happened. While snowboarding, George broke several bones and spent the next few weeks recovering. Once he healed, George returned to the Bible study, attending weekly and asking many questions. That summer the campus minister presented an overview of the Bible. George attended these meetings regularly, and by the end of the summer, he understood that the Bible was one cohesive unit with a single story. George stopped observing the practices of his culture's religion and began attending church with the RUF minister, yet he did not claim Christianity as his own faith.

George spent weeks struggling with the implications becoming a Christian. The RUF minister recalls a conver-

sation he had with George during this time. "The god of my former religion is just and merciful, but he can do nothing about sin," George observed. When the minister asked him how Christianity deals with sin, he said through Jesus. Then he exclaimed, "My head is so full it's about to explode!" The minister did not push George but prayed with him and trusted that the Holy Spirit would work in his life.

When George told the minister he needed to talk, the minister did not know if George was rejecting Christianity or ready to profess his faith. He waited for George to speak. "Christianity is the most legitimate religion in the world," George said. "Jesus lived, died, and rose again." That day, he prayed to accept Jesus' sacrifice for his sins. As he prepares for his baptism in a few weeks, George has become a "sponge for the gospel," the RUF minister says. He eagerly reads his Bible, prays daily, and seeks to know everything about his new faith and hope.

– by Rebecca Trudeau

**As George will return to his home country after he finishes his studies, please pray for his safety. For his protection, his name has been changed and details omitted. Also, please avoid sharing this story over social media.*

Reaching the Nations for Christ

RUF-I (Reformed University Fellowship - International) is a lesser-known part of the PCA's ministry on college and university campuses. Thirteen PCA ministers have been called to campus for the purpose of reaching international students. They have a vital ministry, but due to the striking difference in their flock, their ministry looks a lot different than a typical undergraduate RUF. We are blessed to have three RUF-I ministers in the Northeast. Here is some of what is happening in their ministries this fall.



English Conversation Class at the University of Delaware

George Mason University

RUF-International at George Mason started its first Dinner and Discussion on the last Tuesday in August during Welcome Week. There was also an event each Saturday for international students that included a backyard cookout, scavenger hunt in DC, and a hike in the Shenandoah. Students are being invited to study the Bible in the midst of budding relationships with local American church volunteers.

God is at work on the campus, many times in surprising ways. One student from China asked if he could watch the Jesus film with us and help him understand it better. He invited us to the library, and when the television he reserved wasn't working, we began studying a passage in 1 Peter. A few minutes later a friend walked by, saw what we were doing and asked to join us in the study. We've also been encouraged to hear that many of the students have expressed that being part of RUF has been "like home." *Matt Bowles, Campus Minister at George Mason University* → matt.bowles@ruf.org



Instructions before hiking in the Shenandoah

Penn State University

One of the highlights of our RUF-I ministry in the past semester was the RUF-International's Musicians! We have internationals who are world-class concert musicians. They needed to do an off-campus chamber concert. Oakwood Presbyterian Church offered its building and we billed it as hosted by RUF-International. It was a great time and at the end they gave us a picture, thanking us for our friendship last semester. Those that played were: Alma Bulibekova, violin – Kazakhstan, Mirna Laziax cello – Croatia, Fábio Saggin, viola – Brazil, Diego Robledo, double bass – Mexico, Jorge Ivars, piano – Spain. This Fall we have six new musicians coming out to Dinner and Discussion. *Richard Smith, Campus Minister at Penn State University* → richard.smith@ruf.org



Penn State RUF-International Musicians

University of Delaware

As we drove back from a recent RUF-I trip to the beach, a Brazilian visiting scholar exclaimed, "I don't have words to express how thankful I am for this wonderful time together!"

The University of Delaware has over 5,000 internationals from more than 100 countries on campus. RUF-I has the privilege and pleasure of welcoming these nations in Jesus' love. Every Monday night we sponsor English Conversation Class, where internationals make American friends and practice their English. Each Thursday evening we host "Dinner & Discussion," where global guests enjoy a free dinner followed by an optional discussion in basic English. Once a month RUF-I also provides a social event to grow gospel friendships. Through one-on-one meetings we follow up those who exhibit an interest in Jesus Christ.

It has been exciting to see God at work through RUF-I at the University of Delaware during the first weeks of the fall semester. Over 90 participants are coming to "Dinner & Discussion" each week, as we study life-changing conversations Jesus had with people recorded in the Gospels. Many of our international guests have never before read anything in the Bible. But now they are learning how Jesus offers them a life full of love, peace, purpose, hope, and joy. A good number of bilingual Bibles have already disappeared from the RUF-I information table, and many are asking great questions about what it means to become a Christ-follower! *Rick Gray, Campus Minister at the University of Delaware* → rick.gray@ruf.org



University of Delaware RUF-I beach trip

Your Connection to RuF

Have you ever led, or helped to lead a Muslim to Christ? I have not, but I have had the opportunity to share the gospel with Muslims. It was long ago and only a few scattered occasions. RuF-I ministers have the opportunity every week to share Jesus with people from almost every nation under the sun. Students who might never hear the gospel in their own countries can easily hear and wrestle with the gospel on campuses in the United States.

If you want to learn more about any of these RuF-I ministries, contact the campus minister. I provided his email address after each report. While *you* might not be able to reach the nations, you can support these men who do by your prayers and by giving to their work.

You can make donations to our ministry here: <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 Northeast@ruf.org. And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at Northeast@ruf.org.

Focus on Nathan Dicks



The chaplain across from Nathan Dicks was friendly but clearly suspicious. During their meeting he informed the RuF minister that Nathan's website had inadvertently violated Boston University's unusually cautious policy on student organizations. It was 2014 – Nathan's first year of ministry at BU. The chaplain explained that the university was partic-

ularly guarded towards religious groups.

Several years prior a cultic student ministry had infiltrated BU's campus. While claiming to be Christian, the Boston Church of Christ twisted the gospel, manipulated its members, and had a pyramid-style leadership structure. The university responded by creating strict guidelines for new campus groups. Nathan was required to stop his public ministry. Although disappointed, Nathan was determined to gain the university's trust through faithful ministry.

That year Nathan and his newly-wed wife, Sarah, also

experienced personal tragedy when Nathan's father died of cancer. Nathan made frequently trips to his hometown near Atlanta, GA, to help his grieving mother. As his mother's church rallied around the Dicks family, they learned more about Nathan's ministry and became faithful supporters of his work. In Boston Sarah, her family, their church, and fellow RuF ministers comforted Nathan. Nathan remembers this time as a time of intense prayer for him and his supporters.

Although his first year was challenging, Nathan remained convinced of his calling. As an undergraduate at Clemson University, Nathan had pursued a career in architecture, like his father, but he reconsidered his vocation after the 2008 recession. To explore other career paths, Nathan volunteered for two years of campus ministry in Bosnia with CRU (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ). By sharing his faith Nathan rediscovered the joy of the gospel. He left CRU invigorated in his faith and hungry for more Biblical knowledge. Later Nathan learned that his mother had prayed that he would join the ministry since his infancy.

Nathan decided to pursue his Masters of Divinity and seek what British theologian Leslie Newbigin calls a "missionary encounter with the West." Although a Southerner, he moved to Boston, a city ripe for missions. According to the PEW Research Center, Massachusetts is tied with New Hampshire as the least religious state in the nation. Boston also has one of the highest concentration of students of any U.S. city.

Sarah was one of the first people Nathan met when he arrived in Boston to attend Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary. They were married in 2014. Sarah supports Nathan's ministry by discussing his ideas and sermons, attending Bible studies, and helping with freshman recruiting.

Although Nathan could not publicly recruit students during his first two years of ministry, he could lead off-campus Bible studies attended by students he met outside of the university. Interestingly, several students attended Nathan's Bible studies after an encounter with a street preacher. While not connected to RuF, this member of a Reformed Baptist church suggested that students seek Nathan to learn more about Christianity.

Finally, almost two years after he started his ministry, Nathan became campus chaplain in 2016 and RuF was recognized as an official student group. As chaplain Nathan regularly attends dinners with other chaplains and has delivered a Good Friday sermon in the chapel. He wishes to show the administration and the campus that he "seeks the best for the campus, trusting that it will bear fruit in the long run."

As a student organization, RuF can now meet on campus and recruit new members. Nathan's supporters have continued to pray for the ministry's growth. During RuF's first year of freshmen recruitment, they held a 24-hour prayer

vigil – someone was praying for RUF at BU every hour of the day. This year BU will have its first regular RUF large group meeting as well as two or three Bible studies. Nathan trusts that the continued preaching of the Word, the prayers of the saints, and other simple means of grace will renew many hearts on campus.

– by Rebecca Trudeau

Autumn Reflections



“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” *Leviticus 19:34*

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you

welcomed me....” *Matthew 25:35*

I am just going to shamelessly borrow from Al LaCour here. Al is the RUF Area Coordinator for RUF-I, who supervises the thirteen RUF-I ministers across the country. Al

tirelessly reminds us that Christians are called to show hospitality to the stranger. While we may have differing opinions about how to guard our national borders, we should be of one mind about those foreigners who are among us now. The scriptures above make it obvious and compelling that we should treat them with dignity and compassion and, above all, share Jesus with them.

During my ten years as the campus minister at Lehigh University, I had the privilege to minister to students from a dozen countries. The RUF students welcomed and embraced these internationals, but there were hundreds we could not reach. The great thing about RUF-I is that this ministry is focused on international students and is equipped to reach those hundreds.

Matt, Richard, and Rick are doing terrific work with international students on three campuses in the Northeast. But there are dozens of other campuses with large numbers of international students. I wish we could send RUF-I ministers to all of them. Please pray for God to raise up the men and the money for this vital work.

David Green



NORTHEAST

Prayer Requests, Sept., 2017

1. Pray for “George” as he grows in his new Christian faith and prepares for baptism.
2. Pray for God to bless the outreach and discipleship efforts of our three RUF-I ministries: George Mason, Penn State, and University of Delaware.
3. Pray for God to strengthen and encourage RUF-I ministers Matt, Richard, and Rick.
4. Pray for God to provide the men and the money to begin many more RUF-I ministries in the Northeast.
5. Pray for many internationals to believe the gospel, grow in their faith, and be witnesses in their home countries.

