



# NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

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## RUF into the Mission Field

Last spring break three RUF women went on a short-term mission trip to the Dominican Republic. RUF partnered with an organization called Students International, whose mission is “Bringing students and the poor together cross-culturally to encounter God, to share the Good News, to disciple and serve others in occupational ministries.” Carmen (senior at Brown) coordinated this trip. Here’s what she shared with our group after she returned. *Eddie Park, Campus Minister at Brown University/Rhode Island School of Design*

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This was my third time going on a short-term mission trip. (I went to Chicago last year and Guatemala the year before). I feel like this time I was more conscious to be observant and open. And during my week in the Dominican Republic, I feel that God spoke to me in many ways –

through the quiet times we had every morning; through conversations with my site leader and people on the other teams; and through working and serving in the several ways that I did.

During one of our debriefing meetings we were asked to share how we saw God at work in our service activities. This was something that did not really require much thought for me. Throughout the week I had seen God at work through my leader, Vanesa, who was one of the dentists in the community. Everything in her work was grounded in her faith and in the word of God. I think it was especially encouraging because her work was a demonstration of Christ-like love, and her testimony was much more real to me than just talking about it.

For example, on the first day at the dental clinic I was really overwhelmed because she put us straight to work setting up the dental chairs, sterilizing the instruments, setting up the trays, and then preparing the patients to be seen by her. Once we were done with that, we had to be ready to assist her with the tools and materials as she operated on her patients. For me it was especially nerve-

wracking because I don’t have any formal training and she expected us to know what all these things were and also to follow the correct procedures for each treatment. However, as she taught us she reminded us of Matthew 7:12, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” She urged us to put all our effort into doing the best work that we could, as if the preparations were for ourselves.



Carmen and Fanny, Vanesa’s assistant in the clinic

I didn’t expect the work to be so physical, tiring, and busy – we were standing for hours on end and kept working as patient after patient was being seen. At first a part of me wished that I had more personal interactions with the patients. But my Spanish is not that great, and during a dental visit it’s not like they are there to talk. However, through Vanesa’s encouragement and also seeing her work, I was reminded that everything we do should be meant for God’s glory, whether it is considered ‘spiritual’ or not – and meeting people’s physical needs is also a very important thing that we are called to do. Sometimes when we cannot see how God is working or forget that God is always working, we need to be faithful in all that we do. We can’t always see the effects of our actions nor do we know how he will end up touching people’s lives.

But then during our second to last day at the clinic God allowed me to see a little bit more. There was a 10-year old girl named Stacy who came in and as she sat in the dental chair waiting for Vanesa, she held a report card in her hand. As we helped her at the chair side, Vanesa told us her story. Stacy was growing up in a broken home. Her father was currently with another woman, and she and her siblings had just recently been sent to live with another family. Before that, she would often be found standing outside of her house past midnight while her parents were fighting. When her teeth were being examined, I could see

that a lot of her teeth were decayed and that a lot of her permanent teeth had already been extracted. She wasn't able to pay for her treatments, so Vanesa had actually made a deal with her. As long as she brought good grades at each dental visit, Vanesa would continue to work on her teeth. Vanesa took this as an opportunity to allow her work to be used to build a long-term relationship and to share the gospel with one of her patients.



Alana, Carmen, and Dany

Therefore, I was reminded that we aren't called to drop our studies and everything else we are doing to be missionaries in a foreign country. In Proverbs 3:5-6 it says, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowl-

edge him and he will make your paths straight.' We are to remain faithful in the things God has placed in our lives, because we never know how they may be used for God's greater purpose. For Vanesa, there was a time when she considered not studying dentistry anymore, but now she is able to see why God has led her to where she is now.

The experiences I had in the DR are a small piece of my life, a small glimpse of how God is at work all over the world. While I was in the DR, God taught me and reminded me of the many things that I lose sight of so often and so easily. He reminded me of my own need for Christ's mercy and grace every day of my life. I shouldn't be living my life for my own purposes, seeking approval or blessings from other people, but I should be sharing with other people what God has given me. Just coming back from the trip, I already find myself being so easily roped back into the busyness of college life and the tendency to place my focus on myself and on achieving my goals. I need to remember my life is a gift from God, be mindful of what motivates me in my work, and think about how my actions are honoring him. *Carmen Hung, Brown University '15.*

### PITT in Belize

After six years of ministry at PITT, and another six months of planning, RuF at PITT took its first international mission trip this March. Nineteen students and I spent a week in Corozal, Belize working alongside a national Presbyterian

church. We joined the efforts of this congregation and pastor to reach and serve its local community, working hard to build a fence for its preschool program, and partnering with church members to assist in local outreach efforts. It was a particular joy for all of us to work, eat, and play together, and we believe God was kind and faithful to help us fulfill our goals of serving well, learning well, and loving well. *Derek Bates, Campus Minister at University of Pittsburgh*



RuF students from PITT working in Belize



PITT Team in front of the fence they built

### Mission in St. Louis

In January Maryland RuF traveled to St. Louis, Missouri and worked under New City Fellowship (PCA), a church that has been committed to the gospel expressing itself in racial reconciliation and ministry to the poor for over 20 years. It was a joy for me to bring students to the church I attended while in St. Louis for seminary in the 90s. Just a few miles from Ferguson, our students got to see first hand how the gospel applies itself to the real needs of the city and urban poor as we came along side these veteran Christians to learn and serve. Students were able to meet many members of the church, sit in their homes and hear stories of what it means to minister in word and deed.

New City Fellowship staff taught each morning on the gospel of the Kingdom in an urban context. We also



worked with Sun Ministries (a New City partner) as they seek to redevelop the blighted and boarded up Hyde Park neighborhood in North St. Louis. We saw first hand a team of missionaries serving a devastated area by establishing a restaurant and café where they have employed several people from the neighborhood who were without work. The tangible expressions of the gospel impacted my students to the point where two of them (Lydia Jones and intern Anna Catharine Sedlak) are doing a seven week summer internship with the church presently. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*

## Your Connection with RuF

Campus ministry is fun and rewarding, but also difficult and exhausting. It is delightful to see students grow in their faith and begin to serve God in the U.S. and abroad. But the daily struggle against sin within students and in the world wears us down, and setbacks are hard to bear. At such times we are so encouraged by your support. Your prayers and donations not only help to accomplish the work, they also remind us that God has provided many people who lift up our weary hands and enable us to press on. Thanks for being our partners in these RuF ministries in the Northeast!

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.



Remember to visit our RuF Northeast web site! Go to <http://rufnortheast.org/> or scan this code →



If you would rather receive these newsletters by email, contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

And if you would like to receive weekly prayer requests by email, also contact us at [Northeast@ruf.org](mailto:Northeast@ruf.org).

## Focus on Matt Bowles

Shoes carpeted the foyer floor one fall night in 2013. Matt Bowles had invited several students to dinner to kick-off his first year of ministry to the international community at George Mason University. Matt and his wife, Amy, had purchased four large platters of authentic Chinese food – enough to feed the anticipated 10 to 15 students, the ministry volunteers, the Bowles and their two children, and the host family.

Two Japanese students arrived with over 20 of their friends hungry for a meal and a cross-culture experience. They were followed by 25 Chinese students. Matt and Amy called Dominos, and the crowd enjoyed a cultural fusion of pizza and Chinese food. Matt praises God for a dynamic beginning to his ministry. “It was a gift,” he says.



PORTRAIT INNOVATIONS Professional Studios portraits.com

Matt, an RuF-International minister, strives to share the gospel with international students on one of the most multicultural campuses in America. RuF-I ministers evangelize the world without a plane ticket.

“We are missionaries in reverse,” Matt says. Most missionaries learn the language and habits of the country in which they minister.

In contrast, students travel to America to improve their English and experience our culture.

RuF-I serves students in two primary ways. First, Matt leads individual and group Bible studies. He seeks to make the gospel clear, despite cultural and language differences. Many students attend Matt’s group Bible studies because they want to understand the Christian religion as a facet of American culture.

The second service RuF-I offers international students is the opportunity to experience America beyond the campus. Students often consider visiting American homes their most meaningful cultural experience. Matt encourages local church members to welcome strangers and the foreigners. As a result, several American families have begun hosting events regularly. One family prepares a bi-weekly dinner for the students. On the alternating weeks, students are invited to attend a games and dessert night at another home.

Matt organizes other events to interesting places near Washington, D.C., which is minutes from the Fairfax, Virginia campus. This year, several Japanese students asked to visit a gun range. Matt drove them to the N.R.A. where they received training in gun use and safety and then practiced shooting in the indoor range. “Toward the end I liked it,” one Japanese student commented on the ride home. “But I’ll never tell my family about this.”

Unbeknown to Matt, Japanese culture strongly discourages gun possession and use. The country’s laws permit only airsoft rifles and shotguns. Handguns are prohibited. However, God used this transgression of cultural norms to deepen Matt’s relationship with the students, and later one of the students asked to study the Bible with Matt individually.

While reading John 3, the student asked Matt to define the word “condemned.” Matt grieved for the student as he explained that without Christ the student would live a life and an afterlife under God’s wrath. After Matt’s explanation, the student stared at the ground. “This is very hard,”

he murmured and was quiet for several minutes.

Matt interrupted the silence. "If you reject this, I will still be your friend."

He nodded, "I know."

"But this is the most important thing for you to know. If I didn't tell you this, then I'm not your friend." The student smiled and thanked Matt. He was not ready to embrace Christianity, but Matt believes he knows that the gospel is true. The student has since returned to Japan to finish his degree. Matt speaks with him over Skype and prays for him daily.

Many of the international students at GMU stay only a year. The school partners with several overseas universities to allow their students to experience a year in America. As a result, Matt only has a short time with each student, and he strives to connect the returning student to a local church. This year a Korean student became a Christian through the influence of his roommate, the son of a Korean pastor. Before he returned, Matt helped him find a church near his college in Korea.

Some students returning home have encouraged their friends to apply for a year at GMU over other American campuses, because they received opportunities and kindness through RUF-I. Now international students come to GMU seeking Matt and RUF-I.

Matt meets other international students through the English Corner, a space designated for English learners to practice speaking the language. The center does not allow conversations on faith, but it allows Matt to initiate friendships. Matt recruited several missions-minded students from Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) to help him love and teach the international students. (A traditional RUF has not been established on this campus.) Like Matt, the Cru students visit the English Corner to befriend international students. They have the additional benefit of meeting the students in their dorms and their classes.

Next year, Matt hopes to partner with a couple that began serving GMU's international community this year. Jeremiah and Emily Nichols work for Bridges International, a branch of Cru with an international focus. Matt and the Nichols may form a single student group designed to give students an opportunity to experience American culture and ultimately know Christ.

— by Rebecca Trudeau

## Summer Reflections

"Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut." *Revelation 3:8*



Do you mind if I take this verse a little out of context? (It can't be wrong if I admit it, right?) I think that God has set before us not one, but several open doors. And I am praying that they do not swing shut before we can walk through.

Sometimes we begin a new RUF ministry because we believe God is calling us to make a strategic move. We had no contacts in Burlington, Vermont, but it is a strategic city in Northern New England. Since we opened a church and RUF there three years ago, God has granted huge success for the gospel.

But now there are several other cities where students are coming to us. Tufts University in Boston is not an easy place to work due to its secular commitments. Tufts students have begun coming to our nearby church in Somerville, and we seem to have an opportunity to expand this work to the campus. At Johnson and Wales University in Providence, RI, 30 students are meeting in a couple of Bible studies and are coming to the RUF Large Group meeting at Brown University across town. Last year they registered their own RUF student group on campus!

Sadly, at present we do not have the funds to move forward with these ministries. This is where you come in. We need your help! Please take the prayer card enclosed with this newsletter and pray for the ministries listed there. Pray for an outpouring of money, pray for outstanding ministers, pray for students, and pray for me as I work to launch new RUF works. Ask your church to pray for RUF in the Northeast.

In the long run no one can shut the door on Jesus's Kingdom, but these particular doors may not remain open for long. Please pray that in our generation these open doors will swing open more widely, so that more thousands of college students may hear and believe the gospel and be saved.



# NORTHEAST

## Prayer Requests, June 2015

1. Pray for our new campus ministers and interns as they raise funds for their work:
  - Nick Owens at University of Delaware
  - Daryl Wattleley at Delaware State University
  - Solomon Kim at MIT
  - Nathan Dicks at Boston University
  - Six new interns in the Northeast
2. Pray for funds to follow open doors on new campuses:
  - Johnson & Wales University, Providence RI
  - Tufts University, Boston
  - Rowan University, Glassboro NJ
  - Frostburg University, western MD
  - NYU in Manhattan

