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## February 2023 Newsletter

“And God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

Genesis 1:31

Hello again! We are rolling along in the semester and exciting things are happening. This month we started up three new opportunities for students — faith foundations, equipped disciples, and senior transition groups. Wanting to grow, train and equip students, these groups of about two to five people meet weekly between classes and are led by me or Colby. Students in faith foundations are learning the essential beliefs of Christianity and how to grow in their faith. The equipped disciples groups are focusing on training up future leaders in life and ministry skills. And (probably Colby’s favorite thing on his schedule each week!) the senior transition groups are covering topics such a relationships, finances, life mission and post-college expectations from a biblical perspective for graduating seniors. We are so excited to have these extra touch-points with students, and look forward to how God is going to use them in people’s lives. Along with these new groups, we continue to mentor our student leaders as they lead their peers in weekly discipleship groups. Genesis is the book we are studying together this semester and I can’t tell you enough how much of a blessing it has been to dig into the truths we find there! It was incredible to see the eyes of the students light up as they began to grasp more fully the value and dignity all humans have simply because we are created in God’s image as the pinnacle of His creation. God’s Word is a treasure, and we are seeing students view it that way! Thank you for allowing us to minister here full-time. It is definitely a privilege and responsibility we don’t take lightly!

## Winter Retreat 2023!

The last weekend in January I packed up our van with 5 students from Michigan and we headed down to Ohio to attend the AIA Great Lakes Winter Retreat. While there we joined over 200 student athletes from around our region for a weekend of being challenged in our faith, encouraged by each other’s presence, and of course, a lot of fun!

I could write a few paragraphs trying to explain what happened at the retreat, but I thought that you might get a better picture of it if you heard it from the students themselves. The first testimony you will read is from Job, one of our student leaders. He wanted to write his words directly to you, as the funds you give went to scholarship his time there.

*"The winter retreat was an environment that caused a lot of spiritual growth in a short time. I deeply felt the importance of putting Christ above everything else. I cried so much in worship, reflecting on God's love for me. I learned new perspectives on how to carry Christ daily into work. I learned very practical strategies on how to walk in freedom from sin. I met people that have a heart for Christ who I still connect with!! Thank you so much for your generosity! The seeds you plant, grow and multiply beautifully more than you could see or imagine." ~Job*



Job, Rostik, Avery, Olivia, Ashley, Sarah

“Olivia, I am so excited that you signed up for the retreat!” was a text I sent a freshman rower after seeing her name appear on the retreat registration database.

“Hi! I totally don’t recall signing up,” was the response I heard back from her. “But now I am thinking it’s an opportunity that I can’t pass up. I think Ashley may be interested. Talking to her now about it,” is what Olivia went on to say.

We still haven’t uncovered the mystery of how Olivia’s name appeared on the retreat database, given that she didn’t put it there. But what we do know is that God most definitely wanted her in attendance! Be encouraged as you read about her retreat experience.

*“During my time at the winter retreat, I was reminded of so much that I have often forgotten in my walk with the Lord. The thing that stuck out to me the most was the first talk about being ‘valley tough’. It often feels hard living in the valley on earth, as sin and corruption make us feel discouraged and alone, but Jesus is with us and He actually created us to be valley tough. We were made for the valley, and of course it is so nice to be on the mountain top with God praising Him but isn’t beneficial for our mission on earth: which is to spread the gospel to all nations! We were made for the valley and Jesus is walking that with us everyday even when it’s hard!!” ~Avery, one of our faithful student leaders*



Sarah, Avery, Olivia & Ashley at the retreat’s Silent Disco.  
Have you even been to one of those? SO FUN!!

*Please pray...*

*...for the new groups that are up and going on campus this month. Pray God would use His Word to encourage, train and equip these precious students.*

*...for Job, Avery, Olivia, Ashley and Rostik as they return this month from the winter retreat. Pray God would protect them from the Enemy and his attempts to steal, kill and destroy the work God did in their lives there.*

*...for the athletes who will be around Ann Arbor during spring break to engage in community service opportunities through a local church we are setting up.*

*...for us to not forget our first love, Jesus.*

*We are grateful for YOU! May God bless you as you give of your prayers and finances!*

*“I never thought that I would find myself in a room full of college athletes all here for the same purpose. Just when you think that you are in it alone or losing hope, God puts you in a situation to re-instill the faith you were raised with. Going to the AIA retreat in January and really witnessing Christ and his genuine love through all of these athletes was a huge blessing. My faith grew so monumentally in those three days. Knowing that I could talk to anyone there about God and how active he is in our lives was the most comforting feeling. I learned to not hide my faith for fear of what others would think, and gained the confidence to speak out. This experience was nothing short of amazing and I am forever grateful to all who made this possible for all of us.” ~Olivia*

*“Being an athlete can often make us forget our true identity. Our true identity is who God says we are. He is the Only One who gave His Son for our sins in order to bring us life, hope, salvation, forgiveness and so much more. At the retreat I learned that as Christians we are called to be discipled and disciple others. As pastor Jamie used the example of the grapes with seeds, so we should share ‘our seed’ with others: the good news. We do that not because we are forced to, but because of the love that Jesus gave us. As we have received through Christ forgiveness, love and the Holy Spirit, we are being led by God in order to help grow His kingdom here on earth.” ~Rostik*



We partnered with Bridges International, a division of Cru, to host a Super Bowl party where international students and student athletes could interact with each other. So fun to eat, laugh and play together!

