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Annual Report 2020-2021
Serving with RUF at Jackson State University

July 2021

Greetings in the name of our Lord,

To begin, I would like to thank you all, along with the various churches represented, that so willingly and frequently pray for us and give to RUF at JSU to the praise of the glory of Christ. I am well aware that it is God's grace that is being extended to us through the hearts and hands of his people. Thank you!

The last calendar year has been incredibly difficult for us, as some of you are already aware. Personally, I came into my second semester on campus (Spring 2020) with a lot of momentum on campus. I was also studying and taking written ordination exams during February. I have said before that the growth that we were experiencing on campus and the fruit of ministry was fueling me. Then, two days after oral exams I first heard of COVID-19 during our Spring Break, and it seems that heartache after heartache poured in.

A second week of break was announced for things to be observed, etc. By email we were told that students would not return, and like others, we ended the school year virtually, with our students scattered and disconnected. Unlike many, we saw that become our norm for this entire time. Non-academic organizations have been restricted from gathering on campus the entirety of the time between March of last year and now. In one of our updates I mentioned that almost all of the students I know I have not seen in person since March 6, 2020. And plenty of those have since graduated, or transferred.

In addition to all of that going on, I found out that our May presbytery meeting was cancelled. This changed the way that the remainder of the semester went, as well, with long days spent on the porch doing virtual ministry and striving to study between calls, meals, and in free moments. I think I had cramps in my brain multiple times...

We have attempted some creative things over this time. Our Large Group gathering basically became multiple small groups in an attempt to take advantage of the schedules of our students (and their desire to even log on after whole days of virtual school). Our ladies studied Jude; I continued to go through *Thoughts for Young Men* with the guys. This season of ministry was so tough. Even some of our most dependable students began to wane. We heard over and over how "exhausted" they were with it all, which was understandable. Nevertheless, we kept at it and aimed to be faithful with the time given

us by God. Hopefully, the sporadic reality of it all shows forth reward in the time to come.

For the sake of time, I will close by saying that there were beautiful moments in the midst of all of this difficulty. And those moments will be delightful memories. We ordered food for students, even as we were away from each other, gathered for a virtual worship concert on computers and phones, continued one-on-ones, participated in various campus-wide virtual kickbacks, and more. I got to be the keynote for an organization on campus during the fall semester, was on the dais for the 143rd Founders' Day program, and was privileged to be a member of the 50th Gibbs-Green Commemoration committee. It is hard to convey how valuable these will be for our outreach going forward, especially with us being back in-person starting this fall.

Praise:

- Felicia and I became homeowners on June 4, and our family has been transitioning and loving our new house. Arilyn (13) and Athan (11) are so elated. We are, too! Thank you so much for praying for us and celebrating this with us, even to those for whom this is news.

Prayer requests:

- **Leadership:** In the last year, we have seen most of our leadership team either graduate, transfer, or decide otherwise concerning school. We would love for you to be in prayer about God's sending us identifiable leaders as we meet new students and that we see this even from the beginning of the semester.
- **Health:** As some would imagine, there are quite a few people that will be on our campus that are not vaccinated, and plenty that are overwhelmed with trepidation when it comes to COVID-19. Please, pray for the overall health of students and faculty and these concerns, because these concerns are no small matter and will have serious and immediate impact at Jackson State and how ministry goes for us.
- **Financial:** We have seen great faithfulness from our partners. As we aim to gain even more, would you pray for us — and mention anyone that you think may be interested in hearing from us?

In Christ,

Anthony Forrest