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Annual Report for 2020-21
Serving with RUF at Belhaven University

June 2021

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Thank you again for your call on my life to serve God's kingdom in this way as RUF Campus Minister at Belhaven. I'm so grateful for you and your churches prayers and support in this work!

To update you on the work over the past year, like many of you experienced, it was a long and frustrating year of ministry in many ways due to COVID-19. I was excited entering the year over the summer feeling like I had some level of familiarity after two years with the students and the school and how things worked on campus, but with COVID all of that got flipped around.

One positive thing it did reveal though, is that because RUF is structured in such a way as to have an ordained pastor on campus full-time along with interns, and having the support of local Christians and churches, we were actually able to have the flexibility needed to continue to minister the gospel to students and continue to be right up close to their lives on campus in ways that other campus ministries were not able to. Which, of course, during a year where students were more isolated and disconnected than usual, was an important ministry opportunity.

For our usual Large Group gatherings, due to COVID restrictions, we had to shift to a format where we invited students from all over campus to come study the book of 1 Peter in the fall and Psalms in the Spring. But instead of gathering all together, I pre-recorded my teachings and we pre-recorded a few songs for each week, and had the students come to a set of class rooms where we split into groups of 15 and participated simultaneously in different rooms via tv screens. It was a very cumbersome and awkward way to do it, but our conviction going into the year was that we needed to remain as accessible as possible and plant a flag in the ground and say that even if it was awkward that it was important for us to continue to try to press in towards God's word and community in whatever way was allowable. And while I anticipated that most students would simply decide to give up on it all and remain isolated, we actually met more new students than we had before. The students were eager for a place on campus to be able to get some encouragement, grow in their faith, and get to know one another. So, as awkward as it was, it seemed God was pleased to use it to testify to His gospel on campus!

In addition to our Large Groups, we also attempted to continue our small groups on campus. I led a few small groups throughout each week myself, one with freshman and a few others to study specific topics with a handful of students. We also had a Sunday night group that met at our interns home off campus that helped get the students out of their dorms and into a home where they could study the Bible and get to know other believers on campus. We had to meet outdoors for most of these, but were largely pleased with how they went.

One thing that wasn't affected too badly by COVID was our ability to meet individually with students. As a result, we really tried to press in towards reaching out to students old and new and getting to know their stories, hearing their questions and struggles, and talking to them about Jesus and the Scriptures.

On the other hand, our big yearly events were really wiped out. We normally attempt to have a fall conference with just our Belhaven students and then attend a regional RUF Spring Conference, and finally the RUF national summer conference. All of these had to be cancelled for COVID. In their place, we tried to at least find ways to get the students together over the course of the fall in ways that fell within COVID guidelines. One we did were to have a monthly "Field Day" where we reserved the football field and set up spaced out games and invited folks from all over campus to get outside and meet other students. It ended up going really well and we met a lot of new people through it! Another thing we did was to invite over smaller groups by class to have Sunday lunches in my backyard. This provided another way to simply welcome them in and remind them that there were folks in the community who were praying for them and there for them in the midst of a hard year. Finally, as things got a little better with COVID, we were able to have a Spring Conference with just our Belhaven students where we went to some land out of town and pitched tents and enjoyed the outdoors for a day. We had over 50 students join us and it seemed to be a refreshing chance for them to get a break from the grind and to hear the good news of the gospel as I spoke to them from Ephesians 2 over the course of a few meetings.

All in all, it was a year of many frustrations but as so often is the case, the Lord seemed please to turn those on their head and work in students lives even more as a result.

Prayer needs:

◦ **Family**

- Please pray for the Lord's blessing on us as we seek to rest in His love for us and live that out towards one another. Our four children, Lila (11), Annie (9), Luke (7), and Camp (5) are definitely a handful at times, but we are praying for their growth in grace and love for God.

◦ **RUF Belhaven**

- **Outreach** – Even on campus as small as Belhaven's, there are always new students to meet. Would you pray specifically for God to help us reach the athletes on campus and those who may not normally see RUF as a place they would gravitate to?
- **Discipleship** – There are a lot of new students that we have met who we are praying would grow in their understanding of the gospel as well as in their commitment to the local church. Would you pray for God to work in them in these ways?
- **Financial stability/strength** – God has been faithful to provide for our ministry year in and year out! But we continue to be in need of more monthly donors to be in a more stable place over time. Would you please pray that God would raise up more folks would love to invest in this work?

With gratefulness,



Bentley Crawford