



FOUNDATIONAL

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"THESE WORDS I SPEAK TO YOU ARE NOT INCIDENTAL ADDITIONS TO YOUR LIFE, HOMEOWNER IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR STANDARD OF LIVING. THEY ARE **FOUNDATIONAL** WORDS, WORDS TO BUILD A LIFE ON. IF YOU WORK THESE WORDS INTO YOUR LIFE, YOU ARE LIKE A SMART CARPENTER WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON SOLID ROCK. RAIN POURED DOWN, THE RIVER FLOODED, A TORNADO HIT — BUT NOTHING MOVED THAT HOUSE. IT WAS FIXED TO THE ROCK."



Did you know there are over 500 references in the Bible to rocks and stones? Of course, the most famous of these revolve around the Lord: "the rock of our salvation" and the "chosen and precious cornerstone" of our faith. Jesus, as the hymnwriter so eloquently wrote, is indeed the "Rock of Ages, cleft for me."

Jesus was surrounded by rocks his whole life — he was laid in a manger (a feeding trough most likely made of stone). His carpentry trade probably involved stonemasonry, because of a scarcity of trees in that region. His body was placed into the side of a cave and a stone covered it.

So Jesus knows of what he speaks when comparing his words to a house built on solid rock. We have found Jesus' words, like their speaker, to be reliable and immovable. They are trustworthy. They are strong. They are enduring.

From day one Jesus has been our Foundation. Jim Rayburn, who started Young Life, famously said, "That's not just what Young Life's all about; that's *all* Young Life's about — Jesus Christ."

So we build upon him. As we have spent countless hours in prayer determining the direction of our KNOWN vision (see page 8), we have landed upon four strategies that follow our Lord's example. We are relational; we are Kingdom minded; we are dependent upon volunteers; and we accomplish this work in community.

In this year's annual report we look at how these strategies have played out in 2023 — from our relational work with Gen Zers around the globe to our raising up and equipping Kingdom leaders of color in the U.S.; from our exciting volunteer explosion in Bangladesh to the growing Deaf Young Life ministry in Texas.

These stories, and the others in these pages, cause us to stop and give thanks to our Lord for his steady foundation throughout the history of our mission, and to thank you too, for your faithful support which helps undergird God's important work through Young Life.

May we all continue to build upon our rock and refuge in the years to come.

In Christ,

Newt Crenshaw
President/CEO

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A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

WE'RE CELEBRATING FOUNDATIONAL MOMENTS THAT WILL CONTINUE TO HELP US MAKE JESUS KNOWN TO KIDS AROUND THE GLOBE.

FIRST SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS OUTSIDE THE U.S.

The Africa/Middle East Division started with a few clubs in Ethiopia almost 25 years ago. Today over half of all Young Life kids worldwide live in this division! Some senior staff have been around for years, but now this division has almost 400 full-time staff members, and more than 20,000 volunteers.

As a result of this dynamic growth, three geographies (Africa South, Africa West, Africa East) are now separate Young Life divisions, and their vice presidents have been promoted to the role of senior vice president (SVP). This is the first time in mission history that the role of SVP was filled by local leaders, raised up outside of the United States on the continent where they are serving. On October 1 ...



Alexis Kwamy
was promoted to the SVP of Africa South.



James Mungai Kamau
was promoted to the SVP of Africa West.



Martin Wamalwa
was promoted to the SVP of Africa East.



Chad Edwards
assumed the role of Group SVP leading the Africa and India divisions.



Steve Larmey
assumed the role of SVP of India, North Africa and the Middle East.

MEXICO: 15 AND 18

In 2023 Young Life in Mexico celebrated 15 years of ministry. Alongside an exciting team of leaders, the mission has grown to reach 18 cities across the country.

POLAND: 10 AND 13

This year, in their 10th year of ministry, the team in Poland deepened their connection with the Catholic church and, through this partnership, ran Confirmation Clubs in 13 different parishes around the country.

UKRAINE: CLUBS IN WARTIME

In March, a new club opened in the previously occupied city of Irpin. It's the fourth new club started during the war, making 72 clubs in total throughout Ukraine.

**GOD KEEPS
CHANGING LIVES
IN THE HARDEST OF
CIRCUMSTANCES!**

U.S. SUMMER CAMPING BY THE NUMBERS

CAMPERS AND LEADERS HOSTED
60,000

EGGS SERVED
650,000

BIG COOKIES GOBBLED
15,000

DISHES WASHED
12,000,000

WORK CREW AND SUMMER
STAFF VOLUNTEERS
3,300

FIELD STAFF MEMBERS WHO SERVED ON
A CAMP ASSIGNMENT
830

CAMP STAFF
500

INTRODUCING

KNOWN

BY NAME. FOR A PURPOSE.

YL younglife



WHAT'S THE ESSENCE OF YOUNG LIFE'S MISSION? TO KNOW JESUS, TO KNOW KIDS, AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN — TOGETHER.

We believe God is calling us to know eight million kids by name in 2030. Eight million kids — roughly the population of New York City. Eight million kids who each have an adult who not only shares the gospel with them but their life as well. This is what we're calling our KNOWN movement.

To do all of this, we have four simple strategies.

First, we **model relational ministry** by being with Jesus.

A Young Life leader is someone who talks about Jesus like they know him — because they do. They model what Jesus acts like in the way they talk, the way they show up, and the way they live. And just as Jesus spent his time with people, so we are with young people. We take kids to camp and go home with them, creating shared stories along the way. We do club and Campaigners to help kids understand the gospel.

Second, we **develop Kingdom leaders**. Women and men who courageously follow the holy and sacrificial call of Jesus. Our staff exhibit this by being with each other: sharing, encouraging, and exhorting.

Programs like i100 (see page 14) or NextGen Leaders (see page 16) are, more than anything, opportunities to be with each other, learn from each other, and grow deeper in Christ.

Third, we believe God is calling us to **inspire a volunteer movement**. God's impact through Young Life is too big and too good to keep to ourselves. So we'll invite more volunteers than ever to join us and we'll double down on training, certifying, and

equipping them to join in what God is doing in the lives of adolescents around the globe.

And we believe this invitation to experience the joy of stepping into the adolescent world through volunteering will spark the next movement of at least 100,000 volunteers by 2030.

Fourth, all of these things only happen if we **go together**. Together, we can better create sustainable ministry in places desperate for it. Together, we can bring ministry into specific cities and create new funding and support models. Together, we can go into strategic countries like Mexico or India, countries with millions of adolescents looking for Jesus.

Together, we can create pioneering ministries, or sustained ministry in under-resourced areas and show the fullness of the gospel.

Together, we can know eight million adolescents by name in the year 2030.

This is our purpose. To introduce adolescents to Jesus and help them grow in their faith.

We do it one young person at a time. Sharing the gospel and our lives. We do it with a leader who knows Jesus. A kid looking for Jesus, whether he or she knows it or not. And a transformed life. One person at a time.

KNOWN. BY NAME. FOR A PURPOSE.

KIDS KNOWN BY NAME

'22-'23 Ministry Year | 2,305,114
'21-'22 | 1,700,015

AVERAGE WEEKLY CLUB ATTENDANCE

'22-'23 Ministry Year | 374,900
'21-'22 | 294,883

AVERAGE WEEKLY CAMPAIGNERS
ATTENDANCE

'22-'23 Ministry Year | 160,377
'21-'22 | 127,780

KIDS AT CAMP

'22-'23 Ministry Year | 256,200
'21-'22 | 206,758

VOLUNTEERS

'22-'23 Ministry Year | 57,026
'21-'22 | 48,830

STAFF

'22-'23 Ministry Year | 5,859
'21-'22 | 5,668

MODELING RELATIONAL MINISTRY

Coming into Young Life I was extremely nervous. I knew I needed to be a vessel from God for these kids and was worried I wouldn't be good enough because I'd just started my journey with the Lord nine months before becoming a leader.

A couple of weeks into leading, I fell in love with everything about Young Life. I couldn't wait to go meet kids during lunch, I was excited to sit in the student section during games, and Monday night clubs were absolutely amazing. After the second club I had students coming to me, telling me their story. They opened up to me about their past or their home life today, and the Lord spoke through me what they needed to hear in that moment. I knew this was where I needed to be. Soon after, I received this letter from a student:



Dear Holly,

Thank you so much for coming into my life and giving me a safe space. One of the hardest things I've ever had to do was admit I had been questioning my faith, but God prevails. When it got the hardest and I was asking God for a sign, he put you in my life. I used to be ashamed of my story, but it was easy for me to share it with you. I never felt judged by you and was thankful someone was finally just listening to me and actually hearing what I was saying. It's hard being a teenager. It's even harder being a Christian teenager, in my opinion. I know some people have better home lives than me and some have worse. You could've easily only talked to me during club and acted like I never told you my story, but you didn't and for that I could never repay you. I know God has a plan for each and every one of us, so I know he put you in my life for a reason.

Thank you and Josh, for acknowledging me outside of club and never judging me. I love you, I mean it.

Haleigh

Josh Moorman (staff associate), Haleigh (high school senior and student leader) and Holly.

After reading this I wept. I realized that not only did the Lord put these kids in my life for me to guide them, but to help heal me from my past. I wish I would've had someone at their age to be there for me, to speak God's Word and understand what I was going through. Now I can be that person for them. They inspire me each and every day and I'll continue to show up for them with open arms because they may not know it, but they're a huge blessing to me as well.

— Holly Moorman, volunteer leader

THREE STEPS TO COMMUNICATING WITH GEN Z

DR. TANITA MADDOX,
ASSOCIATE REGIONAL
DIRECTOR, MOUNTAIN
WEST REGION

I was an adolescent once. I lived it, survived it, and am tempted to share about “when I was your age” to my adolescent friends. In reality, my adolescent culture is extinct. It was a pre-social media, pre-9/11, pre-pandemic adolescent world, where Blockbuster defined Friday nights and call-waiting was a luxury. That adolescent world doesn’t exist anymore.

Now, I am a stranger in the land of adolescence, where I once was a citizen. Now I’m sent to share Jesus with people who see me as a foreigner.

According to Barna, 73% of Gen Z want to turn to older generations for advice on difficult decisions, yet 71% feel misunderstood by older generations. Kids want to talk to adults, but they risk being misunderstood, and ultimately feeling worse. They want to share personal, authentic, deep thoughts, but worry it will fall on deaf ears or uncompassionate hearts. “When I was your age” assumes I understand the experience of the Gen Zer in front of me, when in reality, I have never experienced this cultural moment as an adolescent.

STEP ONE: ADMIT I DON’T UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCE OF KIDS TODAY.

My adolescence was absent of social media, school shootings, and a global pandemic, and that’s just a sliver of the experience of adolescents today. The

noise, comparison, and pressure never stop for Gen Z, as technology constantly sends the message: You are not enough.

Gen Z is navigating relationships and friendship digitally and IRL (in real life). “When I was your age” disregards the unique experience of this generation and can unintentionally demean when we are trying to connect.

STEP TWO: ADMIT I DON’T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE.

About six years ago, I felt my club talks weren’t landing as well as they once did. At the same time, a 19-year-old leader brought to my attention I sounded angry in my text messages (because I ended my sentences with a period or used a single “thumbs up” emoji). I also didn’t know how to talk about truth as I heard “my truth” and “your truth” become normalized in conversations.

There was a missing link in my communication with Gen Z. This wasn’t about using the current slang. It was assuming I spoke the same language as Gen Z, without realizing the cultural nuances laying beneath the surface. I asked myself:

- Can I speak their language?
- Can I share the gospel in a way that matters?
- Do I understand what is good news to my adolescent friends?

STEP THREE: ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN.

The biggest request I hear from our Gen Zers is: I wish adults would listen to us. Behind that statement is a personal request: Will you listen to me?

Jesus asked questions and listened. He asked a Samaritan woman a question by the well, and then listened to her. On his way to Jairus’s house, Jesus listened to the woman who bled for years as she shared the whole truth (Mark 5:22-42). In both of these settings, Jesus did not walk and talk, but was still.

We must become still and listen. When we listen to Gen Z — really listen — we learn to see them. When we see Gen Z, we can begin to identify where the good news of Jesus intersects with their questions, experience, and lives. In our discipleship, we uncover how Gen Z can engage their values in a way that reflects the Kingdom of heaven here on earth.

Takeaway Tips: Here are four questions to ask kids today:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how well do you feel like I listen to you?
2. What are the last three memes you sent to someone?
3. What is one thing you wish older generations understood about you?
4. On a scale of 1-10, how is your mental health?

DEVELOPING KINGDOM LEADERS

i100

Young Life officially began international ministry in 1953 when we sent our first overseas missionaries to France. Over the next 65 years, we witnessed our international work slowly grow, with various victories and setbacks along the way. Momentum gathered at the turn of the century and since 2018 we’ve been ministering to more kids outside the U.S. than inside!

With this dynamic growth comes responsibility to support all the men and women ministering around the globe. That’s where i100 comes in.



"WE ARE LEARNING HOW TO TOTALLY DEPEND ON THE HOLY SPIRIT, TO BE LED BY HIM, AND SEE HIM WHEREVER WE ARE, SO WE CAN BETTER REACH THE NEXT KID."



The plan is a multiyear investment, investing in our top 100 global staff to lead the international work to 2030 and beyond. The staff meet regularly to learn together; growing in wise leadership, ministerial calling, and personal health. The result? These staff return home to their individual countries and invest what they’re learning into the staff and volunteers under their care.

“i100 is directly tied to what the Lord is already doing in our midst,” says Young Life President Newt Crenshaw. “Think how big the world is and how diverse the cultures are. God is raising up leaders who come from those cultures, who look like the kids we’re ministering to. These methods — imitating what Jesus did — work in every culture!”

This lateral leadership, a working across the mission, is allowing these staff of diverse cultures to come together to see where they can replicate strong and successful ministry methods. During these times they share successful approaches from their own ministries, and likewise, learn of other ideas from their peers. Hear what some

of these leaders have to say about the experience:

“I’m really proud to be part of something that is bigger than just my country.”

“Seeing things in others’ perspectives gives you a fuller perspective on what you’re supposed to do and how you can improve the ministry in your own areas.”

Group Senior Vice President Dan Jessup says, “Through i100 we’re accelerating the development of our staff around the world. This is an empowerment issue. We have the best of the best in different pockets around the world; let’s let these best of the best — those whom the Lord has identified — be our teachers.

“There will come a day where there won’t be a separate Young Life in the U.S. and Young Life international. There will come a day — and it’s on the horizon — where there will just be ‘Young Life,’ where the mission of Young Life has become a global entity. One day the president of Young Life will come from the i100, and won’t that be glorious!”

NEXTGEN LEADERS



The NextGen Leaders (NGL) program is a new leadership experience centered on the recruitment, development, and advancement of Kingdom leaders of color, ages 21-30, and those called to impact multiethnic and multicultural communities.

WHAT MAKES NGL UNIQUE?

We Focus on the Young Life Essentials.

Young Life History, the Four C's (contact work, club, camp, Campaigners), Belonging, Recruiting and Developing Leaders, Building Community Stakeholders, Funding in Under-Resourced Communities

We Develop Cultural and Ethnic Identity.

Cultural and Ethnic Identity of Ourselves and Others, Skills for Cultural Competency When Leading Ministry, Developing Personal Inclusion, Belonging and Engagement in Young Life

We Help Leaders Grow Personally and Professionally.

Self-Awareness, Financial Stewardship, Healthy Conflict Management, Time Management, Emotional Care, Servant Leadership, Goal Setting, Relational Centered Engagement, Networking, Running a Franchise

We Provide Theological and Spiritual Formation.

Knowing: Awareness of Personal Gifts, Abilities, and Calling

Being Known: Deepening One's Identity in Christ and Living Purposefully

Making Known: Developing Kingdom Relationships and the Journey of Faith



"THE NEXTGEN LEADER PROGRAM
REFLECTS OUR DESIRE TO CREATE MISSION
COMMUNITIES OF BELONGING WHERE
EVERYONE HAS A SEAT AT THE TABLE."

WILEY SCOTT III, GSVP OF THE U.S.

PAINTING PICTURES OF THE FUTURE

BY LIPTON GAIN, COUNTRY DIRECTOR, BANGLADESH

If Jesus was a Young Life leader, what would be his volunteer-making strategy? An unstoppable movement came from his three-and-a-half-year ministry; his volunteer team had almost nothing, but shook the world with the gospel. Today it’s difficult to find committed and called volunteers, but the strength of Young Life ministry is not the number of our full-time staff. It’s our committed volunteers.

Last year our vision was to recruit 400 volunteers from 12 areas in Bangladesh. At the end of last year, we celebrated a list of 406 names. We praise and thank God for these miraculous partners!

Here are three key strategies to recruit, equip, and empower volunteers:

1. HELP THEM OWN THE MINISTRY VISION

In Genesis 15, God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as expansive as the stars in the sky. He provided a future vision for Abraham’s faith, so he could look up at night and be reminded when he was upset or unsure. Similarly, when we create a clear vision for our ministries our staff and leaders can look to it for direction, reassurance, and unity. Leaders paint pictures of the future.

Over the last few years, we found many volunteers because they wanted to be part of our big vision for Young Life Bangladesh. It’s important that every Young Life leader clearly and passionately explain their ministry’s vision and mission. It should be compelling and exciting. Helping them own the ministry vision and incorporate it into the vision they have for their lives is essential. When they feel welcomed, loved, and valued to contribute to a big vision, that’s the moment when they make the commitment to be available for our ministry. Every volunteer loves to be a part of something bigger than themselves!

2. PROVIDE AN ENVIRONMENT TO GET AND GIVE

This environment is a generous culture of contribution where everybody participates. We need to intentionally nurture our volunteers. Their giving will be a product of their receiving. Ministry is the overflow of our relationship with Jesus. The Samaritan woman, the blind man, the man possessed by a group of demons, and many others are the perfect examples of volunteers. These volunteers were engaging and serving in ministry because Jesus ministered to them. At first, they experienced the power of his love and mercy. By this they were motivated and empowered to the fullest to serve in the ministry. That’s why they willingly started volunteering to share about Jesus.

The need for volunteers is different in every culture so we must help them to discover their spiritual gifts and abilities to serve well in the ministry. For example, you can find a leader gifted with music, someone gifted with mentoring, someone tremendously gifted in outdoor activities, and someone who’s a good communicator. We match the volunteer with the ministry’s real need and put the right people in the right places. Last February we brought 80 volunteers (from 10 different areas) who are passionate about music to a music camp, and equipped them with instruments to serve their club kids.

3. SHARPEN EACH OTHER THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

Having an attitude of accountability helps our team to grow. We have nothing to prove but everything to improve. This way we create the accountability group where volunteers can grow big in a small group. We go back to the assigned work of the volunteers, review their action plans according to the vision, and measure the results. If any improvement is

needed, we discuss it with the team and take the necessary steps. As leaders, we must focus on the people, not just the program. Jesus emphasized being rather than just doing. He sent out his disciples with authority and power to serve the mission of finding the lost and he held them accountable. “When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done” (Luke 9:10, NIV).

The Best Helper

What did Jesus do for his volunteers when he knew his time on earth was coming to an end? He promised them the best helper. “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever” (John 14:16, NIV).

The Holy Spirit is the birthright for all God’s children and just as Jesus sent him to the disciples, he has sent him to you and me. Jesus knows our strength is limited, our resources are limited, and our number of staff and volunteers is limited. Before we recruit volunteers for this help, however, let’s first welcome the Holy Spirit, our first and best “Helper”!

After all, Young Life is ultimately “A Holy Spirit-Led Kingdom Movement”!



MOVING FROM RECEIVING TO GIVING



CARING FOR THOSE ENTRUSTED TO US IS AN INTENTIONAL AND OFTEN COSTLY CHOICE, RISKY, INTIMIDATING, AND SACRIFICIAL — BUT ANYTHING WORTHY IS COSTLY.

THIS IS CERTAINLY WORTHY ...

Victoria was first known by Young Life volunteers in a Dallas elementary school for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities. When Victoria reached the age to join Capernaum, our ministry with kids with disabilities, she participated inconsistently.

In 2020, Bre Baldwin joined staff and expanded Capernaum to the area where Victoria lived with her Granny. Soon, Bre became like family. And Granny always ensured Victoria participated in Capernaum.

After high school, Victoria began The Capernaum Leadership Experience, a yearlong discipleship program developing Christlike leadership qualities and opportunities for Capernaum alumni.



During this time, Granny was diagnosed with, battled, and passed away from cancer. Staff and volunteers were trusted voices processing life and its many challenges with Victoria. They helped Victoria navigate monumental loss, transition between homes, hold on to hope, and dream for herself.

"We clearly saw Jesus' care for Victoria through this challenging time. We also saw God give her opportunities to care for others experiencing loss. Victoria has served in Capernaum club, Campaigners, and helped start a new Capernaum ministry. She's been a leader at summer camp, served at work week, and on weekend work crews. Perhaps her favorite thing is volunteering as a YoungLives childcare worker. Victoria's heart for serving others, especially babies, is an overflow

of the Lord's love within her. She's using the gifts God has given her to minister to others. She has become a partner in ministry with me and a true friend." — Bre Baldwin

Victoria will sing "Amazing Grace" for anyone, anytime — at the drop of a hat. How sweet the sound, indeed.

We are thankful for young people like Victoria, who teach us so much about Jesus. We recognize our great need to have our Capernaum friends in our community, to see them, to learn from them, and to realize a fuller picture of the Kingdom at work.

BEING DEAF IS NOT A DISABILITY



FOR YEARS, BEING DEAF WAS LABELED A DISABILITY. WHAT IF WE STARTED SEEING IT AS A LANGUAGE BARRIER INSTEAD?

This perspective is indeed changing in San Antonio, Texas, where the first solely deaf Young Life club since the '90s is thriving.

Emma Faye Rudkin lost her hearing at age 3, and she questioned throughout her childhood if God could understand and love her. At 16 she went to Young Life camp with an understanding of Jesus, but no knowledge of Young Life. On the bus Morgan, her leader whom she'd just met that week, looked at her and said, "You're going to start Deaf Young Life here. I just know that about you." Morgan planted a seed in Emma's mind.

In 2015, three years after the bus conversation, Emma joined Young Life staff at 19, following God's leading to start Deaf Young Life in San Antonio. For an entire semester, however, she showed up at kids' events, but had little to show for it. Growing frustrated, Emma told her roommates she was going to quit. Maybe Morgan was wrong. Maybe Emma misunderstood God's leading.

That night she mustered up enough hope to attend one final football game. As she was leaving, she saw a group of wrestlers communicating in American Sign Language (ASL). She walked up to them and began signing back.

After months of trying to meet kids, Emma's persistence meant Deaf Young Life was about to take off.



FACING DOWN EACH CHALLENGE

The foundation of Young Life work is going where kids are and building relationships on their turf. Yet, unless they have a friend involved, deaf teens don't usually attend pep rallies or football games. Leaders must know where to find them or create opportunities where deaf kids feel comfortable.

But once leaders find these teens, the connection is instant. When deafness excludes, it does so because there isn't common language. Imagine being an English speaker dropped into a culture where no one knew your language. This language barrier follows deaf teens wherever they go, even their own homes.¹ Studies show that 90% of deaf kids are born into hearing homes. Of these homes more than 70% of parents do not sign with their children regularly, leaving the kids to learn the language at school.² Emma explains, "When a Young Life leader shows up and signs their language, it's an instant connection and bond, because (often for the first time) a loving adult who cares about them can sign their language — getting to know important details about their life and how they're doing emotionally and spiritually."

Young people who are deaf not only face communication challenges at home, but they are often excluded from social events.

Many hearing parents have concerns with teaching their deaf teens to drive. So, each Thursday, Emma and her team pick kids up after school from all over San Antonio, to bring them to club. The leaders help them with their homework, eat dinner together, and experience clubs and events made just for their needs — deemphasizing musical elements, while emphasizing the visual, and creating places for deaf teens to connect.

The deaf community is estimated as the third-largest unreached people group for the gospel in the world.³ In fact, 98% of deaf people do not have a relationship with Jesus.⁴ Again, the language barrier creates challenges. Deaf ministry is one of the most expensive ministries because it can require three to four different communication styles. "Each kid has a unique need and understanding of language, especially at camp where we provide all avenues of communication."

In 2019, Emma was delighted to see the interpreters dressing up in costume and being a part of the program at Crooked Creek Ranch, one of Young Life's camps in Colorado. No longer were the interpreters dressed all in black, standing out on stage. Now they blended in, which allowed the kids to know they're truly a part of the camp experience. The ministry applies to service as well. For example, last summer Emma took the first group of deaf teenagers since the '90s to go serve as work crew at Young Life's Trail West camp in Colorado.

SMALL BUT GROWING

Deaf Young Life club in San Antonio is one of only 11 ministries solely for deaf teenagers across the entire United States.⁵ They embody Pentecost in Acts 2, men and women going out filled with the Holy Spirit, breaking down language barriers. Deaf teenagers can stand in awe: "We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:11b, NIV).

What began as a club with interpreter volunteer leaders four years ago has grown into a ministry where the graduates are ready to give back and tell their deaf community about Jesus. Furthermore, a second deaf staff person was recently hired in Austin, Texas, to start Young Life at the Texas School of the Deaf, with future plans to continue into the central United States and expand from there.

**Historically, Young Life has had ministries in various locations for deaf kids over the decades.*

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Identifying infants with hearing loss – United States, 1999-2007; **2.** Sullivan, Vernon, & Scanlan, 1987; **3.** The International Mission Board – Global Research, April 2016, www.peoplegroups.org; **4.** Deaf Missions: Published in Missions Frontiers Magazine; **5.** Sonshine Interpreters Study, 2021

WHY CITIES?

BY JOHN WAGNER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL CITIES

Why do we in Young Life go to cities? Let's face it — it's hard, expensive, and crowded. It feels unsafe. Risky. Dirty. Intense. Burnout is far too common. The schools are often a mess. Chaos is the norm.

We find it difficult to raise money and find leaders. We often don't have a long history; people don't know us. Even churches aren't familiar and are often suspicious. Spiritually, it's warfare.

So, why do we do it?!? I'd like to suggest three good reasons.

POPULATION

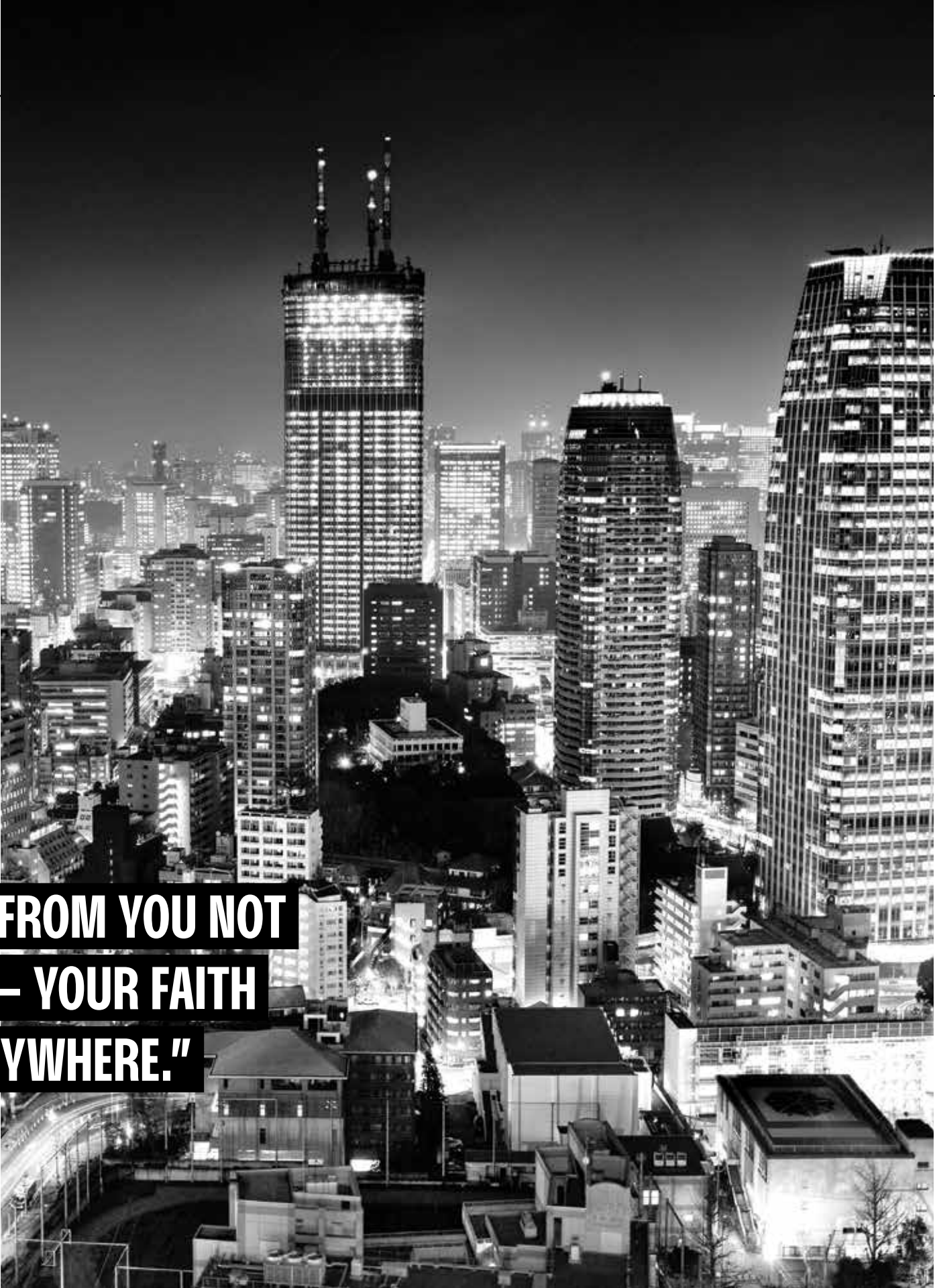
● Tokyo – 37 million ● Delhi – 33 million ● Mexico City – 22 million *

China has eight cities with over 10 million people. The cities of Africa are among the fastest growing in the world. There are ≈600,000 college students in New York City, making it the largest college town in America. The late Tim Keller liked to say, "God loves the city, because he loves humans, and there are a lot of them in cities." God's imprint, likeness, and image are stamped on every one of them, so there's a lot of God's likeness walking around.

If you want to reach a lot of people, especially young people, think of it like fishing and go where they are. Fish in the cities.

"THE LORD'S MESSAGE RANG OUT FROM YOU NOT ONLY IN MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA — YOUR FAITH IN GOD HAS BECOME KNOWN EVERYWHERE."

1 THESSALONIANS 1:8 (NIV)



DIVERSITY

In Acts 2, "the whole world" was coming to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. There Peter and the disciples, in one afternoon, had the opportunity to preach the gospel to people from the whole world.

If we want to reach Asians, people from India or Pakistan or China — if we want to reach people from Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Ghana, Somalia, or Russia, people from the Caribbean, Latin America, or Mexico — we can do it in the cities.

If we reach the city, we reach the world.

INFLUENCE

When Paul was blinded on his way to Damascus Jesus appeared to him and said, "I want you to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles." You know what Paul said? "I will go to the cities."

So, Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Philippi, Athens, Colossae, Antioch, and eventually Rome. Paul knew if he could influence these cities, these cities would influence the world. The world had literally come to these cities.

Why did Paul spend two years in Ephesus, every day, preaching the gospel? Because Ephesus is one of the largest and most influential cities in the world and he knew eventually everyone in Asia would pass through there.

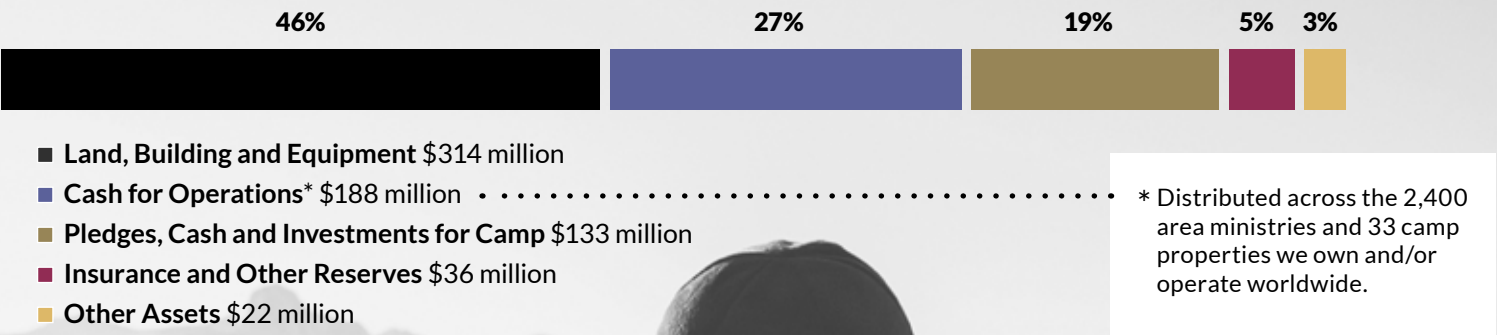
Romans 1:8 says, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported ALL OVER THE WORLD" (caps mine, NIV). Why was their faith being reported, "all over the world"? Because Rome was the capital of the world at that time. Any significant happening there was exported everywhere, and Paul knew it.

The names have changed, but the idea is the same. Places like Hong Kong, Tokyo, Toronto, London, Nairobi, New York, Beijing, Berlin, and Buenos Aires — not only influence their states and provinces, but their country and the world. They're the centers of culture, media, business, health care, banking, education, art, music, fashion, human and financial capital. They present the greatest opportunity we have to make the largest impact.

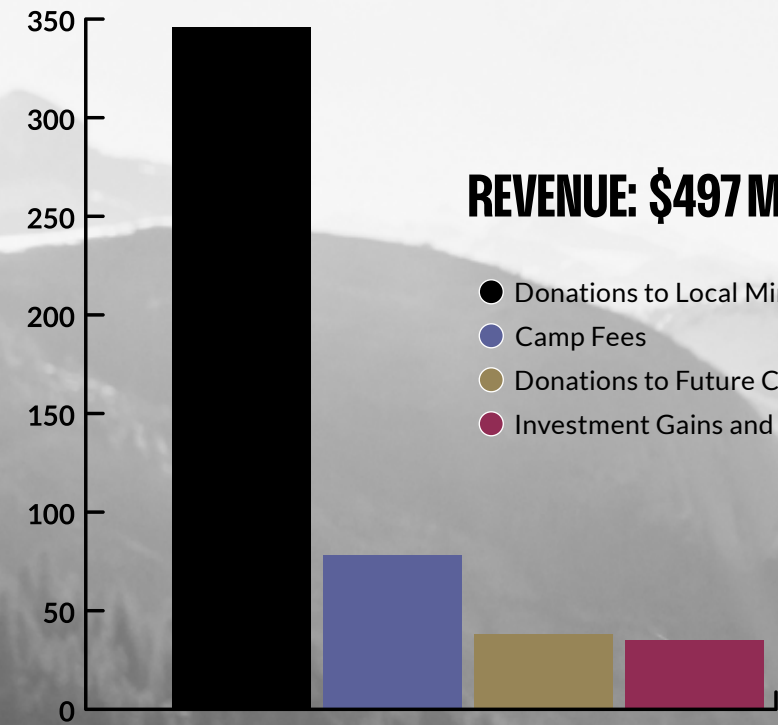
**Statistics taken from worldpopulationreview.com*

2023 FINANCIALS

NET ASSETS: \$693 MILLION



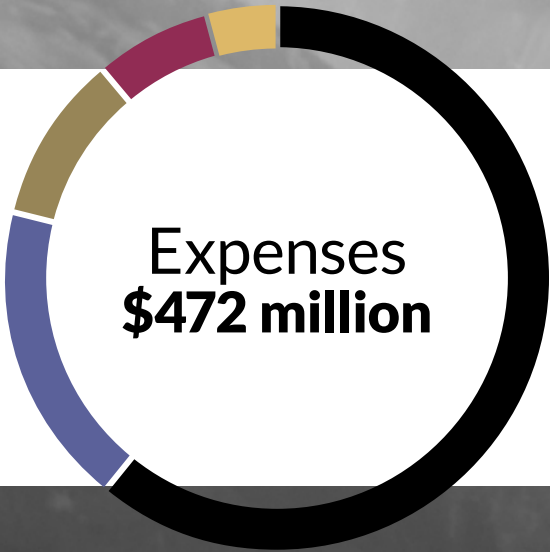
- Land, Building and Equipment \$314 million
- Cash for Operations* \$188 million
- Pledges, Cash and Investments for Camp \$133 million
- Insurance and Other Reserves \$36 million
- Other Assets \$22 million



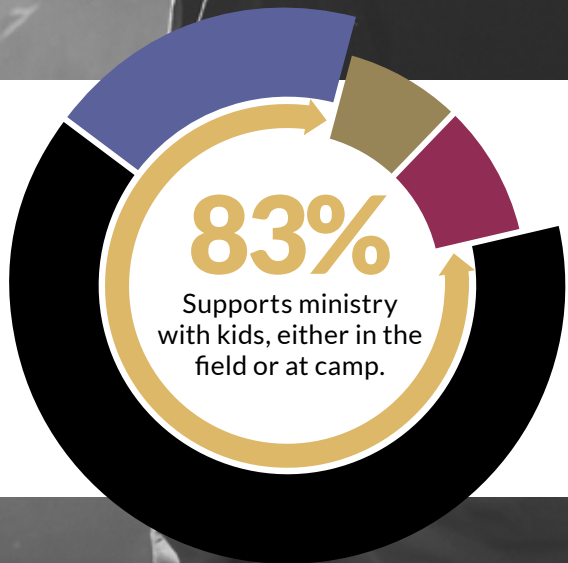
REVENUE: \$497 MILLION

- Donations to Local Ministry \$346 million 69%
- Camp Fees \$78 million 16%
- Donations to Future Camps \$38 million 8%
- Investment Gains and Other \$35 million 7%

- Salaries and Benefits \$290 million 61%
- Club and Camping Activities \$84 million 18%
- Property Expenses \$48 million 10%
- Travel, Training and Professional Svcs. \$31 million 7%
- Events and Other \$19 million 4%



Expenses \$472 million



- Club Ministries 64%
- Camping Operations 19%
- Fundraising 8%
- Management and General 9%

83% Supports ministry with kids, either in the field or at camp.



Young Life takes seriously its obligation to steward resources with the utmost integrity. We are pleased to report, once again, Charity Navigator has awarded us their highest rating for financial health, accountability and transparency.

Thank you to our 207,000 donors who have trusted us to invest their gifts to ensure we know Jesus, know kids, and make him known — together.

ENTERING



JUST LIKE EACH OF US, JESUS ENTERED THE WORLD AS A BABY.

And just like us, he grew up — from fragile child to awkward teenager to vulnerable adult. During his brief stay, he entered into the harshness of human life — the brokenness and the pain.

And into this darkness he brought with him life, truth, grace, mercy, and meaning. Along with these, he brought love.

A love he demonstrated by voluntarily entering into death. Why? To bring us into relationship with the Father, by bearing a burden we could not. His death meant life for us. And to show he was not just a martyr, he conquered death through his resurrection.

Jesus. Immanuel. God with us.

We indeed live on a visited planet, because the Savior has entered our world and redeemed it.

And he enters our world still today through his Holy Spirit living in his followers. He now delivers his life, truth, grace, mercy, meaning, and love through the people he calls his own. We are now the conduit for others to experience his precious gift of salvation.

This is why we enter the world of kids. For we know many of them to be lonely and hopeless. We carry in us the love of the Savior, and we humbly enter the places most important to them — soccer matches, band practice, even gaming couches. We meet them in their joys and sorrows.

All so we might introduce them to the One who has entered their world, and wants to enter their hearts as well.



"HE CAME TO THAT WHICH WAS HIS OWN, BUT HIS OWN DID NOT RECEIVE HIM. YET TO ALL WHO DID RECEIVE HIM, TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD."

JOHN 1:11-12 (NIV)

SHARING



**"WE LOVED YOU SO MUCH THAT WE
WERE DELIGHTED TO SHARE WITH YOU
NOT ONLY THE GOSPEL OF GOD BUT
OUR LIVES AS WELL, BECAUSE YOU HAD
BECOME SO DEAR TO US."**

1 THESSALONIANS 2:8 (NIV 1984)



**WHILE ON EARTH, JESUS
TREATED EACH PERSON
WITH DIGNITY BECAUSE
HE KNEW EVERYONE
HE MET WAS MADE IN
GOD'S LIKENESS**

— an image bearer of the great King. He also knew many did not feel worthy to approach God because of their sins.

So the Savior approached them.

He ate dinner with them in their homes. He was friendly.



He laughed with them at their weddings. He was joyful.

He cried with them at their gravesites. He was compassionate.

Jesus' critics called him a "friend of sinners." He wore it as a badge of honor.

He shared day-to-day life with people, and loved them as they were. By this he earned the right to share eternal life with them, helping them see what they could become in a relationship with the Father.

Jesus is just as concerned with people today, and he lets us play a part in sharing his love for them. Many kids don't believe in God. Or if there is one, they assume he's irrelevant to their daily lives. Or some think a Holy God



would want nothing to do with them, so they dare not approach him.

So we approach them.

We eat pizza together, because we love spending time with them.

We laugh together, because it's so life-giving.

We cry together, because our hearts break at their sadness.

We share day-to-day life with young people, and love them as they are. By this we too earn the right to share eternal life with them, helping them see what they can become in a relationship with the Father.



INVITING

FROM THE BEGINNING, THE FATHER HAS INVITED HIS MOST PRIZED CREATION — US(!) — INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. HE LOVES US, HE KNOWS US, AND HIS HEART IS FOR US.

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus announced the coming of the Kingdom and invited men and women to boldly enter into it. Jesus knows each of us to be hope-shaped creatures, and he invites us to himself, the only One who can make our hopes a reality.

Before the disciples were “the disciples,” Jesus told each of them, “Come, follow me.” When they asked him where he was staying, Jesus replied, “Come and see.” Knowing they were tired and hungry, Jesus said, “Come and have breakfast.”

His invitation to come is for everyone. He tells the people, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink,” and, “Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”

Since Jesus’ ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit continues to call people into relationship with the Son. He delights in bringing the lost to Jesus, and we too delight in introducing kids to him.

Ours is a ministry of invitation.

We invite kids to experience the abundant life ...

We invite them into fun, because laughter breaks down walls.

We invite them into adventure, because life is meant to be experienced.

We invite them into deep conversations, because our souls long to go beneath the surface.

Kids are indeed thirsty, and we’re inviting them to taste the Living Water, knowing that after drinking it, they’ll never be thirsty again.

We invite them into a life lived fully in Jesus, because everyone was made for this.

“TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD: BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO TAKES REFUGE IN HIM.”

PSALM 34:8 (NIV)

EQUIPPING

WHEN CALLING HIS FIRST DISCIPLES, JESUS ISSUED AN INVITATION AND A PROMISE:

“Come follow me and I will send you out to fish for people.” Knowing they had no idea what that meant, the Lord equipped them to do so over the next three years. First, he called them to be with him, knowing everything flowed out of this relationship. Then he lovingly molded them into the people who, through his power, would overturn the world. Lastly, he graciously gave them his Holy Spirit, a calming reassurance and living reminder that he would be with them forever!

Our mission statement reads, “Introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.” The second half focuses on our commitment to discipleship — that by following him daily, we can truly know him and his view on life.

Our faith grows when we trust the Leader, so we help kids learn how to listen to the Lord, through his written word and the Spirit’s voice. Of course, we hear better when we regularly communicate with him, so we also emphasize prayer. And because God created us to walk together, we provide community for kids with their leaders and peers.

Out of this naturally grows a desire to invite others into this loving community. We help our friends realize they’re the aroma of Christ, attractive to those who have yet to meet him.

Lastly, he’s graciously given us his Holy Spirit, a calming reassurance and living reminder that he’ll be with us forever!



“I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. IF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND I IN YOU, YOU WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT; APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING... THIS IS TO MY FATHER’S GLORY, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, SHOWING YOURSELVES TO BE MY DISCIPLES.”

JOHN 15:5, 8 (NIV)



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