



## Surrounded by Love



**On a busy corner in North Minneapolis, the sun glared down and speakers amplified gospel music.**

Adults and children enjoyed games, raffles, and lunch. Christ in You Ministries, a partner ministry of Cru Inner City®, was hosting its annual PowerPack™ party. The party was a chance for church members to connect with people in their community.

The PowerPacks™, provided by Cru, met a real need for the families, providing kids with the things they need to begin a new school year, like backpacks and all school supplies families need but often cannot afford. The party also opened opportunities to share the gospel.

Two blocks from the PowerPack party, another party was underway. Late in the afternoon, as the PowerPack event was winding down, there was a

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Each summer, families gather at PowerPack parties in Cru cities to equip students with the tools they need to grow and succeed during the new school year.



*Continued from front*

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shooting at the other party. But the PowerPack event was so lively, no one heard the gunshots.

So, when Rhonda and her teenage daughter, Makayla, came walking up the block, a volunteer smiled, asked if they were hungry, and pointed to the table where food was available. Rhonda and Makayla approached the folks from Christ in You Ministries.

“There was a shooting at the block party,” Rhonda said, “and my daughter is autistic and very shaken up. She is not very expressive, but as we were walking over, she kept repeating, ‘guns... guns... shooting.’” Rhonda turned to Makayla and lamented, “Baby, I didn’t ever want you to have to learn that word.”

Latifah, one of the leaders at Christ in You, handed Makayla a can of soda. She took a couple

sips, but was so shaken up that she lost control and dropped it. Immediately, a group gathered around and prayed over Rhonda and Makayla. They asked Jesus to take away their fear and surround them instead with his love and presence.

Following prayer, they sat down to eat. Makayla listened intently to youth from the church who were on the lawn, singing praise songs. Her countenance transformed from fear to joy. A smile spread across her face as she began to sing along. It was, quite simply, a powerful display of the love of God right there in North Minneapolis.

Through the hospitality, prayer, and praise of God’s people in the inner city, He brought peace and hope to a young woman and her mother.

Her countenance  
transformed  
from fear to joy



# Not in Vain

**The following is an excerpt from a recent letter written to the Agape Center staff in Chicago.** It's from Ronald, a former 7th grader in their S.A.Y. Yes!® after-school program, where inner-city students are mentored in a safe, nurturing environment:

*"As I sit here reading my Bible, I can't help but think about you and your mission. I want to say thank you for all your zeal and tireless efforts to bring Christ's love into the lives of so many children who need it. Life in Chicago is hard and you all serve as a safe haven for so many. I know because I was once one of those children.*

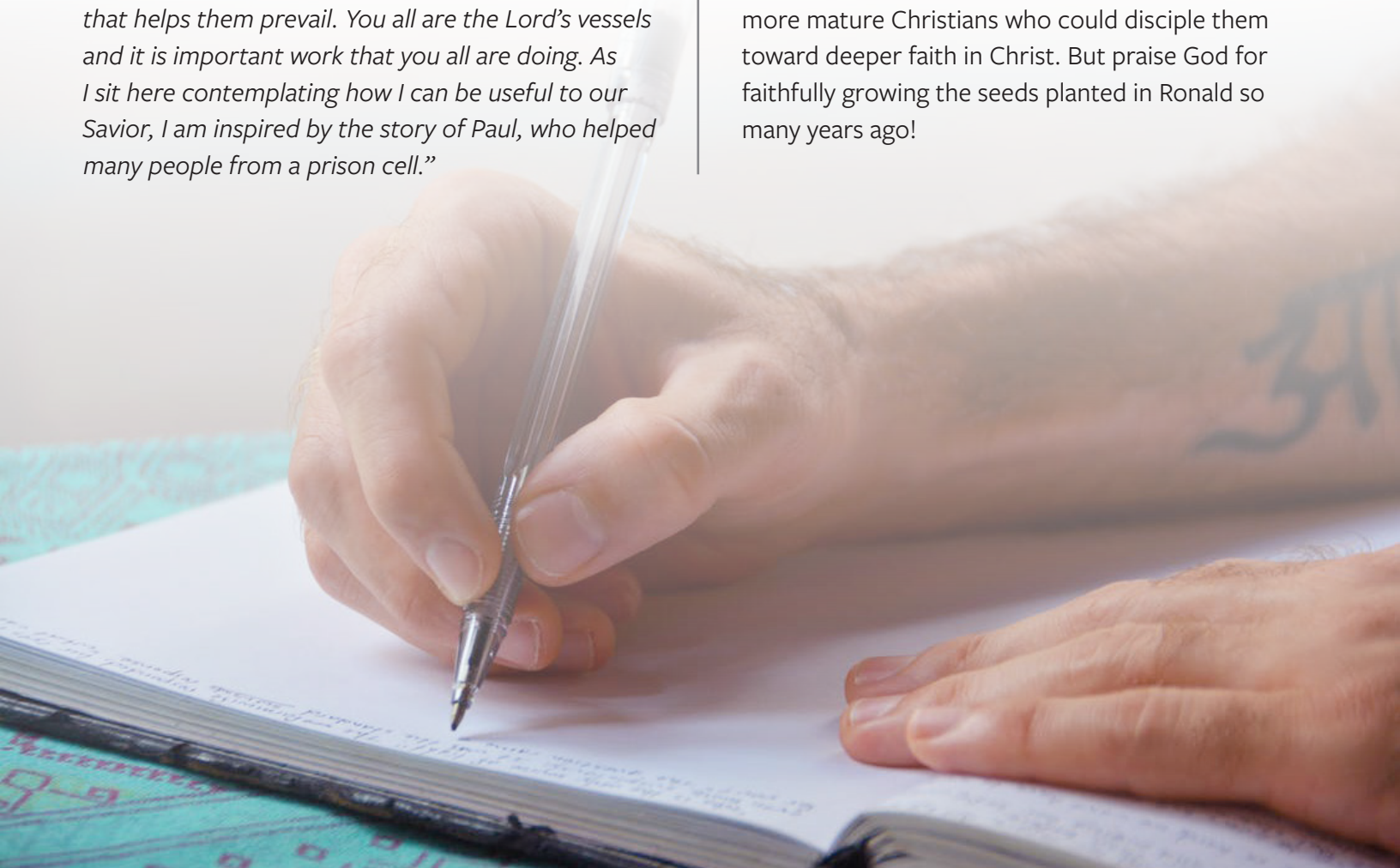
*"You are planting seeds in fertile soil (Luke 8:8), although it may not seem that way at first. There will be times of turmoil in the lives of those children and the memories of the Lord's love that have been bestowed upon them will be the source of strength that helps them prevail. You all are the Lord's vessels and it is important work that you all are doing. As I sit here contemplating how I can be useful to our Savior, I am inspired by the story of Paul, who helped many people from a prison cell."*

You are planting seeds in fertile soil, although it may not seem that way at first

Ronald's letter is so poignant because he was writing it from an Illinois Correctional Center. It's been more than fifteen years since Ronald was a part of the S.A.Y. Yes! ministry at the Agape Center, hearing Bible lessons, memorizing Bible verses, and getting help with his homework. After that time, he made some bad choices and got in trouble with the law.

The Agape Center staff were shocked and saddened when they learned Ronald had been incarcerated. But later, they began receiving letters from him, letting them know that their investment into his life was not in vain. He began to take seriously the things he had learned during his time at the Agape Center and returned to following Christ despite his circumstances.

Sometimes in ministry, we see people make a profession of faith, but then return to making destructive life choices, or even avoid contact with more mature Christians who could disciple them toward deeper faith in Christ. But praise God for faithfully growing the seeds planted in Ronald so many years ago!



# A Personal Word



Milton Massie  
Co-National Director

**As believers in a fallen world, we are often called to be bridges.**

Bridges build connections from one place to another. They make it possible to cross terrain we couldn't cross on our own. God can use what He's done in our lives to help others cross the bridge—the one

that takes us from being dead in our sins to being alive in Christ. That seems like a pretty cool calling!

But there is another function of a bridge. Bridges create connections, but to do so, they get walked on. That doesn't seem quite as cool. In fact, it is often difficult, messy, and sometimes even painful. It means putting others first. It means stepping out of our comfort zone. It means careful, intentional listening. It means making love our aim. It means declaring and demonstrating the works of God among the people we meet every day. We are to “advertise” the gospel by our lifestyle, our words, and our deeds. We're called to walk as Jesus walked, living as lights in a dark world. That's not always easy or comfortable.

How do we handle that part of our calling? The best answer to that question seems to be simply, by faith. Colossians 2:6 says, “Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” So, by faith in God's sufficient grace, we choose to put others' needs ahead of our own. By faith, we realize that only God can open the hearts of those who don't yet know Him. By faith, we forgive when we're wronged. By faith, we love people created in God's image, even when they seem unlovable. By faith, we look for opportunities to be a bridge of hope to those without hope.

At Cru Inner City, everything we do aims to be a bridge to the gospel. Everything from Boxes of Love® to the S.A.Y. Yes! Centers® for kids, to classes that move people from unemployment to a career path—all these have a bridge to the gospel. Your sacrificial support and prayers help make that possible. You are a vital part of the bridge!

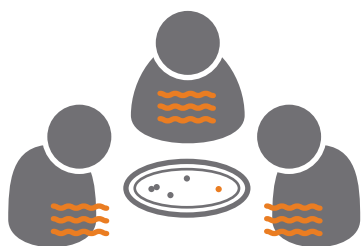
Grateful for your partnership,

*Milton Lee Massie*

Milton Massie

Co-National Director

## A Box of Love. A bridge of hope.



**20% of American families** don't have enough food over the holidays.



Thanks to your generosity, we'll deliver **25,000 Boxes of Love** to those families for Thanksgiving.



Please pray that God uses these Boxes of Love as bridges of hope—that **5,000 people** will make a decision for Christ.

# Food for one day... hope for a lifetime



**Thanksgiving was just around the corner, and Pastor Lee Harris was thinking about who might need**

**a Box of Love® and an opportunity to hear the gospel.** Pastor Lee serves Mt. Olive Primitive Baptist Church, a partner of Cru® Inner City in Jacksonville, Florida.

One day, while on a walk in the neighborhood, Pastor Lee met Delbert. He learned five people lived in Delbert's home—two children and three adults. "Would you be interested in receiving some love for Thanksgiving?" Lee asked. Delbert answered, "Yes."

When the day came to deliver the Boxes of Love, Pastor Lee and Tony Johnson, a staff member of Cru, made Delbert's home their first stop. Delbert's mother answered the door. Pastor Lee introduced himself and explained that the box included turkey and all the fixings for a Thanksgiving dinner. Delbert's mother was overcome by tears of appreciation. "I was just praying that God would bless us for Thanksgiving!" she exclaimed.

Pastor Lee met and prayed with the whole family. They all responded to his invitation to worship at Mt. Olive and began attending! Delbert and his young sons heard the gospel message. Pastor Lee invited Delbert to an evening discipleship group, which he was eager to join. Soon, Delbert gave his life to Christ, was baptized the first Sunday in December and has been a faithful member of the church ever since.

The transformation didn't stop there! Delbert had been seeking employment, but past incarceration was a barrier. Pastor Lee connected Delbert to a program which helps young adults establish a career path. Participants are supported

The transformation didn't stop there



Every Thanksgiving, volunteers across the country help pack and deliver Boxes of Love to people in need like Delbert and his family.

by earning their GED, learning to write a résumé, and mastering interview techniques, soft employability skills, and more. Delbert entered this program and got a job!

Prior to coming to faith in Christ, Delbert had been sleeping on a mattress pad on the floor of his apartment with his children's mother and their two children. Church members gave him a full bedroom set. His fiancée has also come to know the Lord, and joined Mt. Olive's congregation! She recently moved out until she and Delbert get married. The two are now going through premarital counseling, hoping to be joined under God's marital blessings!

Delbert's entire family has been changed, thanks to your generosity. Making Boxes of Love available for our church partners is having an impact on inner-city communities across the country because God's love is changing lives.





Help us ensure that families like Terri's don't feel forgotten this Thanksgiving by donating the gift of a Box of Love to someone in need.

# From terror—to transformation!



**She was a young mother, terrified, with two young children, fleeing horrible domestic abuse.**

They had no money. No clothing but what they were wearing. And no food.

Forced to move in with her elderly mother, Terri felt desperate. Hopeless.

As Thanksgiving Day approached, there was no way she could provide a holiday meal for her devastated family.

But Christians from a neighborhood church suddenly arrived at the door with a Box of Love®! They had the joy of assuring Terri that she and her babies were not forgotten. "God loves you!" was their message.

Terri was overwhelmed, overjoyed, by this expression of caring and compassion

Terri was overwhelmed, overjoyed, by this expression of caring and compassion. That simple cardboard box, packed with food and fixings for a complete Thanksgiving meal, set transformation in motion. Soon Terri placed her faith in Christ—and today she and her family are active, enthusiastic members of that church.

This is the gift of love I invite you to give today to families across America. Every \$41.40 contribution today provides another Box of Love. Please be generous. Thank you!



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Cru is a charter member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

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Occasionally the names of people featured in this report are changed to protect their privacy.

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