

## **More than a cardboard box full of food.** ***An invitation to community ... to Jesus ... to NEW LIFE!***



Just two years ago, they were strangers. Sixteen families who were struggling in Houston's inner city. Caught in the relentless race to make ends meet and put food on the table all on their own.

But now? They're your brothers and sisters in Christ!

The story of how this miracle happened begins with 36 Boxes of Love® — given by generous friends like you — and a new approach to distribution that Cru® Inner City's 30-plus expansion cities had just launched, called the Embracing Families Strategy.

With this strategy, partner ministries focused on establishing relationships with recipients *first* — well before offering Compassionate Products™ (like Boxes of Love) or making gospel presentations. This plan is designed to cultivate deeper relationships that create fertile ground for ministry — including Compassionate Product distributions, gospel engagements, follow-up, and discipleship.

So when Friend of Jesus Church in Houston received those 36 Boxes of Love — each filled with a turkey and all the trimmings for a Thanksgiving dinner

“We went from being just friends to now being sisters and brothers in Christ.”



for six, plus gospel literature — they intentionally reached out to 36 specific marginalized families their congregation had already been getting to know.

“It's so important that every box has a name,” says Bryant Lee, National Expansion Director for Inner City, “but mainly what's important is that we do the follow up work.”

And Friend of Jesus Church did just that. They didn't just knock on the door, leave the Boxes of

*Story continues inside ...*

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## More than a cardboard box ...



Many of the families who received a Box of Love through your generosity got baptized!

Love, and disappear — they maintained contact with each family post-distribution by praying together and checking in regularly.

As a result, friendships deepened. The gospel message penetrated hearts even more powerfully. And sixteen of these families are now attending Friend of Jesus, according to Pastor Mario Valle, Jr., who leads the congregation his parents began more than a decade ago.

“We went from being just friends to now being

sisters and brothers in Christ,” Pastor Mario says. “The Boxes of Love have been a big impact, not just for the church, but for the whole community. We have been able to show our community the love Jesus Christ has for them.

“I believe that the Boxes of Love are a great tool to be able to get to those families in need and speak to them about the love of Jesus. It lets us get closer to our community’s needs.”

Adding to the excitement, on the congregation’s 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary this June, the church hosted a baptism service where “many of those families that received Boxes of Love got baptized,” Pastor Mario reports.

“That shows us that the Boxes of Love are not covering just the basic needs, but they’re covering more. They’re going above and beyond. ... They’re in people’s hearts now, showing that by baptizing themselves. They’re turning everything in ... to Jesus Christ.”

Thank you for sharing this simple, yet life-changing gift — the Box of Love® — with so many children and families of the inner city. You are satisfying the hunger of both body *and* soul.

## “She didn’t know what she was going to do.” *You offered comfort and hope for a fresh start!*



Just pulling into the neighborhood strip mall with her two small children took everything Mallarie had. Grocery shopping felt like a chore ever since the passing of her oldest child.

The single mom recently relocated her family to Chicago from another state to start over, but the transition had been difficult — and Mallarie was struggling to meet her children’s needs.



Mallarie and her children received just two of the 1,800 PowerPacks distributed in Chicago alone this summer thanks to friends like you!

# A young life — transformed!

If you knew Devon at age 15, you might have described him as rough around the edges.

He didn't go to school. Instead, he roamed the streets all day. His home life was broken.

But Pastor Brian Evans didn't write Devon off — or any of the teens in their Detroit community. Having grown up in a fatherless home and a neighborhood ravaged by alcohol, drugs, and violence himself, he's determined to offer teens like Devon the gift he received from his uncle, a pastor: Jesus Christ.

That's why he teamed up with Cru® Inner City to launch New Generation, an after-school S.A.Y. Yes!® Center at the congregation he pastors.

Through the program, Pastor Brian met Devon and began mentoring him. It wasn't long before the teen began responding to his consistent influence.

"You could see a change in him," Pastor Brian remembers, "and he received Christ."

Today, Devon attends church regularly and

is enrolled in the Job Corps, about to earn his diploma — a role model to other teens in the S.A.Y. Yes! program.

"They have seen the dramatic change in his life," Pastor Brian remarks. "He's a visible example of how God can change somebody's life and change their direction."

You have played a personal part in Devon's transformation through your prayers and giving. Thank you for making stories like his possible!



S.A.Y. Yes! Centers, like the one that reached Devon, provide tutoring, mentoring, Bible instruction, other activities, and snacks to young people after school.

As the trio headed out of the store, they met volunteers from Fresh Anointing International Ministry, which was inviting shoppers to its annual back-to-school festival underway nearby.

"We began to minister about the good news, and she began to break down in tears," says Dr. Heidi Ellis, who leads the congregation. "She didn't know what she was going to do about providing and meeting the needs for the kids in the new school they are now attending."

Dr. Ellis and her team listened to Mallarie's story, fed her family, gave her school uniforms and a PowerPack® for both children. PowerPacks®

— beautiful backpacks — are provided to Fresh Anointing through partnership with Cru® Inner City. They are filled with school supplies like spiral notebooks, pocket folders, pens, pencils, crayons, glue sticks, and age-appropriate gospel literature.

After they shared the gospel and prayed over Mallarie and her kids, the mom was so touched, she and her children attended services at Fresh Anointing the next day and joined the church.

"We will be watching over them and continue to spread the gospel to them," Dr. Ellis said.

Thank you for making compassionate outreaches like this possible for families like Mallarie's!





Milton Massie  
Executive Director/  
Steward

*A personal word from Milton Massie*

# A Passionate Vision for Sacred Spaces

During Paul's Second Missionary journey, he traveled with Timothy and Silas to Troas. While still in Troas, Paul was sleeping when he had a vision of a man from Macedonia who "was standing there, urging him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (Acts 16:9, ESV).

*And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

— Acts 16:10

Notice the direct request of the Macedonian's invitation: come over and help. He didn't ask Paul's team to serve them or take over their work. They needed a partner. Centuries later, the call of the Macedonian has become Cru® Inner City's ministry model, as we continually seek to expand our reach in urban communities.

At the heart of expansion is identifying the people already at work doing what God has called them to do and seeking to establish a partnership with them. As we do so, our framework involves submitting ourselves to our inner-city partners. Our core value is to work alongside them, not to impose our will. We want to hear and serve according to their heart.

In addition to that partnership, my vision is for our staff expansion teams to be fully engaged in making disciples through four specific goals to maximize Gospel exposure:

1. Ministering to the whole person
2. Developing discipleship relationships



3. Training believers to serve in ministry
4. Recruiting new staff

I believe this vision aligns with God's Great Commandment and Great Commission to love Him, love others, and make disciples of all nations. For our unique piece of that Kingdom call, we are focused on a particular space within the nations. Our inner-city space is where people are oftentimes ignored, assumed about, and marginalized. People tend to throw these residents away.

I have a passion for this space because, for one, it's my people. And two, our inner-city spaces are becoming more and more diverse, reflecting God's call for all nations. God is sending the world to us. There are people of every tribe and tongue coming to these spaces in such a way that we'll never be without a job. We will always have a place to live out this Commandment and Commission.

Ready to experience it with me?

Grateful for your partnership,

Milton Massie  
Executive Director/Steward

# No Greater Time to Make Your Greatest Impact

## 4 Powerful Ways to Share God's Love at Year's End

The end of 2025 is fast approaching — but your most significant impact of the year may still be ahead of you! *Please prayerfully consider taking advantage of one (or more!) of these strategic ways to give and maximize your Kingdom impact in the inner city by year's end.*

- 1 IRA rollover.** If you're 70½ years or older, you can make a qualified charitable donation (QCD) of up to \$108,000 directly from your IRA without adding a penny to your taxable income. For most people aged 73 or older, this likely counts toward your required minimum distribution (check with your financial advisor to confirm).
- 2 Appreciated stocks or property.** Receive a charitable income tax deduction if you have owned the asset (stocks; bonds; real estate such as homes, vacation properties, commercial or undeveloped land) longer than 12 months. By donating the asset directly to Cru® Inner City (rather than selling it outright and donating the proceeds), you will likely avoid the capital gains tax on the appreciation AND your generosity will make an even greater impact serving the poor and marginalized in America's inner cities.
- 3 Donor Advised Fund (DAF) distribution.** You've already set these funds aside for ministry — and year's end can be a wonderful time to release them to meet needs. Many in the inner-city struggle at the close of the year, with dropping temperatures as winter sets in and challenges making ends meet through the

Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. With a gift from your DAF, you can extend God's love to those in need at this critical time of year without touching your ready capital.

- 4 Cash gift.** Any generous donation you give — mailed or given online by midnight December 31 — may apply toward this year's taxes.

Thank you. Your support brings lasting transformation to men, women, and children in urban communities nationwide!



# A Holiday Feast — in Jesus' Name!



Rayleen didn't have enough money to feed her five children Thanksgiving dinner.

With her kids out of school the whole holiday week, she couldn't count on school lunches. With more meals to cover, her paycheck just couldn't stretch far enough to make a holiday meal, too.

But by God's grace, she was able to reach out to Belinda — a woman she had met months ago while scanning the racks of a thrift store for back-to-school clothes.

After striking up a conversation at the shop, Belinda — a member of God's True Way Ministries in Chicago — prayed for Rayleen and invited her to church. Although Rayleen didn't initially take her up on attending services, the two kept in touch, praying over issues the family faced.

Upon hearing of Rayleen's predicament, Belinda invited the single mother to an upcoming Boxes of Love® outreach at the church — an annual community project sponsored by Cru® Inner City. There, Rayleen received a Box of Love® containing enough food for a Thanksgiving meal for six — dinner for her whole family! — plus gospel literature.

Rayleen and the children were ecstatic to receive the prayers and the food — and the genuine care they experienced led Rayleen to finally drop

her guard. The entire family began attending the church, becoming active in the dance and children's ministries.

It all began with a simple gift provided by a friend like you — a Box of Love!

Every \$48.50 you give today will provide a Box of Love with a holiday feast to feed a hungry family in America's inner cities and share JESUS with them!



Providing a hungry family like Rayleen's a Box of Love — complete with a holiday meal for six and an invitation to meet Jesus — takes just \$48.50!

Thank you for making it possible for Rayleen and her kids — and for giving another inner-city family this same gift today!



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**Creating Options Together™**

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