

## Your **COLOREFUL** Legacy Sowing Beads of Faith!



**D.J. sat alone as the other children gathered by age at nearby tables.**

The 8-year-old was the only one in his age group and Miss Ruby couldn't abide that.

She quickly pulled up a chair next to him ... and the two began chatting.

"I was suddenly very aware that God had ordained this one-on-one, heart-to-heart conversation."

D.J. and all the other children were at New Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church as part of a joint Easter outreach with Cru® Inner City. The children were divided into small groups by age and every child received an Easter Bag filled with candy, toys, and a brightly beaded gospel bracelet. The excitement was palpable!

Through their impromptu conversation, Miss Ruby learned that little D.J. knew who Jesus was but had never made a personal profession of faith. That prompted Miss Ruby to pull the gospel bracelet out of an Easter bag. The bracelet features colored beads, each symbolizing a different aspect of the salvation story. She discussed each color and what it meant with D.J. *He was enthralled.*

"We talked about God," Miss Ruby said. "And we talked about the kinds of problems that people have when they don't know Jesus. D.J. was so enthusiastic, like he was craving the Good News and wanted to know more."



When Miss Ruby finished explaining the bracelet, D.J. prayed and received Christ as his Savior.

At the end of the session, when the families were reunited, D.J. used the beaded bracelet to share the gospel with his own family. His great-grandfather, who had been contemplating his spiritual standing in

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recent weeks, decided to rededicate his life to Jesus and was baptized on Easter Sunday!

“I’m so elated,” Miss Ruby shared. “It brings tears to my eyes just thinking about how attentive D.J. was and how a simple bracelet provided by Cru Inner City could spark such transformation.”

**It all started with a simple paper bag ... a colorful beaded bracelet ... and your support of our annual Easter Bag outreach. Thank you for praying and continuing to stand with us as we transform the inner city for Jesus!**



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## Hope Partnership

***Share Jesus with people in our inner cities***

Hope Partners are a core group of committed friends who help to make all our evangelistic campaigns happen, month by month.

This simple auto-giving program enables you to serve alongside our inner-city teams without ever leaving home ... making a beautiful, personal impact on the lives of men, women, and children in need.

With a monthly gift of support, you’ll be helping children and adults, families and individuals ... meeting immediate physical needs, and leading them to faith in Christ.

Please consider joining with us as a Hope Partner today!



**— Become a —  
Hope Partner.  
— Visit —  
[cru.org/hope](http://cru.org/hope)  
to learn more.**

# Equipped to Serve

## *Cru® discipleship course impacts inner-city Chicago*



**Gwendolyn was sitting in class with nearly two dozen others: some pastors and other lay leaders like herself.** Offered through Cru® Inner

City Chicago's Agape Center, the 15-week course is designed to help leaders guide believers, new and old, into a deeper walk with Jesus.

During one of the sessions, a learning light bulb went off in Gwendolyn's mind, a spiritual "aha" moment.

"Disciple-making," she realized, "is more about sharing our lives — being relational — as we witness about Christ!"

"Disciple-making is more about sharing our lives ..."

Gwendolyn is one of six leaders from Calvary Covenant Church participating in the discipleship course. Calvary Covenant's lead Pastor, Anthony Thomas, enrolled his team in the course after attending specialized evangelism training for Cru's back-to-school PowerPacks® outreach.

"This is a part of my vision as a pastor to incorporate discipleship, outreach, and evangelism into the fabric of who we are as a local church," Pastor Anthony said.



The Cru training, Pastor Anthony said, helps to put a spotlight on what he describes as an "important aspect of a local church's responsibility."

"It takes and highlights a very specific part of what I feel should be the mission of every church, regardless of size: outreach, discipleship, and evangelism," he said.

Arlene, a lay leader participating in the course, is eager to put what she's learning into practice and thus multiplying their reach in the church and community.

Together, we are bringing deep and lasting transformation through our partnership with inner-city churches ... and you!



# ***A personal word from Milton Massie***

## **A Weary World Still Rejoices**



Milton Massie  
Executive Director/  
Steward

Here we are almost two months into the New Year already, standing halfway between Christmas and Easter. We are also on the cusp of a grim anniversary marking the initial U.S. shutdown for coronavirus. At the time, we anticipated several weeks of inconvenience before bouncing back in the customary American spirit.

None of us could imagine the enormous loss with more than 800,000 U.S. deaths and economic losses into the billions, with the brunt of suffering in the already marginalized inner cities we serve.

But this is not a story of despair. In the midst of hardship and suffering, it's important that believers remember our calling to point people to hope, to make sure that they are putting their hope in the only hope we have, which is Christ, because everything else — all the other narratives and rhetoric that we're hearing — makes humans the hero and not Jesus. Jesus is the hero.

As is our custom as a family, we marked the countdown to Christmas by observing Advent, a centuries-old tradition celebrating hope, peace, joy, and love. Though these four concepts are central to our Advent celebration, they ought not to be relegated to the yuletide season.

This year, in this place of time, the concept of hope was driven home as I contemplated the words from one of the world's most favorite carols, "O Holy Night," which foretells the redemptive power ushered in by the birth of Jesus.

The first verse goes straight to the Christmas message, the birth of the Savior to remedy a world held captive by sin. The verse ends with this:

*"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn"*

This present world is as weary as the world before Jesus came for the First Advent! We need something or someone to rejoice in! Emmanuel as the baby in the manger was and is the hope for the world then and now.

As significant as that First Advent was and is, it goes well beyond this seasonal celebration.

Emmanuel grows up, invests three years into earthly ministry and dies a criminal's death, only to rise again. Even so, the "thrill of hope" goes well beyond the resurrection story.

The hope — our hope — points to the future with the second coming of Christ, our Second Advent. That's where our hope is meant to rest.

To that end, we're going to have to make Jesus the hero now so when the soon-and-coming King arrives we're not surprised.

If we're going to experience hope, it needs to be rooted in keeping Jesus as the hero — not anyone else.

The God of Hope (Romans 15:13) transcends a worldwide pandemic, job loss, economic ruin, chronic suffering, even earthly sickness and death.

Thank you for helping us lift up His name in the inner city.

Grateful for your partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Milton Lee Massie". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Milton Massie  
Executive Director/Steward

## DYK?

- On a single night in January 2020, 580,466 people in the U.S. were experiencing homelessness. **30% were people in families with children.**
- 34 million people or 10.5 percent of the U.S. population live in poverty — and struggle to afford necessities such as housing.
- For most of 2021, 25% of adults living in households with children had “little or no confidence” in their ability to pay their next rent or mortgage payment.
- According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, nearly 6 of every 10 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness did so in an urban area.
- Homelessness has sharply increased in the last four consecutive years.

Behind each number is a person who is hurting, a family who feels hopeless, a child who urgently needs to feel the compassion of Christ. This is our mission field. Together, we will continue to reach out and share Jesus: the hope of mankind!

## You Made It Happen ... Boxes of Love®!



**Myles, father of five, had recently been released from prison.** His family was living in terrible poverty, and he was struggling to find work that could put food on the table and pay rent.

When a team from the local church showed up on his front porch with a huge cardboard box, Myles was suspicious.

But the family couldn't believe their eyes when they opened the box: a full Thanksgiving meal, with all the trimmings, and information about the gospel, too. Myles wasn't eager to receive the eternal part of the gift and didn't think he was worthy of God's unconditional love.

One of the volunteers who delivered the Box of Love® shared his story about how he had found the love and forgiveness of Christ while behind bars, and Myles' heart began to soften. He prayed and received Christ, realizing for the first time the blessing of being unshackled.



The next Sunday, Myles and his entire family attended church — and have continued to be there every Sunday since!

This is one example of many who are grateful for the ministry of Cru® and the resources it provides to churches like his. Today, Myles is filled with hope for the future.

Thank you for making this incredible Box of Love outreach possible again this year. Your faithfulness is changing lives.

# Showing Christ's Love through Homeless Care Kits



**Balvina was canvassing an inner-city section of Minneapolis where many of the city's homeless congregate in bus and transit centers.** A frequent

visitor to the area as part of her church's outreach ministry, Balvina has developed a keen sense of those in need of loving attention. *She spotted Pedro right away.*

Balvina's small church had just recently partnered with the inner-city ministry of Cru®, with the goal of making an even bigger difference in their struggling community.

The Homeless Care Kits provided by Cru were a godsend: complete with good quality blankets, warm socks, toiletries, scarves, and gospel literature — carefully curated items designed to restore lost or forgotten dignity to those in need.

“At first, he didn't want to talk to me ...”

**With a Homeless Care Kit in hand, Balvina approached Pedro.**

“At first, he didn't want to talk to me,” she said, but a two-hour conversation ensued.

Balvina found Pedro short-term shelter. Over the next few months, she checked on him daily.



“Eventually, with each passing day, he shared more about his life, and my husband and I shared more about Christ.”

“It took a while before he could trust the Lord,” she said. But about six months later, Pedro prayed to accept Christ as his Savior.

Balvina said there is no doubt Pedro's journey toward redemption started with the Homeless Care Kit, made possible through friends like you. The thoughtfulness of its contents is “a beautiful reminder of God's love and care,” she shares.

Thank you for making this wonderful ministry possible to people in desperate need. Please do it again this winter by giving generously to provide Homeless Care Kits. Thank you!



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