



December 2022

## Creating A Neighborhood Where Kids Can Ride Their Bikes



*“Do not rebel against the LORD, and don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, **but the LORD is with us!** Don’t be afraid of them!”*

The story of exploring the promised land is mind blowing. A quick primer: Israel is getting ready to enter the promised land and has sent out spies to survey the land. They come back with a glorious report of a rich land with milk, honey, and grapes the size of your head. BUT the people there are giants, they will devour us. Two spies see it differently. Why? One has their perspective on God. **For them their “BUT” is “BUT God is with us. God has given us this. Don’t be afraid.”**

**The picture above is full of story after story about how God has intervened in people’s lives. People who have overcome and are striving and thriving in life because of the “BUT GOD.”**

**A young man with mental health issues who is living with a mother with mental health issues might not have hope in the future. BUT GOD** led our staff to intervene. We reached out to the mother and got our student the help he needed. The mother wanted to make sure that he could work with us over the summer – to earn money but also to continue to learn how to be a man. One of our mantras is, we don't give up on ya, but we don't give in to ya." Pastor Tyrone poured himself into this young man. **He is now on track to graduate and also volunteers at our food distribution.**

**A five-year old boy finds his mother dead, with a needle in her arm.** He is traumatized. **BUT GOD** led his grandparents to move back to New Orleans to care for him and his older brother. Last summer, when was struggling through depression and even suicidal thoughts, our summer staff counseled and encouraged him and his grandparents. They reminded him that God made him special. **Our director Elijah says that this child is now the happiest one in our program.**

**A student going on a mission trip to UIM may not think they are going to be a pastor. BUT GOD** took hold of the heart of a young man from Florida who has served as an intern with us for the past two years, and **he has decided to become a youth pastor.**

**When people graduate from our programs, we may not hear from them again. BUT GOD** led a father who was a part of our high school group in the 1990's to bring his son to us. **He wants his son to learn about God and how to follow God, just like he did years ago at UIM.**

Though the settings are different, the "But God" is there for all of us. Having a perspective that God is for us, that He never leaves us nor forsakes us changes our lives. **The struggles are real, but through Jesus' death on the cross, we know that hope is greater.**

**This past year we have witnessed many "But God" moments.** Here are some highlights from our 2022 goals:

- **Youth Ministry** – Our youth ministry has grown again this year. Pastor Tyrone continues to do a great job growing our youth ministry and, more importantly, increasing its depth through mentoring and discipleship. **Their faith is growing and so is their influence on our community.**
- **Education** – Our education ministry has also grown, and we have added new volunteers and hired local young adults to be role models. **Our goal is to grow every student educationally and spiritually.** Again, it is not just about numbers but going deeper with students and their families
- **Leadership Development** – We are so excited about our leadership development program! We hired 13 people last summer, and two of them have stayed on to work part time. A key outcome of our leadership development program is that our entire food distribution of **our Compassion Ministry is run by 16–22-year-olds from the neighborhood!** They show up at 7:30 every second Saturday of the month and distribute food to over 70 neighborhood families. They are truly role models for younger students.
- **Day Camp** – For seven weeks this summer, we hosted over 55 children a day. In addition, youth groups from around the nation were challenged to grow their Christian worldview, to understand God's justice, and to go home to serve their communities. **Our neighborhood kids love the**

program so much that they often “fudge” their age so that they can keep coming. Many of them are now apart of our Junior High Bible Study.

**With your partnership, we are excited to start 2023 with some big goals, BUT GOD is with us as we work to deepen the foundation of UIM.** These include:

- Building our Leadership Development program by hiring more neighborhood young adults to be role models in training up the next generation of leaders.
- Being a larger presence in our community by opening the youth center two more nights a week.
- Growing our education ministry by adding another day to encourage and challenge students
- Growing our youth ministry both in numbers and in-depth.
- Continuing the Roads of Transition and ministry campaign.
- Hiring a social worker to provide more counseling and resources for our youth and families.
- Growing our young adult ministry by adding a small group component
- Completing projects to keep our facilities safe and comfortable, including two new roofs, 3 air conditioners and some minor repairs.
- Finalizing our succession plan, including identifying a new Executive Director.

For many of us, economic times are difficult. **BUT GOD, through over 30+ years of doing urban ministry, has always been worthy of our confidence.** Even in UIM’s toughest times, God has always showed up and showed off.

Remember that the “BUT GOD” is for all of us. No matter what you may be going through, God is there and He always provides.

As we end this year, **would you please prayerfully consider partnering once again to help us continue to Create a Neighborhood Where Kids Can Ride Their Bikes? Raising \$80,000 by year-end will position us to launch 2023 with even stronger programs. Our youth and their families may feel hopeless and lost BUT GOD died for them and has a plan of hope for their future.**

Thank you for your continued partnership, and Merry Christmas!

In His Grip,  
Pastor John Gerhardt

**PS: Please give by December 31 to help us share God’s living hope with our community.** You can also give online at [www.urbanimpact.org](http://www.urbanimpact.org) and clicking Donate Now.



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