

THE FREEDOM BULLETIN

A Freedom Fellowships Newsletter

DECEMBER 2022

Welcome to the 2022

Freedom Fellowships Christmas Gala!

Thank you for choosing to spend an evening of teaching and music with us. Grab yourself some refreshments and get ready to join in on the festivities at this year's Gala!

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New Year's Eve Party

TBD

Identity Project Winter Retreat

Jan. 13-15, 2023

FST Retreat

Feb. 4-5, starts @ 3 p.m. at Beulah Beach

Announcements

No CT:

12/24 (Christmas Eve)



Less is *More*

By Heidi Muller

When you fly halfway around the world, only to find that your bags are still in Chicago, you go through some things: denial, anger, bargaining (United customer service: I'm looking at you), depression and finally, acceptance. OK, it's not that serious, but it is a journey within a journey.

Turns out you don't need that much stuff. Turns out you can wear the same clothes for days, wash underwear in a sink, and hope for the best as you do not, in fact, take the heaps of diarrhea prevention meds you so carefully researched, purchased and packed.

The great luggage debacle kicked off our two-week trip to India, and not only did it *not* ruin our trip, but it provided a decent metaphor for some of things that Amia Muller, Lina

Morscher and I learned along the way.

Showing up with less is more. We—and by we, I mean lots of us—really like to stuff our bags full. We think about all the eventualities, what-ifs and maybes. The thing is, not only are our bags packed with high-protein granola bars, but with expectations, western culture and self-sufficiency.

Lina, Amia and I found out that the best go-bag is empty of “stuff,” but brimming with prayer, fellowship and hopeful expectation. Space is available, then, for all the joys, memories, impressions, corrections, lessons and new friendships found along the way!

Here are some of the treasures each of us brought back.

Amia:

One night over dinner, Becky Stanley, director of Women with a Mission for India Gospel League (IGL), told us that we Americans take a lot of stuff for granted. Specifically, we don't realize how so much of our ethos can be traced back to Judeo-Christian values. In India, that's not the case. There's only a small Christian influence in India, overall. In America, we take for granted a concern for the greater good and the value of personal sacrifice for others. Becky said that those things are not inherent to the value system in India. The most obvious way to spot it is in traffic. Becky was kind of laughing at us when she talked about our American traffic laws. “You take turns. You wait in line. You yield. This is all because of an underlying value for the greater good and for personal sacrifice.” These value systems extend to things like how you approach social services, and whether you help people who are not in your immediate family or social circle. It was a really good reminder not to forget where these kinds of values came from; they are Biblical values.

Right after I got back, I taught a Bible study on the story of Jacob wrestling with God. By the end, Jacob is clinging to God, holding on for dear life, asking for God's blessing. He knows, “I need you, God. And I cannot make it any other way.” I saw this kind of dependence and faith in India.



The people we met don't have sufficient access to so many things: good medical care, education and good job opportunities. They understand their needs very, very well. I think this is really hard for us to do because we are all so rich. Even I, a poor college student, am rich. When I'm sick, I don't cry out to God—"I need you to heal me!" I just go to the doctor. I have solutions that are open to me whenever I want them. The believers we met in India seemed to turn to Jesus so much more quickly than us believers in America, and with so much confidence, knowing He's all they have. In reality, He's all that we have, too, although we don't often see it that way.

Lina:

I can't stop thinking about Sam and Prati Stephens. (Sam is the founder and president of India Gospel League, and Prati is his wife.) As an older couple, they are on fire and still going strong. They kept saying, "There is more to do, there is more to do." They asked us to pray for energy and perseverance. Sam and Prati, and many others, are going through so much tough stuff. Hearing the Indian pastors talk about their experience with persecution was somehow inspiring. They go through so much but understand it's part of following Christ. In the midst of these difficulties, Sam believes that they can reach the whole country with the good news of Jesus, even beyond to Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh! I hope to see some of this kind of confidence and action reflected in my own life and to finish well like Sam and Prati.



We met some very sweet brothers in Christ during our breakfasts and dinners at IGL's Sharon Campus. One of them is Manoushe, an Indian man and old friend of Sam's, who spent his adult life in Australia. He was raised in a Christian home, but he didn't really walk with the Lord until he was 50 years old—he had been focused on work and making money. When he began to take his walk with God seriously, he stepped out of his successful position and started to attend seminary. He took a huge pay cut to become a pastor. His eyes and entire face just lit up when he talked about this change in his life. I was encouraged that at any age, if you just follow the Lord, you can contribute to His mission.

Heidi:

In the spirit of "less is more," and in the spirit of keeping this article under the word limit, I'm not going to share my treasures here. If you want to hear them, I am sharing about this trip at Missions Prayer Breakfast in January 2023 (stay tuned to announcements for the exact date for Missions Prayer Breakfast)! Our hearts came home from this trip so very full. Along with all of the precious people we met, we loved spending time with each other. Today, my go-bag is empty, and ready for the next Jesus adventure, wherever He might take me.

Heidi had the opportunity to interview over 50 people on this trip. She was gathering stories for the India Gospel League North American office. Amia and Lina came along to support and see the work, and led a few Bible teachings along the way!

All photos are of Heidi, Lina and Amia on their trip in India

MAPPING GOD'S WORK

By Todd Muller

The Study Center now features a map on one wall to highlight God's work in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Isaiah 49:6 – The LORD says, “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

What is God doing in the world right now? Where do we fit in? Where do I fit in?

One thing is very clear about what God is doing: He is at work in the world to bring people from ALL nations to know Him and that His salvation may reach the ends of the earth.

Many Christians are aware of the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Matthew 28:19 says, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....”* Some know that this is actually the story of Acts as Acts 1:8 outlines: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Where have we heard the “ends of the earth” before? That's right, Isaiah! This idea of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth did not begin with the Great Commission. This was God's plan from before the creation of the world, and this plan is given a “sneak peek” throughout the Old Testament in the Hebrew Bible, even before Jesus was born.

What is our role in this? There are many answers to this. For us, one of them involves a map on the Study Center wall.

Have you seen the map? It's a map of India. Well, actually it's a map of India...and Sri Lanka...and Nepal...and Bangladesh. Why? Because it's too small a thing for salvation to only be for India; it must reach the ends of the earth! Let's hear a little more about how God's word is spreading in India and the nations around it.

In 1992 Sam Stephens believed he received a call from God. He had recently been given the leadership of the India Gospel League (IGL), an organization started by his grandfather and then led by his father. India is the second most populated country in the world, with 1.33 billion people in 2020. Only about 2% of those people call themselves Christian. Sam wanted to make an impact by training pastors at a seminary. Apparently God had a bigger plan in mind. Sam saw God moving in powerful ways in India. He felt called by God to lay out a vision to 200 other pastors and Christian leaders. In 1992 he courageously kicked off Vision 2000, a bold plan to plant 1,000 churches in unreached villages in India by 2000, just eight years from then.

“God will do it, if you are willing to commit,” Sam said in 1992. The

Spirit fell on them and every single person in the audience stood up in commitment to the vision.

What happened? Apparently Vision 2000 was too small a thing for God. Within the first year they had planted 2,000 churches in unreached villages. By the year 2000 God used IGL to plant 20,000 churches. Thirty years later they have seen over 100,000 churches planted!

Which brings us back to the question of why is there a map of India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh painted on the wall of the Study Center.



One reason is because it is too small a thing for God to just use IGL to make disciples in India. The ministry of IGL has reached into neighboring countries, and IGL now has church planters and community work going on in these other three countries as well.

The work in India is far from done. Sam has a new vision to see a church planted in **every village in India** by the year 2040.

God is reaching the world with the gospel, including in India (and its surrounding countries). We have a map painted on the wall of the Study Center because we are convinced that God has called us to be a part of reaching the ends of the earth with the salvation offered in Jesus. If you have read this far, I think God has a role for **YOU** to play in His work.

The map at the Study Center will be a place where people can get fresh updates about what God is doing in India (and Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh) so that we can support in prayer and have information about how to support the work financially. Come by to learn about this work and about how you can play a part in this great work to make people a light—that His salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.



Lina Morscher & Amia Muller in India

Freedom Fellowships has adopted the village of Rajakatti in Karnataka, India. This means we are helping fund IGL's work in the small village of 2,500 families and five nearby villages. The support is for a five-year Development plan involving Evangelism & Church Planting, Rural & Economic Development, Children's Ministry and Medical Outreach. We have pledges for the next five years to cover this program. However, we would love to have more people join in giving so we can fulfill this commitment much faster than five years. This will allow us to turn to other areas and villages in India to accelerate the work being done there by IGL.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

BY ELLI ROZLER

Freedom Fellowships 2022

2022 was an eventful year for Freedom Fellowships. Let's take time to praise God for the wonderful blessings and answered prayers! Here are some of the amazing things people in our fellowships have been able to experience with God's power:

FISCAL SUPPORT TEAM (FST) RETREAT:

Playground

During the FST Retreat in February, Neil Brooks asked for donations to construct a playground at the Study Center. Many generous donors made it possible for Freedom Fellowships to purchase a commercial-grade playground, which was installed by late summer. Many people in the church volunteered to help assemble the playground, and Burl Covan poured concrete to prepare the playground site. Thank you to everyone who donated to this effort! The children, community and ministries at Freedom Fellowships have been overjoyed playing on the new playground.

New hire

Also at the FST, the leadership team announced its decision to hire Adam Esterle to work full time as an Associate Pastor. Adam has been a productive member of Freedom Fellowships' staff since coming on full time in the spring. He has been helpful managing tech-specific needs for the church, teaching Central Teaching (CT), teaching classes as well as taking on some roles left as Keith McCallum battled cancer.

RESPITE/SAGE:

This year, Respite saw tremendous growth, with many more families and individuals served. Respite events provide parents or caregivers a temporary relief from the responsibilities of caring for individuals with disabilities. Parents and caregivers drop off kids and come back to pick up their kids rested and full of joy and excitement. The kids who attend ask, "When can we go back?"

In December 2021, two families attended Freedom Fellowships' Respite. As of this fall, Respite has served 17 families, with a total of 25 individuals! About 50 volunteers from Freedom Fellowships help with Respite. Volunteers serve on three teams—hospitality, buddy



Adam Esterle & family

and activity teams. Sage, a ministry for adults with disabilities, has combined with Respite this year, which allowed for more people to get involved in Respite.

Reach out to Jamie Bell or Mike Hudock for more information on how to get involved in Respite.

BAPTISMS:

In September, 15 people from Freedom Fellowships decided to be baptized and share publicly their decision to commit their lives to Jesus! Baptism is one of only two rituals we do here (communion being the other ritual). It's always an uplifting event to hear God's powerful, personal hand at work in people's lives. Ian McCullough kicked off baptisms with a teaching, reminding us that God can reach you wherever you're at and that the Holy Spirit is guiding us to reach the lost. Are you ready to get baptized? Keep a lookout for 2023's baptism celebration announcements at CT!

BURDEN:

This year, Freedom Fellowships launched "Burden"—a Christ-centered addiction recovery group with the aim of rooting people firmly in their relationship with Christ and discovering the addiction-free lifestyle Jesus has planned for them. Ted Howell and Rich Hunter lead the group as they share a vision of bringing Jesus' grace into these personal struggles. This group is for all types of addictions—not

just alcohol, substance abuse or porn—but anything that can have a stronghold in our lives. Freedom from addictions enables freedom to give. Members are experiencing this freedom through community and God's Word. Burden meets the first Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. at Freedom Fellowships. It is an open meeting (meaning free to invite anyone) consisting of a 20-minute talk, testimony, then small group break-out time. Reach out to Ted for more information on Burden.

JONI & FRIENDS FAMILY RETREAT:

Joni & Friends is a ministry our church has partnered with for several years now, serving people with disabilities. One of the foremost ways we partner with Joni & Friends is by sending people to Family Retreats that happen in the summer. Family Retreats allow people affected by disability to be fully accepted and loved while their family also



Top photo: Respite balloon activity

Bottom photo: 2022 Baptisms



hosts two Family Retreats in Ohio each year. This past year, 61 people from Freedom Fellowships served during those two retreat weeks, and 10 served on the Joni & Friends Family Retreats leadership team. Mike Hudock was also asked to join the Joni & Friends Ohio board of directors. Many praises can be shouted about Family Retreat: the Gospel was given to many families, a pastor was convicted by our fellowship to start a small group style church with a focus on discipleship, members of our fellowship were softened as they learned to sacrificially love their campers and a door was opened for Kyle McCallum to serve as pastor for the first week of Joni & Friends in Ohio next summer! Reach out to Mike if you are interested in serving Joni & Friends through Family Retreats (registration to volunteer opens Jan. 10, 2023) or help loading wheelchairs when needed for the organization's Wheels for the World ministry.

CENTRAL TEACHING CHANGES:

Adult/family sphere has its own CT! This change has proved energizing by uniting older fellowship groups with post-college/young family groups. Although our Oasis rooms are exploding with kids, there is much community happening with kids making valuable relationships. Seasoned parents are helping to encourage and instruct younger parents and adults. This CT meets

Saturday at 5 p.m. at the Freedom Fellowships Study Center in Kent.

Identity Project (IP) college sphere now hosts CT on the Kent State University campus! This change makes CT more accessible for college students living on and attending Kent State. So far, the college sphere CT has been fruitful. The meeting time moved from Saturday nights to Tuesday nights at 8:30 p.m. in Bowman Hall 137, with fellowship groups Tamarack and Nitro meeting on Thursdays. Tuesdays allow students who go home or work on the weekend to attend this meeting. For more information on when/where college fellowship groups meet, contact Adam Esterle.

Although times have changed for CT, the CT teachers are remaining the same. Whoever is scheduled to teach the adult sphere on Saturday will teach the IP CT the following Tuesday.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES:

Freedom Fellowships' team of elders is the same (Greg Morscher, Neil Brooks and Kyle McCallum, now that Keith McCallum has passed away), but changes have been set into motion to help not only the elders, but the two full-time ministry staff address the needs of our fellowship.

Now, Freedom Fellowships has a Sphere Leaders Meeting (**SLUM**). Over this year's DMT retreat, the elders shared a vision of a more sphere-centered fellowship, with spheres of fellowship groups coming together to have unity and fellowship instead of just sticking within our fellowship groups. Retreats, events, CT and even teaching rotations (teachers from other groups floating to help where needed within

Our Sphere Leadership Team



Greg Morscher

Post-College Sphere Leader

Finances



Neil Brooks

Family Sphere Leader

Student Sphere
Overseeing Elder

Missions



Kyle McCallum

College Sphere Leader

Student Sphere
Overseeing Elder

Facilities



Adam Esterle

College Assistant Sphere
Leader

Media/Library/Technology



Ian McCullough

Post-College Assistant
Sphere Leader

MINISTRY COORDINATORS/SUPPORT MINISTRIES:

CT Experience: Todd Muller

Equipping: Zak Rozler

Service Ministries: Mike Hudock

SPHERES

Student Sphere: High School, Junior High, Beacon

College Sphere: Tamarack, Nitro

Post-College Sphere: Ham, Forge, Summit, Smash

Family Sphere: Adult Fellowship Groups

the sphere) will all be impacted by this shift. This also means a shift in leadership to help bear the load, so matters don't all fall on the three elders.

If you are interested in who is on **SLUM**, please refer to the chart in this article. There are specific support people to reach out to for various ministries and work. So far, this change has been fruitful and helpful to the leadership needs of the church. Keith McCallum initiated SLUM and sphere changes prior to passing away to ensure growth and success within our fellowship. The leaders feel blessed by his foresight and dedication to helping our church family continue to grow with the Lord, even after his passing.

NEW SPHERE:

Say hello to our newest sphere of fellowship groups: post-college! Identity Project (college ministries) had been getting a little too “post-college” with many members maturing! Several fellowship groups have been splitting with the intent of sending the young adults out of college ministry and into a more natural environment to do ministry that suited their new lifestyles. Thus, Forge, Smash, Ham and Summit have shifted to become a new post-college sphere consisting of young adults, DINKs (dual-income, no kids) and young parents. The unity in this sphere has been fast growing, with very fun events always seeming to involve delicious Nashville hot chicken. If this is your speed and you want more information on when and where these fellowship groups meet, reach out to Greg Morscher or Ian McCullough.

FAREWELL TO KEITH:

We say farewell to Keith McCallum, beloved senior pastor of Freedom Fellowships. On Nov. 27, Keith passed away after a three-year battle with pancreatic cancer. On Dec. 3, family and friends came together for a memorial service celebrating his life of service to the Lord. He is now without suffering at home with his most beloved Jesus. Please keep his family—Dar, Sean, Kyle and Caitlin, Connor—in your prayers as they grieve this loss. Although we rejoice Keith is in heaven, his presence will be surely missed. He spent his years with us teaching us eternally valuable truths from God's Word. His gifts were many and he used his energies to always preach grace and care for the lost, especially the youth. We'll miss his insightful, truthful approach to walking with the Lord, his friendship, adventures and legendary outfits. A GoFundMe has been organized to help Dar, Sean and Connor with medical and funeral expenses as well as giving them financial support to live on after losing Keith's income. Visit this link or view the QR code to learn more about the fundraiser.

<https://gofund.me/127b8c15>



Review of the Month:

What has the Lord “saved” from?

Review by *Alex Herbers*

Underdog stories, redemption stories, quests, romances, tragedies, comedies. From politics to movies to your own destiny — we want to know what happened and what’s going to happen. No misinformation, no fake news; **we want the real story.**

The “Saved” podcast does just that: **telling the real stories** of people in our church and how God has begun a great work in their lives. Listen and hear how God restores broken relationships, provides freedom from addictions, shines light through great hardships, and ultimately builds significance, character and glory into the lives of everyday people who follow Him.

Testimonies of God’s activity in our midst are powerful and encouraging. Many have been brought closer to God by hearing a story of His work in another’s life. Corey Tarter and Amia Muller figured we should share and hear more often about the people whom God’s hands have transformed. They started “Saved” to give opportunities for believers in Jesus to talk about how God has changed their lives since they’ve been “saved” to encourage others with their story and to show God’s glory.

The 30- to 60-minute episodes engage guests in, as Corey describes...

An organic conversation talking about people’s lives from beginning until now, with focus on ‘where did Jesus step in?’

He continues: “We like to capture the raw, unfiltered version of the testimonies... What makes our [podcast] unique is that, before you know the Lord, life is nasty, raw. We weren’t Christians. [In the stories,] expect cussing, drug abuse, talk of suicide and sexual and damaged pasts. We leave it up to the person being interviewed how much they want to talk about, but we’re not going to cut out anything that’s very raw.

“At the end of every interview, we ask the same question: ‘what has the Lord saved you from?’ ...everyone says “oh yeah I’m saved, I’m saved, I’m saved.” But being saved is not just a status, it’s so much more. Not just about going



SAVED

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death."

REVELATION 12:11

to heaven. We've been rescued from something... I was in this situation, now I'm no longer in that situation... what did you get rescued from?"

You can find "Saved" on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and wherever pods are cast. And why not give it a listen during a long car ride to visit family this Christmas season?

If you would like to share what God has saved you from or learn more about the podcast, contact Corey or Amia.



**Freedom
Fellowships**

It was for freedom that Christ set us free

CONTACT

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MEETING TIMES

College Sphere: Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m.
Bowman 137 at Kent State University

Adult Sphere: Saturdays at 5 p.m.
500 VFW Pkwy, Kent, OH 44240