

## Breaking Down Walls

**Just west of downtown Los Angeles, intersecting interstates separate the Pico Union neighborhood from other neighborhoods in the area.** Inside Pico Union, various competing gangs reinforce further division with regular turf battles. So, it was no wonder when Mira, a single mom, moved into the neighborhood with her two children, she erected protective walls of her own.

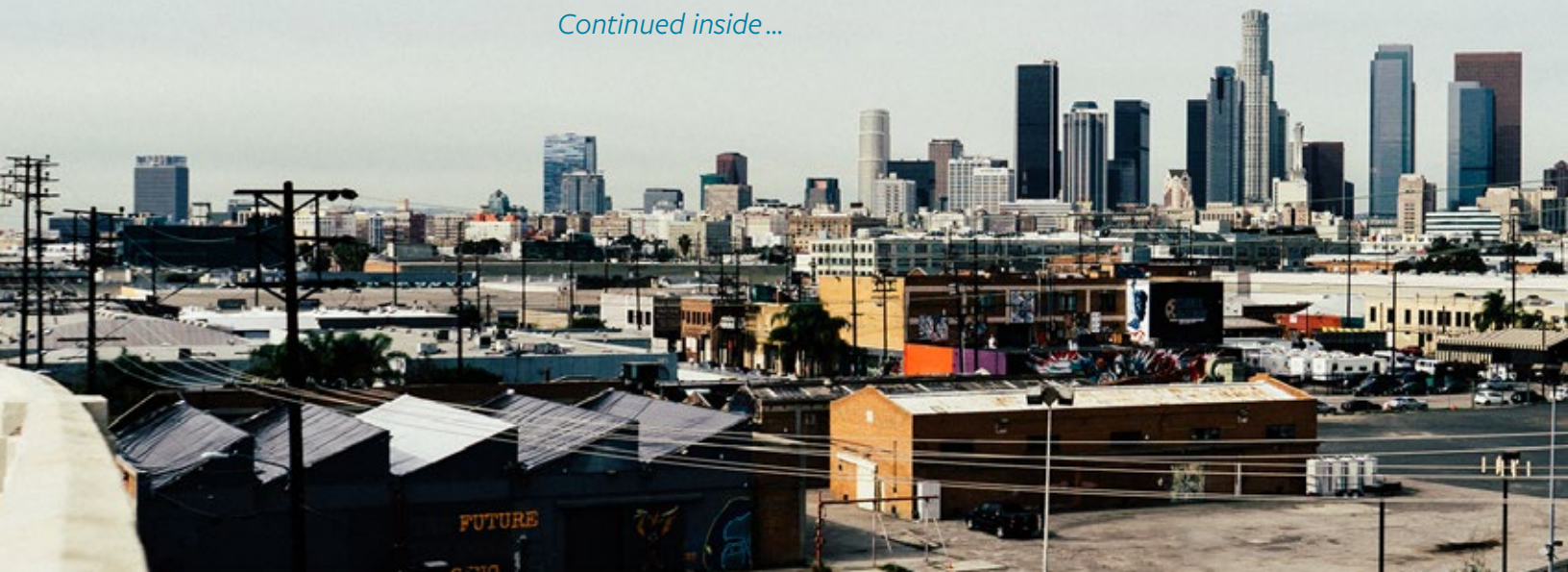
See, Mira's mom purposefully chose not to raise her in the inner city, a place she considered less than safe. So when circumstances forced Mira to move there with her own kids, she resolved to be there for as little time as possible.

Provisionally, Mira and her children found a home down the block from the pastor of First Evangelical Free Church. It's a neighborhood church that partners with the inner-city ministry of Cru®. Mira's children, Elias (12) and Kierra (7), wanted to play with the other children



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Continued from front

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on the block but were shy, perhaps imitating their mom's own reserved demeanor and caution about their new neighborhood. "You could tell she'd been hurt in the past — she was really guarded," said Sarah, whose husband pastors First Evangelical Free Church.

But God was at work. Each summer, following Vacation Bible School (VBS), First Evangelical Free Church hosts a back-to-school night and distributes PowerPacks™ to kids needing fresh supplies for the upcoming school year. "PowerPacks are a great way to extend hospitality, welcome, and encouragement to families," says Sarah.

Sarah invited Elias and Kierra to VBS, and they came! A few weeks later, they also attended the back-to-school barbecue, and excitedly received their PowerPacks. That night, Elias and Kierra heard one of the older students share a testimony of

how he came to know the Lord. The pastor then gathered all the kids to pray over their upcoming school year.

That same night, Mira decided to enroll Elias and Kierra in the gospel-based S.A.Y. Yes!® program at the church. "Mira's family needed community support," Sarah reflected, "And that was one of the first times I saw walls being broken down around some of her guardedness. The PowerPacks night helped break down walls."

Now Elias and Kierra attend a community dinner twice a week, they play on baseball teams with the other kids on the block, and God is working in their family. And now that they're plugged into S.A.Y. Yes! and other church activities? "I love this community and would like to stay here," says Mira.

Thank you for your part in breaking down walls in Mira's life for the sake of the gospel!



PowerPacks deliver school supplies like notebooks, pencils and glue, as well as a presentation of the Gospel to kids like these.

# Lighting Gabriel's Candle

**In Bakersfield, California, a group of boys from Crossroads Christian Fellowship savored their days at summer camp.** Among them was Gabriel, who learned of the camp through the church's S.A.Y. Yes! Center.

Gabriel began attending S.A.Y. Yes! four years ago, in 2nd grade. At first, he was pretty quiet, but he got along well with others. He struggled with reading but worked diligently at it. And though he listened intently during Bible time, he didn't participate much for the first couple years. But as he got older and his reading improved, he began volunteering to read verses out loud. God's word was being planted in his heart.

When he was older, Gabriel had the opportunity to attend summer church camp, too! One night, during a ceremony in a meadow, the boys discussed sharing their faith with just one person. To illustrate, every boy was given a candle. They each told of their personal stories and their relationships with the Lord. Then, as they shared how they would explain their faith to someone else, they lit the candle of the person next to them until each candle around the circle shone brightly.

When it was Gabriel's turn to share, his counselor asked if he had ever received Christ. "No," he said. His cabin mates rallied around him and began sharing with him that we are all sinners and need a Savior, and that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Gabriel stopped them — "I know all that!" The boys asked Gabriel if he knew he was a sinner or understood he needed a Savior. "Yes," Gabriel answered, "I learned that at S.A.Y. Yes!"

Each candle around the circle shone brightly

The other campers went on to explain to him the way of salvation. Gabriel again said, "Yes, I know all that... but now I am ready." The counselor watched in awe as the young boys led Gabriel through the sinner's prayer and prayed over him as he came to faith in Jesus.

Because of your prayers and support, Gabriel and hundreds of kids like him receive not only academic tutoring, but also regular presentations of the gospel through S.A.Y. Yes! Centers all across America! Praise the Lord for drawing boys and girls to Himself!



Gabriel enjoying summer camp.





# Expanding Her View

**What is my next step? Some Summer in the City® students wrestle with this exact question;** should they continue with their career plans or pursue full-time ministry when the summer ends? This predicament was true for Kiersten, a former program participant who is now investing her gifts in the heart of Milwaukee with an organization called City on a Hill.

Kiersten was involved with Cru in college but, needing summers to earn income, did not initially consider a summer ministry opportunity an option. But after graduation, she prayed about serving with Summer in the City and decided to apply. She was accepted, and asked God to confirm His leading by providing the necessary financial support — which He did almost immediately!

That summer challenged her: “Before my time in Milwaukee, I cared for the poor but didn’t go out of my way for them,” she reflects. But God moved in her heart during a poverty simulation exercise she experienced on the summer mission. “Reading the Bible after that, seeing God’s heart for the poor... I realized I had to surrender my own plans.”

She had grown up with socio-economic privilege and hadn’t had to worry about financing things like extracurricular activities. Kiersten was struck by the contrast between her own life and her experience in Milwaukee — her mission group partnered with

churches without any resources for VBS — which meant crafting lessons for the kids without a single piece of chalk or paper. Challenges like that expanded Kiersten’s heart for the poor.

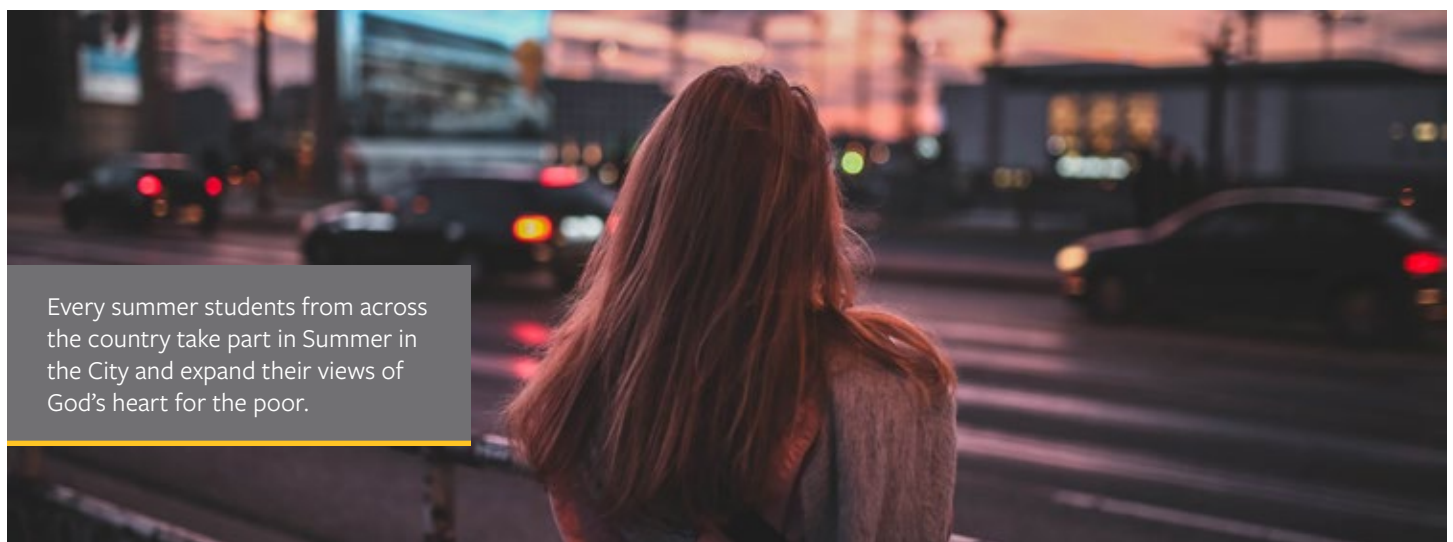
After spending the summer in fervent prayer, and gleaning insight from Cru leaders and inner-city pastors, Kiersten sensed the Lord leading her to move to Milwaukee that fall. God was faithful to guide her: “City on a Hill came to me,” she testifies, still astonished.

She now works in an impoverished neighborhood, with low-income households. After meeting families’ physical needs, she moves toward building a Christ-centered relationship with them through sharing the gospel. She connects volunteers and churches, who together, reach the community.

Wonder what, from that summer mission, impacted her most? She doesn’t miss a beat: “That’s easy... it’s still a daily struggle — but I’ve learned to surrender my own ideas and desires for my life. I’m a planner and love being in control. But I’ve learned to regularly pray, ‘Lord, let me put myself aside, let me put my own selfish desires aside.’”

We praise God for Kiersten and others like her. Please pray for God to use the men and women who will join us on mission this summer! Pray that He would lead some to a lifetime of serving the poor, as He has done with Kiersten!

“I realized I had to surrender my own plans”



Every summer students from across the country take part in Summer in the City and expand their views of God’s heart for the poor.

# A Personal Word



John Sather  
Co-National Director

**Partnership. You hear a lot about that if you've been around Cru Inner City for long. But maybe you wonder what partnerships are and why they are important to us.**

When Inner City came into being, Dr. Bill Bright realized one very important thing. He saw that the needs in the inner cities of America were best understood by the people who lived and ministered in that context every day. His wisdom led our staff to spend time meeting with and learning from those people, pastors of inner-city congregations!

Why pastors? Because we have shared values and a shared mission. We both long to see the gospel lived out in ways that demonstrate God's love for all people, His justice demonstrated by giving voice to the voiceless, and His provision made available to the marginalized.

Partnerships means both partners bring something to the table. They are mutually beneficial. In Cru Inner City, our partners bring the cultural understanding we lack, they bring long-

term relationships, they bring presence by already being there and they bring established trust with their community.

Because of friends like you, Inner City can bring resources to which many of these churches don't have access. This means things like material supplies such as Boxes of Love® or PowerPacks; ministry tools such as Bibles, gospel literature, training, and extra manpower.

Together, we can bring the gospel to more places and in new ways than either of us could do alone! And together, we complement one another and encourage each other in our respective roles and challenges. It is said that "one plus one equals much more than two!" We have found this to be a valuable truth in our partnerships with inner-city churches and the men and women who minister there. Please pray that we can continue to expand our partnerships to more cities and more churches to take the gospel to more people who need Jesus!

Grateful for your partnership,

John Sather  
Co-National Director

## The Multiplying Impact of Partnership



Did you know the average Christ-centered inner-city church provides over \$4 million of value to their community through important programs and services that lower crime, prevent suicide and support families?

Your support leverages the strategic position of these churches to maximize the gospel.



At Cru Inner City, we partner with more than 2,000 of these churches in over 26 cities to multiply the impact of their work and your donations.

# From the day we gave a backpack...

**A boy named Christian lives in poverty, in an inner-city neighborhood in Orlando.** There was no way he was going to have a backpack for the first day of school.

But a caring friend like you gave to Cru, to provide a back-to-school backpack full of school supplies.

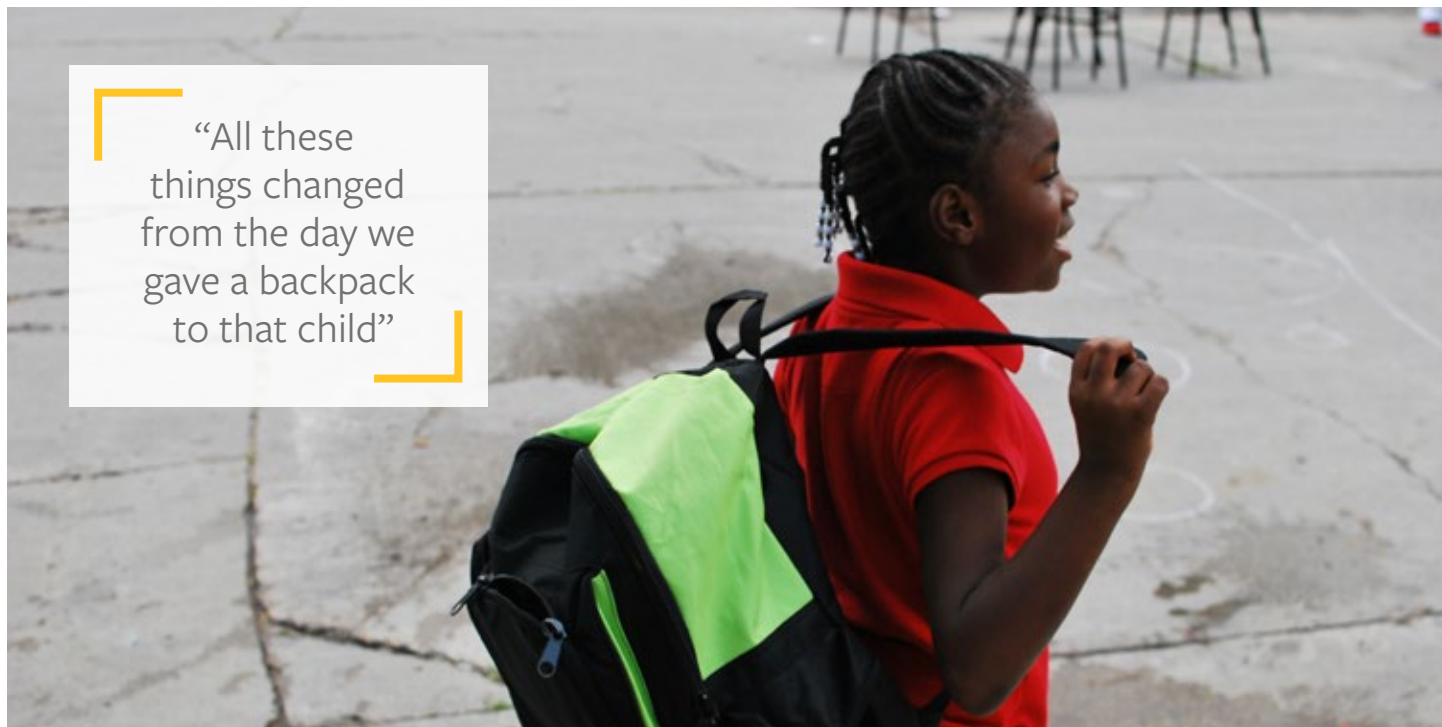
God used that backpack to draw Christian to Christ. He got into the youth group. Started attending Bible study.

“He’s been transformed,” his pastor says. “He had many anger problems, was very explosive, would break walls down. His grades were Ds and Fs.”

One year later, Christian was making As and Bs. No more fights. “Total respect for his parents!” the pastor says. “All of these things changed from the day we gave a backpack to that child,” the pastor says. Supporters of Cru’s annual PowerPacks campaign are “not just touching the children, they’re touching the mother, the father, the whole family... As they give that simple gift, it creates an opportunity to literally bring the whole family to Christ.”

Not just in inner-city Orlando. It’s happening in city after city. Please give generously now, to support this proven-powerful evangelistic outreach, and provide more backpacks for children like Christian! Thank you!

“All these things changed from the day we gave a backpack to that child”



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

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

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