

Hope Ignited



Children's Bible
Fellowship

NY
CBF

Quarterly
Newsletter

— Hope Ignited —

Experience the transformative power of hope as CEO Sean Stewart shares his personal journey and how it fuels our mission. Read more on pages 3-4!

— Hearts Transformed —

Witness the powerful transformation of youth and special needs community members through the heartfelt stories of Jack and Wes. Dive into their inspiring journeys on pages 5-10.

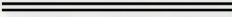
— Legacy of Service —

Join Al and Jan Van Dam as they share their journey of dedication and service to CBF, inspiring others to make a difference. Read their partner perspective on pages 11-12.

— Thank You —

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to you, our CBF Family, for your unwavering love and support. Explore what's ahead on pages 13-14.

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CEO

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Youth

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Thank You





I believe it is easy to look around and find many false narratives (the stories we live our lives by) that lead to hopelessness. The good news is there are many of us who are seeing real hope that has been ignited in us and this fire will not be extinguished. I have personally experienced the power of hope in who Christ says I am, over the narratives that play in my head of worthlessness and shame. Shame says my inner thoughts are too destructive and perverse for me to ever be lovable, (and yes as a mission leader I still have these thoughts and feelings today) but I have a real hope that God's unconditional grace is greater, and He has called me a son. I don't have to live out of the false narrative of shame any longer. I have freedom to live as a son. For clarity, this is not just a simple formula that I follow, it's a faith journey, where I learn to trust God for who He is and who He says I am. I continually have to examine my false narratives, a process that will go on for a lifetime, where I surrender my destructive thoughts and behaviors for His ways not ours of religious fervor, but a deep trust that I am loved and can also show love to the unlovely. Living life focused on real hope!

In the last year I read "Man's Search for Meaning" by Victor Frankle. Victor is a holocaust (concentration camp) survivor. He states that while in the concentration camps he observed that when someone lost hope, they would usually die shortly thereafter. I believe the opposite is also true, where hope abounds there is life. Our ministry has been igniting hope for over 80 years and I have great hope that the hope ignited in



me and in this mission cannot be overcome even by the greatest powers of evil.

An important part of hope is for it to be in someone or something real. False hope ultimately leads to despair. For life saving hope to be real, it must be grounded in a higher power that cannot fail. My hope and the hope of this ministry is in Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

The good news is there is freedom for all who choose to walk in real hope and it is spreading like wild fire. Let's be the wind that blows this fire to every corner of the world by living out of the hope He has given us. Check out the stories of Hope Ignited in this newsletter and be encouraged together as the Body of Christ.

~Sean Stewart





NY CBF | Board

Serving on the board of CBF is a great opportunity to impact and enable a unique ministry for Inner-City Youth and the Special Needs Community. I have served on this mission board for twenty-five years. We have struggled together through financial crises, personnel issues, leadership transitions, strategic alternatives, partner alternatives, fund raising challenges, mission focus, organizational issues, building renovations and the isolation of COVID. Like the story of Joseph, it seems we went from one crisis only to find ourselves in another. But as each phase of Joseph's trials ended, the scripture confirmed that God was with him. Through many trials, I can truly affirm that God was with us. Every time the path seemed impossible to continue, our God would open a door. I believe this is a ministry after Jesus' own heart. He had compassion for the ones ignored by society, and I believe He continues to honor our attempts to minister to these "forgotten fields" of NYC.

CBF has come through several cultural transitions, needing to reinvent itself to stay relevant to the cultural climate surrounding the children and youth we hope to lead to Jesus. Radio programs and children's Bible studies were the tools of our founder Uncle Wynn. Jim Wycliffe focused on buses and street ministry to gather interest in camp. COVID And NYC Summer Recreation rules severely impacted our camping tool. Each year fewer kids were interested or available to attend camp. At the same time, we recognized that a one-to-two-week event, once a year, was inadequate to disciple kids to changed lives. We began to explore alternative models to increase engagement with the kids and be available to disciple them year-round. We tried placing missionaries in the city but found this model to be difficult to execute and the number of kids we could impact was very limited. Under Sean Stewarts' leadership, the team continued to ask for wisdom and the Lord opened their eyes to a new approach using internet capabilities and access to public schools, which we previously deemed impossible.

Elevate is a Christian non-profit that places teachers in schools to teach ethics. We saw an opportunity to work alongside these teachers to provide field learning (CBF Challenge) programs at the CBF campus.



By staging a retreat with real life moral and ethical challenges, the students actively engage in a difficult situation created to be worked through as a team. This opens the door for the staff to share their testimony of God’s grace in tough situations. As positive relationships are established, the internet provides tools to continue follow-up and even discipleship. As we work with students with diverse cultures, racial differences, religious, and gender issues, we are learning that humility and transparency to our own failures is foundational in establishing a relationship with these inner-city kids. Our honesty and personal testimony enable these them to listen to “good news”.

Listening and caring are the heart of our programs with both the youth and the special needs. These tools provide effective answers to our challenge of access to unchurched kids, year-round discipleship, and safety for our staff. We still have much to learn about ministry , but we are seeing God blessing our new approach. It takes many partners to reach the hearts of these “forgotten fields”. The path is very challenging, and the stakes are high. We need volunteers to talk to the special needs and follow-up with students. We need introductions to school administrators. We need help with staging the challenges and providing a welcoming environment at the campus. We need donors who give faithfully to ensure this ministry can continue to grow and we need additional board members who can help guide the mission through the peaks and valleys of ministry to people that have no natural constancy. We need people who care because Jesus asked us to care. A special thanks to those who recently participated and gave out of their heart at our June Gala event.

~ Richard Birney





NY CBF | Youth

In the months since our last newsletter, we have experienced an incredible number of moments that brought about thankfulness, challenge, growth, and inspired hope. This spring and early summer have been particularly stretching. Yet, amidst the busyness, God has been faithful in sustaining me and the entire mission of CBF. Lately, I will be honest, there were many moments where it was hard to see the light at the end of the busy tunnel. However, God showed me His grace in my failures, peace in perspective, and strength in this beautiful community we call CBF. I remember driving down to pick up our Elevate students, my heart was bogged down in “this is just one more thing I HAVE to do.” As I drove, stewing in a feedback loop of negative thoughts, I finally started to pray, and I heard God share with me that I had one word wrong: I GET to do these things. My perspective began to shift from one of hopelessness to one of hope.

I was reminded of things that I knew to be true but was blinded by because of this negative narrative I was stuck in, inside my own head. God has been at work in the lives of students that I would never have access to without the opportunities we have been given. It is a beautiful thing to realize how much I had been robbing myself of joy simply because I was viewing the world in such a negative light. My narrative was so off. With just one simple word, amid staffing struggles, back-to-back event days, and fear of failure, the future and so much more, God spoke truth into my heart. It was true that I was unable to do any of this on my own; I was tired, emotionally drained, and ready to give up. But I have a community around me and the Lord's strength to lean on. From all of that, I saw the beauty of hope and joy—something that I was beginning to lose but was brought back to when I needed it most.

Over the past few months, we have hosted monthly Elevate Days at CBF. These events have been so good in fostering community and growth among the youth. Each month, students from the Bronx Studio School for Writers and Artists (BSSWA) join us for a day filled with



activities designed to challenge their understanding of themselves and their own worldviews. Additionally, we made trips to assist in the classroom as guest speakers. These visits allowed us to share ourselves even further with them. It was during these classroom sessions that I witnessed firsthand the hunger and eagerness of these students to learn and grow.

One of the highlights was a weekend retreat for the Elevate Classroom on CBF's campus. This retreat provided a space for students to disconnect from their daily pressures and immerse themselves in an environment of learning, reflection, and growth. The retreat activities, from CBF Challenges to deep discussions, were designed to ignite hope and foster a deeper connection with Christ. Through these events, I have seen God at work, not just in the lives of the students but in my own life as well. It has been a season of learning to trust God more deeply, to rely on the strength of the community, and to find joy in the midst of the challenges. The theme of "Hope Ignited" is not just a slogan for us; it is a lived experience that we are excited to share with you. Thank you for your unwavering support and partnership. Together, let us continue to be a beacon of hope and belonging in the Body of Christ....and beyond!

~Jack MacKay





From Isolation to Hope: My Journey with Cerebral Palsy

Born with cerebral palsy, I often experienced feelings of isolation and a lack of purpose. These emotions dominated my early years, but through taking steps to confront the painful areas of my life, I've found hope and a renewed sense of purpose. This transformation has profoundly impacted my life, shaping who I am today.

Hello readers, my name is Wes Nepomuceno. I have been involved with CBF since I was 13 years old. I started as a camper and eventually worked as a counselor for both the Hope and Youth communities. About ten years ago, I became full-time staff, focusing on our special needs programming. CBF has been my home and a place of growth throughout my life. I love working with the Hope community, not only because of how I see God working in others but also because of how God works in me through it.

Relying on hope in Jesus has been difficult for me because I must ask people for help with my basic needs. I've spent my life shying away from talking and don't like asking for help. I once told a friend I feel like a burden when I ask for help. He said that asking for help is a blessing not only for me but also for others. It helps me grow through vulnerability and putting myself out there. When it comes to hope, I've realized that God can use me in any way He wants to, even if it doesn't seem significant at the time.

The past couple of years, my hope has deepened beyond what it has been in the past. I've discovered my voice, and I am learning to advocate for myself. I am achieving the goals I made for myself, such as making my own schedule and building a supportive team around me. For example, I rely on assistance most mornings for my personal care needs. I've come to realize I'm not a burden within the CBF community; I am a valued member. Still, I need to encourage myself to continue asking for help – it's an ongoing learning process. While disappointment and rejection remain challenging, I'm beginning to accept them as part of my journey. In the pain and struggle, I find hope,



trusting in God’s purposes. I am learning that limitations and unmet expectations do not define who I am, they are opportunities for me to move forward and not give up.

Working with our Hope Community for the past three years has allowed me to see another side of myself and my disability. In the past, I was a leader but did not have faith in myself that I could lead well. However, my growing hope in Christ has helped me realize that I can do more even though I have cerebral palsy. My journey in Him has made me realize that the hope I place in Him will go further than the hope I place in myself.

I try to relay the things I’m learning to our Hope Community as often as I can. One of my friends, Stephen Calder, has more limitations than I do and is a little more spastic, but I know he wants to live independently one day, just as I do. I try to encourage him to focus his eyes on Jesus. I remind him that hope is not based on false future wishes and dreams; real hope lies in God's plan and purposes for our lives. Though his future may be different and his walk with God may look different from mine, I assure him that God has a unique plan and purpose for his life and struggles. The struggle is real for us both, and the false narratives are sometimes loud and hard to fight, but together we encourage one another. I am thankful for the honor of sharing my life and struggles honestly with our Hope family and continue to pray that the Lord uses our limits and struggles to bring glory to His name.

~Wes Nepomuceno





NY CBF | Partner

Interview with Al & Jan Van Dam

Q: How did you first come to be involved with CBF?

A: We heard about CBF at Leptondale Bible Church (LBC) years ago. Some of the kids from Hope Town would come to our church and we would share an afternoon with them. We didn't have a ramp for wheelchairs back then, so the men would help the kids get into the sanctuary for services. The Hope kids would go home with members of our congregation for lunch and a fun afternoon.

Over the years our youth group was involved in the city ministry running VBS programs from the big blue buses, we did work groups, and a number of our congregation began joining the ranks of CBF.

Q: How would you describe CBF?

A: Our Savior quoted “When you do it for the least of these you do it for me”. The ministry is all about reaching people that are often overlooked or neglected.

CBF is reaching people that are outside our sphere of influence. I, for one, am very grateful for this focus.

Some of the most dedicated believers we know are an integral part of the ministry. These folks have sacrificed personal comfort to meet the spiritual and physical needs of those less fortunate. God likes this. He will reward now with fulfillment and in the future with “Well done thou good and faithful servant”. When one of His own chooses to focus on



others in place of self, his personal needs will be met with some help from above. Our Creator has designed us this way. After all, we are created in His image. There is no one more caring, loving, sacrificing, giving than God Himself.

Q: How has God gifted or led you to be involved with CBF?

A: Homegrown and homemade wood products are made in the shop and are provided as needed. We have been able to provide lamps, cutting boards, charcutier boards, trays, etc. We consider it our privilege.

Financial support is provided whenever possible.

Jan and I count it a blessing when we can be an encouragement to our friends in the ministry. We trust this will be our most valued contribution.

~Al & Jan Van Dam





NY CBF

Thank You!

We are incredibly grateful for you, our Community. Your support has created greater opportunities for discipleship to NYC Youth and the Special Needs Community. Thank you for selflessly providing your resources, talents, and time at CBF.

You are the very heart that moves the mission forward. Continue to remember CBF in your prayers in the coming months as the programs move forward.

Pray • Donate • Volunteer

To become a CBF Financial Partner donate to us directly online or by check, simply follow the directions below!

- ◆ Make checks payable & mail to Children's' Bible Fellowship: 250 Nimham Rd., Carmel, NY 10512
- ◆ Online at www.cbfny.org/donate or scan the QR code below with the camera app on your smartphone to donate directly with PayPal.



