



# BUILT TO LAST

80 YEARS OF YOUNG LIFE



“THESE WORDS I SPEAK TO YOU ARE NOT MERE ADDITIONS TO YOUR LIFE, HOMEOWNER IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR STANDARD OF LIVING. THEY ARE **FOUNDATION WORDS**, WORDS TO BUILD A LIFE ON. IF YOU WORK THE WORDS INTO YOUR LIFE, YOU ARE LIKE A SMART CARPENTER WHO DUG DEEP AND LAID THE FOUNDATION OF HIS HOUSE ON **BEDROCK**. WHEN THE RIVER BURST ITS BANKS AND CRASHED AGAINST THE HOUSE, NOTHING COULD SHAKE IT; IT WAS **BUILT TO LAST.**”

Luke 6:47–49, *The Message*



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friend,

As Young Life celebrates 80 years, I see from our earliest beginnings our Lord's hand that built this mission. Our story begins with a woman of faithful prayer, Clara Frasher, who gathered friends and prayed for lost kids. Her prayer was a work of obedience.

We know our Lord brought Jim Rayburn in response to these prayers. Not only Jim, but the Lord gathered others around Jim to guide him, add to what he was doing, fund the mission and form Young Life. For Clara, for Jim and for all the others in those early years, the origins of Young Life come from our Lord's leading and His people responding.

This is why our mission is built to last. We continue to focus on the Lord in prayer, and I believe that our staff and volunteers have prayed for more hours over the last year than any year before, simply because we needed our God to make a way.

As we pray, God provides, often through people. He calls His people to go into new places (and has been doing this for millennia). These pioneers are focused on Christ and the gospel, and they go with purpose.

You'll see each of these themes in our annual report this year: prayer, people, provision, pioneering and purpose. These have been hallmarks of our Lord's work in Young Life for our first 80 years. They are sure signs of the ways He has worked over the last year, as well.

As long as we are people built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus, of going in loving relationship with Him, and of reaching and teaching young people — I believe God will continue to use Young Life not only for 80 more years, but for generations of kids who are ready to hear about Him.

In Christ for all kids,

Newt Crenshaw  
President/CEO



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# BUILT TO LAST

For any organization to last as long as Young Life has, there must be a firm foundation supporting the structure. Like the man who built his house on the rock, this mission was established on Jesus Christ.

This foundation has helped us withstand the storms that have come in the course of eight decades of ministry, and will inevitably challenge the work in the years ahead.

You might also say Young Life's "house" has several rooms. In this year's annual report we look at five of them: PRAYER, PEOPLE, PROVISION, PIONEERING and PURPOSE. These are as fundamental to the work today as they were in the very beginning.

God was faithful to us in 2021, just as He was in the previous 79 years. He graciously gave us resilience during unsteady times, and we believe He will continue to do so for years to come!

FEATURED PHOTO:   
Young Life 2021

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020



## YOUNG LIFE'S MISSION:

Introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ  
and helping them grow in their faith.

# IT ALL STARTED WITH A PRAYER

It all started with a prayer and that prayer belonged to Clara Frasher, an elderly woman who lived across from the high school in Gainesville, Texas. She gathered other women to meet weekly to intercede for the town's teenagers. Six years later, the Lord brought Jim Rayburn to town. Within two years of his arrival, Jim and a board of directors incorporated Young Life.

Today, prayer remains a vital priority to the work. Whether praying for lost teenagers or hurting adults, we are a mission which takes seriously the admonition that "apart from Me you can do nothing."



**FEATURED PHOTO:**  
Young Life in Russia



Papin Gharibyan has been a Young Life leader in Armenia for five years. Last year his parents unexpectedly divorced; his father sold their house, moved to Russia and Papin heard about it from his neighbors. Throughout this time of difficulty and problems, his Young Life team was faithfully praying for him. God and Papin's team blessed him by letting him know it was going to be OK. In the midst of a pandemic, a war and his parents' divorce, he has experienced

God's peace, which surpasses all understanding.

Papin reflects, "It was and still is difficult. But I live, I have happiness, I have family, fellowship, reasons to live and reasons to proclaim Him. I have vision and a desire to change myself and the world around me. When I accepted Jesus, God gave me a word: My happiness is from above."

— Billy Boyle, senior vice president, Former Soviet Union

**"I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN DO, BUT I PRAY SOMEONE WILL RESCUE THESE KIDS. THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY'RE GOING. THEY'RE WANDERING BACK AND FORTH, AND GOING WHERE, NOBODY KNOWS."**

— Clara Frasher, circa 1933



# COMMITTED PEOPLE

"Young Life is a group of people committed to the idea of winning a hearing with kids for the greatest story ever told."

— Jim Rayburn, Young Life founder

From the mission's earliest days, God has been faithful in raising up women and men who love Him and love adolescents. The vast majority have been volunteers who sacrifice their time, their money, their vacation days, their sleep — really their lives — to reach our young friends.

Within every local area you can also find generous donors, faithful prayer warriors and adults willing to support the ministry in whatever way they can.

Our Father has also blessed Young Life with faithful staff people who guide local areas, run camps and serve behind the scenes to enable the proclamation of God's good news.

This beautiful, sacred calling continues today, from Kansas City to Kazakhstan to Korea to Kenya ...



## GOD SURPRISES



This year Fredrick Ochieng, who is in charge of all the university clubs in Kenya, shared with me his five-year dream, which was big and encouraging. He had identified several potential staff, who were already bearing fruit as volunteers, whom he believed we could onboard in the next two years. The Lord prompted me to ask: Why don't we bring all four potential staff on right now?

Fredrick was surprised and delighted, but more importantly, he was ready. He told me he never thought this would come to fruition, let alone so quickly. Most things the last two years have been slow to the taking, but God sometimes surprises us and speeds things up!

I recently spoke with these men and women, and they're four of the most gracious and grateful individuals I've ever met. One shared his story of growing up in the slums and how he couldn't believe the opportunity afforded him to be able to work full time sharing the gospel with university students. I can't wait to see what the Lord does there and am praying the Lord multiplies their work all over Kenya.

— Brett Rodgers, vice president, International University Initiatives



**FEATURED PHOTO:**   
Work Week at  
Lake Champion in  
New York

## A HISTORY OF BEAUTIFUL GIFTS

“God had in mind for us to have Lake Champion and to use it to tell kids about Jesus. I’ll never forget the feeling when that first group of 50 kids stood up at the Say-So, and I was just trying to keep it together. The tears were flowing, amid the realization that God had given us a magnificent place.”  
— Doug Burleigh, Young Life’s fourth president

The 1986 acquisition of Lake Champion, our camp in lower New York, was God’s answer to our need for another camp on the East Coast. Scenes like the one Doug describes above happen at each of our camps, beautiful gifts our Father has bestowed upon us throughout our history.

This year we opened another of these gifts — our first camp in Texas, the state where Young Life was born. Another “magnificent place” from our magnificent Creator!



Texas has dreamed of being home to a Young Life camp for decades. However, I’m not sure anyone would have foreseen or chosen 2021 as the year LoneHollow Ranch would open its gates for summer camping. We launched a year early, during a global pandemic, with a restricted budget and a lean staff. Yet, it turns out this plan was exactly how God chose to deliver hope to many when they needed it the most.

The challenges were real. In all honesty, we didn’t know where the hands and feet would come from, week to week, to serve the nearly 3,000 campers and leaders this summer. Yet, we refused to turn a kid away.

We prayed and trusted.

Nana, the child of immigrants from Eritrea and Nigeria, graduated from high school in Houston and jumped on a bus to camp. She was carrying heavy burdens and had begun working through them in counseling. Her mind was healing, but her heart needed the love of her Savior, which she found at camp. It doesn’t end there! Nana decided to stay at camp to serve in the kitchen for a month.

— Lindsey Patchell, senior vice president, South Central Division

# PIONEERING

## YOUNG LIFE IS A MISSION OF PIONEERS

Young Life is a mission of pioneers; men and women who are starters. That often means beginning a new area ministry, a new club, a new training method or even just a conversation with a teenager.

Sometimes, however, pioneering also means going. We have a long history of going to the next town, the next military base and the next country with the hope of establishing the work there.

### Why?

Quite simply, because “the love of Christ compels us” to continue reaching the next kid with the good news of the gospel.

“I’M GLAD YOUNG LIFE DIDN’T STOP BEFORE THEY CAME TO MY HIGH SCHOOL!”

— Chuck Reinhold, longtime staff



**FEATURED PHOTO:**  
Young Life in Uganda



## SEEING GOD

In the spring I received a call from former high school principal and current pastor, Randy Hinshaw, in Monticello, Illinois. Randy shared of his growing burden for teenagers and had spent the past few months searching for a way to impact the unreached population in his community for Christ. After investigating many options, he was sure Young Life was the answer for his town.

Just a few weeks later, Randy and I met face-to-face. He asked a few friends to gather to hear more about Young Life, and a dozen showed up, including three additional local pastors. Halfway through my presentation, I sensed the Lord prompting me to do something I don’t remember ever doing. I had everyone close their eyes and envision the hundreds of students in their community who had no sense of the care, protection and love of Jesus Christ for them.

The Lord moved in that moment.

When I opened my eyes, I looked around, and everyone was crying! People started praying, pleading for the Lord for the teenagers in their town. The gathering culminated with one of the pastors sharing he heard from the Lord that he was to step up as committee chair. The group is now meeting weekly for prayer, and the start-up is well underway. There is no one like Jesus!

— Dave Goy, regional director, Heartland Region

YL  
YOUNG LIFE  
AFRICA  
EXPEDITIONS.  
BRIDGING THE GAP



## OUR PURPOSE REMAINS THE SAME

Introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.

That is the Young Life mission statement, and for 80 years we've held fast to this ideal.

When we talk here about adolescents, we mean every kid. We long for each

of them to know the Savior and His overwhelming love for them, and we know that for many of the kids we work with this may be the first taste of affirmation or encouragement they've ever received. It is our profound honor to cheer them on and tell them how God looks upon them, as His beloved image bearers.

"Two things make Young Life unique; one is that radical focus on the person of Jesus. We are people who have lived in the Gospels and I pray Young Life always will be.

"The second is our ministry — that relational style with unconditional love for the hard-to-reach kid. This relationship touches that person so they not only hear the gospel, but actually feel it through someone who loves and knows them. Those two things have been the strength of this mission: the focus on Jesus and unconditional, loving relationships with kids."

— Bob Mitchell, Young Life's third president



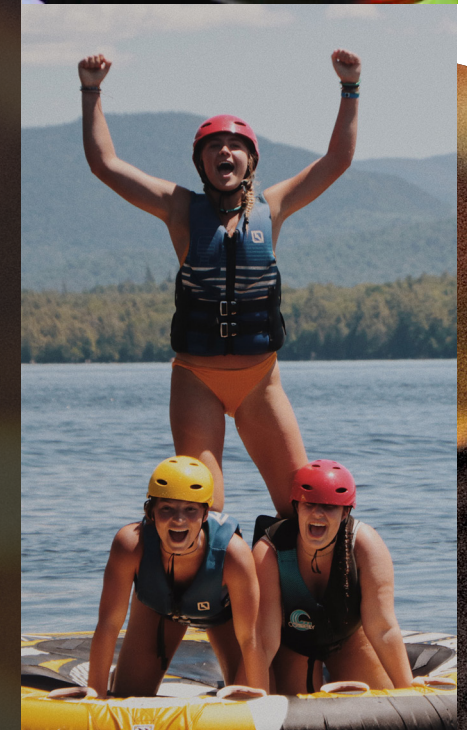
## IT IS WELL

"It Is Well" beautifully sums up the past season of ministry in the Mid-Atlantic. The picture in my mind has been people re-emerging after a storm — peering out their doors, seeing "all is well" and then joyfully playing in puddles. We've had a lot of that, especially this summer, and it's been a privilege to witness.

One week at Rockbridge this summer, a cabin of WyldLife kids showed up ready for action. They had all the enthusiasm and awkwardness you'd expect from middle school boys. Their leader was a young volunteer doing his best to keep up with them. But one kid stood out — a sight-impaired seventh-grader. He moved around camp with his white cane, leader at his side.

There was a beautiful moment during an all-camp relay where he (with a little help from his friends) raced across the finish line for his team. They came in last, but the crowd didn't care. All of camp was cheering and the camper was smiling like he'd won the lottery. It's nothing new, it's just what we do in Young Life — show up for the blind and introduce them to the One who gives sight.

— Josh Griffin, senior vice president, Eastern Division



**FEATURED PHOTO:**  
Adventures at Pioneer Plunge



# THE GOSPEL IS ON THE MOVE

The Forward movement, borne from the needs of local staff working with kids, has been a gift to sustain us through a global pandemic. We've leaned into the four priorities of the movement, which are indicative of Young Life from its inception and the best of what we've been doing for 80 years.



**DEEPER** Seeking the Lord first and helping kids grow in their faith. We have gone deeper with kids around the globe in small groups and one-on-one — as they ask questions and search for meaning and love in new ways.



**TOGETHER** Building and equipping teams that reflect the worldwide Body of Christ. Perhaps more than any other year, we've found important rhythms in going together — both as united ministers of the gospel and as leaders that reflect the communities they serve.



**INNOVATION** Creating new ways to reach kids tomorrow. From a modified camping season to outdoor clubs to digital connection, we continue to show up in the lives of young people however we can, in ways that meet them where they are.



**GROWTH** Impacting all kids — within sight and just out of reach. While numbers have fluctuated with the pandemic, we see growth in kids as they become leaders, and our overall number of ministries is increasing — positioning us for the next phase of growth as our world finds new equilibrium.



## BY THE NUMBERS



**184,144**

AVERAGE WEEKLY CLUB ATTENDANCE

**89,174**

AVERAGE WEEKLY CAMPAIGNERS ATTENDANCE

**8,720**

MINISTRIES AROUND THE WORLD

**5,202**

STAFF

**38,297**

VOLUNTEER LEADERS

**139,449**

KIDS AT CAMP

**1,058,067**

KIDS KNOWN BY NAME

\*Based on the 2020–2021 school year.



# BEYOND FORWARD

The Forward movement has brought rapid change, both societally and in Young Life.

- We've gone **DEEPER** with new discipleship resources and placed Bibles into the hands of tens of thousands of kids around the world.
- **TOGETHER**, we have developed new leadership pipelines and funding opportunities to build a culture of belonging that better reflects the communities to which we minister.
- We have **INNOVATED** in exciting ways, including new digital technologies to support donors and staff, new camping models, strategic ministry starts in global cities and more robust partnerships with the Catholic Church.
- We have **GROWN** by opening new camps in the U.S. and Armenia, developing new camps on wheels in Africa, beginning college ministry outside the U.S., and we are the largest ministry in sub-Saharan Africa serving orphans and children from Muslim households.



## FINISHING STRONG

As we enter the final year of Forward, we are confident that what's next will include the best of what we've learned over the last five years, along with new priorities where we hear our Lord calling us.

- We also know that our core will remain the same.
- We desire belonging for everyone and to reflect God's diverse Kingdom in Young Life.
- We will continue to go deep with kids in ways that see the gospel continue to spread.
- We are part of an army of staff and volunteers — like-minded adults — who care for kids in community and will pursue them.
- And we will continue to develop Kingdom leaders, men and women who embody what it is to follow Christ.



FEATURED PHOTO:  
YoungLives camp



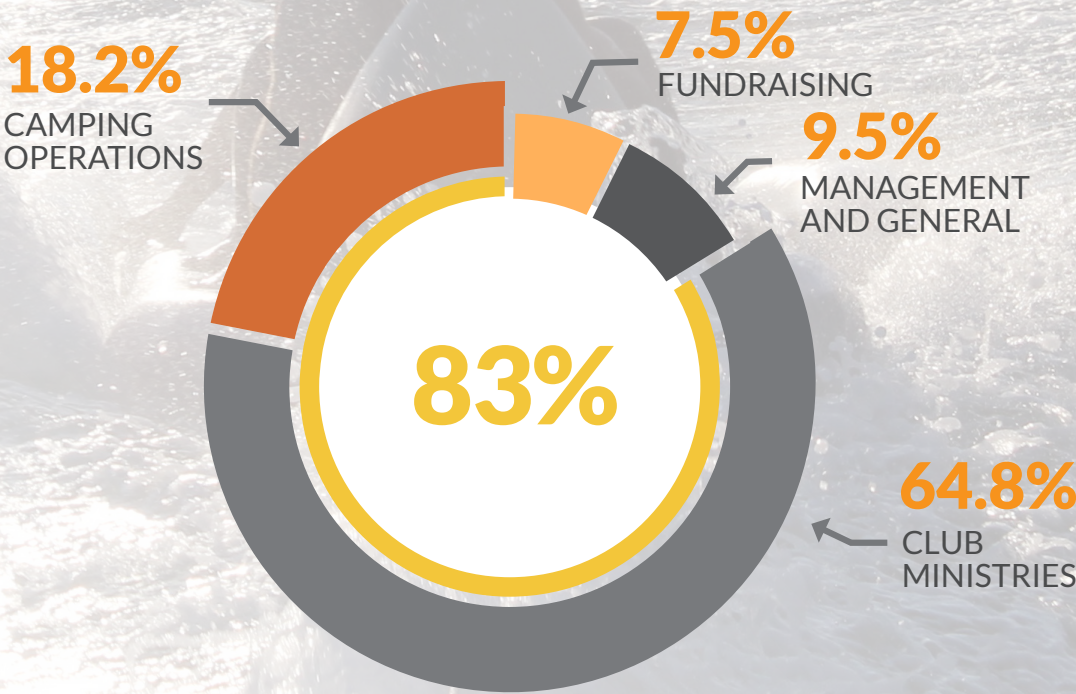
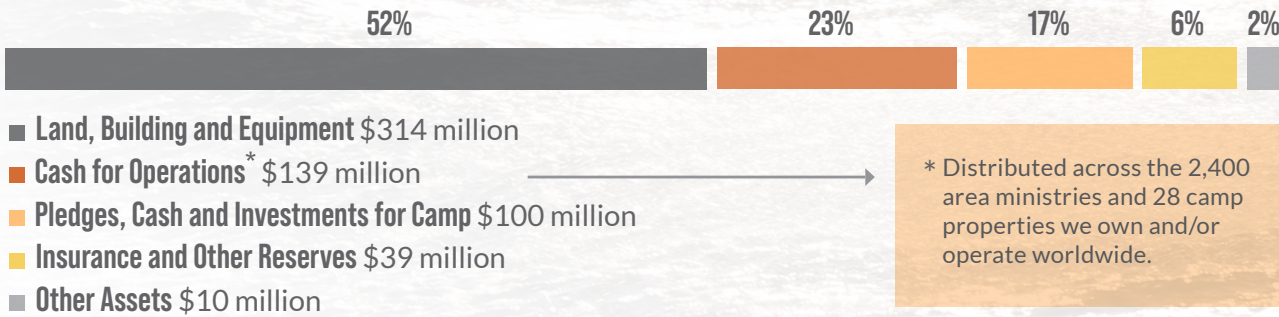
2021  
FINANCIALS



83

83 CENTS OF EACH DOLLAR SPENT BY YOUNG LIFE DIRECTLY SUPPORTS MINISTRY WITH KIDS, EITHER IN THE FIELD OR AT CAMP.

Net Assets \$602 million



Young Life takes seriously its obligation to steward resources with the utmost integrity. We are pleased to report, once again, Charity Navigator has awarded us their highest rating for financial health, accountability and transparency.

Thank you to our 185,000 donors who have trusted us to invest their gifts to ensure the Forward movement of the gospel in the lives of kids worldwide.



## THANK YOU!

In light of eternity, 80 years isn't very long. In light of eternal destinies, however, it's amazing what the Lord has done in this short time.

How many kids around the world have encountered Jesus in the past eight decades through the work of Young Life? Only our Lord knows the answer to that question. As Jim Rayburn, the mission's founder, once quipped, "We're not ever going to justify Young Life with numbers because our count may not match heaven's."

Maybe you're one of the countless kids (or adults) who began a relationship with the Lord through this work. Or maybe you've recently come alongside us in our passion of introducing adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them grow in their faith.

Either way, on behalf of the board of trustees, thank you for your continued support. We're so grateful for your faithful partnership in the gospel. Here's to the next 80 years!

— Michael Stain, chair  
Young Life Board of Trustees



2021 - 2022

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