

AN UNWAVERING  
**FOCUS**  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT

2020





## Dear Friend,

As 2020 began, Young Life staff gathered in Orlando to celebrate and find refreshment. That same week, I became a grandfather. What an exciting time!

Who could have foreseen what this year would hold for us and the world? The short answer is that the Lord did, and He is the One we have continued to follow during this seismic upheaval.

Ours is an unwavering focus — a fixed vision (Hebrews 12:2) on Christ and kids. This is the same vision the Lord placed upon Founder Jim Rayburn’s heart in the 1940s and it continues to guide us today. Yes, the pandemic has produced many roadblocks to ministry, but it also has revealed places where we can grow, including our reliance on traditional systems and structures like our clubs and camps.

While these are amazing tools we’ve been blessed to use, we have also sought the Lord’s leading in finding innovative ways to engage with leaders and kids around the globe. From 91 days of missional prayer through Psalm 91 inspired by our African sisters and brothers to local drive-by fundraisers to backyard camps, we’ve entertained ideas we might never have dreamt up in a “normal year.”

This same unwavering focus has helped us remain open to the Lord’s leading in regard to the interaction between social issues and Young Life. This year has been one of deep introspection and listening to what the Lord has to say — both through the larger society and through His Word.

We’re excited to share how the Lord has moved in and through Young Life during 2020. Thank you for your faithful support in helping us tell kids about the One we focus upon. I hope you find your focus renewed as you read of the marvelous things the Lord has done!

Newt Crenshaw  
President/CEO

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

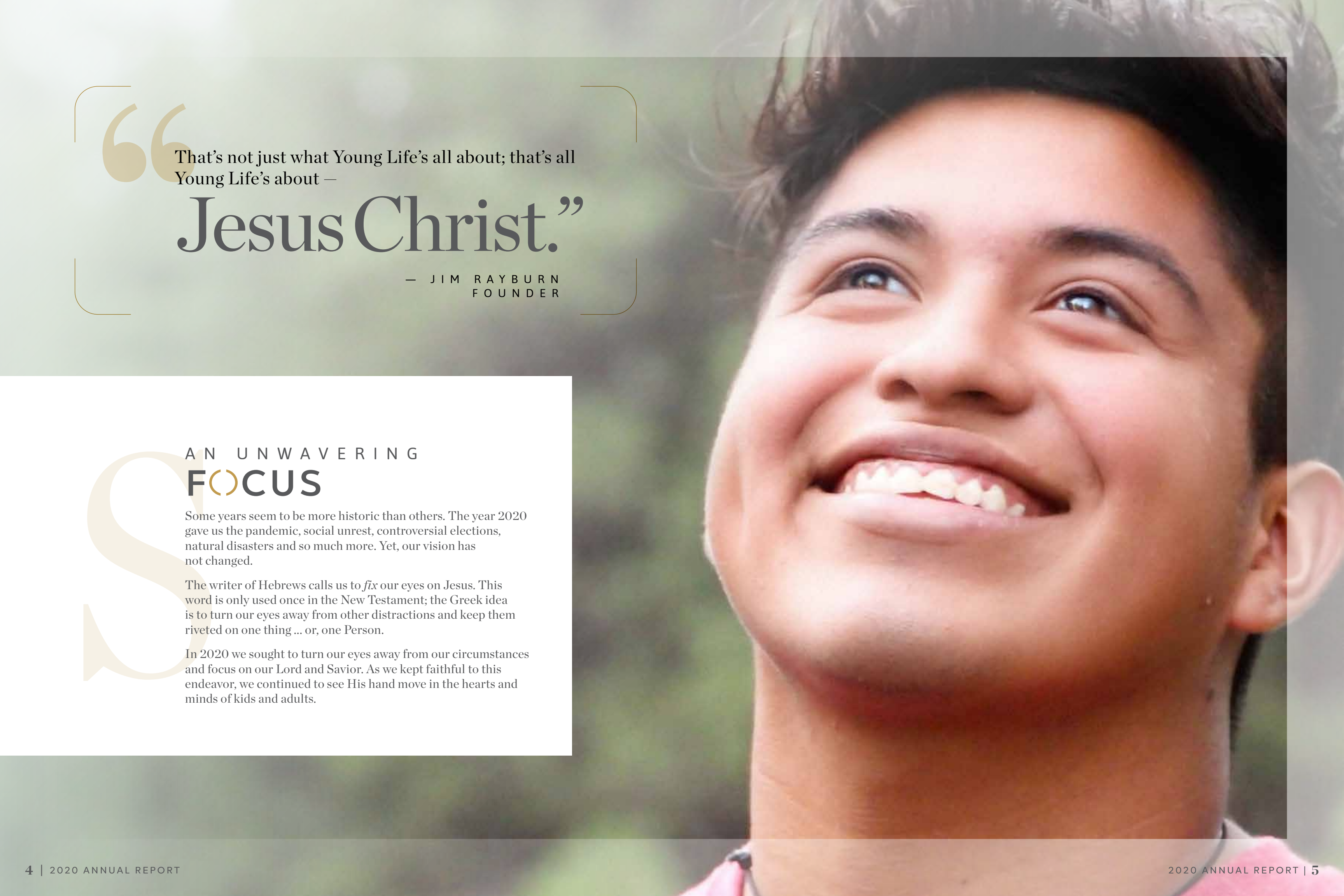
— HEBREWS 12:1-3, NIV 1984



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“That’s not just what Young Life’s all about; that’s all  
Young Life’s about —

Jesus Christ.”

— JIM RAYBURN  
FOUNDER

## AN UNWAVERING FOCUS

Some years seem to be more historic than others. The year 2020 gave us the pandemic, social unrest, controversial elections, natural disasters and so much more. Yet, our vision has not changed.

The writer of Hebrews calls us to *fix* our eyes on Jesus. This word is only used once in the New Testament; the Greek idea is to turn our eyes away from other distractions and keep them riveted on one thing ... or, one Person.

In 2020 we sought to turn our eyes away from our circumstances and focus on our Lord and Savior. As we kept faithful to this endeavor, we continued to see His hand move in the hearts and minds of kids and adults.



# FOCUSING

ON JESUS IN A TIME  
OF CELEBRATION

## YL2020

Every four years Young Life staff from around the globe come together to celebrate all the Lord is doing in the mission. During the first week of January, 5,500 of us gathered in Orlando, Florida, for a time of worship, laughter, prayer and inspiration to go back home and continue giving our lives away to Christ and kids. Our goal with the time was to shower our staff with the same love they give to kids.



# WINTER

After returning from YL2020, we plunged back into the work we know and love.

As we did so, we began to follow with concern reports from our teams in Asia who were the first to come to grips with this strange outbreak known as COVID-19. Their courageous response and corresponding flexibility were inspiring to behold. In late February, Mike Gaffney, senior vice president of Asia/Pacific, shared some of their innovative approaches:

- Young Life Hong Kong brought club to kids online via social media.
- In Mongolia, leaders facilitated video training and Campaigners meetings via Zoom.
- In Singapore, our leaders canceled their banquet, but put together a number of short, entertaining videos to stand in its place.

As we admired their ingenuity, little did we know that what they were learning would become a blueprint for the rest of us.





# FOCUSING

ON JESUS IN THE  
TIME OF COVID

On March 11 the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. The next day mission leadership canceled all business travel, U.S. clubs, large-group ministry gatherings/trips and events at camps. Those early days created a sense of urgency both locally and globally.

In areas around the world, an eerie silence permeated schools, parks and fast-food restaurants, places where kids normally congregate. Staff and leaders followed the lead of our brothers and sisters in Asia, went into their workshops and began inventing new ways to connect with kids and adults in a quarantined world.

As a community, we began praying Psalm 91 for 91 days, sharing what we learned in our times of meditation, fasting, prayer and listening. In early May we unveiled the first-ever Young Life State of the Mission webcast, which told the Young Life story and helped support local ministry. The event, which reached 40,000 people, ultimately raised over \$707,000 for local ministry.

Virtual Area Banquets

*CLUB IN A BOX*

## Zoom Bingo Games

Tic-Tac-Toe Through Kids' Windows

WyldLife, Young Life and Young Life College  
Graduation Ceremonies

## *DRIVE-BY PROMS*

Young Life Military - Club Beyond Goodie Bags  
Delivering Pizza to Capernaum Kids

*YoungLives* Masks for Moms and Babies

# SPRING



Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest  
in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD,

## “He is my refuge

and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

— PSALM 91:1-2, NIV



# FOCUSING ON JESUS IN A TIME OF QUESTIONING

Often an unwavering focus demands not only seeing, but hearing. Really hearing.

In the wake of this summer's racial injustices and social unrest, many wanted to know what Young Life would do in regard to diversity, equity and belonging. We took this opportunity to listen to the experiences of diverse voices within Young Life, dig into the scriptures and then reflect on our cultural and organizational challenges as we seek to help all feel a sense of belonging. This has indeed proven to be a historic moment in Young Life.

We are taking bold steps as mission leadership continues to follow the Lord's direction on these issues. The entire staff from Field Ministry to Camping to the Service Center is spending significant time considering how we might stand together as a unified community and root out injustice, discrimination and the cultural realities that benefit only some.

Two leadership "town halls" anchored our work in this important area, one in July and a second in October. Each event included leading voices in the area of Diversity, Equity and Belonging — such as Dr. Kara Powell of the Fuller Youth Institute and Dr. Christina Edmondson, Dean for Intercultural Student Development, Calvin University. We also heard from staff who offered candid insights into what it means to be a person of color within our organization. These events will continue, as will other initiatives aimed at ensuring that Young Life is a community where all voices are heard and honored.

# SUMMER



Ray Villegas, Queens/Brooklyn/Staten Island regional director, shared his region's campaign, Beacon of Hope. The movement began as a response to the pandemic, and now also encompasses racial tension. Believing "the future is not canceled" they are being intentional in helping this new region care for leaders through leadership development, in order to be beacons of hope throughout New York City.

“

It's been very painful, but there's certainly a sense that Jesus has been with us in this painful time. I was part of a prayer march yesterday in Brooklyn; there were thousands of people there. It was organized, constructive, sincere — there were passionate people there speaking out against the injustice, but there was also prayer; there was also singing. It was peaceful.

I am hopeful that more and more people are responding in a positive way over this issue. **I feel like the Lord has positioned Young Life to be part of that healing process, to be conduits of hope and healing because of who we are,** because we're relational, because we have leaders in place to speak the gospel and to be examples of the gospel to our students.”

— RAY VILLEGAS



# FOCUSING

## IN A TIME OF CAMPING

Young Life has used alternative camping for 50 years, but in the summer of 2020 all of our camping might be called “alternative.” In May, mission leadership made the difficult decision that a national camping program would not be an option.

Instead, we moved toward a camping model that allowed each area to make regional or localized plans, similar to the way we camp during the school season. As a result, innovation was again the name of the game, with staff and leaders looking at all kinds of options, from short stays at campgrounds to day trips to the beach to finding fun options in their backyard.

### “Short Weeks” at Young Life Camps

#### LOCAL BACKYARD CAMPS

Family Scavenger Hunts

Drive-In Movies

DRIVE-THRU

WYLDLIFE CAMPS

Community-Service Day Camps Backpacking/Hiking Trips

Online Club Talks and Cabin Times

#### VIRTUAL FAMILY CAMPS

SOCIALLY DISTANCED  
COUNTY FAIRS



I had girls signed up to be in my cabin this past summer at Castaway, but as COVID-19 restrictions cracked down heavier and heavier, I needed to figure out a way for my kids to experience camp in some other way. I wanted them to know how adventurous life with Jesus is, to bond with one another and with me, and most importantly, to know the gospel.

At the time I planned my “summer camp,” we weren’t allowed to gather in groups larger than 10, so I planned two identical weekend trips with seven girls per trip, three nights each, in Winter Park, Colorado. I drove them all and we stayed in a cabin that belonged to the parents of one of my girls. We ate home-cooked meals, sang, hiked, tie-dyed Young Life shirts, kayaked, played games and had a spa day.

I prepared a club talk and cabin time questions for each night. My girls learned about how God weeps when they weep like He did at Lazarus’s grave; how He leaves the 99 to find them, the one, and bring them home; how Peter saw Jesus for who He truly was and left everything to follow Him.

I don’t know if I’ve ever worked so hard on something before, to have it pay off in such a huge way. It wasn’t the same as going to Young Life camp but I think my girls will remember it for a long time. I’m not on staff; I work a full-time job (and a few on the side), so planning this for them by myself was a huge undertaking and I think they knew it. It’s so good for kids to see us lay down our lives for them. Summer camp or not, my girls saw and heard how much God loves them.

— Laura, volunteer leader  
Littleton, Colorado

# SUMMER



# FALL

## FOCUSING

ON JESUS IN A TIME  
OF PERSEVERING

The world had hoped the summer months would have lessened the pandemic's impact, but in many places the opposite proved true. The people of Young Life soldiered on, looking for ways to care for kids, whether they were able to physically return to school or not.

We were once again reminded that while club, camp and other Young Life mainstays are wonderful tools, God often accomplishes His redeeming work without them.



### YOUNG LIFE, HAITI

As a team, we've been asking, "What is the 'gift of corona'?" The Lord has been revealing we must engage in a total re-working of how we get to kids. We're continuing to see our volunteer leaders step up and out to reach kids and live out the gospel, as seen by this story from Haiti:

Everyone has been stocking up and hoarding things, and there has been great need for medicine, food and water. However, Katchina and Lousedrine, two Young Life students, remarked, "When everyone else is hoarding, Young Life is sharing." When everyone else around them was keeping things to themselves, their leaders shared with them. The bread and drink they shared are the bread of heaven and the living water.

Another young person in Haiti decided to follow Christ after experiencing this reality: "When all the people in my community were looking after themselves, Young Life leaders were out helping the community." She saw this as a sign of God's presence. God is providing and remaining steadfast, even in the midst of a pandemic.

— HAITI STAFF

“When all the people in my community were looking after themselves, Young Life leaders were out helping the community.”



### YOUNG LIFE, TANZANIA

Irene Ayo, one of our leaders in Arusha, Tanzania, followed up with Campaigners kids like Kurwa during COVID-19 by phone. Kurwa's mother, Magreth, is a believer and was so excited when she learned that Irene was helping her daughter grow in Christ. One day, she called Irene to thank her and made a request: would Irene speak to her family?

Magreth put Irene on speaker phone and had her talk to the entire family for about 30 minutes. Irene went on to lead Magreth's whole family, including her husband, to Christ. Today, Kurwa, her twin sister, Dotto, their brother, Laurence, and their father, Joseph, are followers of Christ.



# FORWARD

## STRATEGIES

We throw off whatever entangles and run forward. This continues to be our posture, just as the author of Hebrews seems to have in mind in chapter 12. We dance on the balls of our feet, ready to go after what matters. For us, that means Jesus and kids.

A few years ago, staff around Young Life came together to lay out key strategies to help us keep this posture, so we keep moving forward. The strategies we rallied around are all the more important today.

# “Fixed.

This word is only used once in the New Testament; the Greek idea is to turn our eyes away from other distractions and keep them riveted on one thing.”

## DEEPER

**Seeking the Lord first and helping kids grow in their faith.**

We have seen the importance of this work more clearly during 2020. Kids around the globe are looking for meaning and depth in a time when easy answers no longer satisfy.

## TOGETHER

**Building and equipping teams that reflect the worldwide Body of Christ.**

Even more this year, we want to show kids — and the world — how we are followers of Christ by our love for one another as we increasingly reflect the global Kingdom.

## INNOVATION

**Creating new ways to reach kids tomorrow.**

2020 was a time of exciting innovation, from club-in-a-box to sharing the gospel over the phone to small and flexible camping. We stick to the essentials and everywhere else, we innovate!

## GROWTH

**Impacting all kids — within sight and just out of reach.**

Young Life continues to place adults into the lives of kids and speak about God's good news. Even throughout a pandemic, we are finding ways to reach more kids.





# FORWARD

PROGRESS 2020

The coronavirus reframed much of our ministry and work this year, but the work has continued. Many of our staff and volunteers have had to think about how to get smaller in order to get bigger. For example, in the Former Soviet Union, staff and leaders had one-on-one tea times with kids over a video call. In Africa, leaders began calling kids on the phone to share the gospel with them one-on-one, which they did over 100,000 times, making 20,004 new disciples who began their journey with Jesus. In the United States, leaders had parades to celebrate prom, dropped off needed items for YoungLives moms and continued meeting kids where they are.

“

The gospel is still  
on the **move.**

## U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS

AVERAGE WEEKLY CLUB ATTENDANCE: **355,428**

AVERAGE WEEKLY CAMPAIGNERS ATTENDANCE: **137,526**

MINISTRIES AROUND THE WORLD: **8,371**

STAFF: **5,296**

VOLUNTEERS: **50,509**

KIDS AT CAMP THIS YEAR: **141,985**

KIDS KNOWN BY NAME\*: **1,312,388**

*\* To best represent our ministry, we've created a new statistic — Kids Known by Name, which means exactly what it says. In the U.S., we have fully transitioned to this new metric. In international contexts, we are transitioning to this new metric, and our best estimation of this metric for all of Young Life is above.*

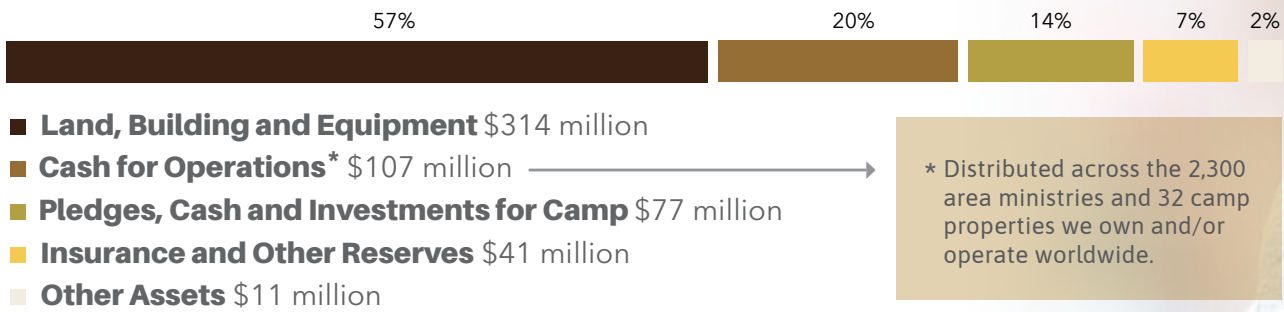


# 2020 Financials



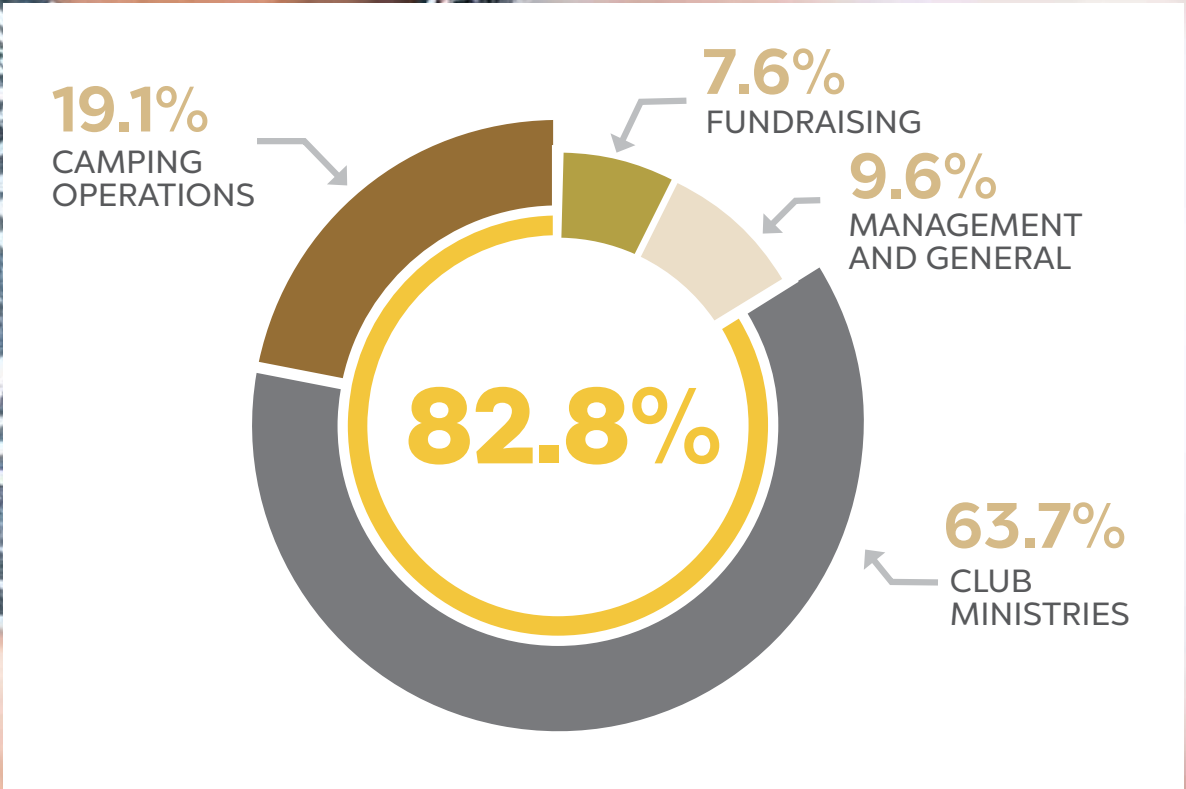
83 cents of each dollar spent by Young Life directly supports ministry with kids, either in the field or at camp.

## Net Assets \$549 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 194,000 donors who have trusted us to invest their gifts to ensure the Forward movement of the gospel in the lives of kids worldwide.





A person stands on the peak of a large, dark rock formation, arms outstretched in a gesture of triumph or surrender. The background is a vast, open landscape under a dramatic sky with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is one of hope and resilience.

“Our staff and leaders have shown resilience, creativity and, of course, an uncompromised focus on Jesus.”

— MICHAEL STAIN, CHAIR



What a difference a year makes! This has been a humbling, teaching, stretching, “back to the basics” kind of year for Young Life. In 2020 we did contact work through Zoom, held virtual clubs and invited kids into socially distanced camping. Our staff and leaders have shown resilience, creativity and, of course, an uncompromised focus on Jesus.

This focus goes back to 1941, when one man with a passion for kids to meet Jesus helped start this great mission. Since then — through world wars, social unrest, natural disasters and more — Young Life staff and leaders have befriended kids and shared with them the good news of God’s love.

On behalf of the board of trustees, thank you for continuing to support this work in a challenging year. We couldn’t do this without your partnership in the gospel. May we each continue to gaze upon the only One worthy of our attention!

— Michael Stain, Chair  
Young Life Board of Trustees



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