

Jesus Loves Kzoo Timeline

How God has been moving through the years...

1999: Vanguard Street Ministry is birthed *“Vanguard Street Ministry”* (V.S.M.) began in 1999 in Kalamazoo, MI with Nate Bull, Bobby Blakely and a core group of people who attended different churches and had a heart for the community and a true hunger for God to do great things. This hunger led the group to pray for the community while posting themselves upon inner city neighborhood streets. God began to reveal to them His love for the lost and His desire to reach people on the front porches of their homes, the corner stores, at parks, or as they walked down the streets. He also revealed that unity in the church was a must in order to reach the people by the masses. Because of these revelations, street ministry, prayer, and unifying the church became the focus of the group.

2007: Revival ignites among students *“Jesus Loves Kzoo”* had not been birthed yet, but during this summer several Kalamazoo area youth groups experienced significant Spirit-led revivals. Out of this passion, a youth movement called *“Jesus Now”* was birthed and they began holding quarterly unified youth services in Fall 2007 that included many kinds of churches (inner city/suburban/several different denominations & non-denom churches).

2008: First JLK: Two Churches – Mainly Youth Two youth pastors (Bobby Blakely from Stones Church & Darren Tigelaar from Centerpoint) were leaders of the *“Jesus Now”* effort and were regularly meeting to pray with one another. They built a relationship and friendship. The first *“Jesus Loves Kzoo”* grew out of this connection and from a passion they (and the youth they were leading) shared to see revival come to their city. They began to their youth groups into sharing the love of Jesus in a simple and practical way on the streets by connecting with ongoing Vanguard Street Ministry efforts. The students from these two churches decided to hold some larger “grill sites” in certain key inner-city neighborhoods during one week in the summer.

2009: JLK Promoted Church-Wide – Added Youth Overnight Option The previous year had been such a success that it was clear *Jesus Loves Kzoo* should not be for students only! We began promoting it as an outreach opportunity church-wide, for all ages. We added an overnight experience just for the students in which they stayed together in one of the inner-city churches, did service projects during the day and joined in with the grill sites at night. That year approximately 25 students from a wide variety of backgrounds participated in the overnight experience and 4 different churches had members of all ages participate in the *JLK* nightly grill sites/prayer walks.

2010: JLK Partnered with “Impact Kalamazoo” – 5 Churches This year, *Jesus Loves Kzoo* partnered with *Impact Kalamazoo* for the first time. *“Impact”* was a youth ministry of Haven church that had been doing a local youth mission week for several years. From that point on, *Impact* coordinated planning for the youth mission portion and *JLK* coordinated planning for the nightly grill sites. Although participation in 2010 was still only at about 5 churches, the base of volunteers within the churches grew widely.

2011: 12 Churches part of JLK – Unity Emerges as Key Approximately 12 different churches participated that year representing a variety of denominations and socioeconomic backgrounds. Growth was mainly through relationships and word of mouth and this was the year that the movement really began to catch the attention of senior leadership in churches. Although God’s call to unity in John 17:20-23 had been given to the leaders from the beginning, this was the year that the “UNITY” aspect of what God was doing through this outreach began to really emerge in a stronger way.

2012: Close to 20 Churches/Ministries Serve – Unified Worship Service Added

2012 was a pivotal year. We held four “Pastor/Leader Prayer Meetings” throughout the year in an effort to engage the senior leaders into the heart of what was happening through *JLK* and also to provide a format for inviting others to come hear about it. During a prayer meeting in February, the vision for holding a unified service at Arcadia Festival Site (downtown Kalamazoo) was first born. Close to 10 of the participating churches cancelled their regular morning services to participate. “Repentance” was a key theme and numerous pastors led corporate prayer of repentance in different areas. The Lord led us to understand that *Jesus Loves Kzoo* was “not an event, but a movement”.

2013: Pressed in through Prayer – JLK Movement Explodes

Coming out of 2012, it was evident the leaders were being called to press in even further through prayer and intentional efforts to build unity, so we began holding monthly Pastor/Leader prayer meetings hosted by different churches. Participation began to grow exponentially and by July 2013, close to 50 churches and ministries asked to participate in one way or another with *JLK* and *Impact*, with main growth still coming for the most part through established relationships. We sensed the Lord telling us to expand further out in the community, so we doubled the number of “Prayer & Grill Sites” and expanded beyond the traditional inner-city neighborhoods into outlying areas. This year we also utilized social media even more than we had in previous years and this impacted much of the explosive growth in recognition and interest throughout the Christian community, as well as bringing together in Spirit several other moves of unity God has been birthing in our region.

2014: Church of Kalamazoo: It’s TIME!

This year was characterized as a time God was calling us to go “deeper”. Through times of prayer He told us “the Harvest is ready” and we sensed this was a very serious time that cannot be ignored or taken lightly. He led us to hold several ‘trumpet call’ events (Neh 4:19) such as **Healing the Land Advance** in March which gathered pastors & leaders together (2Chron 7:14) and also additional nights of “OneWorship” – a format for community worship & repentance.

During the July “Catalyst Week”, close to 70 churches & ministries participated at some level and we expanded to 3 grill sites per night which expanded the impact exponentially! It was estimated that close to 10,000 meals were served and most importantly, thousands were touched with prayer and the love of Christ.

2016 – Kalamazoo Uber Shooting

Because of the relationships already established, *Jesus Loves Kzoo* was able to quickly call together a city-wide prayer gathering covered by many media outlets. The Gospel was clearly preached and broadcast on national news channels!

2017 – Civil Righteousness Conference was birthed!

The reconciliation work that had begun through the Healing the Land repentance/ racial healing events, went to the next level this year with the first ever Civil Righteousness conference with movement founder, Jonathan Tremaine Thomas.

2020 – Civil Righteousness Conference 2020

Racial Reconciliation legend John Perkins joined Soong Chan-Rah and Jonathan Tremaine Thomas for a powerful CR Conference in March. This happened literally the day before much of the world locked down for Covid. As we entered into the turmoil of the pandemic and season of racial unrest, it seemed to be significant that our last leader gathering focused on the Biblical answers for racial divisions and brokenness.

2021... *We continue in prayer and continue encouraging the Church to step outside the walls to share the Gospel while pursuing deep reconciliation with one another... with eyes firmly fixed on Jesus!*

To find out more, please contact us at: Jesusloveskzoo@gmail.com