

Intro

This summer, we have had the privilege to serve parents, students, and our community. It was a summer full of great stories, opportunities to see God at work, and hearts being moved for the purpose of God's kingdom. As a student ministry team, we love to celebrate all of the great things that God is doing in and through our students, and we want you to be able to celebrate with us.

Our team this summer consisted of Lucas Jackson (NextGen Pastor), Brynn James (Administrative Assistant to Student Ministries), Sandra Payne (NextGen Lay Admin), our interns (Andre Nelson, Sophia Lind, Emma Peterson, Nathan Rateau, Eliana Staton), as well as myself (Sam Schroeder, Associate Director of Student Ministries). This group of people are an honor to work alongside, as each of them works so hard to live out a life that glorifies God in response to being saved by Christ. Every day with each of them has been a blessing.

Weekly Bible Studies

Each week this summer, we have gathered together to study God's word, specifically in the first ten chapters of Deuteronomy, to build biblical literacy in our students. We want them to understand who God is for themselves, which is why we slowed down and went through only part of one book of the Bible.

We gathered on Wednesday nights at Bethel this year for Middle School and on Thursdays at Lucas's house for High School. Location and structure changes allowed us to have a more relaxed atmosphere, which pushed a lot of students to open up more this summer.

It was amazing seeing how students would gather together in community both before and after these Bible studies, to the point where they didn't want to leave. I have the privilege to see how students support one another and become more strong as a body of believers.

Monthly Fun Events

We removed our bigger fun items from our weekly Bible studies to allow for a greater focus on the Bible and on a more relaxed community gathering. However, those big fun events didn't go away. Instead, we gathered once a month as both middle school and high

school together to do a fun event. We would like to thank the Anderson family for willingly opening up their home to us for each of these events.

These events included Color Wars, Water Day, and Build-a-Boat. Each of these saw our high school and middle school gather, mix who they hung out with normally, and be able to invite their friends to join us. There is something about seeing how competitive students can get, yet still smile and show love to others that is amazing to see at these events.

VBS

This summer has been full of ways for our students to love others intentionally through service. Our first major way was having about fifty students serve alongside our adult volunteers at Vacation Bible School. Each student there was intentional with the kids they were serving, helping to make disciples. Every day, I got to witness and hear moments of students sharing the gospel, helping students to learn, and love on kids.

This could not have happened without Allison, Tracey, Nicole and all of the other helpers that they recruited to make VBS happen. I seriously look up to each of them and all they do to make disciples through our kid's ministry. Thank you God for having given us such loving disciple makers.

Soccer Camp

A new opportunity this summer was our free soccer camp. We wanted to serve those in our community and share the gospel with them, following the great commission. We had over seventy kids attend this camp, with sixty of them being unknown to us as staff and leaders before the camp. It was awesome to be able to reach our community through this.

We partnered with Butch from J316 Ministries who taught the kids various soccer skills, but more importantly, he introduced them to the gospel using the colors of the custom soccer balls we sent home with the kids. This gave them a great physical reminder of the gospel.

One of the best parts of this camp was the fact that we got to work alongside thirty leaders to pour into these kids. They got to have as much fun as the kids, but also were able to be a great example to the kids. Twenty of our leaders were some of our students!

Down Home

Another aspect of VBS was that the kids raised money to be donated to a local non-profit, Down Home. They use that money to help furnish homes for people emerging from homelessness. This helps a house turn into an actual home.

As a student ministry, we took about ten volunteers to help furnish the home that this money went toward. We packed up a truck of furniture and boxes, brought it to the home, and loaded it into the house, even decorating. At the very end, there was a big reveal for the family, and this is probably one of the most memorable blessings I have seen on a family ever. We plan to see how we can serve alongside Down Home in the future, as it was a very real and practical way for us to love the world sacrificially by giving up our time.

Other Serving Opportunities

This summer really did have a focus on serving. We spent time helping at Ruby's Pantry and used one of our high school bible studies to go and serve with Summer Hope at McCormick Park. Both of these were ways that we could give back to our community, those in need, and also just showing love to others in specific and intentional ways. It is great to mobilize our students!

Middle School Camp

We looked at the life of the Apostle Peter, and what it looks like to go from being a fisherman to a follower to a fisher of men in our life with Christ. We had 26 middle school students with us this week, and nearly as many leaders including high school students. This was our first time doing Middle School Camp in August, and it went really well with warmer water, great times outside, and just a general great atmosphere for camp!

While we looked at the life of Peter, we got to see how he went from a fisherman to a follower of Christ, faltered, then was brought back by the redemptive grace of Christ to be a fisher of men. This life was taught to our middle school students to help them understand what it looks like to follow Jesus. It isn't easy, but grace is there for us thankfully!

This was a great way to cap off our summer by spending such an intentional time with all of the students. Thank you to everyone who helped us make this happen.

Final Thoughts

This summer was truly amazing. I love to see our students every week because I love to see the way that God is moving in their lives. There are so many of them that are curious about God, asking questions, seeking answers, and bringing great discussion that benefits the entire group. It isn't easy always, but the joy that it brings to our hearts here on the Bethel Students team, makes it all worth it. We love to see God at work and are happy to be along for the ride with Him.

Parents, I want to thank you for entrusting your students with us. We want to walk alongside you, which is why we want to share about how our summer was. We are into our school year already, and know that we always love to hear from you, so feel free to stop and say hi to me or Lucas on a Sunday or Wednesday.

Samuel Schroeder

Associate Director of Bethel Students