

Each summer CBFNC young adults serve in a variety of ways across our country and the world. We are spotlighting three of them who served through CBF project Student.Church.

by Wanda Kidd, CBFNC Colligate Engagement Coordinator

ministry of presence

This summer Carter Benge, a student at Campbell Divinity School, and Gilbert Henry, a criminal justice major at Mars Hill University, served at First, West



L-R: Benny McCracken, Gilbert Henry, and Carter Benge.

Yellowstone, MO, with Rev. Bennie McCracken. They said that they discovered more about ministry than they bargained for.

Through the years, they both served in places with a variety of responsibilities, but this year was different. Their placement involved work not only in a church

or with field personnel, but also work in secular jobs in West Yellowstone to experience bi-vocational ministry. They helped with various events: Kids Day in the Park, Sports Camp that doubled as a Vacation Bible School, a weekly chess club, and Ultimate Frisbee group. They led Bible studies, helped plan worship, and attended a Mormon meeting at Old Faithful. And, as they did that, they scooped more than 1,000 gallons of ice cream at the local creamery.

Benge said, “Throughout much of my life, I have seen ministry put on a schedule. Almost as if, ‘Ministry will happen from 10am to 2pm on Saturday.’ This has always seemed so constraining and overwhelming that I constantly wonder, ‘Does God want me to be a minister?’” By serving outside of the church, these two young men discovered that ministry is broader than their past experiences. This summer they had real encounters with God in-between their “scheduled ministries.” While playing pick-up soccer in the afternoons with the kids in the park or sitting at the local espresso bar, they began to see ministry beyond the walls of the church.

Those times weren’t planned ministry but happened in the cracks and crevices of life because of the ministry of *presence*. Ministry happened when they least expected it. Benge said, “Perhaps ministry is about *being present*, and I’ve realized, yes, God wants me to be a minister. I can go sit with a friend at their house. I can listen while we talk and drink coffee. I can go to their basketball game. I can walk with them through life. I can be *present*. My *presence* is ministry.” Missionally and bi-vocationally Henry and Benge’s lives were changed by their summer serving in West Yellowstone, MO.

sharing meals, laughs, culture

Jaime Fitzgerald is a student at Gardner-Webb Divinity School and has served with CBF from her home church to Puerto Rico. Her placement this summer, however, was unique. She served as the mentor, host, and tour guide for a team of Baptist university students from South Korea who wanted to learn about church and serving Christ in America. She helped translate the culture for both the students and the congregations they served. She was the continuity for the group throughout the summer of experiences.

The summer of travel began with College Sessions at CBF Global’s General Assembly in Greensboro in June and ended with Selah Vie in Nashville in August. Each week the team traveled to a CBF church and served alongside the ministries of the local congregation. The team’s first week of service at First, Shelby, included assisting with different roles in Vacation Bible School and learning about the important work of Field Personnel Cecilia Beck.

The following week in St. Petersburg, FL, was filled with summer literacy camp at Church of the Beatitudes and the Micah Center. The team then traveled to First, Cornelia, GA, and served countless hours as part of an overnight camp for children as well as Vacation Bible School each morning. Mars Hill, Mars Hill, graciously hosted the team next, and the week was spent working with ministry partners of the church. This included serving with Lord’s Harvest for the Hungry feeding ministry of Western NC as well as at a local middle school helping to prepare for a new school year to begin. The team’s last week of service was in Madison Heights, VA, at Randolph Memorial Baptist Church. The week in Madison Heights was filled with a variety of experiences including teaching Korean culture to children and adults, serving food at a community lunch with Madison Heights Baptist Church, attending an American funeral, and learning about the funeral process in the U.S.

Upon the conclusion of their time in America, the team made their way to the CBF student event called Selah Vie, where they were able to debrief their summer and reconnect with people they had met along their journey. The summer was filled to the brim with learning and teaching of local church culture from both South Korea and the U.S. Meals were shared. Phrases were taught. Laughs were had. And most of all the light of Christ shined brightly.

