

SPRING BREAK TRIPS HAVE RETURNED!

By: *Lisa Scott & Diane Gress*

Almost two years to the day since our last H2O spring break trips began, students and staff found themselves traveling to the Smoky Mountains and Florida for a week together studying the word of God and engaging with grace.

God provided for us to take over 50 people to Gatlinburg, TN for spring break! Each year we have gone, our hope has been that students would engage with the Bible in a way that helps them realize how accessible and alive God's Word is. This year we read Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, and part of the Psalms and Matthew. We saw God use his Word to help students have a greater understanding of the story of the Bible, the Old Testament, and how to engage with questions. We saw God help people wrestle with what it means to truly live their lives to seek after God's own heart, as David did. We also hoped that the students would be refreshed by community with one another during Spring Break, and we saw God really answer that prayer as well! One student who went on the trip shared, "God used the week in the Smokies to really open my eyes towards him, and gave me opportunities to see him working in other's lives, and the joy that he could bring me. I became more confident in bringing my emotions to God, and also more confident in my abilities to read the Bible." Another student shared, "It was so refreshing to be in the mountains with time to focus on building community and being in the Word. I got to build friendships, explore the smokies, and get some good rest. I'm grateful for the week of memories filled with laughter and growth!"

While the Smokies folks were living it up in the mountains, the rest of our spring breakers traveled to sunny St. George Island, Florida! This year we stayed in a new location and weren't quite sure what to expect, but God blew away our expectations and blessed us with a wonderful retreat center to stay at and a truly joyous week engaging with his grace. Each day of the trip, two staff members teamed up to talk about God's grace through the lens of relationship: with God, with others and with ourselves. We had a lot of time in group discussions, getting to meet the other folks on the trip and hear different stories and experiences as we talked about what grace is and how it applies to different areas of our lives. We also had a lot of time to hang out at the beach, which was just a short walk away from the retreat center. The island is small and not heavily populated, so we often had the beach virtually to ourselves and enjoyed spending time together playing games, floating in the water and taking walks along the shore. One student shared, "God really met me where I was and comforted me amidst hard feelings. He reminded me that my worth is not in my production and his love and grace is all I need for satisfaction and joy." Another student shared that, "God used this trip to remind me of the joy we get to experience in Jesus, and the beautiful design God has for Christian community."

It was an incredible blessing to be able to have spring break trips this year and we are so thankful that the pandemic is at a point where it was safe to travel and spend time together in the way that we did. God moved in big ways during that week and, as we returned to campus, has continued to use what students learned on those trips to build his kingdom! ■

A SEMESTER FOCUSED ON LOSS & HOPE *By: Kyle Riesenberg*

The last two years have been difficult as many of us have experienced loss in some way. Maybe that was the loss of a loved one, the loss of an expectation or dream, a job, a friendship, or a sense of freedom. Loss seems to be a shared experience by all of us. Yet, even in the loss, we can see God at work. We know that he is near and that he is providing for us, even if it feels very small or distant.

This spring we began a sermon series called "Out of Eden". Our hope with this series was to help us engage with the losses that we experience in life and to notice how God is present in

the midst of it. We started with looking at the first pages of the Bible and engaging with humanity's exile from the Garden of Eden. From there, we explored different stories that were riddled with loss, but were not without hope as we saw God's continued presence with his people. The series culminates with us engaging with humanity's ultimate return from exile when followers of Jesus will be united with him in a new heaven and a new earth.

I am hopeful that the series has helped us to engage with the losses that we face in our lives, whether those are big events



that spur on loss rapidly, like a pandemic, or in day-to-day life. Personally, the last few years have brought with them some of the hardest moments and seasons of my life. I have found that looking back through the Bible at stories of loss and God's presence has brought me a renewed sense of assurance that God is still with me and still with his people. I don't know what is in store next in my life or the life of the church, but I take hope in the fact that, now matter what might come, throughout history God has faithfully pursued his people and he will continue to remain with them, even to the end of the age! (Matthew 28:20) ■

SLICE OF LIFE

At H2O Church, we get excited about what God is doing in individual lives. Each week at service, we have someone give what we call a "Slice of Life": essentially, the story of how God is working in their midst. God uses these slices to glorify himself and encourage and strengthen the body, and our prayer is that it would do the same for you.



RESIDENCY SLICE OF LIFE FROM: MORGAN MCQUEEN

When I first considered joining the Residency Program, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life. Would I become a missionary overseas? Would I serve as a campus missionary with H2O Church at Ohio State for the rest of my life? All I knew was that God was giving me the opportunity to choose to use my first two years after college to do full-time Kingdom work. So with a modicum of understanding about our fledgling Residency Program and no idea what the next two and a half years would hold, I jumped in.

However, this jump felt a bit like leaping from an airplane and discovering you're skydiving into a storm. Almost immediately upon beginning the process of support raising, the pandemic hit the world at large and everything shifted into chaos. I was constantly on Zoom calls, plagued by ever-growing fears that I wouldn't be able to raise the funds necessary for me to start my Residency, and I was trying to finish my senior year in the early days of our "unprecedented times". Yet by the time August rolled around, God had provided me just enough financial support to begin my Residency. By God's grace, I would be earning my living investing in his Kingdom.

Along with my fellow Residents and other campus missionaries, I took off at a sprint trying to meet new international students, build relationships with them, share the gospel, and help disciple some of the women on our International Team. Over the next two years, I got to spend 40+ hours a week just doing ministry, building the Kingdom and learning about the Lord and being his disciple.

During these two years I got to do my dream job, yet it didn't always feel like a dream. Doing ministry was often tough: students were doing virtual learning, student organizations couldn't meet in person for health and safety, and there was a general fear of spending time in person with anyone. The team I co-led, International Team, put on a plethora of events hoping to reach even a fraction of the students we would

normally meet in the typical year. With COVID-19 concerns and isolation at an all-time high, we count ourselves lucky to have even met one student.

We spent hours praying and planning and strategizing how we could meet more lost students. In that space of desperation and utter dependence on God to move, he did miraculous things. he brought Xiaoyi, now a dear friend, to our Zoom call one evening in September 2021, seeking friendship in a time of incredible isolation. Armed with almost no knowledge of Christianity, Xiaoyi decided to join our team, and over time, started to ask questions and genuinely engage with what she believed. Through all the highs and lows of the past two years, Xiaoyi has been one of the most faithful members of our Team, always ready to ask questions, share her thoughts and learn about God. To this day, Xiaoyi has not placed her faith in Christ – yet we are not in great despair, nor are we deeply discouraged, because God has been at work in mighty ways and desires a relationship with her more than I can even imagine.

God did this little miracle and countless others over my two years, each pointing to the glorious truth that he is the one in control and he is trustworthy and good. God brought strong believers to our Team, generations of whom will continue leading long after I'm gone. He brought international students with hearts open to hearing about Jesus, and joy abundant. At every turn, God showed me that I can trust him with my life and my plans.

It seems like the poetic way to wrap up this story would be to look back at the beginning and say that now, at the end of the Residency, I now know exactly what I'm doing with my life, but I don't. Right now, I'm not sure what job I'll have, whether I'll ever return to full-time ministry work, or how things will change as I transition off of the H2O staff team. But I know now more than ever that God is faithful to provide and he is in control. He is Jehovah-Jireh: the Lord will provide. ■