

The first thing to be said about a Sacred Road summer is the growth, fellowship, and deepening of relationships with the kids and youth we serve. Throughout the summer, we witness Christ's love through the relationships formed between our summer staff, teams, and youth.

My primary focus has been youth ministry, and it has quickly become my favorite and what feels like purpose in this phase of my life. Going into the summer, my prayer was that our youth ministry would build up leaders through the opportunities we offer. I have been told that our youth ministry exists to give teenagers, especially those on the reservation, a chance to step into new opportunities and make a difference in their community. I hold those words close to my heart. Our youth are major change-makers, especially in the church. When we invite them into something meaningful, they almost always rise to the occasion and often exceed our expectations. They inspire me more than they realize.

This summer, we invited youth ages 12 to 18 to serve alongside us on worksites, painting homes in the community. For many, working four days during a team week was something completely new. They sacrificed sleep, learned new skills, and built relationships with interns, team members, and each other. In total, 30 youth served on worksites. Their work created a new bond within our youth ministry and a dynamic that our younger youth and kids now look to and want to be part of.

I also saw so much fruit and hope during our time at Young Life camp. We took 15 youth to camp in Oregon, giving four Sacred Road staff the chance to better understand where our youth are. Camp gives us time to hear the gospel, but importantly, it gives leaders and youth the chance to process their struggles and understanding of faith in real time. Our days are filled with joy and moments of pure chaos, but in the midst of it, we can focus on the real questions and give them space to consider walking with God.

By the end of camp, two youth prayed to receive Christ. The follow-up after camp is a gift as we continue inviting them into the church community through worksites, youth group, and Sunday church. In the weeks that followed, both boys were baptized at our church.

We also had girls in discipleship come to us wanting to be baptized. One girl I have worked closely with for about a year had struggled with understanding where she stood and feeling like she may never be ready for baptism. After many conversations, she decided that she wanted to walk a life with Jesus, and was baptized.

Our youth ministry will continue to invest in the youth on the reservation. We have seen growth not only through summer activities but in our Sunday morning youth attendance and their desire to be part of the church. Following the passages of Psalm 23 and Isaiah 58, my prayer is that we continue giving our youth opportunities to know Christ, serve their community, and grow into the leaders we already see them becoming.