



September 2026

Dear NPEA Supporters and Friends,

My name is Jack Branum, and I was an NPEA Church Planting Intern this summer. Looking back on this summer, one of the first things I want to say is a huge THANK YOU to the NPEA Board and to everyone who supports NPEA. Because of your generosity and commitment to developing future church planters and ministry leaders, I was able to spend this summer serving in an internship that has impacted me far beyond what I could have imagined. Your support allowed me to serve in church plants while also learning from ministers, shepherds, church staff, and countless people who are faithfully following Jesus. I am incredibly grateful for the investment you made in me and for the chance to experience ministry from so many different angles.

One of the most visible parts of my internship was serving in up-front ministry. Throughout the summer, I spoke at three different churches and preached three times, twice at North Point Christian Church (Spearfish, SD) and once at Venture Christian Church (NPEA church plant in Rapid City, SD). I also gave two communion meditations and served as a host at Traverse Christian Church (10yr old church plant in Windsor, CO). I led a youth group worship night, led worship on a Sunday morning, and played drums as part of the church camp worship band and at North Point. Alongside those things, I worked with the North Point staff to plan and produce their monthly guidebook/bulletin. Being involved in all of these areas gave me a better understanding of both sides of ministry, the moments that happen in front of a congregation and the, often unseen, preparation that makes those moments possible.

Some of the most meaningful parts of my summer, however, happened in time spent with others. Discipleship became one of the greatest areas of growth for me. I worked with the youth group, leading the high school students through lessons, questions, and conversations. I also continued investing in a group of four high school boys who I have been discipling for several years. Being able to continue those relationships throughout the summer reminded me that discipleship is not simply about teaching someone information. It is about walking with people, asking questions, listening, encouraging, challenging, and helping one another follow Jesus.

I also served at three different church camps, which gave me another environment to build relationships with students and see God work in their lives. I spent time creating, designing, and editing a Gospel of Mark discipleship guidebook, which helped me think through how we can make discipleship practical and reproducible within the church. I also sat in on a discipleship group and saw what it looks like for mature believers to continue learning from one another and follow Jesus together. But perhaps the most valuable discipleship experiences were the simple one-on-one conversations with students, pastors, shepherds, and members of the church. I spent afternoons with gentlemen from North Point working on various projects. I had great conversations about church, wisdom, and life. I gave drum lessons to a young kid in the church and was able to disciple him through something as simple as music. I also had conversations with several students about calling, purpose, and what God might be doing in their lives. All of this showed me that discipleship can happen in so many different settings, and some of the most important ministries we do may never happen from a stage.

Another major part of my internship was learning about church leadership and vision. I sat in on staff meetings and elder/shepherding meetings. This allowed me to see how much prayer, wisdom, conversation, and discernment goes into decisions that most people in a church never see. I also observed financial planning, stewardship conversations, and vision casting. North Point has been walking through a significant financial situation and being able to witness that process gave me a much deeper understanding of the realities of church leadership. I watched leaders think strategically about how the church could continue moving forward while simultaneously seeking God's guidance and trusting Him with the outcome.

During the internship, I helped develop a sermon series for July and August called OVERFLOW, which focused on spiritual disciplines and what it looks like to build a lifestyle around the rhythm of Jesus. I observed coaching calls and conversations about ministry situations with Patrick Lightfoot. Those calls taught me that leadership is not simply about having the right answers. There is an incredible amount of wisdom that leaders must rely on God for. Sometimes leadership means making a decision. Other times it means waiting, listening, seeking counsel, praying, and trying to discern the path God is leading you toward. Watching leaders navigate real situations showed me that ministry leadership carries weight and responsibility that requires much more than talent or knowledge. It requires dependence on God.

If I had to choose one takeaway from this summer, it would be this, **healthy ministry flows from life with Jesus**. I came into this internship excited to learn how to do ministry better. I leave realizing that the foundation underneath everything we do in ministry is our own relationship with Christ. Preaching, leading worship, creating resources, discipling students, sitting in leadership meetings, and making difficult decisions all become empty if they are disconnected from life with Jesus. The most effective ministry leaders I observed were not simply people who knew how to lead, they were people who were learning to walk faithfully with Christ.

I am leaving with an even greater passion for ministry, especially for discipleship, developing people, and investing in the people around me. More than that, I am grateful for the people God allowed me to serve alongside and learn from. The students I invested in, the pastors and shepherds I learned from, the staff members I worked alongside, and the churches I served all shaped me. I am thankful that NPEA gave me the chance to experience ministry not simply as a job or a position, but as a way of life. My hope is that what I learned this summer will continue shaping the kind of follower of Jesus, disciple-maker, and ministry leader I become for years to come. **Thank you again for making this internship possible through your generosity and support of NPEA.**

Sincerely,

Jack Branum

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