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Cedarville Students Help Transform Church Into Vibrant, Growing Congregation

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Cedarville Students Help Transform Church Into Vibrant, Growing Congregation

by Clem Boyd

Joe Collis '15 went from church attender to church ministry leader in less than 14 days.

University Baptist Church (UBC) in Beavercreek, Ohio, held a ministry fair the first week he attended in 2013. Within a week and a half, he was helping lead the middle school boys' ministry. "That's unheard of in most churches," Collis said. "Many churches want to know you for a long time, but UBC trusts you, gives you leadership opportunities, teaches you, and equips you to serve in the local church."

That philosophy flows from UBC's Senior Pastor Casey Cockerham. "Our Cedarville students add an energy and enthusiasm to our congregation that is contagious," he said. "We love allowing them to serve and gain hands-on experience while they are learning the theological and philosophical tenets of faith at school."

According to Cockerham, Cedarville students lead worship, teach children's Sunday school, lead children's church, help with the Awana program, serve as greeters



Cedarville students lead small groups for University Baptist Church's Young Adult Ministry. Photo courtesy of Joe Collis '15.

and ushers, help with counting offerings, and serve youth. "They are a huge asset for us when it comes to volunteers," he said.

Collis led the Cedarville ministry team of 20–25 students to UBC from August 2014 to December 2015. Valerie Sohn '16 led the Cedarville team spring semester 2016. She started attending UBC in 2013 and noticed a lack of children's worship during the main adult service.

"I was ready to volunteer if someone else started the children's worship ministry," Sohn said. "But then they put me in charge. It's stretched me to lead in ways I hadn't experienced. I didn't know if I could do it, but I tried, for the Lord's sake and for the children."

Whether they are going into full-time ministry or working in another profession, it's exciting to imagine this missionary force of bright, young students going out into the world to serve Christ in their families and professions.

Collis desired that same experience for all students. "I enjoyed challenging Cedarville students who wanted this welcoming environment and church family to then serve the Lord there in a practical way," he said. "They see you as a ministry leader today, not just tomorrow."

Cedarville students helped the church turn an important corner. "When I came to the church in June 2010, the church was struggling," Cockerham said. "They had gone through a difficult pastorate and had been without a pastor for two years. The church was down to around 40–50 people and worship was being led by one of the members."

Cockerham was familiar with Cedarville from past ministry experience and began praying that God would supply a worship leader and students from Cedarville. "God was incredibly gracious to bless us with both," he said. "Very soon we had an entire band made up of Cedarville students. God used that in a mighty way to bring incredible growth and life back into the church. Since that time, we have continued to grow and we are blessed to have more than 100 Cedarville students worshiping and serving with us each week."

There are now more than 300 adults and children attending on an average Sunday.

Cockerham added, "Whether they are going into full-time ministry or working in another profession, it's exciting to imagine this missionary force of bright, young students going out into the world to serve Christ in their families and professions."

Clem Boyd is Managing Editor of Cedarville Magazine.