

# STANDING IN THE GAP

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2024

*“To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ”*

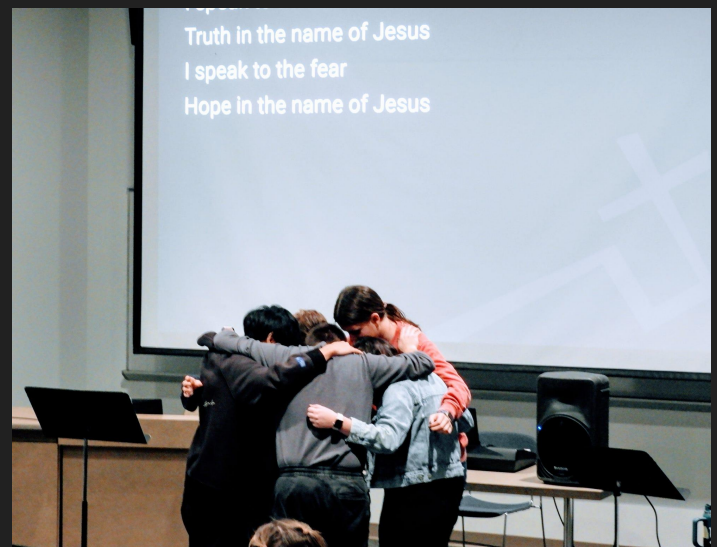
## SUMMER REFLECTIONS: ALUMNI STORY AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A common myth is that summer provides more free time with fewer constraints. In reality, summer can often bring more hustle than the rest of the year, even without firm commitments. Summertime through Standing in the Gap is no different. Even though academics are not in session, Gap is. This summer gave way to another wonderful Summer Gap season.

Personally, this summer also held its flurry of activities as it brought my wedding, which included many Gappers and Gap alumni as key parts of our big day. It is amazing to see how God uses Standing in the Gap to not only bring people to Him but also unite them in such strong friendships that He is the center of.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” -John 15:13-15

-Natalie Steffes; Standing in the Gap Communications Manager



# SUMMER GAP

By Taylor Yaros

The SVSU Standing in the Gap program has been a very large part of my life now for several years. Back when I was a sophomore, I was originally drawn to the GAP program for two main reasons: the people and the teachings.



The people in this organization are not only deeply passionate about their faith in Jesus, but they are some of the most kind and outgoing people anyone will ever run into. They will greet you, act like they have known you for years, and will consistently insist you keep coming back each week. I was initially invited to GAP by an old friend of mine, whom I have known since the seventh grade. The consistent inviting he did each week worked since I've still been attending regularly for the last 3.5 years.

The second thing that is inspiring about the GAP program is that Pastor Nate (and sometimes Pastor Gabe from the Midland church) gives incredibly in-depth teachings about the Christian faith. Most of these are often practical and helpful lessons for people new to the faith to start incorporating more into their daily lives. These can range anywhere from tithing, to turning the other cheek, to new and obtainable ways to talking about Jesus more in our daily lives. The weekly meetings during the school year are amazing for students trying to learn more about Jesus, and those seeking a Christian community on campus. However, I would say that the the best part of the GAP program would be Summer GAP.

Summer GAP is essentially the same program that happens during the fall/winter semester for college students. However, there are generally only 3-7 kids who attend every week; since most SVSU college students live a significant distance away from campus. The structure is a little different during the Summer Gap; we sing no worship songs as we do weekly during the Fall/Winter college semesters. However, the smaller number of attendees often allows Pastor Nate to go more in-depth over the texts and verses that we read each week.

# SUMMER GAP CONTINUED

By Taylor Yaros

Pastor Nate will often start the session by asking us about our week and we talk about any issues we have had in our personal lives. Here is where students often build a closer relationship with those in the room since we are given the time and space to get to know each other on a more personal level. I started attending the Summer GAP program last year and it was easily the best decision I made. I grew incredibly close with people I had not had the chance to talk to during the regular semester. Nate also allows us to ask questions each of us might have that we might have, or topics we might be confused over. Things we might not go over or get back to right away when the fall/winter semesters are in swing. I remember last year we talked a lot about how evolution fits into the Bible timeline, and how to protect oneself while still following Jesus.

For the 2024 Summer GAP, Pastor Nate has set up the curriculum around the Foundations course which is a supplementary class that is often taught by GAP leaders each semester. The goal is to teach the foundations for our core beliefs as Christians so that we can move onto 'spiritual maturity' and start helping others develop a deeper understanding of their faith as well. We have covered topics such as baptism, tithing, trials in life, and communion. I think the session I took away the most from was from the week this summer where Pastor Nate went over baptism. The meaning behind it, why Jesus also did it, and why it's essential to our belief system as Christians. Nate went into detail about how being submerged underwater was as close to the grave as any living person could get. It's cold, it's hard to hear, it's dark, and you can't breathe. He then went into a long lesson about how this represents dying to yourself so you can better follow Jesus. I often think about what we covered that week.

The opportunity to be able to attend a campus organization such as Standing in the GAP over the summer is an incredible gift. It helps develop not only a person's faith but also the relationships between other attendees. While the 2024 Summer Gap is almost over, I would highly recommend people attend next year if they have the chance.



# STANDING IN THE GAP: MY STORY OF FAITH, COMMUNITY, AND GROWTH

By Connor Steffes

Hello everyone, my name is Connor Steffes, and I am one of GAP's newest alumni. I have the distinct blessing to have met and been a part of both Nate and Ben Polzin's respective churches. While in high school, I attended Ben Polzin's church, and upon graduating, chose Saginaw Valley State University as the college I would attend. Ben suggested I attend both Nate Polzin's church in Saginaw, as well as the Standing in the Gap chapter at SVSU.

My first year at SVSU was in the Fall of 2020, and to say that Gap was small would be an understatement, due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, the kindness and welcoming of the few people there were very profound, and I felt at home at both Gap and Nate's church. In my second year, I began serving on leadership, and I watched as Gap began to begin recovering from COVID-19's detrimental effects. During my final semester at SVSU, I had the privilege to serve as Nate's Intern Campus Pastor, and I saw Gap reach sizes higher than I had seen during my four years at SVSU.



Throughout my time at Gap, I met many new people who I now consider family. I met my now-wife at a Gap meeting, Natalie, who runs this newsletter, in 2021. We got married this July. I also met my best man at my wedding, Tony, because of Gap. Only one of my Groomsmen was someone I did not meet at Gap, a fact that emphasizes the impact Gap has had on my life. I thank God for those people, as they make the Christian walk much easier. In general, I feel a common theme of my testimony has been God sending people to help 'stand in the gap' between me and Jesus Christ, starting with Ben Polzin, and being carried on by many from Gap and the Church in Drive.

I have countless good memories of my time at Gap; I went on 8 retreats, all of which were very special and powerful experiences. I went through Gap's foundation course and then got to lead it four times, all of which were amazing learning opportunities for me. I even got to lead two win events in my final year; two different Survivor nights, where I tried to replicate the hit CBS show. (That came without the million-dollar prize for the winners. Sorry Troy and Nate. You guys did play a great game though.)

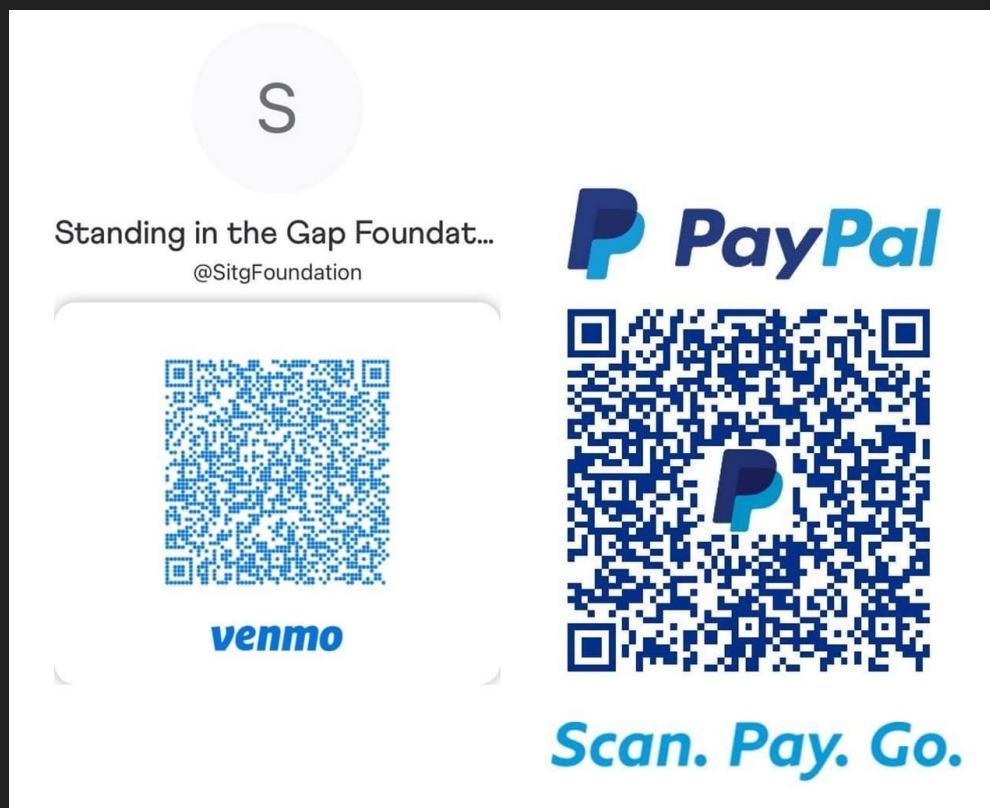
In general, I wouldn't trade my time at Gap for anything, and I can't wait to see where these young folks will take it in the coming years. As for me, I have become employed at Alma Public Schools, as their 6th social studies teacher, something I'm both excited for and privileged to be able to do. I will continue to attend the Church in Drive and will enjoy my first year of marriage with my better half, Natalie.

# STANDING IN THE GAP

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2024

## LOOKING TO SUPPORT GAP'S MISSION? DONATE TODAY.

**We are working toward a goal 100 monthly donors contributing \$25 per month. Your support makes the difference!**



**For more ways to serve contact:**

**WWW.SITG.US**

**info@sitg.us**