

# Overflow



Children's Bible  
Fellowship



Spring  
Newsletter

**— Overflow —**

One of CBF's distinctives is "Ministry out of Overflow." Our CEO Sean Stewart opens up about this concept. See how it has transformed his life on pages 3-4.

**— Journey —**

CBF moves forward out of overflow to impact the broken world around us. Catch up with what's been happening at CBF program's on pages 7-10.

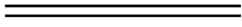
**— Partner —**

Bob Merchant one of our CBF Family partners, shares his inner Journey with Christ and how it impacts loving others along the way on pages 11-12.

**— Connect —**

Our Board Member Robert Reid closes out the newsletter with an invitation to connect with CBF in a deeper way. See his piece about ways to do so on pages 13-14.

3 & 4



*CEO*

5 & 6



*#JustListen*

7 & 8



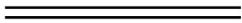
*Hope*

9 & 10



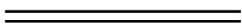
*Youth*

11 & 12



*Partners*

13 & 14



*Board & Thank You*



When I first came to CBF I had a sense of how ministry worked. I intended to bring energy and effort to the work at hand. As with any role, my expectations were different than reality. What I have learned, in time, is that the key to ministry is not My effort and expectations. It took God putting me in a position where there was more work and more problems than I could accomplish or solve and bringing me to a time of great unraveling. For most of my working career, I had put my identity and value on getting things done and outworking my peers. My life collided into a wall as the CBF board had expectations for the ministry I couldn't make happen with hard work and determination. What God wanted to do was connect me with a deep principle found in John 15:5. Jesus says "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." The last part of this statement is a bit of a shock, but I found this to be true in every way.

Efforts connected to getting my value had no fruit and led to burnout. This burnout was a moral failure, and it showed my life and work was disconnected from God. When I hit this wall of failing in my work and family, God brought me to a place where I was challenged to go back and identify where I was getting my value. True value comes from Jesus, he literally calls himself "the way, the truth, and the life." I began to embrace my failures as a pathway to seeing God's work of redemption in my life. My identity no longer needed to be based on my work successes. I could stop striving to manage this identity and become free to be who God created me to be.

At this point, ministry became easier each day. God regularly shows up with the biggest surprises and He is responsible for building His ministry.



We call this “overflow,” and it is one of the great gifts from God. My hope is that everyone who comes through CBF connects with their God given Identity and can experience His love overflowing out of their lives. This love is not earned or a product of effort, but truly a gift. This is not to say I don’t have agency, I do, each day I must choose to either strive on my own or relax in His plan and join in. As I join into His plan and His work, He is also bringing forth the fruit, and this truly is “ministry out of overflow!”

~Sean Stewart



One of our organizational distinctives here at CBF is that we minister out of overflow from the Holy Spirit. Given the current theme of “Overflow” I thought it behooved me to remind or introduce to y’all to an extraordinary program that we piloted and ran for the last few years—namely, #JustListen. I have recently been given the opportunity to oversee this ministry and am excited to see where the Lord leads and guides us because the potential is astronomical! But, before I get too ahead of myself, please allow me to briefly elaborate on why this ministry exists and how we make it happen.

Let’s start with the why. What’s CBF’s purpose? Our vision is to help the church reconnect the next generation and the forgotten to real belonging in the body of Christ. We have observed, over numerous years in ministry, that people with special needs have been forgotten about or pushed off to the side of society and often left to themselves. Leaving them with feelings of despair and brokenness. Something we have all dealt with at one time or another. We want to connect our ministry to our brokenness because we understand that God’s power shows up in our weakness and vulnerability, and we desire to help those with deep brokenness identify their need for Christ.

So, what is #JustListen (#JL), and how do we make it happen? This is a relational ministry program specifically geared towards those with special needs to offer a place where they feel heard and provided real belonging in the body of Christ. The ministry itself is simple in its idea and execution. We take someone who believes in our mission and is interested in joining us by becoming a #JL partner, and we pair them with a special needs individual. The next step is to make a phone call and “Just listen.” Hopefully, creating a beautiful budding relationship rooted in Christ, and learning from one



another. This ministry concept was birthed out of the isolation the pandemic caused. We realized there were many of us missing and needing one another, so how much more were our friends with special needs? It proved to be wildly needed and successful as we have many relationships that are continuing today.

There are some specifics on how we approach these conversations and relationships. With a quick training adapted from the incarnational listening principle from author Peter Scazzero's book, "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality," and Celebrate Recovery's small group guidelines, we'll have any volunteer ready to dive in headfirst.

We believe that followers of Christ can transform their community by taking this journey with us. If we come together as a body, focusing on personal transformation by allowing the Holy Spirit to work in and through us, and sharing vulnerably with one another in our brokenness, we will see a renewed community where those forgotten will find real belonging again in Christ. So, are you ready to minister out of overflow of the Holy Spirit and serve one of our beloved special needs individuals? If so, I'd love an email or a phone call or if you'd just like to talk I can always...just listen.

[cbement@cbfny.org](mailto:cbement@cbfny.org)

~Codi Bement





# NY CBF | Hope

Usually, Spring is the beginning of renewal and new growth, hinting at the abundance yet to be harvested in the fall. However, at CBF, we have come to realize that the Lord's blessings knows no specific season. It unfolds daily in unexpected ways, according to His divine timing.

In this ministry, we discover that it is not merely about giving and serving but also about receiving and ministering out of overflow. As we pour into the lives of our Hope participants, we realize that we, too, are being filled and transformed in the process. Their lives become a wellspring of inspiration and strength, enabling us to minister from a place of overflow.

Through this ministry out of overflow, we understand that God's presence transcends seasons and circumstances. It is a daily reality, unfolding unexpectedly. We become vessels of His grace, pouring out love and compassion to others while simultaneously receiving an overflow of His blessings and renewal in our own lives. As our stories intertwine, we discover the transformative power of community and the profound beauty of ministry that knows no bounds.

Engaging in our monthly scheduled Hope Celebrations, overnighters, retreats, and day events serves as a powerful reminder of God's grace in our lives. These Hope events hold a special place as tender caretakers for the 'gardens of the heart.' Walking alongside our Hope participants, we guide and assist them in uprooting the weeds of lies, rejection, and pain that threaten to suffocate and destroy their understanding of God's grace. Yet, in this process, we inevitably confront our own "weeds"—the besetting sins that entangle and hinder our ability to fully experience the depth of the Lord's love in our own lives.

In witnessing this transformative power of God's grace in the lives





of our Hope participants, we personally experience a renewal of His overwhelming love. It is through the grace of friendship that we catch a glimpse of the depths of His heart. Our Greenbriar friends, whom we drive to and from events, have become examples of his grace. Over time, they have courageously shared stories of pain, hope, and transformation, unveiling the lies they've internalized and embraced their true identity as beloved children of God. Their vulnerability inspires us to confront our own challenges, to nurture the gardens of our hearts, and to trust in God's provision. Together, we find solace and encouragement, knowing that we are not alone in our struggles. It is through this shared journey that we experience the power and grace of the Lord, discovering true belonging.

May our journey at CBF continue to be a testament to the transformative power of God's grace, overflowing from our lives into the lives of those we serve.

~Anne Chavarro





# NY CBF | Youth

It has been almost a year since I began my journey with CBF, and it has been a great time of building relationships. I left my job as a minister to begin work here for two reasons: I felt called by the Lord, and the inner journey work the staff did was irresistibly attractive. In my last role, there was pain. Pain that I caused and some that was dealt to me. Coming to CBF, I had hit a wall. Over the last few months spent searching and surrendering to the Lord, I realized that I was finding my identity in my work, not Christ. I was totally and unapologetically being the savior for my old church, stepping in the place of Christ. I didn't depend on him, or any of my fellow believers. I truly believed the success of the church depended on my work alone. But every day, I felt empty, like my pitcher had run out of water. In recognition of this, in my vulnerability and brokenness, I have since begun to surrender to the Holy Spirit and let him lead and guide. He has shown me that my identity is in him and his work, not mine. I have felt his love, grace, and mercy in ways that are hard to express. And now, I feel his presence daily, working in and through me, overflowing into every relationship. I'm not perfect by any stretch. When I said "began to surrender" earlier, I meant it because this is a journey.

We believe we can do ministry out of overflow through our vulnerability with these teens and commit ourselves to allow the Holy Spirit to work on and transform us in our pain, grief, and sin. Meaning our actions and attitudes are that of a heart that acknowledges our brokenness, surrendering wholly to Christ and allowing room for the spirit to move in and through us. We've noticed that the youth are exiting the church rapidly, and in our experience, the data says that it's about identity. So, we've decided to jump into evangelizing, mentoring, and discipling by living



life with them. To show them that their identity isn't going to be found in what the world has to offer but in Christ.

The last few months have been jam-packed with CBF Challenges, connection days, retreats, and visits to the school. Recently I have had the pleasure of being invited to BSSWA to volunteer with Elevate NY in the school. Building relationships with these students and their teachers is truly a privilege. Last month we had our first Elevate overnight retreat and pulled off a two-part CBF Challenge reminiscent of the Hatfields and McCoy's. The teens learned intensely about identity, what we value and why, pride, and selfishness. There was an incredible time of debriefing where the teens latched on to the ideas presented and took some real self-inventory as the gospel was presented. In May, we were blessed to host not just the Elevate class but nearly the entire 11th-grade class for BSSWA (about 60 students)! The school had state testing, and instead of letting the teens go home, Mrs. A, a literature teacher, was interested in bringing them up to CBF because of how much she's heard it's such a wonderful place from her Elevate students and fellow teachers. What an absolute blessing of an opportunity it was to serve those teens and teachers! It seems like the Lord is using CBF to overflow into BSSWA! Next? The Bronx!

~Codi Bement



I was recently asked what ministry out of overflow looks like in my life. After some reflection this is what I concluded. Early in my life as a Christ follower I was trying to minister in my own strength. I had certain gifts and natural abilities and would use them to minister to others. As I look back now it was more about me doing for God instead of me being with God and allowing Him to work through me. Although this may seem like a simple concept, I needed to learn this the hard way, which seems to be a painful pattern in my life. After a good number of years of doing ministry, I began to feel tired and burned out. My interest in ministry was fading and I didn't know why. I was feeling guilty, like I wasn't a good Christian to feel this way. I should want to do God's work. I was right, but I just didn't know what was broken. I would tell myself, "You just need to push through and work harder." That wasn't the answer. Again, that was Me trying to fix the problem, not tapping into His strength.

I believe God has brought me on this long and difficult journey to teach me what ministry in His strength looks like. Now that I think about it, it wasn't really a lesson in how to minister, rather a journey of relationship. I thought I needed to be a good Christian and work for Him. All along he wanted my love, trust, and full devotion. What a humbling experience to realize He wants me, not my skills.

To be clear, I'm still a work in progress. I'm not speaking from a position of perfection. This is a recent revelation and I'm just beginning to minister again, and it's exciting. My current passion is to love those God puts in my path. One example is with my brother in the special needs community, Jonathan Wallace. About 3 years ago, I met Jonathan



whom I started to develop a relationship. We met at CBF, but also both attend the same church in CT. Recently we spent the day at an airshow. It is a joy to see Jesus' work in my friend's life as I get to walk alongside him. My relationship with CBF has exposed me to some really cool guys. Just last month I had the privilege to spend a weekend with the Hope Celebration crew. What a joy that was! I feel so full right now! That is the best way I can describe what ministering out of overflow looks like in my life.

~ Robert Merchant





# NY CBF | Board

Hello! My name is Robert Reid and If you have been to our beautiful 220-acre CBFNY Campus in Carmel NY in the past 5 to 7 years there is a pretty good chance that we have met. If not, I would like to extend an invitation for you to visit and meet with me and the family of CBF staff and volunteers that call this place home. You will love getting a firsthand appreciation for the wonderful things that are happening here that can't be captured in pictures and newsletter articles!

While I have been a CBFNY Board member for the past few years, I enjoy what I call a “hybrid status” among those that call CBF Home. My wife of 35 years, Frances Reid, has been a part of the CBF family as our Partnership Development Director since the fall of 2020. Last November, Fran and I moved to campus since I spent so much time here anyway. When I describe myself to people inside and outside of CBF, I like to use the designation; “Volunteer.” I came as a volunteer “mechanic” to repair the vehicles that CBF uses to transport guests that come up to our campus. Since then, as a volunteer used by God, I have connected several people to likewise “volunteer” their talents and gifts and in that we have forged many new wonderful relationships with neighbors, guests and staff.

Before I close my perspective piece, I must share my appreciation for our CEO Sean Stewart. He is unwavering as God has used him mightily to bring in staff that loves the Lord and adopts and sees the mission of CBF as a calling, and wants to be used to keep it around for the Hope and Joy it represents to so many past, present and future friends. I want to come full circle on my Board perspective piece here and repeat that you need to come and see what God is doing in and through CBF's partners in person to fully appreciate the words of our newsletters. It is through your prayers, monetary support, and volunteer time that the mission moves forward.

~Rob Reid

# Thank You!

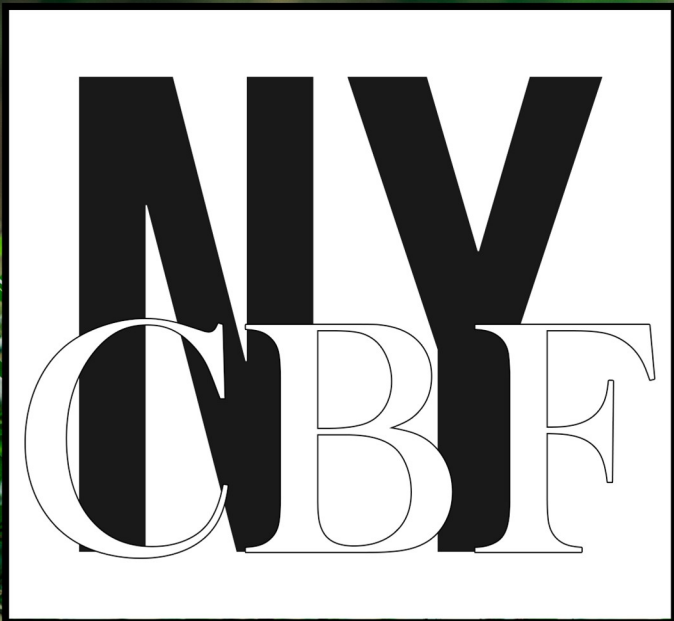
**"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." - 2 Corinthians 9:7**

As we come to the end of this newsletter, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and engagement. Your partnership with CBF has enabled us to make a lasting impact in the lives of the forgotten. We are humbled and honored to have you as part of our community.

In the spirit of connecting and uplifting one another, we invite you to explore further ways to connect with us and contribute. Whether through prayer, donation, or volunteering your generosity can create profound transformations and extend the reach of our efforts. Inspired by the scripture found in 2 Corinthians 9:7, we encourage you to give with a joyful heart, recognizing that it is not the amount but the spirit of giving that matters most.

- ◆ Pay by Check to Children's Bible Fellowship  
250 Nimham Rd, Carmel, NY 10512
- ◆ Donate online at [www.cbfny.org/donate](http://www.cbfny.org/donate) or scan the QR code below with the camera app on your smartphone phone to donate directly with PayPal.





**NIV**  
**CBE**