

# ETBU students serve with New York church

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Three East Texas Baptist University students distributed food, helped with an after-school program and prayerwalked the streets of Red Hook—a section of Brooklyn just south of Manhattan.

David Griffin, Baptist Student Ministry director at ETBU, and the students—Faith Smith, Andrea Latham and Allen O’Daniel-Diaz—worked in partnership with Pastor Edwin Pacheco at Redemption Church in Red Hook in early May.

Once considered the “Crack Capital” of the United States, Red Hook is a densely populated community with a long history of poverty, crime and brokenness. Redemption Church ministers by meeting needs, building relationships, breaking down socioeconomic barriers, discipling believers and bringing hope to the community while sharing the gospel as opportunities arise.

On their first day in Red Hook, Pacheco led the ETBU group on a tour of his community.

“He guided us through the streets of his neighborhood and gave an in-depth background and context of their vision as a church body, as believers, and as servants,” Smith said.

The students and Griffin joined Pacheco in prayer as they walked through the neighborhood.

“That was really neat to not only join in unity with others, but also just to publicly be a light where others don’t necessarily see that happen every

day,” Smith said.

As a church plant, Redemption Church shares space with a local school, and Pacheco offices in a converted classroom. The school holds an after-school program—Peacemakers—designed to teach students how to resolve conflict without resorting to violence before they reach high school. Smith and Latham helped at the Peacemakers graduation ceremony.

One way the church meets the needs of the community is through a food ministry. ETBU students helped unload a shipment of food and portion the items for distribution. When the time came for food distribution, the line of community residents seeking help wrapped around the building.

After completing the food distribution, students participated in a prayerwalk around the area.

“We prayed Christ would make the spiritually hungry filled and that the city would come to know that God blesses those who are spiritually poor and broken,” O’Daniel-Diaz said.

While in the area, the ETBU students also went sightseeing in Manhattan, stopping to pray at key locations, and they visited the American Museum of Natural History.

At Redemption Church, the ETBU group also helped prepare gift bags for Mother’s Day and assisted the congregation by setting up sound equipment, moving tables and preparing the space for Sunday church service.

After they participated in the worship service, the students again moved tables and reset the cafeteria for school on Monday.

“Taking the team [to New York] provided the opportunity to help our students see the reason for home missions or church planting,” Griffin said.

“The need for workers is immense. Prayerfully, I hope that graduates of ETBU might decide to plant their lives [in New York] to help our Baptist church planting efforts. It is something any of our graduates could do, regardless of their major or future profession.”