

2016 MISSION TRIP TO ALTOONA PA

TEAMeffort



My expectations, versus God's plan:

As I planned for the Mission Trip this past year, it was quite surprising how my expectations for the trip evolved. In the early planning portions of the trip, my most important expectation was to build/repair a house for a family that needed a little help along the way. I wanted to facilitate a finished product that the homeowner could have pride in and recognize that a church group from Iowa poured their heart into while spreading God's love along the way. Little did I know, that while we continually exceeded my "working" expectations, that the trip wasn't about actually fixing a house but rather fixing ourselves. I had been told of the great faith moments that occur on Mission Trips, but nothing had prepared me for what God had in store for me.

The trip started out with an amazing send-off with parents, family, and significant others; and I knew as we prayed prior to our departure that we had a special week ahead of us. Through road construction, "land-hurricanes," and worshiping in an 86 degree church service on Sunday morning, we made it to Altoona, PA full of spunk and ready to serve.

At our initial chapel on Sunday night, we were introduced to the TEAMEffort staff and our leader, Chelsey Spears. Chelsey was an amazing leader and set the tone from our first interaction with her. Her faith, leadership, musical talents, and positive attitude were truly an inspiration and I couldn't imagine our week without her by our side.

Another highlight was getting to know our new friends in Altoona; Mel, Nick, Aspin, Aaron, and Grace. It was such a joy to work side-by-side with this wonderful family as we helped them with some projects around the house. For me, prior to meeting the family, there was uneasiness due to not knowing if the family wanted us there, but that was quickly extinguished as we got to know the family. One of the highlights of the trip for me, was to watch them drive up to join us for Chapel on Thursday night. That was very moving for me personally. Not only did we have a positive impact on their home, but we had made such powerful connections that they were willing to join us for Chapel and share in praising God after knowing us for three days.

At church, we talk about how we "Gather to Grow" and we are "Sent to Serve," to me this labor of love wasn't about serving at all. This trip is a reaffirming sign that God is in all things. No matter what you are going through in life, Prayer and "getting real" in a room with people you love and trust is healthy and powerful. I learned that sharing our faith, our struggles, our doubts, our laughter, and our tears are what God had set as his expectation for me the entire time. God is very intentional in how he puts people in your life and I believe there a reason he selected this special group for me. We are not family by blood, but the 30 of us who shared this trip together are FAMILY.

We must now accept that challenge which TEAMEffort served up to us. We must keep pressing into our faith through prayer, we must continue to seek the Lord, and we must not let this mission trip be a check mark of good deeds but rather a desire to share the Word with the people of our hometowns and communities. My work is not done, but rather just beginning.

Matt Schmidt

What an amazing week! With this being many of our second mission trips, we left with high expectations and God did not disappoint. From the many miles in the van, time on the worksite, chapel services and our groups devotions- God showed up in so many ways. At times we experience things that God has set before us without even knowing that he put them there for a purpose. Looking back it is easy to see that he was placing us in situations for a purpose during this whole week.

It all started with getting up from a short night's sleep in Fremont Ohio to attend church with our hosts for the night. Pastor Jody's sermon was on the language of prayer and that it is starting to become a "dead" language. Many of us forget that we should pray earnestly and often- instead we pray when it is convenient or when the mood strikes us. Jesus prayed to his Father that he would take the suffering that he was about to experience away, but he also prayed Your will be done, not mine. That night when we attended the opening chapel service we were introduced to the week's theme- "Pray As You Go" and the each of the next four nights would be about each of those words. We were told that we needed to be open to what God had in store for us this week- "His will". It was amazing how perfectly that morning's sermon propelled us into the week ahead.



Monday the first and hottest day of the week we were able to meet the home owner for whom we would be painting. She introduced us to her 3 kids, Nick a senior, Aaron an 8th grader and Grace a six grader (and later on Aspin, Nick's girlfriend). Mel and all 3 of the children joined with us for opening prayer and worked side by side with us as we began scraping and cleaning up the yard. Early on the kids stayed close to each other not really engaging with any of us- then came Tyler with a ball and that all changed. Through the simple throwing of a ball the ice was broken. Even

though their mom had left for work, the kids joined in our circle at the end of the day and prayed right alongside of their new friends. Even with the extreme heat we were all energized by the day and had a great time at chapel listening how powerful prayer can be in our lives.

Sore backs and muscles were no match the next morning as we loaded up the van excited to finally be able to start the painting....which didn't get started until midmorning with all the additional scraping that was needed! Once we got started painting we were able to get a coat on the whole house and even a second coat on part of the house! Once again we were joined by Nick, Aaron and Grace who continued to warm up to the idea of all these kids helping them out for no reason other than that is what God had brought us there to do. Tuesday's chapel challenged us to "get real" about what we were running from much like Jonah. Our nightly group devotion and following discussion was as real as it gets- lots of people talking about what it was in their lives that had them questioning God's plan for them. It is so amazing how well these young adults know and understand what their relationship to God means to them and how He has shown himself in their lives.



Wednesday was an exciting day as we were able to finish putting a second coat of paint on the entire house. And since we were so far ahead of schedule we also tackled putting a coat of stain on Mel's shed. Matt and a company of youth grabbed a couple pick axes, shovels and an axe and were able to dig out two stumps in the front yard. A number of the girls decided that an outdoor table and benches could use some paint, so they grabbed the leftover paint, did a little scraping and finished up yet another project. It would

have been so easy to just be done with the painting and call it good, but all those on the trip took it upon themselves to find something extra to do. Our mom chaperones went to Lowes and picked up mulch and some plants to help put the finishing touches on the house and when we ended up a few bags shorts someone donated their extra birthday money to go buy enough mulch to finish up the landscaping! Even with all this work we finished nearly 2 hours early. Instead of taking off to get out of the sun for a while the youth group pulled out the volleyball and invited kids to join them in a game of kill ball (not as bad as it sounds). Just as we loaded the vans, Mel made it home from work, so we were able to get some pictures with Mel and her kids. Mel surprised us with \$5 ice cream certificates for the group and let us know that she believed that we are her guardian angels. Still amazes me how much of an impact in a person's life we can make in just 3 days! Wednesday was once again an outstanding chapel and great group devotion.



Thursday was a bit of a different day. It is only a half day work and some free time to explore the surrounding area. Since we were done at Miss Mel's house our Team Effort leader Chelsey took us to her sight from the prior 2 weeks to finish up a small amount of deck staining. Chelsey took some extra time with the group before beginning work to elaborate a bit more on her life and how she ended up where she is today. She challenged the group to continue what was started on this trip as we all head home and she also invited all of the outgoing seniors to consider Team Effort as a way to do that. Even though rain was

forecasted for the area and we heard a fair amount of thunder, we only had a few drops of rain fall. Once again God showed himself by making it possible for us to finish serving this community. Not sure who came up with the idea- but since we had to provide our own lunch we went back to campus changed our clothes and headed to the restaurant at which Miss Mel worked. When she saw us she began telling all her coworkers that "her kids" were there! We enjoyed a sit down meal together and due to some rain headed to a local bowling alley instead of going swimming. That night at chapel Mel and her family were able to join us for a very moving service. Malachi challenged us to look at our lives after we "GO" from this mission trip. He asked us to think about what is it in our lives that is keeping us from following God's plan. We were all given a piece of paper and chalk that we could write down what it was that we needed to ask God to help us with and to leave it at the cross. For some I expect it was part of their lives that was interfering with their relationship with God, for others it may have been someone that needed to be touched by God's love. Whatever it was, God gave us Jesus to die on the cross, and that is where we all need to focus our lives.



That night our group devotion was about what direction would our lives "GO" after we finished this mission trip? Would we fall back into the old routines, would we choose to please God or please ourselves? Would we use God and the bible as our compass to help us "GO"? This is the one thing that we will take from this week- that we need to look to God to help direct us to where he wants us to "GO". He has a purpose for us. He has put us in situations and places to show His love for others. We need to quit ignoring those nudges He is giving us and live the life He wants us to live.



Friday was our fun day. Most of the group spent 5 hours working together to concur the rapids of the Lower Youghioghney River. But it was more than just fun- we saw groups of kids working together toward a single purpose just as we had all week long. On the way home we made time to stop at the Flight 93 Memorial to pay tribute to those who lost their lives on 9/11.

Our final devotion was a heartfelt thank you from Tyler to all of the seniors who throughout the past 5+ years went out of their way to make him and others feel welcomed not only at youth group, but in every part of his life. They were there when he needed to be picked up and loved by God. It is their love of God and showing that love to others that is now his calling.

It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to this wonderful group of seniors as they head off for college and their next steps in life. Our prayer for them is that they "Go with God" at their side. And as Maria said so well.... **"I Love you All!"**

Your Chaperones

Our PA Mission trip 2016 was more than I could have imagined. Watching this church family connect with this family we don't know was incredible.

These 23 kids scraped, painted, stained, clipped, raked, trimmed, hauled and prayed with this family. I felt as though this could have been one of our own homes we were working on and had a short time to get it finished. In their free time they all hung together and included everyone including kids from 4 churches that were there. In my time of crisis, while floating down the river with nose and toes in the air after I fell out while white water rafting, they all yelled "lil Kim" in an effort of solidarity that I would be rescued. It gave me a warm feeling in my belly. I am in constant awe of God's power and love he has for all of us and how it works for us and others. Our hands but his work and will is all we need.

Kim R



Seven years of participating in mission work with St. Peter youth group finally ended in Altoona, PA. For me it all started out in Golden Isle, GA as a 6th grade. Time has flown by, I felt like it was just yesterday I was leaving for my first mission trip with my mom. Now in a couple weeks, I will be starting my Freshman year at Wartburg. I have grown so close to this wonderful youth group. Saying good-bye to all the others in this youth group is for sure one of the hardest things that I have had to do getting ready to leave for college. I have made unforgettable friendships that will always be there to support me if needed.

I learned on this mission trip the impact we have on the people TeamEffort works with. Our youth group worked with Mel and her three kids. We did everything from trimming hedges to scraping off old paint and repainting her entire house. We all worked so hard together that we finish her house a day early. Before we left Mel told us we were her guardian angels.

Most mission trips, I never see how much we impact the home owner lives. But I could really tell that we help change Mel's family. To me that makes me so excited and I can't wait to see what God has instore for Mel and her family.

I am excited to see what is instore for this wonderful youth group. I know they will change the world where ever they go. I am very grateful to have been a part of this group, and glad I can call everyone my friend.

Abby



I have had the opportunity to tag along on 6 mission trips and this one did not disappoint. This trip meant a lot to me because it was my last one with this youth group. The sweetest moment for me was Tuesday night devotion. Our group became super vulnerable with each other and I believe we grew closer.

God showed up on the work site in more ways than one. Everyone stayed healthy which is a blessing. We were able to finish one project. We worked as a team and goofed around, but also got down and dirty..... and super sweaty.

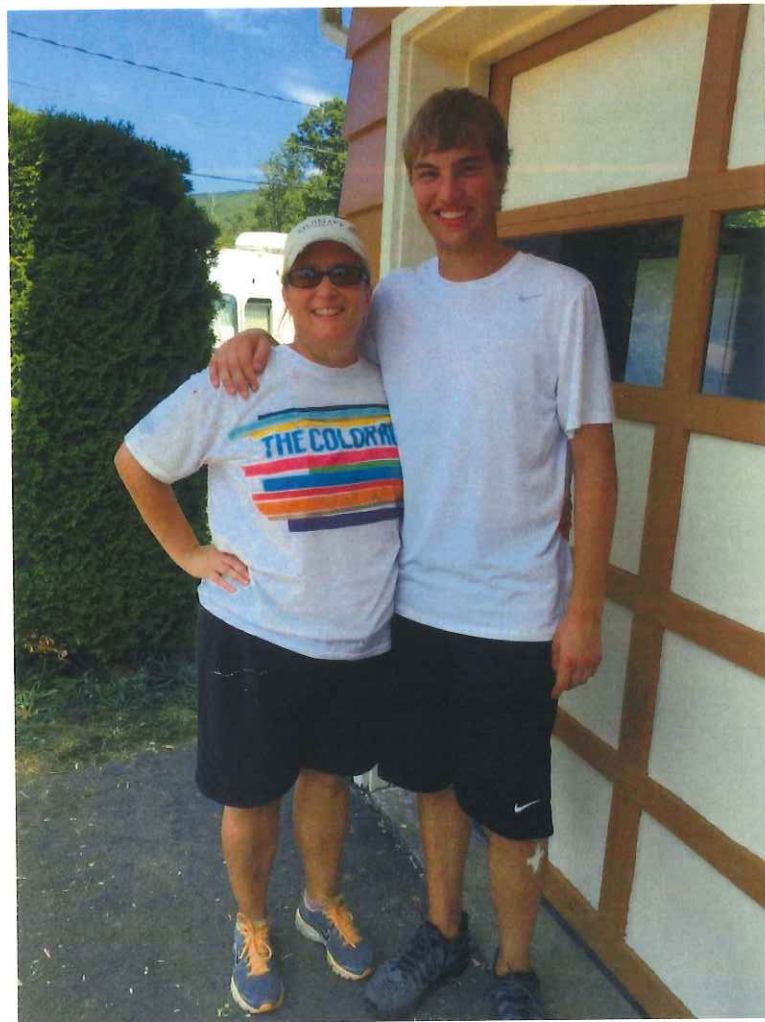
My time in St. Peter youth group has been a time of laughter, tears, joy filled hugs and lots of sweet God moments. Some of my best friends were made here and I am eternally grateful.

Chelsea



This trip was life changing. It was the best mission trip that I have ever been on! I have grown so much stronger in my faith! I have to thank everyone that went along to help me grow closer to God. Everyone has influenced me so much and I cannot tell you how much that means to me. We did a lot of awesome things on this trip! We helped a family work on their house! We normally do not see the owners of the house working with us on the job site so seeing that was really cool! I also learned to do some new things such as use an axe to get a tree trunk out of the ground! Chapel was super good every night and we had such a good camp counselor! I have also made some new friends that I am plan on keeping in contact with. I know that I will remember this trip and everyone that went along!

- Connor Dooley





God has been on the move. Wow. What an incredible FIRST mission trip. I just want to start off by thanking everyone at St. Peters for welcoming me with open arms. When I was first asked to come on the mission trip, I was skeptical at first. I didn't know what to expect, or if I would even be wanted. I was nervous, anxious, and quite honestly a little scared. Truth is, I was having second thoughts about coming... But as I approached the church Sat. Morning with The Jacobsen Family and saw a group of people laughing and smiling, I knew at that moment this would be an incredible, life changing experience.

Choosing a "favorite part" of the mission trip is near impossible. From meeting new people, to worshipping together, to growing in fellowship. But if I truly had to pick a "favorite part" of the mission trip it would be one of two things. The first one would

be praising and worshipping. There was just something about coming together and singing loud and proud mixed in with so much genuine emotion. Constantly pouring out our love for our Savior, knowing that He was smiling down upon us and hearing our praises. The second one would be seeing everyone from St. Peters growing in faith and strengthening relationship together. There was just something different about seeing 30 people smiling, laughing, and crying all in the same tiny room. There was just something different about people sharing personal testimonies and being embraced by loving open arms. There was just something different about experiencing all the love and genuineness the whole week. I can't begin to describe how Real those late nights were.

So as I take the time to reflect and come back to real life, I took away these two things...

First, Pray As You Go. The motto for the entire week. Strengthening and truly diving into prayer. Learning to cast all fears, doubts, anxiety onto the Loving God we have. Constantly talking to Him and being aware of the signals He sends us. It's not going to be easy. We are going to fall back into routine and find excuses on why we don't find time for prayer, but I'm prepared for the challenge. Plus, there's beauty in the struggle and hardships.

Second, you can make a difference wherever you are. The truth is, we live in a broken, sinful world. Somewhere, somehow, someone is struggling. It may not seem apparent, but it's the truth. So take the time to reach out and help someone. Whether that be repainting a house, or building a deck, or praying over them. Always be open to helping others and spreading the good news. The good news of knowing that we have a God that loves us unconditionally and sent His son to die for us... Incredible, isn't it?

The memories made and experience will last a lifetime. As I head off to college I will always remember the work of God in Altoona, Pennsylvania. I will always remember the love shared among the youth group. Thank you so much for the opportunity. Blessed beyond belief is an understatement. God is truly Good. Thank you Lord!

Dody



Kristin Raudabaugh

This mission trip to me was about the building of relationships while also fulfilling work for families in need. The work that was done while on this mission trip gave me a sense of pride and purpose. The family we originally started with had been living in a house that was previously owned by the mom's (Mel) parents. Both parents of Mel had died leaving the lived in and cluttered home to their children. It seemed very easy for a lot of us youth to think "Well why are we helping this mother with three teenagers?" or "I wanted to help people who really need it". It was very easy for some of our youth to think this wasn't important because it wasn't feeding starving children or bring a homeless person up from the bottom of the pit they may have fallen to.

Mel is a single mom raising three beautifully wonderful teenagers who not only helped us while we worked away on their home, but also continuously making relationships with our group. It was amazing to see our group take two weeks worth of work and do that plus more in three days. I personally feel this amazing depth of confidence and profound pride in myself and in the amazingly passionate group of youth we have at St. Peter!

I can say with full confidence that this year's mission trip was my absolute favorite. We were very open this year with no judgement for who you are or who you use to be. Our mission group is filled with youth and adults who range from; being absolute in their faith to people who don't believe at all and never will. Now some people might find that as this horrible thing and "why would we let atheists go on this FAITH trip?", I would respond to that with "Have you ever been on a mission trip?". Understandable, mission trips have a large element of faith within them, but it's so much more than that. It's about the community of your peers coming together with love in their hearts, some for their religious reasons and others just because they have so much love to give to the world.

I personally fall within a category of question and I am not ashamed, embarrassed, or disheartened by this. I feel that it's natural to question the world and the things you "know". This mission trip showed me how so many are currently question or have before. It shows that no matter what you believe, love is the most important thing and I feel that is truly important to remember in a world full of need.

Altoona, Pennsylvania

Lindsay Hemphill

I was expecting this trip to be like the others yet I knew it would be different in its own way. We had different people, people who had never been and people who were veterans. I kept thinking that this is my last one. Last one as a camper anyways. This is it and I was ready to see what God had in store for me and the rest of our crew.

The first driving started out how it should. We pray and head towards our destination. Except it downpoured and we got stuck in construction the second half of the day. Boy was that fun. By the time we got to the church where we were staying the night, I just wanted something that wasn't a seat in a van. It was a different experience staying in a church instead of a hotel. We didn't have to drive anywhere for church which was nice. As we made our way towards camp that day, I knew that this coming week was going to be big. This week would leave an imprint, a good one, on me for the rest of my life. And that it did. We worked hard. Seeing how much we did from the before and after was amazing. It's amazing how something like painting a house or staining a shed can do for a family. I saw God in many ways at that house. In the joy of everyone's spirit and in the work that was being done to help.

I left a child and came back an adult. Literally...and figuratively. I am so privileged in this world all because this is the path that God has put me on. I have what I need to survive and more yet through everyday I don't realise it. I know, in the back of mind, that I do realise it. I just never see it everyday. I have seen how just worshiping can change someone from prickily to fuzzy in a second. That soft side is what is pure. I've been stripped of my armour every time I worship God. I am pure to God and that is what matters most. That last night we worship in the chapel is the strongest night. I feel God better on these trips and I think that is why I have always loved them. I am not surrounded by everyday life or social media as much. I am able to enjoy the simple things in life and love those around me. I wish that is how it could always be, but I guess that's life. God has moved in t' moving and you do not see it coming. It hits hard but it is wonderful and beautiful. It's like you can feel God inside you and around you. You can feel him literally everywhere.

I hope that this isn't my last mission. But I feel it is. I have enjoyed every single one. To when I didn't really feel God all that much in Arizona, to feeling his power and beauty in later ones. I finally get what it is like with Him in my life and I love it. The hardest part is..Will I Go?

Yes. Yes, I will go.



Life changing. That is the only way to explain my week in Pennsylvania. I've always enjoyed mission trips and came back with, what we all call, a Jesus high but this trip was different. I had been going through a rough patch before the trip and as many of you know, I wasn't planning on going until about a week before we left. I truly believe God gave me a sign to change my mind and come along. Coming from an almost all atheist family I didn't grow up and have the confidence in God as other did and went into the week thinking I would get the Jesus high for a little bit then it would go away, like always. The first night Matt mentioned that there were openings a few nights if anyone wanted to lead a devotion. If you know me, you know I'm really not comfortable talking about my struggles with many people. But I feel pulled to open up and tell the group my story, my struggles, and the reasons I decided to come on the trip. After I talked, the whole group opened up. A lot of people stepped up and were able to tell us things they were struggling with. I was so thankful for that moment. It was beautiful and kind of unbelievable how strong God's presence was in our room that night. Our leader, Chelsey, was amazing. She led a message about how she ran from God and eventually found her way to turn around. It really showed me how I was running too. Her chapel proved to me that it's never too late to find your way back. Since I've been back I've been looking for a new church home for my next chapter in my life in Austin. I am so thankful for such an amazing church family and some great memories with them they are truly moments I will hold onto for the rest of my life.

Maria





Every year when I come on these trips, I am always amazed by the array of emotions that overcome me. This final trip was no exception. My faith journey is just starting and this week has showed me that that's okay. As I start college, I have a fresh start to be whoever I want to be and incorporate God in however I see fit. This is my opportunity to start making my relationship with God stronger and I know that I have a whole church family to help my do it.

My favorite part of every trip is the work days. There is just something about sweating and putting in some hard work that brings out the best in all of us. The work site is where we all bond most and see firsthand the effects of Gods work. This year, our home owner was especially grateful and I think this is the first year I have truly seen the effect we have on these communities. Mission work is something I've grown to love and I can't wait to continue it.

Throughout all the struggles in my life, I haven't always turned to God and this trip has lit a fire in me to maybe start giving some burdens up to Him and see what He does with it. It's not perfect but it's a start and I can't wait to begin.

I am forever grateful for St. Peter Lutheran church and the experiences and relationships it has blessed me with. As the wise Dody Kim would say: GOD IS GOOD.

Morgan

I am so grateful for the experiences I've been able to share with this youth group on all of the mission trips and through all of the fundraisers. I feel like I really grew closer to a lot of friends through this trip. For me and the other seniors it is our last trip so there were some emotional moments. It is sad for me to leave this church and these friends I have made in this youth group. The work we did on Mell's house really brought us together as a group as we bonded and used teamwork. It was amazing to see Mell and her family come to worship with us and see the impact we have had on her life. White water rafting with some of my best friends was one of the best experiences of my life. It was so fun working together in the raft after a long week of work! I will miss all the leaders and youth that have influenced me over the years in this youth group!

Peyton Kaune



This mission trip was more than I could have ever hoped for. Out of the four I've been to, this one is up there with one of the best. From working on the site to just sitting together in chapel, the presence of God was everywhere. What we would call a "Jesus high." A Jesus high is when you are all things God. You can feel him, hear him, and see him in all the things around you. My "Jesus high" was amazing on this trip. While working on the jobsite, I got to see all of the people working towards one goal and that was amazing to see. One thing that I had never seen in the previous three years, was the interaction with the family we were helping. The mom was a single mom who had to work most of the time, but her boys would be out helping us whenever they could. The older one even brought his girlfriend along. They were always helpful and always knew what needed done or were searching for ways to help us. Mel (the mother) referred to us as her guardian angels. We could see the impact we were making to her and to her family and that is nothing short of extraordinary. As a youth group, we bonded like never before. We were sharing things we had never shared with anyone and were exploring our individual faiths together. I've never felt so close to a group of people, they are my family in a way. Overall, I couldn't have asked for a better last mission trip with a better group of people and I can't wait to watch the younger one grow on these trips as I have.

Rachel

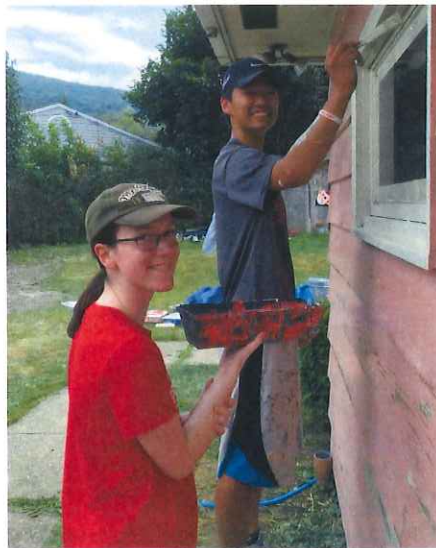


The mission trip to Pennsylvania was definitely my favorite. Not only was I able to meet awesome people, but I was also able to grow closer to God. The chapel services were very well done and infused not only with a biblical message, but a personal message from each counselor. These messages really hit home with us and allowed us to think and contemplate our own faith. Even though I enjoyed Chapel so much, it wasn't my favorite time of the week. My favorite moment was after Thursday night chapel (the final and most emotional chapel of the week). We'd just finished up our devotional and were getting ready to go to bed when someone started knocking on our back door. It turns out it was a girl from one of the other churches and she was inviting us to join them in the chapel tent. The chapel tent was right in our backyard and we could hear music and singing coming from it, so we decided to join them. Their worship leader was leading an impromptu worship full of familiar songs. Rather than give us the words on a slideshow or a sheet of paper, he'd sing them out himself and then have us repeat him. You could tell everyone was getting into it because of all the closed eyes, raised hands, or even dance moves (apparently some of them were Riverside songs). I don't know if I've ever had a "Faith Moment" or a true "Jesus Moment", but that was the closest I've ever felt to God.

I'm extremely thankful that I was given this opportunity because it reminds that whatever we do, God is with us. We were able to do so much in so little time and feel His presence in so many ways. To me, mission trips can be summed up with a bible verse.

Phillipians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Sydney





This year was the very first mission trip I have ever gone on, and let me tell you, it changed my life. I have always gone to church throughout my childhood and heard stories of God's miracles, but hearing these in church every Sunday is so much different than seeing God work his ways in the real world.

In the past year or so I have felt myself drift away from God, not because I chose to just because I seemed to be caught up in other things. I had a stressful school year and summer and I had forgotten to pray, I was lost.

One of the messages during chapel this week on the mission trip included noticing and hearing God's "nudges". These are for example like in the movies Bruce Almighty and Evan Almighty when a specific bible verse like 3:16 is on your alarm clock, billboards, papers at work

and etc. During this message I realized how many nudges I had ignored.

The very first nudge I had seen was the morning after we had stayed the night in a church in Ohio during a service. The service was about praying, it was perfect. I finally realized that when I was praying I was praying wrong. I needed to pray for forgiveness, needs, deliverance. I needed to pray for God's will and understand that is what I need, not my will.

When we had gotten to Pennsylvania the first night at chapel they introduced the theme for this summer and it was- Pray as You Go. I strongly believe this was no coincidence. The first service focused on the word pray. I learned to pray at all times, without ceasing, continually.

God had also nudged the Schiller family and some of the seniors to encourage me to go on this mission trip, He had nudged my family to convince me to go, and He had nudged the adults to move the mission trip to after state softball so that I could go.

Seeing God's nudges wasn't the only way I saw God on this trip. I saw him work through us while we were working on Miss Mel's house, I saw him as we developed new relationships through him, I saw him while we worshiped him, and I saw him through our prayer.

I will never forget this trip, it has definitely changed my life and put me back on the right track with my faith. I am so blessed that I got to opportunity to go on this mission trip. My next mission is to "Go", my goal is to take what I have seen and learned on this mission trip and keep it going by spreading God's word, by realizing my nudges, by seeing the day to day blessings, by praying again, for God's will, and by continuing to do God's work wherever I go.

Amber Fistler

This mission trip to Pennsylvania was absolutely amazing. This was my first one and I have no regrets. I created such great relationships with everyone on the trip and especially with God. I loved working at the house and helping others. The families were all so nice. It is so crazy what God can do.

I really regret not going the past years. I feel like I had missed out on so much, but coming on this mission trip I realized how amazing mission trips are. The counselors and the adult leaders were so amazing and I look up to each one of them. I made so many new friends with people I would've never expected. Each day brought all of us so close it was amazing. Whether it was painting the house or going to chapel or even eating breakfast, I felt God with me every step of the way.

The families that we helped were both so amazing. They were so nice and willing to help out. I am so glad I went on this mission trip this year, I cannot express this enough. I want so many other people to experience the feeling I had and I hope so many more people go next year. God does truly work in amazing ways.

Blair



Reflection for 2016 mission trip

This was my second time going on a mission trip and the best one yet! I learned so much on this trip over helping others, communication, and my faith. This trip in Pennsylvania could not have gone better. With the group of people that went to getting our house that we had assigned done in three days. Yeah that's right I said just three days! Our project had included the take all the old paint off with scrapers-which was the hardest part. Then we did the first coat of trimming around the doors and windows. That was on just the first day, but it went by fast when you are with friends. Then on the second and third days we just finished the first and second coat on the house and trimming. Did some touch ups and extra yard work. She was so happy that she started crying when she was thanking us. That was just such a great experience to have done that for her. If I have the opportunity to go next year count me in!

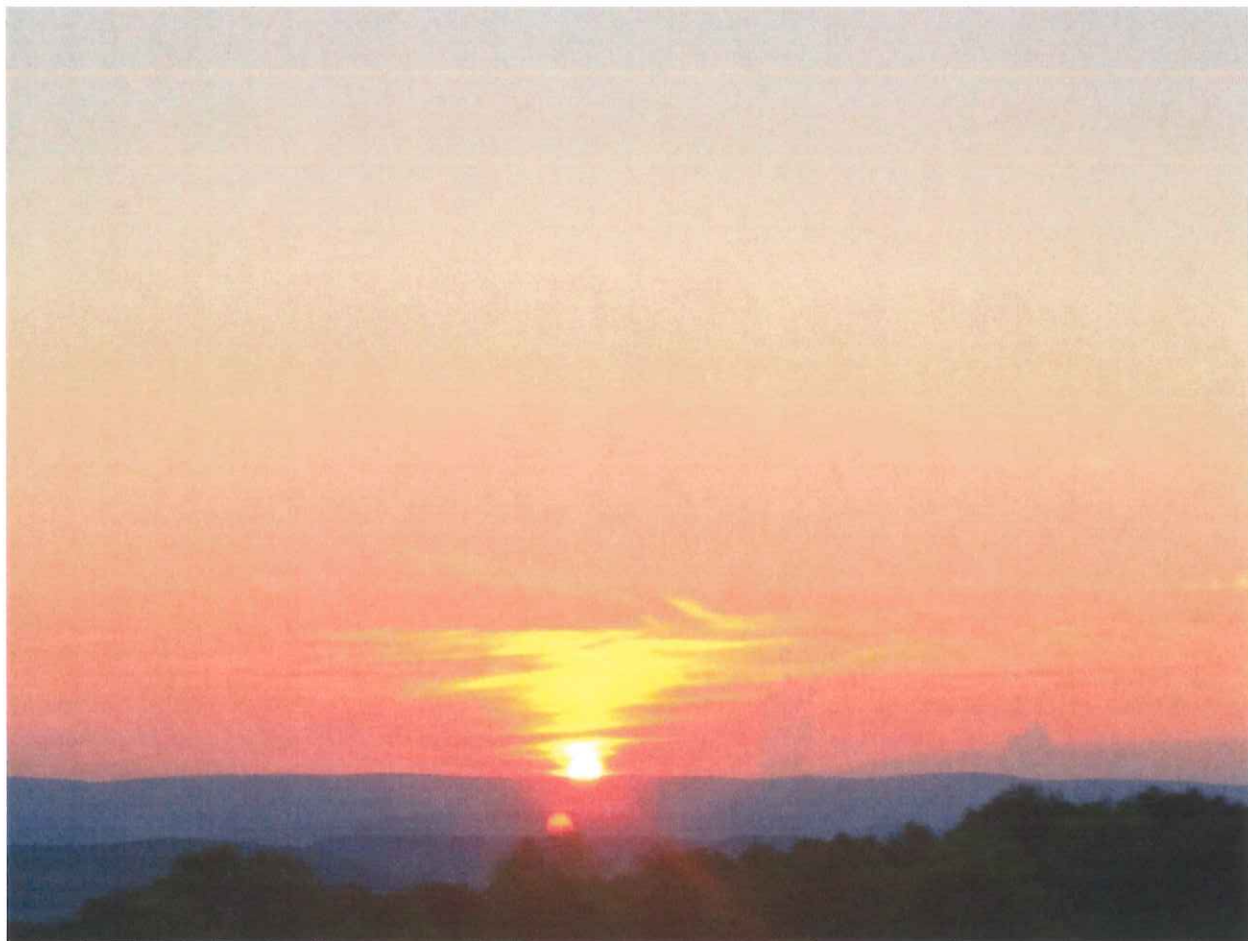
Thank you,
Jordan Ridnour



Last year when I couldn't go on the mission trip, I was devastated, so I signed up for this one right away. I was looking forward to this trip all summer and it exceeded my expectations by a long way. I was really lucky to have this trip as my first mission trip because I didn't know what to expect going. Not knowing what to expect made the experience more exciting and it made me go out of my comfort zone.

I loved everything about the trip, even the working part. We worked on a single mother's house and I loved every minute and was sad when we finished early and had to go to a different project. It was so cool to see how her whole family helped us and how we bonded by simply painting her house. Every night we had chapel where we worshiped with the other groups and that was also really fun. My faith grew lots this trip and I had never really known what God's love really felt like until this trip. This trip was life changing and I want to thank everyone who helped me get there.

Kaitlyn



This mission trip was amazing. We were so blessed to have been able to help serve in God's name. I got the pleasure of getting to know the people in our youth group much better and I also got to know myself and my relationship with him better than I have before, I know everyone says this after every mission trip but I'm going start reading the bible because it's a pretty cool story that also happens to be very important. I'm going to miss the seniors like no other, these guys were always there to inspire me in my faith and have been great leaders to all of us. I know though they're leaving God has great plans for all of them. I look forward to going on mission trips with this youth group again and I hope future trips are as good as this one. Oh yeah, God is good.

-Rob Kreklau



Every year when the time comes around for the mission trip it kind of catches me by surprise. I get into a routine and repeat the same steps day after day. The mission trip is just such a refresher, not only for my faith that grows more and more each year, but also just for the everyday things. This year in Pennsylvania I had the greatest time. I got to meet some truly great people and I got even closer with the people in youth group. The family we worked with was a blessing to me and I believe everybody in the group. It was a family that when u saw them and what they had u said why are we helping here. It seemed almost like another family could use our help more. What I learned however is that God put us there for a reason and no need is any greater or lesser than another. I personally got to know the family pretty well and I slowly started to learn that despite appearances they were struggling a little. The best part for me though was when the homeowner called us her "Guardian Angels". It truly made me feel like we did some good.

The other key part to these trips is the beautiful worship services every night. Now I'm going to be honest with you and say that the first night at chapel is rough. These TEAMEffort leaders are up on stage dancing around screaming and just having fun. Then we start singing as a group and for me I struggle to just let go and have some fun or even just sing sometimes. I feel like it's embarrassing it I'm going to mess up. However as the week progressed I found myself opening up. I began to actually sing the words on the screen in front of me and I started to truly enjoy the worship services. The stories the guides shared were truly incredible ranging from a weird family situation to a message sent from God through a breakup. Some of it was totally bizarre and kind of hard to believe but it was all true. It all showed how God acts of guidance don't have to come from these huge acts of miracle like getting eaten by a whale for example. To kind of sum Chapel all up it's a hot sweaty group of people singing in a tent on a dreary and rainy night listening to stories and praising God. Although it's a little uncomfortable it's one of the greatest experiences I will ever have because you truly feel the presence of God.

The final thing I want to reflect on is just over all what did I take from this year's mission trip. The saying for the week was Pray As You Go. Throughout the week we broke down each word by itself. Starting with Pray we talked about how simple it is yet how so many people fail to do it. Prayer was related to Latin in a sense that some believe it is a dying language. So after hearing this night one I began to pray more often. I found myself praying before after and even sometimes during meals. I would intend to only pray before but then halfway through I'd remember something else I forgot to add. I started to realize that talking to God is relaxing it reminds me of what I'd like to accomplish. Stuff I kind of start to forget comes back to me as I'm praying and I find myself sharing it all with God. Lots of times a non-religious person or someone on the edge questions why pray? They say why ask for something if it won't be given to you. The message for me that really stuck talked about this. In the message the guide said you can't simply ask for something from God. You have to accept that maybe if you ask he will say no. So the leader told us to look at the story of Jesus in the garden. Before he is taken he prays to his father and says if it is YOUR WILL can I not face this pain I am about to face. Now as you know God did not take this pain from Jesus and because of that we will forever be free of sin. This is why we have to trust in God and say if it is your will because if God would've simply granted Jesus's request we would forever be faced with sin.

It's one of those things that can never be taken away from you. The mission trip is one of the greatest experiences in the world and although I tried I can't truly put in all into words. Pennsylvania was a great experience and I can't wait for next year. Oh and little shout out to the seniors that have always made it a great experience best of luck to you

Tyler

This year's mission trip was amazing. We went to Blue Knob, Pennsylvania and helped a single mother named Mel and her family by scraping and repainting their house. It was really great to see Mel, her two sons, daughter, and their friends come outside to help out. She was very grateful for what we did and without her and her family's help, we probably wouldn't have finished a day early like we did. On our half day we painted a deck for an elderly couple and went to lunch at the restaurant Mel works at to surprise her. Our team effort guide was a girl named Chelsey and she was very helpful and always had a smile on her face, hearing her story really strengthened my faith. She went whitewater rafting with us on our free day and had a really good time. I liked the worship services we had each night but the devotionals after every service were even better. Everyone really spoke their mind and shared all their feelings with everyone, there was a lot of laughter, a lot of tears, and a lot of tissue boxes passed around. It's sad because this was the last trip for all of the seniors unless they decide to come back for another one. I've made some of my best friends in this youth group and it's gonna be hard to see them go. Even considering we had no air conditioning in our dorm, this was probably my favorite mission trip.

Turner Miller



The mission trip was a lot of fun. I got way more out of it then I even expected. All the work and fundraisers and early mornings we had so we could make the money to go was totally worth it! It was cool how we got to meet and kinda make friends with the home owner and her family, it was really cool how the family would come out and help us with the work and they really showed how grateful they were. This one being the seniors last trip was sad but I think they ended on a really good one! I'm already excited for next year and can't wait to pick our place and start working towards going there! While I still have memories from this last one that I will never forget and will gladly share with many people!

Bailey



This mission trip in Blue Knob, PA has been one to remember. Over the trip, I developed relationships stronger than I ever would've imagined with God and the people in youth group through working and worship. We got the chance to work with a warm, welcoming family who would end up coming to Chapel with us on the last night. The homeowner, Mel, is a single mom with three kids who just lost her mother. As you can imagine, the house was not in the best shape. On the outside, paint was scraped off so much the wood was damaged and the landscaping needed to be cared for. What would've been a two-week job for any other group, we finished our job in three days. It was amazing to see how much our church had affected both the house and family. Some of us exchanged numbers or social media with the family to keep in touch. At night, we all gathered in a church or tent (depending on the weather) and sang lots of songs and heard other's stories of when they knew they would forever be connected with God. After the service, we would head over to a dorm for our nightly devotional. This was one of my favorite parts of the day. We'd open up and talk to each other about our thoughts of the day and worship and could say anything we needed to. When all of us expressed our feelings, we grew much closer to each other and really felt God's love. For the free day, I chose to go white water rafting and had tons of fun being the only one to stay in the raft in my group! Blair suffered from a nasty paddle to the head, though. Overall, I now understand a bit more of God's ways. We got into a totally different mindset on the trip and I hope I can keep this mindset for a while. God always has a plan for everything and He may know the things you're going through right now, but needs you to talk to Him so you grow closer and form a tighter bond together. Thank you so much for supporting me and my faith.

Beth Giles



The week I spent with my church family in Pennsylvania was one of the most memorable weeks of my life. On other mission trips I've been on we didn't really get to know the homeowner of the house we were working on, but this year we actually got to talk with our homeowner Mel. This made the trip way more meaningful for me. It was an emotional year because it was the graduated senior's last trip. I have bonded with all of them and I don't know what the trips will be like without them. This year we had large group devotions every night after chapel. Everyone really opened up and it was one of my favorite parts of the entire trip. I really appreciate the opportunity to go on this amazing trip every year and get to know people I may have never even spoken to if we hadn't gone on the trip together. I have made so many special relationships through this trip and can't wait for next year!

Grace



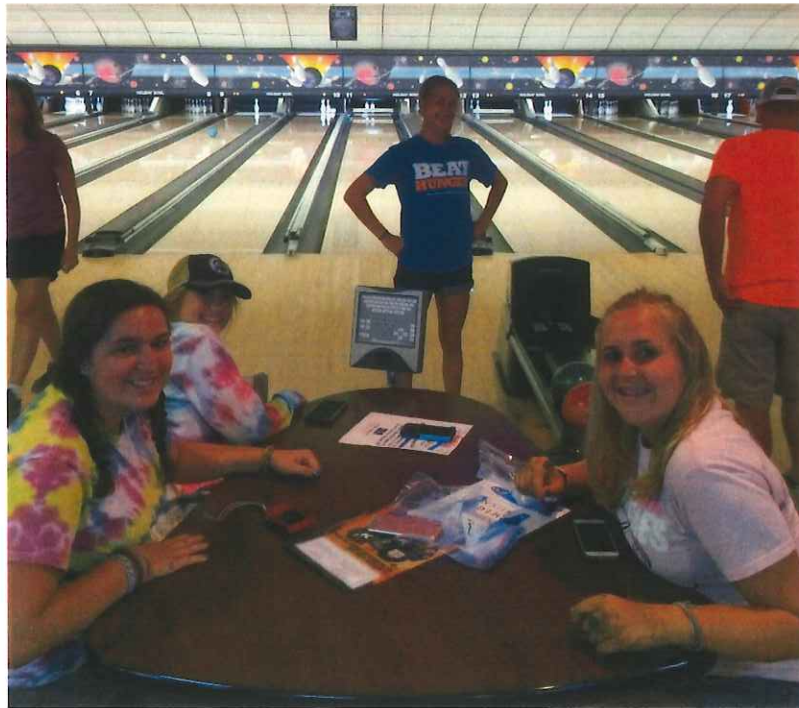
The trip to Pennsylvania was my first mission trip ever. I went into the trip without even knowing what my own expectations were. Since I go to Johnston schools, the trip gave me the chance to get to know the rest of the youth from St. Peter. What I found out was that I've never before met people who I can connect with so much; I felt like I could tell them anything! After spending the week with them, I now consider every other youth group member my brother/sister. With regards to the mission itself, I feel that God called us directly to that family. As soon as we got to the house, they welcomed us with open arms. I was a little worried that the kids would be embarrassed to have people come in and help; instead, they too came out and helped us...and even brought friends along. As the week went on, I saw a connection happening between our group, Mel, and her family. When we were completely done with the house, I felt a sense of accomplishment and joy. I felt like I've changed their lives forever, especially when Mel mentioned having a new start in Iowa. As for my faith, I feel that it's grown to a whole new level. I've always felt nothing will top how Riverside made me feel close to God, but this mission trip has proven that to be wrong. I will never forget this past week and I look forward to more trips in the future.

Megan



My trip to Pennsylvania was an amazing experience probably one of the best weeks of my life. The first night we got there we got to meet our leader for the week her name was Chelsey. I will never forget her she really made me grow stronger in my faith and just showed me how truly amazing God is. The first few days of the trip we worked on our house owner Mel's home. Mel made it very hard to say goodbye on our last day at the worksite because this trip we actually got to know her and become close with her and her 3 kids. My favorite part of the trip was chapel and then after chapel we had devotionals where we just poured out our hearts to each other and it was one of the most memorable parts of the trip. This year at closing chapel it was a sad time for all of us because one the trip was ending and two part of our church family was leaving. Over the years I have grown close with all of the seniors and I just can't imagine going on trips without them I am going to miss them so much. I am very grateful for getting to go on these trips and watch everyone grow close to God and getting chance to be a part of this great church family.

-Rose



Messages from friends made along the way

Hi Sue,

It's Mel back here in Altoona. Hope everyone had a safe trip home. Just thinking about all of you and how you changed our lives around in just one week of spending it with you. Wish we could have met the 1st week then we would have got to see you more. Please keep in touch!

God bless,
Mel (homeowner)

I'm so glad God brought you guys to PA. I was touched watching your group "get real". It was amazing how God worked through them. Thank you for being amazing leaders and an amazing group! Praying for you all.

Chelsey Spears (TEAMeffort leader)

Glad you had a safe trip. You can be proud of your kids. They will be a pillar of St. Peter Lutheran Church.

God bless and stay in touch.

George and Jean (Family who greeted us at Grace Lutheran Church)

Thank you Matt for being our guests! What a great joy it was to meet so many young people. We are going to take one of your pictures and have it in our monthly bulletin...so thanks for sharing.

May the Lord continue to bless you in your ministry,
Pr Jody (Pastor Jody Rice, Grace Lutheran Church)



Gather to Grow, Sent to Serve