

# BRING ON THE HEAT: MISSION TRIP 2025

When we set out on the mission trip we were expecting to resonate with parts of the Bible, such as Paul's writings about helping the poor. However, somewhere along the way we may have taken a wrong turn, because it felt like we got pretty close to the lake of fire described in Revelation.

In other words: it was really, really, hot.

But you probably already knew that. You got to experience the 'heat dome' up here in Ohio that week too. So let's move on from that, and I'll tell you what was hot – and cool – about our mission trip.

## COOL: THE OVERALL MISSION

We drove to La Center in western Kentucky. La Center (population: 872 in the 2020 census), about a 30-minute drive from the big city of Paducah, is in a depressed area that has recently experienced several tornadoes. This was our third trip in a row through the organization TeamEffort, and our second to this particular area. Every summer TeamEffort chooses several locations throughout the country, bringing in different youth groups each week to work with those communities. TeamEffort coordinates food and lodging for each location, locates homes in need of help, and provides guidance and materials for the youth group teams.

## COOL: THE WHUMC CREW AND THE PEOPLE WE MET

The WHUMC crew (16 youth and adults) coordinated with the youth from Fields UMC (6 youth and adults led by Emily Radloff) in North Ridgeville. We linked up on the drive down and formed a team for the week, working on the same site. However, we weren't the only youth groups there. Our camp included youth groups from as far away as Florida and Wisconsin. All told, we were part of a group of about 140 campers who worked on about 10 different sites throughout the week.

## HOT: THE WORK

The WHUMC/Fields UMC team worked in Barlow, the next town over from La Center. The WHUMC team split our work across two homes located near each other. One was the home of a woman who used a walker to get around. However, the ramp outside her house ended in a spot that was frequently underwater. We removed that ramp and built a new one that ended on higher, dryer ground. The other home's roof had been damaged, leading to some leaks inside the home. Other youth groups had started the work in previous weeks, and we picked up where they left off. Some of us worked on drywall inside, patching the water damage, while others tore off portions of the old roof, made some repairs, and put on new shingles. At the end of the week the drywall was ready for the next group to paint, and we'd made considerable progress on the shingling.



## COOL: CHAPEL

Each evening featured ‘chapel,’ which included prayer, games, worship music, and a message. After that, we broke into smaller groups, with Anne and Emily leading discussions among the WHUMC/Fields UMC group.

Our last night of chapel ended outside around tiki torches. Even though it was hot and buggy, the service allowed for meaningful reflection and deep processing.

“Its a great time to get closer to God and let things go that are bothering you” – Jackson

## COOL: SEEING GOD AT WORK

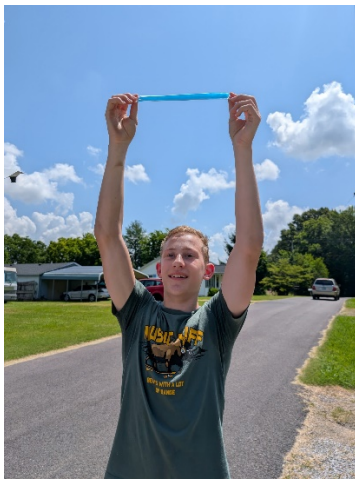
God was present throughout the week. Some examples of when we felt God's presence:

"Through all the young kids eager to help other people, even though it was very hot, humid, etc" – Jackson

"In the merciful clouds that gave us cover from the sun" – Cole

"The will of everyone to keep going in the extreme heat" – Tom

"I had one stolen moment on the roof where God met me with a brief cloud cover and a cool breeze when I needed it the most. It was there amongst the noise of pounding hammers and chattering teenagers that I closed my eyes and felt His presence, and I will carry that moment with me" – Desiree



## COOL: LEARNING AND GROWING

The week changed us. From drywall to shingling to using power tools (or even just learning to use a hammer), we all developed skills that we can use in the future, and the confidence to use them:

"It's a great opportunity to learn new things, strengthen your faith and get closer with God, learn more about the Bible, and help others... Having few people with roofing experience was difficult and required me to be more focused and patient with people" – Jackson

(I learned) "That I can do a lot more than I thought I could" – Cole

We also grew in our understanding of the importance of mission work, coming home with an increased desire to continue our work:

"Immersive mission experiences make a difference for those that we are serving, but I think even more so have an impact on those that are serving. The participants have the potential to have life changing interactions with others and deepen their faith in a way that simply doesn't happen on a Sunday morning. Youth bond on trips like this in ways that don't happen during youth group. They are also often inspired to serve the local church in new ways after being on trips like this" – Anne

"I think that you should go on mission trip because it is one of the most impactful trips you can go on. As you're learning new skills and worshipping God, you're also helping someone who may not

have thought they would ever receive help. I think this is a really good way that God can work through you and show His love” – Sarah

“From a personal standpoint, I cannot see how anyone could not walk away feeling fulfilled after the week, but it is also a great way to show the kids more than what they experience everyday” – Tom

“The demands of a summer service trip (where we give up quite a lot of autonomy and comfort) make us commit to hard physical work, to taking instruction, to cooperation, to connecting with the residents we serve, and to the mindset of Jesus in his labor-laden ministry, so the experience shapes us more into disciples who suffer for others and love sacrificially and who are supported by the community that commissioned us. As a bonus there's the satisfaction of making progress over time, of our sweaty, gritty lifting and cutting and sanding and hammering over structures that slowly evolve, of having brought a major project strenuously to completion, of having improved other people's lives. It is humbling and character-building work” – Jacob

## COOL AND HOT: OUR LODGINGS

Our ‘home’ for the week was the First Baptist Church in La Center. Their family life center included classrooms that were converted into dorms (about 15 bunk beds per room), a gymnasium that included a nine-square apparatus and doubled as a cafeteria, some showers (with the inevitable long lines), and a worship space. The dorms varied in how well the A/C worked, but the guys welcomed the consistently 70-degree nights.



## HOT AND COOL: MEALS



Breakfast started around 7:15 (hot breakfasts provided by a local restaurant) and we were on our work sites by 9. We broke for an hour at lunch (sandwiches) and worked until 4. Dinner was provided by a different local church each night. We also found some time to get milkshakes one night.

“I will never forget our 9 pm trip to Culver’s. There were so many of us and we were all so tired that we were super giggly and it was really fun” – Abby

## COOL: FREE TIME

We worked all day on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and finished by noon on Thursday. That left the afternoon open for a fun outing to Lambert’s Cafe in Sikeston, Missouri (home of the throwed rolls and some delicious southern cooking!) and a visit to Fort Jefferson Hill Park and Memorial Cross which sits at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and you can see Missouri and Illinois while standing in Kentucky. It was a fun afternoon!

By the way: the throwed rolls were hot.



