

# Reflections on the Pittsburgh Mission - by Josh Zuiderveen

Three years ago, I had the opportunity to attend the 2014 mission trip to Pittsburgh, helping the Covenant Fellowship RP church in Wilkesburg PA. By staying in contact with members of the host congregation I have seen joys and sadness of the work in Wilkesburg over the past three years. I have followed the progress made by them and the following mission teams. Like many of those who have attended this trip, I have had the opportunity to come visit for a few days and see how the church is doing. I was encouraged by those from the 2013 team who stopped in for a few days and have carried on the practice of meeting the current mission team and encouraging them.

If you have or are considering, a career in the trades (landscaping, carpentry, plumbing, drywall, etc.) this is a mission trip that will utilize your skills. It will allow you to better see how your career path can be used to the glory of God. I have included a sampling of the work that this Congregation is doing in their community. Most of the following projects around the church are year-round, but the mission team provides a fresh set of hands for the task.

**Annual Community Clean-up Day:** The attached photo show a time-lapse of local volunteers and church members tidying the yard of an abandoned house near the church. The mission team is responsible for preparing and painting the plywood used to board up abandon houses. These decoratively painted doors and windows have become one of the calling cards for the church. A google street view of the Wilkesburg area will show samples of the years and years of work this Congregation has accomplished in this community.

**The Wilkesburg Christian Housing ministry:** This is where the church buys an abandoned house from the township and rebuilds it, afterward selling the home to a Christian family who is then a permanent witness to their part of the town.



**Routine Maintenance:** Weeding, Cleaning, Painting, etc. Keeping the Church grounds clean and tidy. In an area, with many overgrown properties, these task lets those passing through know that this church cares. During my mission trip, it provided a few opportunities to interact with the neighbors.

**Community Planter Project:** First launched last year (2016) and experienced great success. During my mission trip, a few of the church families were running their own plots out of their backyards and now have taken what they have learned and begun to pass it on to the community. Expect that there will be a few dozen micro-gardens on the church ground. Lord willing this will give you an opportunity to witness to the church's neighbors.

**Discipleship House:** One of church members has opened his home to long-term discipleship. You'll likely be helping with landscaping to make his property more usable.

For those who I may be scaring off with my description of the construction work, there are many other ways to serve this church. However, I will leave it to others to fully expand on them. There is the extensive evangelism study with frequent practical experience, the weekly Kid's Zone and the week of VBS, and the interaction with the regular life of the church. There is the opportunity to visit many of the RP operational centers, as you are only a few blocks from the Seminary and Crown & Covenant Publications. And near enough to the Geneva College, the Home (an assisted living and nursing facility) and the RP Missions office to visit.

For me, this was a real learning experience. Seeing the outworking of evangelism, teaching a VBS class, and the many other projects that I was a part of pushed me outside my comfort zone. It also taught me a lot about interacting with teammates with vastly different skillsets and areas of expertise. It has been three years since I got this opportunity, and the memories are still vivid in my mind This is one experience I will never forget ---- "I'll be Back" - Joshua Zuiderveen

If this overview has interested you, would you prayerfully consider applying for the upcoming mission to Pittsburgh at [www.rpmissions.org/apply](http://www.rpmissions.org/apply)? If you are part of a large group or responsible for organizing one, this mission trip is note-worthy as the Wilkesburg church has the capability for hosting a sustained group, upwards of 35 team members.

*Josh*