



# NORTHEAST REPORT

NEWS OF REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP IN THE NORTHEAST

Volume 9, Number 3

March, 2017

## “Something Digs Into My Heart”

RUF at the University of Pittsburgh traveled to Yakima, WA this March to serve along Sacred Road Ministries in the heart of the Yakama Indian Reservation. Sacred Road, begun by a single family over a decade ago, now runs a robust gospel ministry of service to the people of White Swan, WA. Our band of 19 folks from PITT joined in the regular labors of cutting and providing firewood, building a foundation for a new home, basic home repairs, and running a kids club for 70 children each afternoon. Here is the testimony of one student who went to Yakima with us. *Derek Bates, Campus Minister at University of Pittsburgh*



Yakama is an extremely poverty stricken and broken community with a lot of abuse, despair, and death. The thing about overwhelming and thick darkness and pain, is that it makes God's constant love and goodness shine with intense and piercing clarity. I was able to witness genuine joy and trust in the eyes of the kids we cared for that hasn't always been there. But by loving them simply and consistently, Sacred Roads is showing these kids and their families that they are worthy of love, and that we as Christ followers want to serve them because Christ served us. I watched grown Native American men cry as I listened to their stories of pain that are now stories of hope, because Sacred Roads is showing them that someone cares and they are not alone. These people don't necessarily even claim Christianity as their faith, but they are still overwhelmed with God's goodness and mercy. Sacred Roads isn't doing anything fancy or new. They are just restoring justice piece by piece by claiming small victories and reclaiming souls for the glory of God's kingdom.

As for God's work on me, it was a powerful week. It's been two weeks and even now when I let my thoughts dwell on Yakama, something extra digs into my heart. I told my small group this on the last day, that the best way I can describe what happened is that my heart made like the Grinch and grew three sizes, and was also overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, and broke all at the same instant.

One of the most powerful things to me was due to the weight and constantness of God's presence that I felt. It's again that piercing light in the darkness, that extreme contrast of His goodness. In my day-to-day life I struggle with anxiety and PTSD. Managing my symptoms and thoughts has needed to be intentional with varying levels of effort depending on the day. I didn't even realize what had happened until the week had passed, but I was at ease the entire time and didn't have to wrestle at all with my PTSD. God showed me that you will never be more at peace, open for healing, and susceptible to joy than when you are doing God's work and loving His creation and His kids like He loves us.

The final and currently most in-my-face thing that God has left me with is the question of “What is the point of doing anything with our lives besides giving them completely away, and serving the least of these like Jesus served?” When I've faced this question in the past I've run from it, because of how big it is, and what it might mean because that does not fit neatly into my black and white box of a five-year plan. This time though I'm asking for God's help in facing that question, and diving into and it and it's full meaning.

— by Valerie Kristofic



PITT students and the Kids Club



## Serving “the Least of These”

### Penn State University

For Spring Break eleven of us from RUF at Penn State headed south to Chattanooga. There we worked for an organization called Hope for the Inner City, which was started by a PCA church. Hope works in the poorest zip codes of Chattanooga, and seeks to be an agent of financial restoration. Toward that end they provide urban gardens, soft skill training for interviews, training on computers, among other things. They communicate the gospel in all they do. While we were there, we worked on the gardens, the greenhouses, the computers, and other odd jobs that would directly benefit those coming in for help. In the afternoons we provided a Vacation Bible School for the kids in a Hope after school program. The program feeds the kids, tutors them, and teaches them the gospel.



Penn State students working in the garden at Hope for the Inner City

Our Penn State students were given a hands-on experience of how the gospel can be at work in an inner city context, and we have continued to have good conversations about our trip since our return. *Joe Dentici, Campus Minister at Penn State University*



Penn State spring break team

### University of Vermont

March 13-17, students from RUF at University of Vermont partnered with Appalachia Service Project to help rebuild a home for a family of five that lost theirs during the summer floods of 2016 that devastated the town of Rainelle,

WV. Over the course of five days our team of students sanded, painted, and installed hardwood floors. When lots of students head to the beach or the slopes during spring break, I was proud to watch these students serve “the least of these.” I am sure Jesus is proud too. *John Meinen, Campus Minister at University of Vermont*



University of Vermont students rebuilding a house in Appalachia

### University of Maryland

Fourteen of us from RUF at the University of Maryland embarked on our Spring Break Mission trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee. There we worked alongside Hope for the Inner City – the mercy ministry arm of New City Fellowship, PCA. There were many highlights to the week, including helping HOPE begin work on their micro-economic projects to employ people in this needy east Chattanooga community. One of our jobs was building a chicken coop for egg-laying hens. This was one part of a small urban farm business they hope to build and duplicate in the city. The other job was helping a local textile artist set up shop to begin a screen printing business in the community. The goal will be to train those in the neighborhood in real skills all the while producing a product to sell for income. Chris Iwaskiw, a Computer Science major, was instrumental in setting up Hope’s Computer Resource room with Windows software. This room will be used for both job training skills in computer programs and also for the community to have computer access to submit resumes and so forth. Micah 6:8 is a call to “do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”



The greatest highlight was the Bible club outreach we did for three days. We were told that maybe at most 20 children would come to the club. One of my students prayed for 40 to come, and 44 children came out the first day for singing, a gospel centered lesson, craft and snack! All told about 70 children came out to the club over the three days. The gospel made an impact and we believe a couple of students came to saving faith. The transformation with my students was most dramatic as they went from fear and timidity to confident boldness and joy in connecting with the children and the community. We praise God for a great week and are thankful for the ongoing work of Hope for the Inner City. *Chris Garriott, Campus Minister at University of Maryland*



Bible Club kids and RUF students

## Your Connection to RUF

Derek Bates has built a very strong ministry at the University of Pittsburgh in the last nine years, and there is a swelling number of alumni who can attest to the deep spiritual growth they experienced through RUF at PITT. But taking students into another culture turbocharges that experience. It's hard to imagine Valerie growing the same way if she had not gone to Yakima with the PITT mission team this spring.

Chris Garriott is a veteran of many mission trips, but this is the first for John Meinen's RUF ministry at the University of Vermont. John's ministry is in the developing stage, but they are not too young to serve others more needy than they.

It takes a lot of planning and money to get a team of students across the country and back. Your prayers and donations make these mission experiences possible. Thanks for your support!

You can make donations to our ministry here: <https://www.givetoruf.org> or scan this QR code. →

Type the school or campus minister you wish to support in the box.



## Spring Reflections

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?'...And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:37-40



The United States is divided over whether Donald Trump can make America great again, but let's be honest – the aspiration to greatness is a characteristic deeply embedded in our culture. Most of our arguments are about what constitutes greatness and how to achieve it. And Christian Americans long for greatness as much as any-

one. We just cloak it in spiritual terms.

I think this is not all bad. I'd rather be part of a great church than a failing church, and there is no virtue in laziness or incompetence. The problem is that Jesus turns greatness on its head by declaring that those who will be honored in His kingdom are the ones who care for the lowest members of society. We tend to define a great church as one with wealthy members, a nice building, and rich programming. I think Jesus would define a great church as one that goes into poor neighborhoods and welcomes needy people into its fellowship.

RUF cannot solve these problems for the whole church, but we are trying to embed these perspectives and convictions into our students. By God's grace, may the rest of their lives be oriented to Kingdom greatness – by reaching down to the lowest members of our society.

*David Green*





# NORTHEAST

## Prayer Requests, March 2017

1. Praise God for calling men to begin new RUF ministries:  
Rowan University: Brent Kilman  
West Virginia University: Peter Green
2. Pray for Brent and Peter as they raise full funding for these ministries.
3. Pray for ministers and funds to begin new RUF ministries at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, University of Massachusetts, Johnson & Wales University.
4. Pray for Summer Conferences in May. Three weeks in Florida, Lehigh University in the Pocono Mountains, Maryland and Delaware on the Chesapeake Bay.

