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### **GWU Students Offer Helping Hands During Fall Break Mission Trip**

Office of University Communications

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# GWU Students Offer Helping Hands During Fall Break Mission Trip

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Office of University  
Communications

November 6, 2015

## *Projects Included Painting, Trash Removal, Yard Work and More*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – With paintbrushes in their hands and a spirit of joy in their hearts, nine Gardner-Webb University students spent their 2015 Fall Break helping people in an impoverished North Charleston, S.C., neighborhood.

Just a few weeks after devastating South Carolina floods and only a few months after the Charleston church shooting tragedy, Dr. Tracy Jessup, vice president for Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University, accompanied nine students to Charleston County, S.C., during fall break. The group worked with Metanoia Community Development Corporation and was privileged to attend church services at Mother Emmanuel AME Church, a predominantly African-American fellowship where nine people were shot to death during a Wednesday night prayer meeting on June 17.

Metanoia was birthed when the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina decided they could not be faithful Christians without addressing issues of poverty within their own state. Based in North Charleston, S.C., Metanoia focuses on holistic community development by building youth leadership, establishing quality housing and generating economic development while nurturing people and allowing them to grow their faith in God and one another.

Megan White was one of the GWU students who went on the trip. She said she learned a lot about selfless service in just a few short days. “The first full day of our mission trip, we painted a middle school classroom and office,” White reflected. “This was a lot of fun for our group, but also a lot of hard work. We spent about seven hours painting the rooms we were assigned. But thinking about how amazed and excited the children would be made it enjoyable.

On another day of work, the team spent about six hours clearing brush and trash away from the yards of two homes in the community. Although the work was exhausting, the group could clearly feel the impact of their efforts as residents of the neighborhood shared words of encouragement and gratefulness.

“A couple that lived across the street from the house we worked on even brought us some apples in case we got hungry while we were working,” White shared. “Although the people in that neighborhood had very little, they were all very friendly and willing to give us what they did have to make us feel welcome.”

A highlight of the trip, students say, was their Sunday morning visit to the historic Mother Emmanuel AME Church, the location of the tragic mass shooting that claimed the lives of nine devoted members of the community. Jessup said the congregants were incredibly kind, and they were eager to hear about the efforts of the mission team.

“Someone mentioned the well-known adage that the most segregated hour in America is on Sunday morning at 11 a.m.,” Jessup offered. “And they connected that concept to the reality that through the tragedy, their congregation had been given an opportunity to embrace and engage people of a variety of ethnicities. They really see that as a blessing that was birthed as a result of the shootings.”

Throughout the extended weekend together, the team developed unity both emotionally and spiritually. Jessup gave team members the opportunity to lead the group’s devotional time. He was encouraged by the spiritual growth he witnessed, and asked the students to consider ways they could be more intentional with their personal, God-given assignments.

“I hope they are deliberate about asking themselves ‘How am I going to be ‘on mission’ with God when it’s not built into my schedule?’” he reflected. “That is something we want all students to be able to do as they transition from their time at Gardner-Webb into what their future holds. We want them to use their time here to develop those skills and then carry that spirit of Christ-minded service with them wherever they go.”

*Metanoia is a non-profit organization based in North Charleston, S.C., that works with the residents of communities that have experienced decline due to lack of investment and capital flight. Their mission is to attract investment to the quiet assets that already exist within these neighborhoods. For more information on Metanoia, visit [pushingforward.org](http://pushingforward.org).*

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).*