

Scattered to Serve September 19, 2026

Over the past year, you've heard us say that we want our outreach ministry to be more focused and go deeper. As nice as those words sound, they don't happen by accident. They require intentionality, some difficult decisions, and a willingness to try something new.

That's the heart behind a new chapter for Scattered to Serve.

For years, Scattered to Serve has been an annual opportunity for our church family to get out into the community and serve together. Those days have made a real difference, and we're grateful for everyone who has participated.

Beginning this fall, Scattered to Serve will become a quarterly rhythm instead of a once-a-year event.

We've seen how serving together has the power to build meaningful relationships. Our hope is to create even more opportunities to know our neighbors and the organizations that serve them. We want to hear their stories, understand the challenges they face, celebrate the good work already happening in our community, and discover how God might be inviting us to walk alongside them.

To make that possible, we'll intentionally spend more time learning from and serving alongside a smaller number of community partners. Each Scattered to Serve gathering will focus on one community partner and one area of need. We'll begin by sharing a meal together, learn about the issue from those closest to it, serve alongside our partner, spend time in prayer, and discover ways to stay involved long after the event ends.

Whether you've served dozens of times or you're looking for your very first opportunity, we'd love for you to join us as we take that first step together.

Some gatherings will provide opportunities to build relationships directly with our neighbors. Others will introduce us to organizations where those relationships can grow over time. Either way, we hope Scattered to Serve becomes a doorway into deeper engagement throughout the year.

We believe God changes us as we draw near to our neighbors and to one another. Sometimes that happens through a conversation. Sometimes it begins by learning about an issue or sharing a meal around a table. Those moments may seem small, but we believe they are often where God does God's deepest work.

We expect to learn along the way, and we'll continue listening, adjusting, and growing as God leads. This isn't the finish line. It's simply our first faithful step.

Our first quarterly Scattered to Serve event will be Saturday, September 19 at 9:00 a.m. as we partner with Neighbor Health. Together we'll share breakfast, pack food bags for local families, hear about the important work Neighbor Health is doing in our community, spend time praying over the organization and the families who will receive the bags, and learn about additional ways to get involved.

Sign up for this project
by clicking or scanning
the QR code.





Growing More Than Vegetables

In 2025, the Outreach Committee awarded King's Ridge (a CASA community) a \$15,000 grant to build an on-site community garden. HBUMC member John Thomas designed and led the project, which has become something much bigger than a garden. It is a place where neighbors know one another, volunteers build relationships with residents, and community continues to grow.

As the Outreach Committee continues to refine its grant-making philosophy, this is the kind of impact we hope to support through fewer, larger grants that strengthen relationships, build community, and create lasting relationships.

Below, John shares a reflection on the first year of the King's Ridge Community Garden.

The King's Ridge Community Garden was built in August of 2025 with the help of a host of investors (specifically HBUMC) and of Robert & Hunter Webb of LawnmastersNC.

The nine large, raised beds were planted for fall crops over the next few weeks and kale, lettuce, turnip greens, collards and radishes grew well. Because the garden is next to the parking lot and only 40 yards from the back door, residents came to see what was planted and to talk.

Over the next several months, 15 different residents came out to work with volunteers. Most importantly, at least 50 residents have either harvested produce or taken produce for their personal use in the past year.

I often roam the halls to talk with residents. I ask what they want planted. Opinions are shared freely!

Everyone loved the fall and winter greens and residents ask every week why there are no greens in summer.

"What! I have to wait till October to get more greens?"

We gave out several hundred bunches of greens during the months of October to May. Now the cabbage, tomatoes, green beans, peppers, onions, potatoes and cucumbers will have to suffice.

It is often the case that I harvest and head inside to the community refrigerator to store the gallon bags. The bags often do not get to the refrigerator before someone smiles and says,

"Those look good. Can I have some?"

Di., a physically frail woman fighting with medical issues has brought water to volunteers several times.

De., a young woman who works all week, comes out on Saturdays and painstakingly trims dead leaves, weeds, removes bugs and assures good soil conditions for the garden beds.

J., an elderly man on a walker, gives his opinions on what I should grow at least once a week.

I have found him sitting on a bench unhappy or cross many times so I sit with him and let him talk. He has cussed me out several times (he really let me have it when I brought him lunch but would not buy him cigarettes) but I find myself smiling at him and just waiting till he calms.

Now I still see him each week and he asks me to pray with him. I expect I get more from those prayers than he does.

This man is crippled and lonely so I choose to sit and listen. He has fought with drug addiction. He has fought with poverty and being abandoned by family.

Recently, he came out one day and put his walker aside to help me lift a wheelbarrow of soil into a raised bed. J. did not want any vegetables. He just wanted to help on that hot June morning.

Sometimes there are holy moments in a garden.

I met a man named R. back in the fall. He impressed me as a kindhearted man.

I also saw that he may not always make good decisions on how to do a garden chore so I learned to stay close and work beside him. If I did not, I saw that my cabbage plants might end up on the gravel outside the beds.



R. cares about our garden.

During that first hard cold spell in January, he came out and helped me cover the 9 beds with black plastic sheets and large clips. He worked beside me for nearly 3 hours covering beds. The wind was high while we worked and the gate slammed shut so hard that it broke the handle off the gate.

I secured the gate as we finished the covering and R. said he would come check on the garden during the cold night to come. The temperature hit 15 degrees that night.

I came back in the morning and was frankly surprised that the beds were still covered. When I walked inside, the security officer told me that R. had been out in the garden at 2 a.m. recovering two beds where the plastic had blown off.

R. saved our greens that night.

Ar., a mother of 7 with a full-time job as well, helped build a garden bed and loaded soil into the bed. She cut her hand on an edge of one of the beds. I take her vegetables once a week.

R. and B. both watch the garden and stop me in the hall if they are concerned about watering or plant health.

I get “good advice” on what to grow, when to harvest, what needs water.

Volunteers at King’s Ridge know that half of their job is working in the garden and the other half is listening to residents.



That second half ends up being rewarding beyond expectation.

Their smiles, their joy, their conversation, their prayers and their gratitude are treasures.

To volunteer in the garden contact John Thomas at jbthomas52@gmail.com.

VBS Beyond Our Walls

This year's VBS mission project was shaped by our 5th graders. HBUMC member Mary Clayton Sherrill and the other 5th grade Sunday School teachers invited students to choose the VBS mission partners, learn about their work, and experience it firsthand. Below, Mary Clayton reflects on how giving children ownership made this year's VBS especially meaningful.

When we think about VBS, we often think of the fun, faith, and fellowship happening within the walls of Hayes Barton as we teach children about God's love for them.

But what you may not realize is the impact our VBS has on the community through our missions.

At the beginning of 2026 during a Sunday School lesson with our 5th grade class, a discussion started about ways we volunteer and why service is so important. This organically grew into their desire to learn more about nonprofits in our community and wanting to choose the missions for VBS, which at that time was several months away.

With the support of the church and other 5th grade Sunday School teachers and parents, we began to spend time during our hour together on Sundays learning more and eventually voting on the nonprofits we wanted to support.

The kids felt drawn to the missions of A Place at the Table and Diaper Train.

During VBS week, we enjoyed a Lunch & Learn at A Place at the Table and saw

firsthand the dignity given to its customers at this pay-what-you-can cafe as it leans into its mission of "All Are Welcome."

On the last day of VBS, we presented A Place at the Table with a check for \$3,256.13. Having seen exactly where and how this money will benefit our neighbors, our 5th graders were thrilled!

For our next field trip, we loaded up the diapers, wipes, and board books collected during VBS and delivered them to Diaper Train.

We learned about the staggering need for these donations and the many families it supports in Wake County.

Working as a team, our 5th graders organized and counted 6,087 diapers, 7,730 wipes, and 398 board books!

Hayes Barton's VBS impact was huge! Thank you!

As I reflect on what made this year's VBS special, I think it was the ownership that our oldest participants felt in learning, planning, and volunteering.



A spark that ignited during a Sunday School discussion gave our children a chance to shine the light of Christ through service.

I am grateful for the support of our church in letting our kids take the lead, and I hope we see even more outreach opportunities for our children in the future!

— Mary Clayton Sherrill



Creating Places of Hope

HBUMC members Dawn Cummings, Betsy Ramos, Liz Trathen, Angie Thompson, and Bobbi Mullins make up the Library Guild, a team that has created community libraries at Parkview Manor, the Helen Wright Center, Prison Alliance/Christian Library, and The Women's Center. Each space is designed to meet the unique needs of its community while offering clients a place to read, reflect, and find a moment of peace. Below, Dawn shares the story of the Library Guild's newest project at The Women's Center.

The HBUMC Library Guild started a Community Library at the Women's Center three years ago in a very small area, and we also placed books in the cubicles throughout the building where the patrons rested for a while during the day to regroup. It was warmly received.

In the past few months, the Women's Center relocated to a much larger facility at 3211 Bramer. The move gave the HBUMC Library Guild the opportunity to create an expanded Library Resource Hospitality Room.

Together, the Library Guild furnished the Library Resource Hospitality Room with books, reading materials, puzzles, bookcases, and furniture through generous donations from Circle 1 members and the membership of HBUMC.

Each Community Library is different, allowing us to create a space that gives clients the opportunity to read, reflect, and escape to other places through the written word while they navigate homelessness, food insecurity, mental illness, and other difficult circumstances.

To see the Women's Center Library brings joy to our hearts. It is a delight to see the ladies in peaceful meditation and varied stages of thought and relaxation as they partake of the written word offered within the WORLD of BOOKS.

The Women's Center's new facility offers overnight shelters for men and women, meal services, personal hygiene products, laundry facilities, shower areas, on-site primary care, behavioral healthcare services, dental and vision services provided by community partners, case management, computers with internet access, enrichment classes, assistance with replacement of vital documents (birth certificates, Social Security cards, and identification), and housing programs. The Recuperative Respite Program for those experiencing chronic homelessness with serious physical disabilities, intense medical needs, and serious and persistent mental illness continues to operate at the New Bern Avenue location.

So in the days ahead, as you discard books from your personal libraries, please consider donating them to the HBUMC Library Guild. They can be placed in the HBUMC Library or one of the Community Libraries we maintain.

God has richly blessed the HBUMC Library Guild, and we will continue to seek God's direction as we serve our neighbors in the days ahead.

"Books showed me there were possibilities in life, that there were actually people like me living in a world ... I could not only aspire to, but attain. Reading gave me hope. For me, it was the open door."

- Oprah Winfrey

More Than a Mission Trip

For the second straight year, HBUMC middle school students traveled to Columbia, North Carolina, to serve alongside Carolina Cross Connection. They repaired homes, served at a local food pantry, worshiped together, and formed new friendships. But the greatest impact of the week couldn't be measured by the projects they completed. Below, middle school student Ellie Kerr shares how the week changed her.

Hi, my name is Ellie Kerr. This year, I attended the middle school mission trip, and it was truly one of the best experiences of my life.

One of my favorite memories was getting to help my neighbors in another community. Hearing their stories and seeing their passion deeply moved me. They showed me what it truly means to be a follower of God.

One moment when I clearly saw God at work was on my last workday of the mission trip. Mrs. Hazel, the neighbor I was working for, always put others before herself. Whenever someone thanked her, she never focused on herself. Instead, she always gave the glory to God and encouraged us to thank Him, which truly inspired me.

At the end of our final workday, we showed her everything we had accomplished, and she began to cry. **In that moment, I knew God was surrounding her.** She was so grateful for all the work we had done, and seeing her joy made all of our hard work worthwhile.

One important lesson I learned is to never take things for granted. You never truly know what someone is going through until you experience their situation alongside them and hear their story from their point of view.



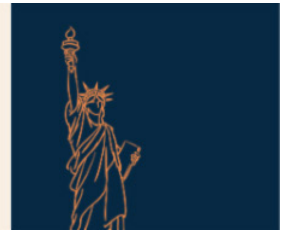
Another part of the mission trip that made my week so meaningful was making new friendships. When I arrived, I really only had one close friend. By the end of the week, I had become friends with everyone from my church community and with almost everyone from the other church that joined us on the Cross Connection mission trip.

I made so many incredible memories, and I'm so thankful I had the opportunity to go on the middle school mission trip.



Faith & Immigration

Exploring our call to welcome



Welcoming the Stranger

Over the past several months, the HBUMC Immigration Team has continued to meet monthly as we discern how our church can faithfully love and serve our immigrant neighbors. **This summer, we hosted Refugee Hope Partners** for a conversation about the experiences of refugees in our community and the work being done to support them. We have also continued exploring the best ways for Hayes Barton to come alongside organizations already serving immigrant families while considering how we can better communicate opportunities and resources with those who want to learn more.

As part of that ongoing journey, the Immigration Team will be offering a four-week Wednesday night class this September as one of the church's Wednesday Night Bible Study options.

Beginning Wednesday, September 16, and continuing through October 7, the class will meet from 6:30–7:30pm following Wednesday Night Dinner. Each session will be led by a member of the HBUMC Immigration Team and will explore a different aspect of immigration, including:

- *The history of immigration in the United States*
- *The biblical call to welcome the stranger*
- *The perspective of a U.S. immigrant*
- *Current immigration policy and the challenges facing immigrants today*

This class is designed to be non-partisan and discussion-oriented. Our goal is not to advocate for a particular political viewpoint, but to better understand the experiences of our immigrant neighbors, explore what Scripture has to say about welcoming the stranger, and engage thoughtfully with a complex topic through the lens of our faith.

Whether you are new to the conversation or have been learning about immigration for years, we hope you'll join us. Together, we'll create space for learning, honest conversation, and faithful discernment as we consider how God is calling Hayes Barton to love and serve our immigrant neighbors.

If this is a topic you'd like to explore further, we'd love for you to join us.

Register for the class using the QR code.

You can also contact Jason Trice at jtrice@hbumc.org to be added to the Immigration Team's informational email list and receive updates about future events, volunteer opportunities, and resources.



A Relationship Ministry

For more than 40 years, Hayes Barton has partnered with Appalachia Service Project (ASP), providing youth and adults the opportunity to serve families throughout Appalachia while growing in faith, friendship, and love for their neighbors. Below, adult leader Lisa Coster introduces this year's trip before several of our students share what made the week so meaningful.



On June 21, 67 dedicated youth and leaders headed to Gate City, Virginia, to repair homes for families in the Appalachia region. Our church has been serving on the Appalachia Service Project for over 40 years.

We were divided into teams of seven or eight and assigned a family in need of assistance to help make their home warmer, safer, and drier. **Together, we repaired flooring, roofs, drywall, and decks. We dug drainage ditches, painted, put up siding and underpinning, and repaired damaged joists under homes.** We tackled jobs beyond our skill and comfort levels, but each day we headed out to our worksites ready to serve.

As we worked on these homes, we got to know the families who live and work on these beautiful patches of land. We learned about their history and their faith. Their roots run deep into the hollers, and they love their community. We discovered that we have many more similarities than differences.

ASP is a relationship ministry with a little construction on the side, and that is why we travel many hours from home, sweat, and do things out of our comfort zone. **Loving our neighbors is what we are called to do.**

Student Reflections

"Looking back, the people are what stand out to me the most. The conversations, the laughter, and the little moments throughout the week are what made this experience so meaningful. This trip reminded me how important it is to slow down, care for others, and appreciate the community around me."

— Allison Barzola

"Something that warmed my heart was not only seeing how thankful she was, but actually building a relationship with her. I am so thankful that I was able to go on the trip to serve others in the name of the Lord."

— Olivia Manooch



A Relationship Ministry

Year after year, I return to Appalachia Service Project (ASP) hoping to deepen my relationship with God, build new friendships, and make a meaningful difference in the lives of families throughout Appalachia. And year after year, ASP answers that call. It continually reminds me that true service is about far more than completing construction projects. It is about having faith and loving others through our actions, as reflected in this year's ASP theme from **Romans 12:12–13: "Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying. Take care of God's needy people and welcome strangers into your home."**

This past summer, I had the opportunity to serve alongside my church family in Gate City, Virginia. Because ASP had been unable to serve in the area for several years, there was an overwhelming need for volunteers. Many homeowners faced unsafe living conditions, including rotting floors, leaking roofs, and unstable foundations.

My crew was assigned to Ms. Angie's home, where we spent the week removing deteriorated flooring and installing new subflooring, insulation, and flooring. What began as a construction project quickly became much more. Throughout the week, I formed friendships with my teammates that I know will last long after ASP. **I also spent time talking with Ms. Angie and learning about her life growing up in Appalachia.** Hearing her stories opened my eyes to the cycles of poverty that many families experience and reminded me how much I often take things for granted.

More than anything, though, I was inspired by Ms. Angie's unwavering faith.

Every morning began with prayer, and throughout the week she continually thanked God for the blessings in her life.

Despite living in difficult conditions, she radiated hope, joy, and trust in God's plan. Watching her live out her faith showed me that following Christ is not measured by material possessions but by gratitude, humility, and complete trust in Him. Her example challenged me to look at my own life differently and strengthened my relationship with Christ.

ASP founder Tex Evans once described ASP as "a relationship ministry with a little construction on the side," and this year's trip showed me exactly what he meant. While repairing homes is important, it is the relationships with homeowners, teammates, and God that make ASP so meaningful.

ASP has become much more than a week of service to me. Every year I leave Appalachia with stronger friendships, a deeper faith, and a greater appreciation for the blessings in my own life. It has taught me to serve others with humility, find joy in putting others first, and trust God more fully in my everyday life. I am incredibly grateful for everything ASP has done in my life so far, and I look forward to continuing to serve and grow through this ministry for years to come.

— Miles Kirby

Closing Thoughts from Lisa

Let's look for the small things that matter: eating a meal together, telling a story, sharing a devotion, eating ice cream, praying together, singing karaoke, and helping a friend.

Look for the God moments in all things because those are the moments that make our lives worthwhile.

We have been changed this week in our hearts and souls, and we can't wait to return next year.