

# St. Lloyd Presbyterian Church Cemetery Clean Up Reflections

On Saturday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, nearly 40 persons (including 12 from Sardis) from seven different churches gathered for a day of service at the site of the former St. Lloyd Presbyterian Church in the Grier Heights community of Charlotte. St. Lloyd served as the church home for countless African American Presbyterians from the late 1800's until the early 1960's when the membership dwindled and the church closed. Upon the church's closing, many of the remaining congregants moved their membership to the nearby Grier Heights Presbyterian Church. While the St. Lloyd church building is no longer there, the abandoned church cemetery remains.

In an effort to clean-up the overgrown cemetery, undaunted volunteers joyfully removed debris, threw away trash, cleared small trees, and cut limbs to help restore the cemetery and honor the memory of those buried there. While much progress was made in the clean-up effort, several volunteers noted that a follow-up day of service would enable additional progress to be made. As a result of this enthusiasm, another day of service to clean-up the St. Lloyd's cemetery will be planned.



When reflecting on this event one Sardis member shared, "Most of the mission work I have done in the past was strictly a Sardis event. I really enjoyed the other members of the Presbytery and working alongside them."

Wayne Johnson, a long-time resident of the Grier Heights community in Charlotte, spoke to us about his family members who were buried in the cemetery and about his ancestors who were enslaved persons that are buried in one of the cemeteries on Sardis' property. We are all "bonded together" he said, as he shared with us how impactful it was for the group to be working together to restore this sacred land.

The events left us with the desire to continue to meet others in our community outside of our normal circles, to engage with others in our area in mission and to continue to seek out ways for Sardis members to be involved in relational and hands-on ways in the community. We recognized the need for mission to not be a one-time event but an ongoing relationship and involvement that is built overtime. We look forward to the next "Reconciling History with hands and hearts" event and invite you to join us!



## A Sardis Member Reflects...

"We have to be aware of our shared history. It was interesting to hear Wayne mention that blacks and whites have a shared history that goes back to the settling of our country. We need to be aware of what happened in the past so that we can be aware of what ordinary people are capable of - both good and bad. Just because we don't see active racism in our lives doesn't mean it does not exist. Discovering that St Lloyd Pres was an offshoot of Sharon Pres founded by African Americans because they were not being treated as equals by the white members of Sharon is an eye-opener." It was also eye-opening to meet one of the descendants of the enslaved persons buried at Sardis.