

Carolina Mountain Club Volunteers at Historic Asheville Church Cemetery

Kit Ogburn, Asheville Thursday Crew

A recent workday for the Asheville Thursday Trail Maintenance Crew was not its usual work on a trail. The day was instead dedicated to a project that one of its members, Ann Kurtis, initiated after she learned about a need that she felt her crew was well suited to assist with. Ann had read an [article in Mountain Xpress](#) about stalled federal grant money that Alexander Chapel United Methodist Church (UMC) needed to clear a historic cemetery on its property. Tropical Storm Helene left the cemetery covered with fallen trees and debris.

Before the Asheville Thursday Crew showed up in force on March 19th with twenty-seven volunteers, some clearing work had already been done by volunteers from Alexander Chapel UMC, Longs UMC (Canton), Pisgah Area SORBA, as well as CMC members from the Asheville Friday Crew, the Hot Springs Crew, and the Asheville Thursday Crew (including Ann, pictured to the right).



The Thursday Crew continued that initial effort, with constant sawing by eight sawyers, who provided cut pieces for others to pick up and load into wheelbarrows. An almost continuous line of wheelbarrows of heavy wood was pushed to a site where the wood was sorted and stacked. The cycle was repeated throughout the workday. Sawing in the mangled field of trees and debris and strenuous lifting and hauling were arduous tasks.



The pastor of Alexander Chapel UMC, Phillip Gibson, recognized the volunteers in a letter. Here is an excerpt:

*Dear Friends of the Carolina Mountain Club,
I write to you with a full and grateful heart.*

What you have given Alexander Chapel United Methodist Church has been far more than hard work. It was care. It was reverence. It was a kind of quiet ministry. As you cut and cleared fallen trees from the cemetery, you did so with a deep respect for the sacredness of that ground—a place where generations have been laid to rest, where stories are held in the soil, and where families come to remember and grieve and give thanks.

[Our church member, Russ Williams] watched as you worked with strength, skill, and attention, but also with gentleness. You did not simply clear debris—you tended holy ground. You honored those who came before us, and you helped restore a space that continues to hold meaning for so many. There are not enough words to fully express our gratitude, but please know that what you did mattered deeply.

On behalf of Alexander Chapel, thank you.

Please know how much your presence and your labor meant to the descendants of those laid to rest. You have left a lasting mark—not just on the land, but on the hearts of this community.



This was a workday that participants will remember, not just for the hard work, but mostly for the pride of goodwill and community service provided by the Carolina Mountain Club.