August 2, 2026
2026 Youth Trip Testimonies

I am Genevieve. On our trip, I experienced God's love in so many ways. On our first day, we toured an organization called Boystown. It's like a little city and their mission is to house children who have experienced unfair treatment. There, they are given opportunities they don't usually have. There is education, beautiful houses, and they live with loving parent figures. It was extremely eye-opening to learn about Boystown's mission. It was such a blessing to see up front the place that truly makes a difference in so many young children's lives.

Another place we volunteered at was Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach. There we made food and served it to hundreds of people in need. We met a lady named Charlotte who shared her life experiences and gave us Nebraska magazines. Although it seemed like such a small thing, you could tell how much joy it brought Charlotte to just have a single, normal, conversation with us. I teared up as she walked away because I realized that even the slightest acts of kindness make a difference in these people's lives. It is these kinds of moments that I am filled with God's presence.

Serve Boldly taught us to treat those viewed as "outsiders" with the same amount of respect and dignity as we do our peers. I especially like the volunteering opportunities that we see up close the impact we are making on people's lives, such as Matt Talbot, because we see the faces of every single person we serve. We saw people's faces light up Matt Talbot when we gave them their food, and it was a moment that I truly felt God's love.

The places we traveled to serve every day will forever be remembered, but so will the people. I had the chance to learn more about the other high schoolers and I have no doubt these friendships will last a lifetime. My first time going on one of these trips, I was scared that I wouldn't fit in, but throughout the years I have grown close with this group, and I view everyone as brothers and sisters.

You can tell how much we all genuinely care for each other. We are such a tightly packed community that bonds over our love of being the hands and feet of God. I am eternally blessed to have been on this trip to Omaha.

Hi. I am Anika Pretasky. This was my first youth group trip. I was a little nervous to go because I barely knew anyone, but it turned into meeting some of the coolest people.

One of the experiences I would like to share is when we went to a restaurant in downtown Omaha called Table Grace. This place is for people who can't afford a typical restaurant. Guests can pay $1 or $2 – and if you can't pay that day, you can volunteer to help in order to pay off your food. When we got there, everyone was set to work helping in the kitchen. I was put on dish duty most of the time. Even doing that, I could feel the impact I was making.

There I met a wonderful lady, Hope. She had recently started working at Table Grace because they offered her a job to help her pay for the healthcare needs of her daughter. It was very interesting learning about her life and connecting with her. She gave some really thoughtful advice and made me grateful for what I have.

The next day I had an equally eye-opening experience when we were in Lincoln helping prepare and serve food at Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach. The director, Victoria, talked about their program. She informed us that they not only provide meals, but they also help with housing, addiction support, showers and laundry. Listening to Victoria, you could tell how proud she was of this program, and it made me so happy to know I was a part of helping.

I was inspired by the way these places in the community could come together and help so many others in need. Overall, this was a very special experience, and I can't wait for next year. Thank you for supporting this kind of trip.

I am Eva. This mission trip to Nebraska was such a meaningful experience, especially because of all the different people I was able to meet and connect with throughout the week.

One experience that really stuck with me was meeting a man while we were serving food. He told us that he had never had a mission trip crew actually respond to him or take the time to talk with him while they were serving him. Being able to stop what we were doing, have a genuine conversation with him, listen to what he had to say, and treat him with kindness and respect meant a lot to him. That really opened my eyes to how something that feels so small to us can make such a huge difference to someone else. It reminded me that mission work isn't only about the physical things we accomplish, but also about making people feel seen, heard, and valued.

I had the opportunity to be a youth mentor this year, which was honestly one of my favorite parts of the entire trip. Getting to spend time with everyone, encourage them, and build relationships with them was such a rewarding experience.

Both working with those we served and mentoring the younger youth on the trip taught me that sometimes the most meaningful way we can serve someone is simply by showing up, listening, and making them feel like they matter.

My name is Henry. When I signed up for our mission trip to Omaha, I knew we would be serving people, but I didn't realize how much they would end up serving me by changing the way I see the world.

Throughout the week, we volunteered at Heart Ministry Center, Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach, the Furniture Project, and the Food Bank for the Heartland. We packed food, handed out groceries, built a ton of furniture, and helped however and whenever we could. I thought those would be the moments that stuck with me the most. But they most definitely weren't.

The moments I'll remember most were the conversations. One day, I met a veteran named Jay. He had served our country in many places around the world, but what he really needed that day wasn't food or anything we could hand him. He just needed someone to sit down and talk with him. So, we did. We talked about his life and my life. We talked about the World Cup. We somehow ended up talking about Pokémon.

It wasn't a deep theological conversation or anything life-changing on the surface it was just two people talking. But that's exactly what made it so meaningful. Before this trip, I think I was guilty of doing what a lot of people do. It's easy to walk past someone who's unhoused without thinking much about them. It's easy to assume you know their story. But spending time with people like Jay completely changed my perspective.

They're not just people experiencing homelessness. They're veterans. They're parents. They're people with hobbies, interests, dreams, stories, and lives that matter. They deserve more than a passing glance, they deserve dignity, respect, and someone willing to listen at the very least. This trip reminded me that serving isn't just about handing someone a meal or packing a food box. Sometimes the most important thing you can give someone is your time. Sometimes the greatest act of kindness is making someone feel seen.

I came home incredibly grateful for our church, our amazing chaperones, (shout out to Sarah, Lauren, Ben and my dad - Rob) and for everyone who made this trip possible. I hope this experience doesn't stay in Omaha. I hope it changes the way I treat people every day. Thanks!