

Letter explaining improvements// Student Summer Trips

Dear families,

Our summer programming for students is experiencing some improvements going into 2026 and beyond! For those who have been here for a while, we want to give more context to what has sparked some of these updates, and our vision for our Student Summer Trips.

The past years of service trips have been an opportunity to stretch and grow students in their confidence, leadership, and maturity. Our method to that has been to have a high bar for joining a trip – applications (including short and long-form essays) were usually due by early January, all students needed to sit through a one-on-one interview, and students could risk losing their place on a trip if they failed to reach their fundraising and team training requirements. The unintended consequence of this was that students who were on the fence about participating in a trip would elect not to go, limiting our pool of students. **Going forward, we want to widen the availability for these summer trips so that we can minister to as many students as possible while still maintaining a higher-challenge trip for students who really are looking to engage their faith through service.**

One of the ways that we will open opportunities for Middle Schoolers is to provide a one-day service trip to Boston Project, and a week-long conference experience. CIY MIX is a camp/conference experience designed with middle schoolers in mind. The teaching, games, and worship are planned to help our MSM students take their next faith steps and come back to Grace Chapel with renewed vision and passion for what God is doing in their lives and neighborhoods. The registration deadlines for this trip will be different from prior years. Students will have more time to register and will be encouraged to invite a friend to come along.

For our High Schoolers, we will continue to send a trip to the Philly Project. In past years, we have emphasized the service and cross-cultural components of Philly, but going forward, we want to share just as much about Philly's evening program, which includes a game, worship, speaker, and small groups. These sessions are geared towards seekers as much as believers, allowing our HSM students to integrate a life of faith with a life of service, and encouraging students who have doubts and questions to commit or re-commit their lives to Christ. Like CIY, Philly participants will also be encouraged to bring friends who are curious about Jesus. Our hope is that they come back changed with a deeper sense of God's calling on their lives and their giftings that can bless their home community.

Grace Chapel's 2026 high-challenge trip will be to Root Cellar, a ministry in Lewiston, Maine that serves refugees and asylum seekers. Students in grades 10-12 will be encouraged to apply and prepare for this trip like they have in the past. The Root Cellar is a challenging and sensitive ministry environment. Students trusted with serving on this trip will be those seeking to challenge their faith and take seriously the training and preparation needed ahead of time.

Some of you may be wondering about returning to Guatemala. Potter's House was told leading up to our trip this past summer, that we were uncertain if we would be bringing a group in 2026, but we are hopeful for the summer of 2027.

If you have other questions, please follow up with your local Student Ministry director.