

2023 Mission Trip Re-Caps

Shari**Our first order of God's LOVE was to make a surprise visit to Mary Kirchoff and family. I wanted our youth to see firsthand on how to make someone else's day! She was so happy to see us and share all her gifts with us. Our Youth Mission Trip this year was a trip back to Minnesota. We joined up with the great leaders & Youth from St. Mary's Church in Kenosha (Kendra & Jasmine). Our trip was short but packed with so many wonderful ways to serve others. Vernon you are not going to believe this but we sorted shoes...can you believe it! We had some really good experiences to share with others on how we sorted over 2,500 pairs. We were able to make a difference in so many lives. From food, clothing, shoes, making meals, school supplies and some educational time seeing the Capital and the University. We also had some great opportunity to enjoy the evening's site seeing, entertainment, relaxing and just having some good old fashion fun! Most of our youth made all 5 day without their phones. Kids will be kids and it's so important that we as adult leaders help them grow along the way. See what it is that they are doing, thinking and help guide. Give some great words of encouragement and feedback. To talk about our Lord and savior with them on so many different levels. To see the good they did. To hear the number of people we helped packing potatoes. We packed 234 bags, 9,449 pounds and 7,874 meal went out. Shoe Away Hunger was not just sorting shoes. What they recycle they purchase food for Food Hunger. We sorted 1,505 pair of good shoes if not new. Over hundreds of grind shoes that were in bad shape. With that, we all feed 1,505 meals for 7 days. At the Ronald Mc Donald House they made over 150 "Grab-N-Go" bags. We all know the thrift store helps so many people not only here but, they ship to 3rd world countries as well. At Feed My Starving Children the packed 92 boxes that will make 19,872 meal that will feed 54 daily meals for a year. Then to finish off with some great yard work at the group home. What a HOT day that was. When you look at all we did, we did a lot.

Last but not least! I need to THANK Heather and Lisa. I was sick again on the trip and down for a day or two. Lisa and Heather did an amazing job leading our youth and working with the St. Mary's group. We gathered to talk about the change of leadership and all the youth were ready and willing to follow the new direction we had to take. I could not have did this mission trip without them and their support. Thank you ladies!! Love you both. Are you game for next year?

Thank you so much to all of you reading this. Our ministry is blessed with all your support. God's Blessing to you all. Love you Shari

Liam**I had lots of fun with the other kids. I found God leading me to help packing food and putting clothes into piles and we helped the homeless with water. Mrs. Shari talked with us all about paying it forward and if we were helping by giving money or we enabling the homeless to make bad choices. We did have a bad experience as Mrs. Shari talked about. We gave a veteran some water and money. After we walked away, we seen him go to the smoke / liquor shop. We do not know what he really did with the money. But, we think it was not a good choice. I had a lot of fun and a good experience. I would like to go on another trip again.

Payton**I liked hanging out with friends and it was fun working with the St. Mary's group. Going on roller coasters and ferris wheels at the Mall of America. I thought the mission trip was fun and I saw Jesus leading me to make everyone laugh and have fun.

Sydney**I thought the mission trip was fun. I loved hanging out with friends and meeting new friends and people at our service sites. I saw Jesus leading me to serve others and help with many opportunities. I stepped outside the box and came out of my comfort zone by riding a roller coaster for the first time and helping Miss. Heather get out of her fear zone of Ferris wheels. We rode the ride together.

Olivia**On this mission trip I felt that I got closer to God and I got to put other people before me. I like how I got to get closer to others and become Less shy. It's a great experience to have, and will never forget it. I stepped out of the box when I talked to others more. I made new friends, I met new people, and when I went on a roller coaster for the first time and conquered my fear of roller coasters.

On the first day of the mission trip when we met Mary who was a church member for a long time and then she moved. That was a great experience because we made her day and we made her really happy. We decided for the anonymous donor pay it forward money we decided to buy school supplies for the Stevenson Elementary school.

Miss Heather**As a junior in high school, I finally worked up the courage to step out of my comfort zone and attend a mission trip with the youth group. After that experience, I was disappointed in myself that I hadn't taken that step and gone on more mission trips sooner. When the opportunity presented itself to go to Minnesota as a leader, I knew it was something I really wanted to do. The trip was amazing and I loved all the opportunities to be God's hands to the people in Minnesota as well as to all those around the world who would benefit from the food we packed and the shoes we sorted. Hearing the numbers of bags of potatoes packed, shoes sorted, and meals packed for Zambia brought tears to my eyes as it became obvious of how big of an impact just a couple hours of service could have for others. Each service opportunity gave me the chance to get to know our youth better as well as some of the youth from St. Mary's. I loved packing forty pound bags of potatoes with Sydney and Sara while cheering Cate and Lucy from St. Mary's on to reach their goal of packing ten bags each. Sorting shoes at Shoe Away Hunger with Zach, Sydney, Olivia, Colton, Liam, Collin, and Jeanette from St. Mary's was quite the adventure but showed just how well our group could work together for a common goal. Making a meal with six youth from St. Mary's as well as putting together "Grab-n-Go" food options for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House as well as learning more about the amazing services that the Ronald McDonald House provides for families was inspiring and has made me want to look into ways I can support our own Ronald McDonald House here in Wisconsin. Packaging Manna Packs for children in Zambia was a great way to end our service to others. My team of Sara, Peyton, Olivia, Abby, and Zach were rock stars at packing as a team and really put me to work sealing the packs during the last song for packing as they kicked it into high gear and packed the meals so quickly, but efficiently. Another service highlight from the trip was going shopping for school supplies to support The Stevenson School, the mission of the month for July and August at Presbyterian Church of the Way where we were staying. One of the generous members here at Vernon gave each mission tripper \$20 to use to "pay it forward" in Minnesota. As a group we chose to use \$10 from each of us to buy school supplies to support this mission. Addie, Peyton, Collin, Liam, Sara, and Sydney all went to Super Target with Lisa and me to help pick out supplies needed by the students at The Stevenson School for this fall. The best part of the shopping trip in my opinion was hearing the discussions between all the youth about prices and how best to use our money to make the greatest impact for the students. Overall, my favorite part of our mission trip was getting to see Jesus in each of our youth as they served with all their hearts each day! I had a lot of fun during our evening activities- going to the aquarium and riding rides at the Mall of America, walking around the sculpture garden, swimming at Josephine Lake, and walking around the University of Minnesota campus- but most of all I loved serving alongside these amazing youth!

Sara**I did not really know what to expect, but it probably was not what I expected. I was very proud of myself as well as everyone else because we definitely helped many children when we packed for Feed My Starving Children and Second Harvest. An anonymous donation came from one of our church members. They gave us all a gift of \$20 to pay it forward some place on our trip. One of our ideas was to purchase school supplies for the church we were staying at in Minnesota. Pastor Dave had mention it during worship. I see Jesus leading me toward happiness to help others. I definitely stepped outside my comfort zone when I went on one of the roller coaster rides at the Great American Mall (for reference, it was the Sponge Bob drop one).

Zach** When we first arrived at the Presbyterian Church of The Way, we simply settled in and got ready to go to the nearby beach on Josephine Lake. On Sunday, we did not yet begin our work, and instead went to shop at the Mall of America. I didn't buy anything, as I thought that everything was too expensive (I'm not spending \$70 on legos). On Monday, we began our volunteer work at the Second Harvest, which helps supply other organizations that feed people in need. After the Second Harvest, we helped at a much smaller organization called Shoe Away Hunger, which sells shoes at super cheap prices to people who need them, and then donate their profits back into feeding people in need. On Monday night, we visited a sculpture park that contained many works of sculpture art, some abstract, some not. On Tuesday, we started our day by doing yard work for a group home. After that, we helped at a thrift store called Arc, where we helped sort and organize clothes. At Arc, it was also revealed to us that some people have some very interesting fashion choices. For our Tuesday night activity, some of us went swimming again, while others went to a bridge to watch the sunset, some chose both. The bridge viewing has become my favorite part of the mission trip. On Wednesday, our final day, we started the day at Feed My Starving Children, which sends packets of food all around the world to people in need. That day, we were helping them send food to Zambia. After our shift was home, we drove home. On this trip, I expected us to give to the Twin Cities community without getting anything back, or doing anything for ourselves. I was pleasantly surprised when we had time to ourselves every day. On our mission trip to the Twin Cities, I saw Jesus and his love in the happiness that we brought to people, the work that we were doing, and the friendships that were created on this mission trip, which is what I believe to be the purpose of these trips. Not only to give to the community.

Addie**When I first thought of the mission trip I thought it would be more going in the streets and handing out stuff to the homeless. Like food,water,toys, and other things that might brighten up peoples day.But what I expected wasn't all so true yes we helped give out things to people but in a different way. I really enjoyed the mission trip I can't wait to go next year!! On the first day of the mission trip we meet this old church member. None of us knew her but we all stepped in and gave her a hug that was somewhat uncomfortable for me knowing that I only meet her for a second or so. The mission trip on getting more better every day. I already knew that I will be making differences to so many lives. The first real day we worked at a potato place where we looked at potatoes to make sure that someone would have a nice meal and it's not going to be disgusting. The number of people we feed just shocked my mind but that wasn't even the start of what we were doing. I liked how we got to organize the shoes and tie them together and learn how many people we feed that day. The second day we were out doing yard work for a home the place was very sad about how many things were on the ground. When we were done with the front yard it looked so good I was proud of myself for working this hard and not giving up. I hate yard work and I just hate the feeling of getting dirty but then I remember this was for a good cause. We went to the thrift store that day which was my favorite part it was so cool and fun just organizing the close and putting it in rainbow color to make it look nice. The final day came around so fast it was already Wednesday before we made our way home we stopped by a place called feed my starving children. Just learning that people only get one meal a day just blew me away I became very thankful that I could eat breakfast lunch and dinner. What they had was little I learned that even though sometimes I want something I remember I have already a lot. With the money we spent from someone who gave us money was the school supplies for the school that was filed with very poor supplies so we took 10 dollars and used it in school supplies for the school. I hope we made a huge difference. I had fun hanging out with our church and some other people from the other church. I really enjoyed this mission trip and I can't wait to learn more ways to help people in such little ways.

Ms. Lisa**I believe Jesus led me to go on the mission trip so that I could learn about ways that I could serve God and the community and grow in faith. I have never been on any type of mission trip so I did not know what to expect. I am extremely happy that I went. I had a wonderful time and feeling very blessed to have had this opportunity. I definitely got out of my comfort zone by experiencing various new things. At first, I was not sure what I had to offer or how I could contribute to the youth group especially when there were such wonderful, more experienced and knowledgeable leaders all around me. Then Shari became sick. I was nervous when I had to step in. Those are some pretty big shoes to fill. I really did not know the kids very well. But throughout the day I discovered just how completely great the kids were and I couldn't have asked for a better group to be a part of. They were so respectful and polite and did everything they needed to complete each activity. Shoe Away Hunger, Feed My Starving Children and Second Harvest was an eye opening experience. It really puts into perspective how blessed and fortunate we are in our daily lives to have necessities such as food and clothing that are taken for granted. Seeing so much love for each other and faith in God within the Presbyterian Church of the Way and St. Mary's and Vernon's youth group gave me a feeling of hope for future generations. That God, faith and the desire to do what is right instead of what is easy or self-serving is still very much alive in the human race. Although, we may not have felt or seen the difference we made instantaneously, a difference was definitely made. With the generous anonymous pay it forward donation, our group decided to support Presbyterian Church of the Way's mission of the month to donate school supplies to Stevenson's Elementary school.

Collin**This is about my trip first youth trip to Minnesota. It was a 6-hour drive up there. We were there for five days. We stayed at a church, and I slept on my grey mattress. There was a super target down the road from us where we bought groceries. We went to Sea Life in the Mall of America. There were rides there and I got some Pokeman cards from the game store. We went to sort shoes at shoe away for hunger. I think that was the name of the place. We went to another place and sorted red potatoes we almost got to do yellow potatoes tho. We went to serve at the thrift store. I sorted the toys and then helped the girls do clothes and then Payton lost her phone and we found it. (she was told not to have her phone but Ms. Shari was out sick) and then Ms. Lisa treated us to Dairy Queen for Ice Cream and then I realized I forgot my water bottle at the thrift store, we went back and I found it. Then we went to the beach and swam out to the pole. We went to the YMCA to shower and there was a hand sensor thing to open the door which was cold and the showers stalls still had spots for us. Then another church came in with 7 boys including me and like 20 girls. We played sardines in the church at night and it was fun. Ms. Shari got sick and puked so she didn't feel too good. We saw these cool sculpture's at the sculpture garden there was a giant spoon with a cherry on it that was cool. We saw a deer that almost died. A car almost hit it outside the church. On our way up to Minnesota, we stopped at Mary's house and they had a dog and I touched it, but it was a big dog, and it was scared so it barked and scared us. When we left, we saw a trampoline that had a sign that said FREE Jumping, so we pulled over and I jumped on it.

Colton**I thought the mission trip was fun. I thought that I stepped outside my comfort zone when I helped at the worksites and talked to people I did not know. Another way I stepped outside the box was when I was at one of the work sites and talked to them the whole time at one of the sites. I loved the sorting of potatoes site because it was easy. I saw Jesus when I helped the homeless people. I hope I can go again on another trip.

Abby**This year's mission trip in the Twin Cities in Minnesota didn't go exactly how I expected it to go. I assumed that it would be much like last year. We would go around helping and different organizations, but nothing very cool would happen, and then we would go home. I also assumed that because I had a new and bigger group of Vernon kids with me, that it would be a lot more crowded. I also thought that it would not be very fun. Honestly, I did really want to be in a car with the same 15-ish people for 6 or 7 hours. However, it turned out a lot better than I thought it would. The car ride there was not at all squishy, and we rotated seats a lot so I was able to talk to a lot of people throughout the duration of our ride. Thankfully, I wasn't allowed to sit next to Zach so I wasn't very annoyed during any of the time we were in the car. The first day of our mission trip, Saturday, was just a lot of driving. When we arrived at the Presbyterian Church of the Way, we all settled in and met with each other. On Sunday, we had breakfast with the Saint Mary's Church youth group. I met a girl named Jeanette from their church who later became my friend. We went into the sanctuary at 10am and worshiped with them. Then, we went to a lake which had a playground and zipline. After that, we headed to the YMCA to take showers. We woke up early Monday morning, had breakfast, and headed off to work. We went to Second Harvest. We packed potatoes into sacks and shipped them off to people who couldn't afford to pay for food. After that, we drove to Shoe Away Hunger and sorted shoes that would then be sold to less fortunate people. Then, we showered again because we were gross. On Tuesday, we went to a grouping home and helped clean up the yard. We weeded, raked, and spread some new mulch on the ground to freshen it up. Then we went to a really big and cool park for lunch, which had cooler and longer ziplines! After that, we drove a few minutes to a thrift store where I sorted baby clothes for a few hours before we left. After dinner, some of us went swimming and then we took showers again. Right after that, we drove to Skyline in the Twin Cities. It was a really large bridge with lots of huge glowing buildings around it. It was a beautiful sight and I'd love to go back. The last day of our mission trip, Wednesday, was much more relaxed. We didn't have to leave the church until much later which means we were able to sleep in. At around 10:45 we were all packed up so we drove to Feed My Starving Children where we packaged meals for children in Zambia. In the end, we were able to back enough food to feed 54 children one meal for a year. Then I said goodbye to Jeanette and we parted ways with the Saint Mary's youth group, which I hope we partner with again next year. I saw Jesus in many ways in Minnesota. I saw him in all of the organizations that people had started to help others. I saw him in all of the people at Second Harvest and Feed My Starving Children. I also saw him in all of the volunteers that were there to help people other than themselves. Some things I learned on this trip are that I can't always think about myself and that even though I wasn't able to see the outcome of all the work that I did in the few days, I was still able to help change the lives of so many people that really deserved it. I loved coming on this amazing mission trip in Minnesota, meeting a lot of new people, stepping out of my comfort zone, strengthening my relationship with Jesus every step of the way.

