

# **BIG SKY. BIGGER MISSION.**

**JULY 7-14, 2026**

**Who Can Go:** Any current and active high school member of our youth group that is interested in going. There will be additional requirements outlined in this packet for what a student must do in order to go. It should be noted that our first and primary reason for going is to serve others and, at times, get dirty doing it! Yes, we'll do some exploring and some fun stuff too while we're out there. **However, if you're primarily coming for "the fun" or to use this as a vacation, this probably isn't your trip!** It's a very fun trip, but our primary mission is to "serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13).

**When Are We Going:** July 7-14, 2026 (possibility that this gets changed to July 6-13, but if it does, we will check with everyone first before confirming. This would also happen BEFORE mid-Spring to allow plenty of time for everyone to plan).

**Where We Are Going:** We will be unable to fly into Kalispell, MT this year due to runway work at the airport. Our plans are to fly into Missoula, MT which is about 1hr. and 45 minutes south of where we're working. We'll primarily be working in the Flathead Valley in the Kalispell area. We'll also do some group activities in Glacier National Park and the Flathead Valley.

**Cost:** The cost will be \$500 per person (including adults)! In the past, we've had people in our congregation make generous contributions that have helped offset this cost (but this is not a guarantee!). While we don't have formal fundraisers for the trip, one of the most effective tools for raising your money is by writing letters to people to help raise the money (We've had multiple people write just a few letters and get their whole trip paid for!). We are happy to give you some tips on how to write an effective fundraising letter. We never want money to be an issue, so we'll try and help guide you to raising the funds needed to take the trip! If you've been trying to raise the trip money and still come up short after participating in these opportunities, please let us know and we'll work to make things happen! **Also, plan on having to pay for luggage on the flight (\$35 each way), one meal a day, and any money you want to spend on souvenirs.**

**Deadline:** Because the area fills up so much during the summer months and because of the complexity of planning such a trip, the deadline to sign up for this trip will be December 31, 2025! **Everyone must pay a \$100 non-refundable deposit by December 31...TO ENSURE YOUR SPOT IS NOT DROPPED, THIS SHOULD BE PAID (PREFERABLY ONLINE) WITHIN 24 HOURS OF SIGNING UP! WE WILL NOT GET A TICKET FOR ANYONE THAT HAS NOT PAID THIS DEPOSIT!!!** If someone wants to come after this date, it will only be IF we can get a plane ticket AND have room for lodging, etc. There will also be a \$100 late fee for anyone that signs up after December 31st!!! Even though the deadline is officially

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**December 31<sup>st</sup>, it GREATLY helps us with planning if you'll sign up and pay the deposit ASAP after you know you're coming! This is especially true for adults because of how we'll have to do the rental cars this year!**

**Where We'll Stay:** Bigfork, Montana. We will stay in the same condos (The American) as the last 5 summers.

**What We're Doing/Who We're Working With:** We will be working again with Lighthouse Christian, a home/farm for special needs adults. One of the unique things about the facility is that by being on a farm, the residents help with chores on the farm. We'll do farm work, repairs, building projects, a field trip, games and activities, teach the residents, and serve with them!

We will also work with one or more groups such as Shepherd's Hand, Flathead Food Bank, or Habitat for Humanity. More details will be announced once these portions of the trip are finalized.

**Leadership/Teambuilding during the trip:** We also want to take advantage of being away from the day to day distractions we live with when we're home! We plan to do some hikes (nothing that you have to be an expert hiker to do) and some other activities to help us grow closer as a group. We'll also spend some time seeing the sights in Glacier National Park. There will be multiple service and leadership expectations while we're on the trip. Examples include delivering a devo, helping cook meals, teaching residents at Lighthouse Christian, helping clean after meals/activities, etc. While we'll spend a lot of time serving, it's also our goal to use this as an opportunity for some leadership training and growth within our group---we've got some great high school students that have some amazing leadership potential!

**Expectations/Requirements to go on the trip:** **Any student that is coming on the trip must currently be an active high school member of our group and must remain active within the group.** There will be multiple service and leadership activities announced which students will be required to participate in. As we've done in the past, we've also required those coming on the trip to work at least half of the VBS workdays and to work VBS in early June. We also expect students coming on the trip to be regularly attending and leading within Bible classes and active within the group. Examples of leading and being active within the group/class include (but are not limited to): participate in youth led worships, leading prayers, song, or reading scripture in Bible Class, reading scripture on Sunday Morning Worship, volunteering to help with sound/Powerpoint during worship, and leading children's church,

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etc.) Our philosophy is very simple: If you're not active within the group or are not leading and serving here, then chances are you're not going to be active or lead and serve 2,000 miles away from here!

**Parents/Chaperones:** Space on this trip is always EXTREMELY challenging. Since this trip is primarily for the teenagers, space for parents is EXTREMELY limited. However, there is also a balance between having too many parents and not enough parents! We want to make sure there's enough parents to help us and to keep an eye on the kids, but we also don't need so many that we're having to spend lots of extra money on arrangements! We need enough parents to ensure that all of the rooms have an adult and all vehicles have a driver. If you are coming as a parent, we want to warn you that the days are VERY LONG and we will heavily rely on you to help us with the kids (especially in the driving department!). We typically give first priority to parents who have not been at all, parents of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, or parents who have not been in recent years. Ultimately, Daniel and Katy reserve the right to adjust the parent list too based off the needs of the group (some projects may need certain skillsets, experience with leading a large travel group, experience with air travel, rooming breakdown, etc.). We also expect parents to be involved with the group at other events throughout the year. It makes things MUCH easier when we have parents who have built relationships with the teens and who are used to working with us and how we do things, etc!

**Meeting Expectations:** We will have several other meetings before the trip. We will make every effort to advertise the meetings in advance. THE MEETINGS WILL BE IMPORTANT AND TEENS ARE EXPECTED TO BE AT THE MEETINGS. A parent being at the meeting instead of the teen is NOT the same as the teen being at the meeting (although we do encourage parents to come to the meetings with your teen)...We expect teens to be at the meetings and to notify us in advance if they can't make it! If a teen absolutely cannot make a meeting, THEY MUST let Daniel know ASAP BEFORE the meeting. If a teen misses multiple meetings or doesn't let Daniel know they'll be missing meetings, they will not be allowed to go.

**STAR ID Requirements:** Effective May 7, 2025, every air traveler will need a REAL ID compliant license/ID (STAR ID) or another form of identification for domestic air travel. STAR IDs are issued originally to qualified individuals only at Alabama Law Enforcement Agency Driver License exam offices. If you are over 18, this will be REQUIRED (and strongly

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recommended if you're under 18) in order to fly after May 7!!! It takes a few weeks to get your STAR added to your license and you MUST go to the Drivers License Office across from the courthouse in Guntersville to apply! We STRONGLY recommend doing this sooner rather than later! Visit <https://www.alea.gov/dps/driver-license/star-id> to see the ID requirements to obtain a STAR ID.