

In the pre-sunrise hours of Saturday, April 13, 2024, a group of 22 youth and seven adult advisors from Village Church in Wellesley boarded an early morning flight to New Mexico for our annual Youth Service Trip in Santa Fe. Let me tell you — it was nothing short of magical. Over the course of the week, we reconnected with our most authentic selves as we let go of scrolling on social media, being consumed by our electronic devices, and the constant bombardment of news and notifications. We were invited to listen deeply to one another as we reveled in the present moment, smiling face-to-face.

We took in the breathtaking desert landscape and the distant snow-capped mountains (the Rockies and the Jemez), inviting the warm sun to kiss our cheeks while the parched red dirt valleys (who *always* thirst for water) taught us how to yearn for Something Greater than Ourselves. We savored the sound of the breeze weaving through the junipers and Ponderosa Pines, and the lively band that played on Music Night made us dance and sing like the wind itself.

Under an expansive azure sky, we opened up to one another and embraced our vulnerabilities. We laughed so hard we cried, and we cried so hard we laughed. Beneath a dark sky dappled with stars, we shared our hopes, dreams, and fears for our futures and the many friends around us. We felt gratitude for this community and the cloud of witnesses who supported us from near and far as we journeyed on the Way.

And, of course, we let ourselves get messy. We got our hands (and feet and faces!) dirty planting seeds and harvesting kale on Emigdio's farm, painting murals with Daniel, Mitchell, and Lorraine, building adobe bricks with Jake in Chimayo, cleaning out rain gardens built by Paco, and gardening at various elementary schools. We worshipped with Rev. Talitha, served like Jesus, and we truly had the time of our lives.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. So, I hope these images from the 2024 Youth Service Trip can encapsulate what mere sentences fail to do!

This week, as we continue to settle into spring in New England, I encourage you to slow down, even for a handful of minutes. Be open to the ways in which the Spirit of resurrection is alive within you and around you. Go outside, take a breath of fresh air, and be filled with new life. Know that you belong to the beauty that surrounds you and that you are always connected to these people, this community, and this planet we call home.

With blessings and love for the journey of life,

Megan

Megan Strouse, Pastoral Resident, 1st year

[See photo gallery >](#)