



ELCA Youth Gathering Overview

Every three years, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gather for a week of faith formation known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. Through days spent in interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, young people grow in faith and are challenged and inspired to live their faith in their daily lives.

ELCA Youth Gathering Theme

We are excited to share with you the theme for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering, “This Changes Everything.” Our primary scripture will be Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”

Grace is a foundational and distinctive piece of the Lutheran faith. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as people realize they are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve their neighbor and share the good news.

Our logo is a visual representation of our theme and the 2018 Gathering experience. It incorporates the coming together of a mosaic to reflect the diverse host city of Houston, as well as the idea that we are a church where all are imperfect and incomplete, yet we each belong in – and have an important place in – God’s masterpiece. The cross at the center of the logo is the focus – it is God’s grace, through Christ’s life, death and resurrection, that changes everything for all people.

All youth desire: Someone to become, somewhere to belong, something to do [that changes the world]

Schedule

The Gathering operates multiple program areas over the course of the five days that we will be gathered. To ensure that each participant is allowed an opportunity to fully participate in each of these areas, we rotate groups through different program aspects, dedicating a day to that program. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday our groups will rotate through Interactive Learning, Service Learning, and Synod Day. There will be plenty of opportunities for participants to engage in Community Life programming throughout the week, and we will end each evening together at our Mass Gathering.

June 27 Wednesday

8:00am - 8:00pm - Gathering check-in at hotels

6:00pm - Doors open at NRG Stadium

7:30pm - 9:15 PM - Mass Gathering begins

12:00am - Lights out

June 28 Thursday

Morning - **Service Learning** departure

***Service-Learning** is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. (Learn and Serve America National Service Learning Clearinghouse)

The mission of Service-Learning Day is to:

Invite participants to enter into the diverse story of Houston.

Empower our partners in Houston to further their mission.

Join in relationships of accompaniment with our partners.

Create opportunity for transformative experiences for Gathering participants so they return home as agents of change in their own communities.

The ELCA Youth Gathering invites participants to engage in one day of service-learning during their time in Houston. As a faith community, the ELCA Youth Gathering combines meaningful service, instruction and reflection with a faith lens of accompaniment.

What will your congregation's Service-Learning Day look like?

You will put on your orange Gathering participant shirts, fill up your water bottles and lace up those tennis shoes to get ready for your Service-Learning Day! Then your group will walk to

your assigned Launch Hotel and follow signs that lead you to your assigned Servant Companion (the young adult serving as your guide on this day.) Once your busload has checked in, you will board your bus and head for your Service-Learning site. At your site, you will meet a representative from the organization you are working with. They will share the story of the work they do in Houston as you get to know each other. Then you will work together to further the mission of the partner organization. Your group will eat lunch at your site, have the opportunity to serve together again and then debrief your experience together. After your goodbyes with the partner organization, your group will load back on the bus and head to NRG Park. You will get dropped off at the NRG Arena for the Celebration of Service! This is opportunity to reflect on the day, share your experience, learn how to take next steps and to celebrate together.

9:00am - 5:00pm - **Interactive Learning**

***Interactive Learning** is a "Holy Playground" of sorts, that invites Gathering participants to encounter God through a variety of learning styles and sensory experiences. All 30,000 participants have a dedicated day in the three day program rotation to experience the extensive offerings inside the over 700,000 square feet Interactive Learning space. From sports to creative expressions, service projects to quiet meditation, Interactive Learning offers something for everyone.

11:00am - 6:30pm - **Community Life Community Life**

***Community Life** is a "One Stop Shop" for Youth and Adults, these events are happening in The NRG Arena daily starting June 27. It offers a place for youth to play games, inflatables, live stages with prizes and our own live bible studies that will happen in the afternoons. We will also offer a place of relaxation for participants in our Hammock Village.

Community life also has volunteers that will help check you in at your hotel, and make sure you have everything you need for the Gathering. Our volunteers will be ready and willing you help you starting on Tuesday, June 26, starting at 1pm.

We hope you will join in our Community Life "One Stop Shop" starting on Wednesday, June 27, at 1pm.

11:30am - Synod Day doors open

12:00 - 3:00pm - **Synod Day**

***Synod Day** We Belong Together

Fulfilling the mission of the Gathering to provide faith formation in high school age youth, the Synod Day provides yet another opportunity for participants to connect God's amazing story in geographical groupings that assists in translating the Gathering experience to their home context.

The Synod Day is one of the rotation program days when participants meet as a synod for worship, bible study, learning and more. The bishop of each synod appoints a Synod Day Director who is responsible for implementing the curriculum and worship experience for the synod. A list of Synod Day Directors can be found [here](#).

Each synod will come together in the afternoon on a designated day and location for Synod Day. Participants will dwell on three daily themes of the Gathering.

- Thursday: God's Love Changes Everything
- Friday: God's Grace Changes Everything
- Saturday: God's Hope Changes Everything

In her book "Woo: Awakening Teenagers' Desire to Follow in the Way of Jesus," Morgan Schmidt identifies the three central desires of teens.

All youth desire:

- Someone to become
- Somewhere to belong
- Something to do [that changes the world]

As young people desire and struggle to find someone to become, somewhere to belong and something to do, the Gathering seeks to be a ministry that helps define some of that or at least open up pathways of discovery. Synod Day places an emphasis on the promise that WE BELONG TOGETHER. We will see this theme expressed through the context of worship, which provides the framework for the afternoon experience. Through the understanding that we are Gathered, Claimed and Sent as God's children, it is the hope that participants will gain a deeper sense that God has, indeed, claimed them, that they matter, and they have a place to belong.

1:30 - 3:30pm - Celebration of Service (For those who had Service Learning)

3:30 - 5:30pm - Bible Study (In Community Life)

6:00pm - Doors open at NRG Stadium

7:30pm - 9:15pm - **Mass Gathering** at NRG Stadium

***Mass Gathering Overview**

Each night of the Gathering we will come together in the NRG Stadium for a time of inspiring speakers, uplifting music and more. Be a part of the Mass Gatherings by indicating your group's interest in Mass Casts when you register.

Our speakers will share how God's call, God's love, God's grace and God's hope changed everything in their lives. Be watching here in the months to come as we release speaker names and bios.

Our house band leads us in singing each night. You will sing some of your favorite praise songs and hymns and you will learn some new favorites!

Throughout the Gathering, special guest bands will join us to share their love of Christ and neighbor through song. Announcements on our special guest musicians coming soon.

On Sunday, July 1 we will gather one last time in the stadium for closing worship and the eucharist. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will preach and we will celebrate and remember that Jesus Changes Everything! Be a part of closing worship by indicating your group's interest in being Communion assistants when you register.

12:00am - Lights out

June 29 Friday

Morning - Service Learning departure
9:00am - 5:00pm - Interactive Learning
11:00am - 6:30pm - Community Life
11:30am - Synod Day doors open
12:00 - 3:00pm - Synod Day begins
1:30 - 3:30pm - Celebration of Service (For those who had Service Learning)
3:30 - 5:30pm - Bible Study (In Community Life)
6:00pm - Doors open at NRG Stadium
7:30pm - 9:15pm - Mass Gathering at NRG Stadium
12:00am - Lights out

June 30 Saturday

Morning - Service Learning departure
9:00am - 5:00pm - Interactive Learning
11:00am - 6:30pm - Community Life
11:30am - Synod Day doors open
12:00 - 3:00pm - Synod Day begins
1:30 - 3:30pm - Celebration of Service (For those who had Service Learning)
3:30 - 5:30pm - Bible Study (In Community Life)
6:00pm - Doors open at NRG Stadium
7:30pm - 9:15pm - Mass Gathering at NRG Stadium
12:00am - Lights out

July 1 Sunday

8:00am - Doors open at NRG Stadium
9:30am - 11:30am - Closing Worship at NRG Stadium



If you would like to make a donation to support the youth going on this great faith journey please make checks payable to VELC.

On the memo line note: Youth Gathering

Mail to:
VELC – Vernon Evangelical Lutheran Church
S90W27550 National Avenue
Mukwonago, WI 53149

Attention: Shari Higgins
Youth Director

**Thanks for
Donating!**