

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8**



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Houston, Texas / June 27 – July 1, 2018

Who is eligible to participate in the 2018 ELCA Gathering?

- ◆ Youth in grades 8-12 at the time of registration are eligible to attend.
- ◆ Congregational adult leaders must be 21 at the time of the Gathering.
- ◆ Students between 18-21 can apply to be Gathering volunteers.
- ◆ The recommended ratio at the Gathering is one adult for every seven youth.

Why participate?

The Gathering is an opportunity for young people to...

- ◆ Experience the greater Church with 30,000 other Lutheran youth and adults
- ◆ Learn about and serve the people of Houston
- ◆ Be challenged in living out faith in daily life
- ◆ Engage in faith and life questions and action
- ◆ Be inspired by dynamic worship, speakers and activities
- ◆ Learn about and be a part of ELCA social justice efforts
- ◆ Have a BLAST together growing in Christ to love and serve!

About Houston...

- ◆ Big. Diverse. Young.
- ◆ Largest city to ever host an ELCA Youth Gathering.
- ◆ Area of 655 sq. miles – can fit 7 major U.S. cities inside its borders.
- ◆ There is no racial majority.
- ◆ Over 145 languages spoken.
- ◆ One quarter of the population is under 19 years old.
- ◆ Fun fact: “**Houston**” was the first word ever said on the moon.

What to expect at the Gathering...

- ◆ **Service Learning Day** an opportunity for your group to serve in the community (supplies and transportation provided).
- ◆ **Synod Day** provides a time to gather with our synod for Bible study and worship.
- ◆ **Interactive Learning Day** is a massive area with a variety of experiences to engage youth and adults.
- ◆ **Mass Gatherings** each evening with inspiring speakers and musicians.
- ◆ **Community Life** activities throughout the day.

Continued...

Visit the Gathering Website...

- ◆ Gathering Website: www.ELCA.org/gathering
- ◆ To download the Official Gathering Handbook for free or purchase a spiral bound copy for \$10
- ◆ To sign up for the monthly ELCA newsletter - GNews

Some important dates...

May 15, 2017	Gathering volunteers application process begins
July 15, 2017	Volunteer application closes
July 15, 2017	Financial aid application opens
September 15, 2017	Registration opens – Early bird rate \$350
November 16, 2017	Registration continues – Regular rate begins \$390
February 16, 2018	Registration continues – Late rate begins \$440
May, 15, 2018	Registration closes – All payments due

Note: Housing, transportation to and from the Gathering, and meals are in addition to the registration fee. Additional instructions for housing registration will come after the registration process begins. As much as possible, synod groups will be housed together in the same hotel. Register early!

There is much more information available on the ELCA website and in the Gathering Handbook. Be sure to take a look!

I look forward to meeting congregational Primary Leaders and other adults who plan to attend the Gathering as well as those who are thinking about attending. The Gathering, a one of a kind experience, makes a tremendous impact on a person's faith journey. I will gladly help you and your congregation to figure out how to give youth the opportunity to deepen their faith through this event.

I invite you to send me the name and contact information of the person that you have identified as your congregation's Primary Leader for the Gathering. Be sure to include the name of your congregation in the email. Congregations who have questions or desire to know more about the Gathering before deciding can also send me an email. I am happy to answer your questions, speak with your leaders or get you the resources you need.

You will receive this newsletter on a monthly basis through June, 2018. There will also be three regional training events offered in our synod by June 1 – dates coming soon. Please let me know if your congregation would be willing to host a Gathering training event.

Finally, there is a great deal of planning that goes into taking a group to the Gathering. Let us give thanks and continually lift-up in prayer all those who are planning this event on our behalf. And, let us pray for the youth and each other as we begin on our journey to Houston in 2018!

Gathering Mission Statement: **FAITH FORMATION FOR OUR YOUTH**



Gathering Synod Coordinator:

Jill Goldhammer, Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Salem, Lutheran, Peoria, IL will serve as the synod coordinator. Jill can be reached by phone at 309-688-9212 or by e-mail at: jgoldhammer@salemofpeoria.com

