

JUNE:

GATHERING FOR HOUSTON

**GETTING
READY**



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



A Youth Ministry Curriculum ramping up
for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering

Well, it's finally here, the last days before the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston! Your group has worked tirelessly to make it to this point. The Gathering is in sight! This session has been created to give you final preparation helps before you depart on this great journey. History and experience prove that if you take time to prepare for the Gathering with these resources, your group will have a deeper, richer Gathering experience.

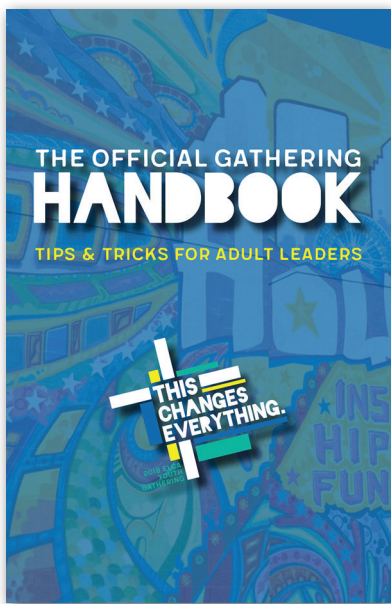
Here are some helpful tips as you lead everyone. Share these with the other adult leaders in your group before you leave for the Gathering.

- As an adult leader, your response and attitude have a lot to do with how the group responds. You should remain calm, be non-anxious (it's ok to not have everything in total control.) If you react in this way, this will help the group react similarly.

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- Remind everyone to take a few deep breaths. It really does help if you just pause for a few moments to re-direct and re-focus.
- Play some group games. Have some fun when things seem to be out of your control. Google youth group games and keep have these games in your "pocket" to use at any moment. Besides, negative reactions take much more energy than positive reactions do. Save your energy, you'll need it to keep going!
- Remember a scripture verse and take a few minutes as a group to focus in on the scripture. Use the Gathering theme verse (Ephesians 2:8) or pick one that is meaningful to you or your group. Put the focus back on God and growing in faith. Jesus changes everything, even us!

This session has tons of practical things to help your group prepare in these final weeks. We're ready for you and can't wait to gather with you in Houston. Know that the whole Gathering staff, teams and volunteers are praying for you daily. **See you in Houston!**



HANDBOOK CONNECTION:

Read the [Official Gathering Handbook](#) pages 39-63. Lots of helpful information for you as you head to the Gathering.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Bible
- Christ Candle
- warm-up sheet in large print
- markers
- supplies for opening activity

GATHER (15 minutes):

Warmup

As youth enter the space encourage them to use the large print of the phrase “This Changes Everything” and markers to write what can change everything in a person’s life.

Call the youth together as you are ready to begin the session. Ask them to share what they wrote and why.

The Intro

This session we will be focusing on our final preparation for the Gathering.

This is not just another trip or a vacation. The Gathering is an experience where we can encounter God in new ways and grow in our faith along with 31,000 other people!

Gathering Prayer

Ask for a volunteer to lead the gathering prayer.

Gracious and loving God, you gather us together and have called us to the ELCA Youth Gathering. In the time we spend together, bind us together as a community in Christ. Help us see your work in the world through the eyes of the citizens of Houston, through their beautiful diversity and their rich culture. We give you thanks for this experience and the blessings we will receive and offer. Amen.



SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING:

Tweet or Instagram your group as they depart for the Gathering. Include a poster or sign with the approximate miles you will travel. Use the hashtag [#ELCAYG2018](#) and tag us [@elcagathering](#)

Experiential Learning: Packing Up

An activity to focus on what we are taking to the Gathering.

You will need 1 suitcase per each group of 5-8 youth (approximately.) You will split the group into teams. You will need enough of the following items for each group to have the same items, it's going to be a race!

Gather a bunch of supplies that you would pack for the Gathering like clothes, shoes (no flip flops!), toiletries, water bottle, journal, bible (reference the Handbook, page 39 for more items.) If you can't gather these things, write items on a sheet of paper (one item per sheet.)

Add the following things written on a sheet of paper (one item per sheet):

- Patience
- Open mind
- Grace
- Enthusiasm
- Offering
- Respect (for each other, for leaders, for Houstonians, all we meet)
- All in attitude
- Flexibility
- Positive attitude

The idea is for the group to gather all the items for the trip in the shortest amount of time (first group done wins!). Tell them how many items they need to find. Spread the items all over the space/building and set them on the hunt to pack.

Processing questions

- What were some surprises in the items you had to pack?
- Why did we include things like: patience, open mind, grace, etc.?
- Say: when we prepare for a trip we take the time to pack the things we will need while we're away. This trip will need more than just our regular, personal items, it needs things like flexibility, positive attitude, patience, enthusiasm, grace, respect to make this a great experience. Come to think of it, all our trips require these things! So anytime you venture out, make sure to pack all the things you need!



WORD (30 minutes):

God's Story - Scripture

The theme for the Gathering is "This Changes Everything" and the theme scripture for the Gathering is **Ephesians 2:8**.

Read the verse together.

- Ask the group to share what they remember about the verse and the theme that you have discussed over the last several months.
- Point to the Gathering logo and remind them: 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. Remind them to keep this theme at the front of their thoughts as you immerse in the Gathering.

Our Story - Vocation

LEARN:

Watch the Service Learning Video:

<http://www.elca.org/YouthGathering/details/service-learning>

Processing questions together as a group:

- Rozella spoke of accompaniment. What does that mean?
- What does accompaniment mean for us as we engage in service learning?
- Why do you think they call it service learning and not service projects?
- What did Rozella tell us we might be doing on our day?
- What did Rozella tell us our true purpose was for our service learning day?
- How is that different from what we usually think about when we think about serving?

Remind the group that your service learning day is about accompanying the people and organizations we meet, not what we will do for them, but to learning about and from them. That's what it means to accompany, being engaged with people.

LISTEN:

Watch the following video which introduces you to part of Houston's story. Additional videos of stories can be found at the bottom of the [Service Learning webpage](#):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t747JK144yw>

Say: Just like our own town/city Houston has many surprises of what is going on just in one small place that is making an impact locally and even wider reaching ways. What did you hear in this video about how these Houstonians are called?

What does this video help us understand about Houston?

What is one take-a-way for us from Broken to Bucha?

How will seeing this help you engage in the Gathering?

CONNECT:

This experience with the Gathering will be enormous in a variety of ways. By getting ourselves ready to engage fully in the Gathering we will have a richer experience. One thing we want to be attentive to is our expectations. We have expectations for the Gathering, some realistic, some not.

Ask the group to call out expectations they have for the Gathering. Have someone write those on newsprint or a wipe-board. Challenge them focus a bit deeper in this exercise, to move away from the simple to things deeper in experience (for example one might say: "try Houston food." An acceptable expectation but take it deeper, what do they expect Houston food to be like? What are they hoping for? How will this enhance their Gathering experience?) Encourage the group to look beyond the obvious and try to see the Gathering as an experience and not just a trip.

After these are written, go over the list again, asking if they are realistic expectations. Ask if any of these should be removed as an expectation. Ask if we missed anything.

Now ask the group how they will respond if an expectation falls short or isn't met. How will you individually and as a group process this missed or un-met expectation?

Keep this list to reflect on during the Gathering and for use upon returning home.

ENGAGE:

We're almost ready to engage at the Gathering! Let's look at some final things to keep in mind and get ready.

There is a lot of walking at the Gathering. Start now by walking a good bit each day leading up to the Gathering. This will help you while in Houston.

Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes. The number one injury at the Gathering is foot injuries from wearing flipflops. Seriously. Wear good shoes. Especially for your Service Learning day, you'll need closed toed and closed heeled shoes.

Have a water bottle with you always. It's hot in Houston. You will dehydrate quickly. Be sure to drink water throughout the day to keep yourself healthy.

Be flexible! Stuff is going to happen, things are not going to go perfect, that's not a reality. What will you do and what will we do as a group when things don't go as planned? Let's role play a few options:

- We have a delay in our transportation (flat tire, mechanical trouble, traffic, airline running late, etc.) how will we respond to these delays? Role play how you might react to this scenario. Talk about what is the most helpful ways to respond.
- You miss your Service Learning opportunity or are not able to do the full experience. Role play how you as a group will respond.



- Spend a few minutes going through the Interactive Learning tracks so you're all familiar with what is available. There is no way to get to everything, have a plan in place for Interactive Learning day and have back-up plans too. You can find the tracks and more information on our Interactive Learning partners here: <http://www.elca.org/YouthGathering/details/interactive-learning>
- Discuss your offerings for the Gathering. Have a plan. Encourage each member of your group to have an offering plan in place before departure. Go to this link to learn more about many ways to give offerings while at the Gathering: <http://blogs.elca.org/youthgathering/giving-changes-everything/>

SENDING (5 MINUTES):

Sing (or listen to) the theme song. You can find the theme song downloads [here](#). Gather around the Christ candle and ask someone to share the following prayer.

Sending Prayer

Let us pray. Gracious God, we thank you for calling these young people and the adult leaders who will accompany them to the ELCA Youth Gathering. As you have shown your love by sending your Son to live among us, we pray that your Spirit help those we send also be an expression of your presence in the world. We know and we thank you that Jesus changes everything. Amen.

(You may also download the [Litany of Sending](#) to use with your congregation.)

Go and Do Likewise - (Blessing and Sending)

When I say "stand up," we all stand up. When I say "stand with," put your arm around your neighbor's shoulder. When I say "stand for," mark the sign of the cross on the forehead of someone beside you.

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

The early church gathered together to break bread and to share with one another. To bring the gifts of the many and support any among them as there was need. Around bread and wine, prayer and singing, love and service, we are brought together to be a unique community of the church who gathers in Jesus' name. As a part of this community...

Stand up – using your gifts to serve God.

Stand for – using your talents to care for all people.


Stand with – God's creation using your passions to better God's creation and change the world.

St. Paul reminded the community of the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." This changes everything! Amen.

Go in peace, serve the Lord.


Thanks be to God.

#ELCAYG2018

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Download the complete, year-long curriculum at www.elca.org/gathering

GET

READY

WITH

US!

QUESTIONS? EMAIL
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