



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

WHERE GOD GUIDES,



GOD PROVIDES.

ISAIAH 58:11

*The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
~ Isaiah 58:11*

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GATHERING MARCH 10-11, 2023

Dear Youth Leaders (Deacon, Pastors, & Youth Ministry Leaders),

Blessings to you, your family, and congregation! We are overjoyed to be sharing the registration materials for the Synod's annual Senior High Youth Gathering! All 9th-12th grade students are invited to this event, which is coordinated and planned by the SW MN Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO). It will be held March 10-11, 2023 at Luther Crest Bible Camp, Alexandria, MN.

Our theme this year is "*Where God Guides, God Provides,*" based on Isaiah 58:11.

We have an outstanding gathering planned for you:

- Speaker & Band: Joe Davis and the Poetic Diaspora (speaker and poet/musicians)
- Nightlife: Variety of activities including open gym, bonfire, music, Spikeball tournament, games, etc.
- The Zen Zone (a relaxing place for peace and prayer)
- Small group sessions led by trained youth to help dig deeper into the theme
- Service learning opportunities include a guest speaker from LSS, tying blankets, and refugee experience simulator
- LYO board elections (more info below!)
- Lively worship, dancing, singing, fun, faith and relationship-building

Make sure you follow our Social Media—this is where we will be posting pictures and updates about our gatherings, events, LYO Board, or our ELCA youth.

- **FACEBOOK:** SWMN Youth, ELCA **INSTAGRAM/SNAPCHAT/TWITTER:** @swmnlyo
- Please use the hashtag: #swmnyouth

After submitting your registration, you will receive a confirmation email. You will also receive, via email, information, and updates as we get closer to the gathering. Thank you for promoting the gathering in your congregation and with your high school students.

See you in March!

In Christ, The Southwestern Minnesota Lutheran Youth Organization

Questions regarding the Gathering?

Gathering Manager Chloe Halvorson chalvorson03@hamline.edu or (320) 220-1364

Questions regarding Gathering registration?

Registrar Shaun Luker gatheringregistrar@yahoo.com or (507) 317-8968

All Other Questions

SW MN Synod Youth Ministry Coordinator, Nikoli Falenschek nikoli.falenschek@swwmnelca.org or (507) 403-0494

Senior High (Grades 9-12) Youth Gathering Registration Info

COST: \$110 per person (payment due with your registration)

- Includes room, programming, and a Gathering t-shirt
- Also includes Friday snacks, Saturday breakfast & lunch
- **REGISTRATION: Opens February 1 @ 12:00 pm --- Closes February 24th @ 4:30 pm**
- **GROUPS:** Groups must register with one adult (21 yrs. or older – for liability reasons) for every 7 youth.
- **ROOMS:** We have multiple options for housing this year at Luther Crest Bible Camp. Some rooms are hotel style, and some rooms will be camp style with bunk beds. We will be housing youth with youth by gender and adults with adults by gender. (Non-binary housing is available upon request. Contact Nikoli Falenschek for more information.) Persons from different churches may be housed together in order to reduce gathering costs. We will do our best to honor your room requests.
- **TO BRING LIST:** sleeping bag, pillows, bedding, towel/wash cloth, toiletries, sleeping attire, change of clothes, weather-appropriate clothing, etc. Optional: spending money for Merchandise table, food as you travel & if you choose to bring phone/electronics (& chargers)– other than camera use, please, refrain from using during mass gatherings/worship.
- **HEALTH PROTOCOLS:** If you are exhibiting symptoms or are sick, please do not attend the gathering, even if you test negative for Covid-19.

Register online at www.swwmnelca.org/event/shyg2023.

PAYMENT: Either pay online (with check/credit card) or make ONE CHECK out to the “SW MN Synod” & mail to synod office, PO Box 499, Redwood Falls, MN 56283. ***Registrations are non-refundable and will not be confirmed until payment is made.***

FRIDAY

5:30 - 6:30pm Registration
6:30 - 7:00pm Pre-Assembly Music
7:00 - 8:30pm Assembly 1
8:30 - 9:00pm Small Groups, Adult Orientation
9:15 - 11:00pm Nightlife, LYO Board Info Meeting
11:00pm - 12:00am Assembly 2
12:00 - 1:00am Church Family Time
1:00am Lights Out

SATURDAY

8:00 - 8:45am Breakfast Buffet
9:00 - 11:30am Assembly 3 & LYO Elections
11:30 - 12:30pm Lunch
12:30 - 1:30pm Free Time Activities
1:30 - 2:30pm Dig Deeper into Theme
3:00 - 4:00pm Small Groups
4:00 - 5:00 pm Assembly 4
5:00pm Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

LYO BOARD ELECTIONS

Your new SW MN Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) Board will be elected at the Senior High Youth Gathering. This is an amazing opportunity for youth to serve their church, synod and community while growing in faith and leadership skills. Please encourage youth from your congregation to run for this board. It is a rewarding learning and faith building experience.

The LYO Board is responsible for planning and leading the Jr. and Sr. High Youth Gatherings and representing the voice of youth on a synod level. The LYO board is a leadership team that requires leadership skills, maturity, a significant investment of time, and a desire to grow in and share one's faith. Board members receive training to grow in their skills and accomplish their assigned tasks.

Youth from your congregations in grades 9-11 are eligible to run for one-year LYO board terms—thirteen seats are up for election. The elected youth will choose their own officers during LYO training in June. After the gathering, the current 2022-23 LYO board will appoint 2 additional board members to increase diversity on the board.

Serving on the LYO board involves a time commitment of attending LYO training in the summer, 2 weekend meeting/retreats, and planning/leading the Jr. and Sr. High Gathering.

Forms received by the deadline (March 10th @11:59pm) will be distributed to gathering participants to aid in the election process. All youth who run for the LYO board will need to fill out an online application (electronic form only), which can be found on the Youth Gathering webpage – www.swmnelca.org/event/shyg2023.

If you have any questions, please contact Nikoli Falenschek by email or phone: nikoli.falenschek@swmnelca.org or (507) 403-0494.

From past LYO members: *How have you seen God at work through your service on the SW MN Synod LYO board? . . .*

Within the first five minutes of my first ever junior high youth gathering, I knew that I wanted to be on LYO. In particular, I saw God through the members giving their faith talks. I remember one key phrase from almost all of the faith talks I heard, and that's when I heard God through them. After giving my own, I realized that many participants felt the same way. One other way that I have seen God through LYO is how close the group is. We all support each other through anything. I love how we open our arms to the gathering participants that we don't and automatically feel so close to them.

- Emma Thompson, Olivia, MN

I see God work every gathering we do, I love seeing the smiles on the youths face when they arrive at the gathering and during, it is awesome to see how appreciative they are, and because I know that the people on the LYO are there to support me through whatever, and whenever!

- Harper Groves, Buffalo Lake, MN

I have seen God working through each one of the LYO members and the work that we do. Whether that work is individually, in a group, during the gatherings or outside of the gatherings, God is constantly working in and through us to make us the best that we can be. We're not just a board, but a big happy family and I wouldn't trade in my time on the LYO board for anything.

- Olivia Hanson, Olivia MN

The 2023-2024 LYO board must commit to attending all of the following events:

- Training: June 11-13, 2023 (Gustavus)
- Planning: September 9, 2023 (Synod Office)
- JH Gathering: November 16-19, 2023 (Willmar)
- Training: January 19-20, 2024 (Green Lake)
- SH Gathering: March 7-10, 2024 (Mankato)

If you know you will be unable to attend more than one meeting or will not make your participation in the LYO board a priority, please consider letting someone who is able to make the commitment and be present for more meetings have the chance to serve on the LYO Board. Your commitment to LYO starts with a training to build foundational skills in leadership and create relationships of trust within the LYO community. Participation in training is essential and expected.

All candidates must fill out an online application (electronic form only, found on the Youth Gathering webpage.) before voting takes place on March 10, 2023. If you do not receive confirmation that your form was submitted successfully, please contact Nikoli Falenschek at nikoli.falenschek@swmnelca.org.

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Small groups are a SUPER-MEGA-IMPORTANT part of the Senior High Youth Gathering and are awesome for creating friendships between youth from all over the Synod. It makes the whole gathering much more unforgettable for the youth.

We are asking you as an adult leader to find 10-12th grade youth that you believe would absolutely ROCK at leading a small group. We are looking for 30 youth who can own this kind of leadership role. Past experience in leading a small group is helpful but not required. We trust your judgment to ask youth who would be gifted listeners and leaders.

Small groups are made up of approximately 8-10 youth from similar grades.

Visit the Youth Gathering webpage – www.swmnelca.org/event/shyg2023 to fill out the Small Group Leader online application.

You may either denote someone's interest in leading a group on their registration or by sending an email to McKenna. McKenna will contact you via email to let you know she has received your application. If you do not hear from her 2 days after submission, please contact her to make sure she received it.

