



Dear Youth Leaders (Deacons, Pastors, Youth Ministry Leaders & Parents),

Blessings to you, your family, and congregation! All 9th-12th students are invited to the Synod's annual Senior High Youth Gathering. It will be held April 4-5, 2025 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Redwood Falls. Lodging will be at Redwood Lodge. This event is coordinated and planned by the SW MN Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO).

**Our theme this year is "Strengthened by Faith" based on Isaiah 41:10.**

We have an outstanding gathering planned for you:

- Band & Speaker: LYO Alumni & Synod Youth Band
- Nightlife: Variety of activities including games, snacks, dance, large group games, relaxing space for prayer, etc.
- Small group sessions led by youth to help dig deeper into the theme
- Lively worship, dancing, singing, fun, faith and relationship-building
- Service learning opportunities with meaningful service project and growth
- LYO board elections (more info on page 3)

**REGISTRATION**  
**Early Discount ends**  
**February 28th!**

**PLEASE NOTE:**  
**Hotel block ends**  
**March 4th**

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. Please use the hashtag: #SWMNYouth

- Facebook: SWMN Youth, ELCA
- Instagram/Snapchat/Twitter: @swmnyo

After submitting your registration, you will receive a confirmation email. Once you receive the confirmation email, you may contact the hotel to book your housing. You will also receive information and updates via email as we get closer to the gathering. Thank you for promoting the gathering in your congregation and with your students. **See you in April!**

In Christ,  
The Southwestern Minnesota  
Lutheran Youth Organization

### Questions regarding the event?

Gathering Manager:  
Chloe Halvorson  
[crhav25@gmail.com](mailto:crhav25@gmail.com)  
(320) 220-1364

### Questions regarding registration?

Registrar:  
Amy Swanson  
[gatheringregistrar@yahoo.com](mailto:gatheringregistrar@yahoo.com)  
(320) 287-1867

### Other questions?

LYO Coordinator:  
Pastor Seyward Ask  
[seyward.ask@swmnelca.org](mailto:seyward.ask@swmnelca.org)  
(678) 427-7612

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

- **REGISTRATION:** *\*\*Opens February 5th @ 6:00pm and Closes March 4 @ 6:00pm.*
  - **Registration Link:**  
[https://secure.accessacs.com/access/eventlogin.aspx?id=DqzVky6i5q6dx5CcfTP9A==&site=143587&returnUrl=events%2fwz\\_people.aspx&ChurchID=4115&EventID=236820&sn=143587](https://secure.accessacs.com/access/eventlogin.aspx?id=DqzVky6i5q6dx5CcfTP9A==&site=143587&returnUrl=events%2fwz_people.aspx&ChurchID=4115&EventID=236820&sn=143587)
  - You will receive an email confirmation from the synod once you're registered. This email will include a hotel form. Please fill out the hotel form and email it to Carmen Bengston at Redwood Lodge, contact info below. The hotel block of rooms at Redwood Lodge will be held through March 4th.
  - Hotel Contact: Carmen Bengston; [carmen@flanneryhotels.com](mailto:carmen@flanneryhotels.com) or (507) 644-5700
- **COST:** \$65 per person (online payment due with your registration). Cost will increase to \$80 after **February 28th.**
  - Reg fee includes programming, a gathering t-shirt, snacks, and Saturday lunch. You must pay a registration fee to attend. Students & parents/adults are not allowed to attend otherwise.
  - Online payments only. Gathering payments are made online when registering. Electronic checks are accepted. *\*\*Registrations are non-refundable and will not be confirmed until payment is made.*
- **GROUPS:** *\*\*Groups must register with one adult (21 years or older for liability reasons) for every 7 youth.* If students wish to attend, but their church is not attending and/or they do not have an adult to attend with them, please contact LYO Coordinator, Pastor Seyward; [seyward.ask@swmnelca.org](mailto:seyward.ask@swmnelca.org) or 678-427-7612
- **ROOMING:**
  - Again, we require a ratio of 1 adult leader (21 years or older) to 7 youth. Each congregation may decide how to assign rooms. Depending on how many people you put in each room, extra pillows, sleeping bags, or an air mattress may be needed.
  - Persons from different churches may be housed together. Please contact Pastor Seyward with questions.
  - We do our best to create a safe haven for all people. We do not allow adults to sleep in the same bed as youth. We also ask adults to use the rule of 3— Never have one adult and one youth in the sleeping room alone. When an adult is in the sleeping room, make sure there are two youth present. We do this for the protection of youth, adults and our congregations. If you have questions or want to request non-binary housing, please contact Pastor Seyward.
- **PACKING LIST:** sleeping bag, pillows, and extra bedding if needed, towel/wash cloth, toiletries, pajamas, change of clothes, weather-appropriate clothing, supper or money for supper as you travel to the Gathering Friday night, prescription medication if you take it in its original container/packaging. Optional: spending money & chargers for phones/electronics. *\*\*Other than taking photos, please refrain from using phones & other tech during worship.*
- **OFFERING & SERVICE PROJECT:** This year, offering will go to Safe Avenues in Willmar, MN. We'll also be assembling bathroom kits for survivors. Please see the next page for more information on what to bring and collect as donations from your congregation. Visit <https://www.willmarshelter.com/> for more info
- **HEALTH PROTOCOLS:** If you are sick, please do not attend the gathering. We will have a Registered Therapy Team on site for the event, which includes a Therapy Dog who is a Malamute/German-Shepherd/Husky.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

*\*\*Aside from check-in, bed time, or emergencies, students & adult leaders should remain at Gloria Dei for the event.*

### FRIDAY

4:30 - 6:30 pm	Registration at Gloria Dei <i>**Please check in at your hotel first.</i>
6:30 - 7:00 pm	Pre-Gathering Music & Small Group Leader Training
7:00 - 8:15 pm	Mass Gathering #1
8:15 - 9:10 pm	Small Groups, Adult Orientation
9:10 - 11:30 pm	Nightlife, LYO Board Info Meeting
11:30 pm - 12:15 am	Mass Gathering #2
12:15 - 12:45am	Church Family Time
1:00 am	In Rooms
1:15 am	Lights Out

### SATURDAY

9:00 - 9:45 am	Breakfast Buffet at Redwood Lodge
9:45 - 12:15 pm	Mass Gathering #3, LYO Elections, Small Groups & Adult Education
12:15 - 1:45 pm	Lunch at Gloria Dei & Free Time
1:45 - 3:00 pm	Service Projects & Dig into Theme
3:15 - 4:00 pm	Small Groups
4:00 - 4:45 pm	Mass Gathering #4, LYO Installation
5:00 pm	Go in peace & serve the Lord!

## SERVICE PROJECT

This year's offering and service project at the Senior High Youth Gathering will benefit Safe Avenues of Willmar, MN. They provide advocacy, parenting time services, and emergency shelter for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Please visit their [website](#) or learn more about their mission, vision, and the people they serve below.

***Mission:*** *To provide advocacy, parenting time services and emergency shelter for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.*

***Vision:*** *Eliminate the oppression that exists in the community by providing education, victim advocacy, parenting time services, systems intervention and agency collaboration.*

***Who Safe Avenues Serves:*** *Safe Avenues provides domestic and sexual violence victim advocacy to 7 primary counties in Southwestern Minnesota. We provide emergency shelter for a larger 18 county area covering the lower Southwestern corner of Minnesota. In addition, we provide safe parenting time services for families in need.*

For this year's service project, we will be collecting supplies to assemble bathroom kits provided by Safe Avenues to persons in their programs. Their biggest needs are for our congregations to bring underwear of all sizes (modern-styled) for kids, men, and women. These are for families in their shelter and survivors of sexual violence.

### **Supplies needed for the kits include:**

- Travel size body wash
- Travel size shampoo
- Travel size conditioner
- Disposable razors
- Toothbrushes
- Travel size toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Underwear for men
- Underwear for women (no thongs)
- Underwear for children
- Large plastic totes

Thank you in advance for working with your congregation to collect supplies to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence in our synod.

# 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 leadership 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 maturity, leadership skills, responsibility, openness, creativity, a significant investment of time, faith and trust in God and sharing the Good News of God's love with others, 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 2024-25 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 meetings/retreats, and planning/leading the Jr. and Sr. High Gathering.

All youth who run for the LYO board will need to fill out an online application, which can be found on the Youth Gathering webpage – <https://swmnelca.org/event/sryg2025/>. Forms received by the online deadline (due April 4th at Noon) will be distributed to gathering participants to aid in the election process. Students may still fill out an application in person at the gathering (due April 4th at 10:00 PM).

If you have questions, please contact Cree Garcia, LYO Secretary: [creegarcia20@gmail.com](mailto:creegarcia20@gmail.com)

## **Testimonials from past LYO Board 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 through every gathering we do. I love seeing the smiles on the youths' faces 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 2025-2026 LYO board must commit to attending all of the following events (dates TBD):**

- Training
- Fall Meeting
- JH Gathering
- Winter Meeting
- SH Gathering

If you know you'll be unable to attend more than one meeting or are unable to make your participation on the LYO Board a priority, please consider letting someone else have the chance to serve on the LYO Board. Your commitment to LYO starts with training to build foundational skills in leadership and create relationships of trust within the LYO community. Participation in training is essential and expected. If you miss more than one meeting, other than for illness, an emergency, a death in the family, or unavoidable school conflict like a school play – your term on the board may be ended due to scheduling conflicts.

**All candidates must fill out an online application** (electronic form only, found on the SW MN Synod Youth Gathering webpage) before voting takes place on April 5, 2025. If you do not receive confirmation that your form was submitted successfully, please contact Cree Garcia, LYO Secretary: [creegarcia20@gmail.com](mailto:creegarcia20@gmail.com).

## **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're looking for 25 youth to step into this 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.

**Each small group leader should attend a required training at the beginning of the Senior High Youth Gathering on Friday, April 4th at 6:30 PM.** More information will be emailed about this training time as we get closer to the gathering. If a student cannot make the training during that time, please contact LYO Board Vice-President, Quinn Eisenbacher at [geisenbacher@gmail.com](mailto:geisenbacher@gmail.com) to make other arrangements.

***Visit the Youth Gathering webpage to fill out the Small Group Leader online application:***  
<https://swmnelca.org/event/sryg2025/>

You may either denote someone's interest in leading a group on their registration or by sending an email to Quinn. Quinn 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 (or Pastor Seyward) to be sure we have it.



# GATHERING RELEASE FORM

Medical / Information / Media Release Form  
SWMN ELCA Synod: Senior High Youth Gathering 2025

*\*\*Reproduce this form. A form is needed for every youth AND adult participant. Please email a copy\*\**

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Names (youth only):

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Phone Numbers (youth only):

\_\_\_\_\_

Medical Conditions/Allergies: (attach further explanation if necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact:

*Youth participants– who can we call if parent/guardian is unavailable?*

*Adult participants– who can we contact in case of an emergency?*

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Company Name and Policy #:

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Photo/Media Release Permission:**

I hereby grant permission for gathering planners or LYO members to use photos and videos of the above participant for Youth Gathering communication and promotion of the event – including printed & social media platforms.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Parent/Guardian Permission (Youth Only):**

I hereby grant permission for my child to attend the SW MN Synod Senior High Youth Gathering, to be held in Redwood Falls, MN on April 4-5, 2025. I also give my permission, in case of an emergency, for medical attention to be sought by the chaperones for my child's group and/or the persons in charge of the gathering. I understand all efforts will be made to notify me immediately of any such happenings.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_