

## Lutheran Youth Organization

The Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) had another successful and eventful year! This group of 30 people consists of 15 voting youth members, 9 voting adult members, and 6 advisory members. This year we had three planning meetings where we organized two youth gatherings to spread news of God's Work through Our Hands.



The first meeting of our year took place in Belle Plaine at Prairie Oak Institute. In the two nights that we spent together, the LYO greeted the new members, participated in group building activities, spent time in worship together, and began planning the events for our first gathering for junior high students.

Once September came around, we came together to finish planning the details of our Junior High Youth Gathering (JHYG). Held at Cross of Calvary Church in Olivia, we spent one day discussing details of the JHYG including night life activities, worship services, and service project organization. We divided into Servant Teams of four to five members. This division of labor is the key to the successful operation of our gatherings.

Our first main event, the JHYG, was held in November. Due to a snowstorm on the first night, many churches had to cancel or reschedule to the next night, but we were able to take advantage of the small numbers in order to have a more intimate and faith-filled night. We played games that would not have worked with a large group of people and really engaged the youth and adults throughout the event. The night was still eventful and many participants complimented the board on how the night was run. The next night was full of people ready to engage in gathering. Our location at the Holiday Inn, Willmar, could barely hold us. Rachel Kurtz, our entertainment and speaker, could not have done a better job. With Pastor Jeff Engholm as chaplain, we were able to portray our theme of "You Are the Light" through scripture, our theme verse (Matthew 5:14), and faith talks given by youth on the LYO board. The Holy Spirit touched the lives of many Christians that weekend.

During January the LYO came together to recap the JHYG and to plan the Senior High Youth Gathering (SHYG). This time at beautiful Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, we followed the same pattern as our September meeting.

In March the SHYG took place at the new location of Lake Geneva Christian Center in Alexandria. It was the perfect place for the numbers we had attending the event. After trouble finding an entertainer, Rachel Kurtz graciously stepped up to cover the position. Brian Konkol, a chaplain from Gustavus Adolphus College, served as our main speaker. We also incorporated 4 other speakers who gave short "Ted Talks" to add to the theme "Rooted in Faith" based on the verse Colossians 2:7 along with Chaplain Jeff Engholm. As a service project this year we incorporated a walk for water, which educated participants about water scarcity in other countries, and we also had a refugee simulation to open the eyes of youth to the struggles of a refugee fleeing crisis and trying to enter a new country. The SHYG was a weekend of eye-opening experiences for all people involved. The new LYO board was elected and we cannot be more excited for the leadership to come this next year.

In addition to our two gatherings, the LYO also attended various events throughout our synod to represent the voice of the youth. Two other youth members and an adult member traveled to North Carolina for the National Youth Leadership Summit. At this event, they were able to talk with youth from all across the country about what their LYO is like and how they preach the Gospel.

Throughout the three years that I have been a youth member of the LYO, I have had the chance to lead hundreds of youth and adults in worship through the gatherings. The years have been life-changing to my faith. I am so excited to see how God works within the new board these next years to help carry on the tradition of spreading the Word of God.

God bless,  
Elsa Skeie  
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Cross of Calvary Church in Olivia, Minnesota