

Synod & Ethnic Community Coordinators

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

Sheraton, New Orleans

There are some Key Words / Phrases to be familiar with: "Compassionate Justice" and "Public Church"

Key Verse for the Gathering → PHILIPPIANS 2:1-8

"Agree with each other, love each other

Be deep-spirited friends

Don't push your way to the front;

Don't sweet-talk your way to the top

Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead.

Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage

Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand." (Taken from "The Message")

This is not like past Gatherings

Preparation for the Gathering is about posture of mindfulness

Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose and intentionally

Not reacting to pre-conceived notions

Openness to new outcomes, laying aside old patterns, hurts, pains

Acknowledge when buttons are being pushed, and move through it in your group

Make a conscious choice to hold yourself accountable.

Be in the present moment; Remain in the present; don't multi-task

React to what is in front of you, not from your memories or projections

Non-judgmentally ("this is horrible", "what an idiot", "how could they do that?")

The non-judgmental quality of mindfulness brings great freedom

Loosen your grip – "They don't call it The Big Easy for nothing"

How do we do this?

Start with who we are → baptized, cross-centered, faithful people

Our faith gives us the capacity to face the tough-stuff

Be IN the world but not OF the world

We cannot afford to rear a generation of avoidance. We must tell the truth, face the truth

By being in New Orleans, we are inviting attendees into the way of the cross

"Focusing on faith practices can shift mission trips from episodic, event-focused experiences to experiences woven into the larger fabric of a way of life"

The Gathering is about God's Word changing us, to deepen our faith and our ways of living out faith. It's about exploring the six areas of discipleship:

- Compassion
- Community
- Advocacy
- Servanthood
- Leadership
- Vocation

THE THREE BIG DAYS

Learning → Contemplate God's Word

Interaction Center → Explore God's Word

ServantLife → Live God's Word

Volunteers

Local volunteers (adult)

Youth Servant Corps (local youth) – 220 people

Gathering Volunteer Corps – 200 people

Housing

Housing assignments have been made!

Some congregations are on "standby" – haven't paid anything yet

75 hotels in French Quarter / Central Business / Warehouse District

Hotel Rate is available both before & after the Gathering (if rooms are available)

You will be able to do your own substitutions on the on-line registration portal

→ NO cancellations; NO additional rooms

→ No later than May 25th

Final balance due by May 25th, if you don't want to have to wait in the "unpaid" line at registration

All payments go to the Lockbox

ELCA Policy → adults can't share beds with youth, even if they're related

(no policy about youth / adults sharing rooms)

All of the cots / roll-aways have been spoken for → no 5 person rooms

There are motor coach restrictions in the French quarter

Servant Events

Servant Event assignments sent to congregations in mid-April

→ Found in the congregational registration site (enter cong. ID #) On-site registration

→ All day Tuesday & Wednesday at the Convention Center

→ Balance due is paid at Room #207 at the CC

Getting Ready Materials

Working through the Getting Ready materials is absolutely essential to a successful event

February materials are already on the web site but do not, as yet, include the video –it is still being compressed. There will be emails giving notice when materials are ready. Materials are emailed to those registered as adults but are available on the web site. Go to www.elca.org/gathering and click on “getting ready.”

ENews is a different listserve group circulated on about the 15th of each month. It will give information about bands, speakers, and other updates.

There will be a consistent pattern to the materials and will include videos every month and some months will include a podcast

Topics:

April will be about the servant project and will be customized

May planning for celebration and continued learning after the gathering

Some month will be sample covenants

For health history forms and permission form go to www.elca.org/gathering and click on “preparing.” You will need one copy to give to the gathering and at least one copy for the adult advisor. Do NOT mail forms to the gathering just bring them with.

Graphics of the gathering emblem and the ELCA emblem are available as downloads from the website in several formats and color schemes. Congregations may use the logos on t-shirts, posters, etc. The official vendor of the gathering is www.oldlutheran.com

The “Guide Book” will be given to participants upon arrival at the gathering. It will include maps, schedules, and other helpful information.

Each participant will also receive a Gathering edition of “The Lutheran Study Bible.” This edition will include the “final 15” Bible study and other Gathering specific materials.

Thursday, January 29, 2009

Operations

The Synod will host a rally in a large room in the Dome after one of the evening events. This will be a chance for a synod photo, to hear a greeting from the Bishop, and Pr. Mark.

Mission Invest Fund

Mission Plus Youth Accounts pay a very, very good interest on checking and savings accounts for youth groups. Congregations who are using MIF accounts can use a "bank" (Service Center) that will be set up by MIF at the Gathering. There is automatic bill pay and on-line banking available.

Safety and Security

There will be a 24 hour Information line. This number will connect with people who can answer questions and solve problems. There will be a "Prayer Line" for prayer requests. Both numbers will be on the participant wrist band. There will be a nurse (Debbie) available to participants. There will be a Chaplain to serve participants in crisis. The first line of security is the adult leader, the small group and the congregation's covenant. There will be sample covenants available on-line. A copy of the covenant will be requested up registration at the hotel. All participants will be asked to bring cell phone as a safety tool. (During the gathering you may call Pr Anderson's cell 319-415-1923 for help) The gathering office will be in touch with the national weather service several times a day. The local police and Homeland Security are in consultation with the Gathering. Each and every participant will get an orange t-shirt to wear during while they are on their service event. There has been extensive scenario planning by the leadership team. There are designated hospitals and protocols for admission and care. The local police will be well aware of when and where all the service events are.

At the Dome, the floor will be closed when there are too many people for safety and fire code. There will be no "send one person in to save seats for the group" allowed. There will be no body surfing or "mosh pits" allowed in the dome. There will be three gates into the Dome with cue areas. Back packs and other bags will be searched upon entering the Dome. Glass containers, lighters and other contraband will be confiscated. It is advised to have a "meeting place" to gather after dome events where the group meets up if they are separated when leaving the Dome.

The #1 most frequent injury at the last gathering was toe injury due to the use of flip flops.

An "e-alert" system is being developed and this why cell phone numbers are requested as a part of the registration process.

Local responsibility, the youth should never be without an adult with them for safety but also in case of illness, accident, etc.

Registration

Only the primary adult leader goes to the registration area. If the group is paid in full the process will be much quicker and much more fun. Tuesday registration will be open 9:00am-4:00pm on Wednesday Registration opens at 8:00am and will not close until all groups are accounted for. Youth should go to the interaction center to wait for the registration to be complete. Each participant will receive a “messenger bag” made by women in Lebanon and books and other materials. The primary leader (and other adults if you like) will attend a 30 minute orientation before getting the materials.

Meals

During the servant event each participant will receive one sandwich from Subway (maybe) there will be additional food like fruit and chips available at your hotel as “cash & carry”. For the two learning days, the convention center will also provide pizza, sandwiches, fruit, Starbuck, as “cash & carry” and there is a food court and restaurant. Groups may also bring food to the convention center. There will be food available at Gate C of the Dome before dome events in a “Tailgate” like atmosphere. Hotels will offer “cash carry” breakfasts. Hydration will be a crucial issue at the event. Please bring your own water bottles. There will be water stations at the convention center and servant sites to refill.

Dome Events

There will be 5 youth who will serve as emcees. There will be animated video, speakers, bands, dancers, all working to bring a message of Hope and Gospel. There will be one main stage and two satellite stages and mega screens. Bands will include cantinas, skillet, and group one crew. Peter Mayer will lead the stage band.

Community Life (a.k.a. Hotel Life)

The gathering will use more than 70 hotels with 200 Community Life volunteers. All hotels are in walking distance (except Garden District). Morning worship will be available at most hotels and at the Convention Center. There will be a “Jackson Square evening venue at one of the larger hotels with live music, street artists, cooking,. So you think you can dance instruction and contests, morning sending ritual. There will be Dances, Open Mick & Coffeehouses, inflatable games, and karaoke. There will be an address to send text messages, and photos to which will be used in the Dome that evening and on the web site. There will be contemplative prayer space. All hotels are mapped at <http://maps.google.com/mpas/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=100260575211135200979.000449e870fffccccc4af11&ll=30.002517,-90.014763&spn=0.150443,0.307617&z=12> Reservations for airport shuttle will be available at www.elca.org/gathering later. Streetcar and other Public Transportation information is at www.norta.com. Free long-term Parking location for large vehicles will be at Convention Center Blvd & Henderson street.

Holy Communion

The sacrament will be served in a cup and plate. Unsold ware will be given to local shelters for table ware. Groups may volunteer to help administer the elements on the web page at www.elca.org/gathering.

Interaction Area

Mornings: 12,000 participants are assigned to the interaction center each morning. In the mornings, groups will arrive and be ushered into an open room, when that room is full of 1,000 then the next room will be opened. Each room will have a host, a band, a short video which will give an overview the 6 interest areas and a speaker. After 30 minutes the participants will be launched into the interaction area. There will displays and activities related to each of the six interest areas. This will begin their learning experience for the morning.

The learning Center will be accessed by Krews Boulevard (play on words: cruise and crew) from the escalators near the center of the EMCC to the second floor on their designated day at a designated time. The greeter/guide will hold a parasol to help the group for a parade. The goal of the learning center is to engage youth and adults in critical thinking/reflection about God, the Bible, Church/society, and spirituality as they practice the vocation of sainthood. This will be accomplished through: spiritual formation, church and society, and Bible study. The tools will be to participate in one activity each in three categories: Self-guided learning centers, workshops, and integrators (*for example: Jazz jam, theatrical followed by discussion groups*).

Afternoon, all doors will be open and everyone welcomed. Some areas will only be open in the morning as a part of the learning plan.

The center will include: high ropes, low ropes, cafes, college displays, sports, story telling, music, theater of the oppressed, parades, advocacy postcards, tinkletown, green displays, "Jacksons for Justice," a FEMA Trailer, a Habitat House, henna tattoos, bumper cars, blood drive, green space, prayer chapel, 80 young adults to guide, 90 adult volunteers to help with display, exhibitors, and "lagniappe" (a little something extra).

Servant Life

All specific Information will be available on the web site before the event

Launch Location: Assigned to Dome, Convention Center or French Quarter

Launch times: Assigned to 6:45am, 8:00am, or 9:15am

40-50 people on a bus

Groups will be assigned to a specific bus, bus numbers will be posted on front and passenger front window. There will be an information center at the launch

site. Wristbands will be colored according to the day of the assigned servant event.

Buses will stay with the group unless there is a safe shelter on site

450 Servant companions will accompany groups on servant events.

Leave a Lutheran footprint by serving for 6 hours in your Interest area
Areas and examples:

Wealth & Poverty

-visit college to learn why there is poverty and what to do about it

Environment

-Clean Parks, wet land restoration

Housing

-Habitat work

Literacy

-work with "recovery school district" by hosting a "Day Camp" for local students
note there is no summer vacation in this district

Health & Wellness

-working with local hospitals to "live in the hospital for a day"

Art & Culture

-visit a museum and discuss

Bring: Full water bottle, emergency info and First Aid Kit, appropriate clothing, cameras, cell phone, and servant attitude. **Very important to be on time!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Old Lutheran

www.oldlutheran.com is the official vendor of the Gathering. You may purchase official Logo gear, organic T-shirts, a water bottle and shirt combo, and custom Group Identity options. 877-653-5884.

Helpful Hints

- 1) Collect the cell phone numbers of everyone in your group so you can call misplaced members and
- 2) While it will be very hot outside, it will likely be surprising cool in the Dome so bring a light jacket or sweater to the dome no matter how hot the walk there is.

- 3) Bring trading items or give aways like buttons as many groups will be collecting and trading
- 4) Have a youth create a blog or listserve to keep parents/congregation up to date
- 5) The adult leader should have an umbrella, large hat, staff or some object so when walking to or from Dome events they are easy to see and follow.
- 6) At least one adult should carry back pack with first aid kit, crackers, cards, cell phone, etc.
- 7) Program Pr. Anderson's cell phone number into your phone 319-415-1923.
- 8) Check the gathering web site www.elca.org/gathering before leaving for last minute changes