

The Synod Journey April Updates!

MANDATORY SPRING TRAINING EVENTS FOR ADULT LEADERS!

There will be three identical spring trainings for adult leaders to equip you with the final details for the Synod Journey and ELCA Youth Gathering. It is expected that all adult leaders attend one of these trainings, and **mandatory that at least one adult leader from each group** attend. You are also welcome to bring additional adults working with your group. Training dates and locations are below. Light snacks will be provided. Please help us prepare for numbers at each site by registering at <http://www.nemnsynod.org/training-events.html>

Sunday, April 15, 2:00-4:30pm

First Lutheran Church
301 Lawler Ave S., Hinckley

Sat., April 21, 9:30am – Noon

First Lutheran Church
1100 E. Superior St., Duluth

Sun., April 22, 2:-4:30pm

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
6190 Fairview Rd., Baxter

FINAL PAYMENT and FORMS DUE: MAY 1!

Your final payment of \$550 per person is due May 1. Please see the Payment Reminder sheet enclosed for your total due.

Forms are also due May 1. All forms can be downloaded from the Synod Journey website: www.nemnsynod.org/SynodJourney, click on the "Registration Forms" tab. The forms are in the top left column under the bright red arrows. **Before sending in forms, make sure all forms are complete and accurate, have necessary signatures and you have the appropriate copies!**

- **Synod Journey Health and Release Form**
(one for each participant, youth and adult: send originals, you keep a copy)
- **Texas A&M University-Galveston Waiver**
(one for each participant, youth and adult: send originals, you keep a copy)
- **Special Needs Survey**
(one per congregation)
- **ELCA Youth Gathering Youth Release of Liability Form***
(one for each youth participant: send a copy, you keep original)
- **ELCA Youth Gathering Adult Release of Liability Form***
(one for each adult leader: send a copy, you keep original)
- **ELCA Medical Form***
Please **DO NOT list your social security number** as requested on this form.
(one for each participant, youth and adult: send a copy, you keep original)
- **Adult Leader Child Protection Training Certificate**
(one per adult leader)

*These are the forms required by the ELCA Youth Gathering. Why do we ask for the ELCA forms? The ELCA will not allow participants to participate in the servant and other events without their paperwork. By sending us a copy, it means you have peace of mind that all your paperwork is complete and means a copy is on site in case yours are lost or stolen!

REGISTRATION CHANGES

If you know of any registration changes before the final payment, it is very helpful to know that information as soon as possible! **Please contact Catherine as soon as possible with any cancelations and/or substitutions!** You will need to fill out the “Changes” form on the “Registration Forms” page for a cancelation, and additional paperwork if you have a substitution. All changes need to be finalized no later than May 1st! **Remember – each payment for the Synod Journey is non-refundable.**

CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

In February I was made aware of some additional requirements Texas A&M has for groups staying on campus:

- The Texas A&M Waiver Form
- Child Protection Training for every adult leader staying on campus with minors

We fully support any action that protects our young people...and you, their adult leaders! This training offers that. The class takes about 45 minutes to complete. You need to complete a quiz at the end of each section and score 100% before you move on...but have no fear, you have unlimited attempts to pass! Once complete, the system will send you a link to download a completion certificate. You need to download and save that certificate as a PDF, then email it to SynodJourney@nemnsynod.org by May 1.

Sometimes the language in these types of trainings makes you wonder if you can have any sort of relationship with children who are not your own. The NE MN Synod strongly affirms and encourages relational ministry with young people, walking alongside them and accompanying them on their faith journey. The intent of this training is to create safe space for that to happen. We hold a great responsibility and trust with our young people - we want to make sure they are secure in knowing we are doing everything in our power to share Christ's love with them in ways that protect their physical, emotional and spiritual health!

The language in this training also assumes we are from Texas. While it's true that while in the state we are under their laws, I am confident if any need to report abuse issues arise, they will refer the report to Minnesota.

ALL adult leaders on the Synod Journey need to complete this training. If you have not already done so, please go to www.nemnsynod.org/sjadults for the training instructions.

The current password is: HALcyon!driz2LE

The next scheduled password change will be Monday, April 30. Updates to the password will be posted on the Adult Leader Info page linked above...although you should have taken the training by April 30 in order to send the completion certificate to me by May 1st! 😊

EMAILS from the ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

As you see emails and posts from the ELCA Youth Gathering making requests to check your accounts, just another friendly reminder that at this point you can **disregard these reminder and request emails/posts!** Catherine and the Synod Journey team will be taking care of these requests for you! You will most likely be receiving more of these as deadlines approach, so let me assure you that the following have been/will be taken care of:

- **Houston Housing and Payments:** The housing assignments and deposit have been sent to the Wyndham Houston on your behalf – you can ignore this reminder!
- **Transportation:** We will be using our synod buses for transportation while in Houston. This has been communicated to the Gathering team.
- **“Check your congregational account/balance due/final payments due May 15”:** Catherine will be making your final payment for you – you can ignore this reminder! But you can’t ignore the Synod Journey May 1st deadline so Catherine can get the payments in to the ELCA by May 1st! 😊

You have no need to go into your Gathering congregational accounts at this point. At the Spring Training events we will tell you when you need to do that, how to do that, and what to do.

GATHERING ROTATION SCHEDULE

Our synod has been assigned to the following rotation at the Gathering:

Thursday: Synod Day

Friday: Service Learning Day

Saturday: Interactive Learning Day

More details will be given at the Spring Trainings.

Our Synod Journey buses will provide transportation to each of these activities, and back to our hotel at the end of each night. (Except on our Service Learning Day, which will be provided by the ELCA Youth Gathering.)

Houston Housing

Our hotel assignment in Houston is:

Wyndham Houston Energy Corridor

14703 Park Row

Houston, TX 77079

Your housing has been submitted, and deposits paid. Housing is very limited for the Gathering, and we need to work with the room types we are given. Thankfully, we were able to accommodate most requests you made during registration in September. Just know that youth may have been combined with youth from another congregation to fill a room. In the final mailing you will receive a listing of exact assignments and room types. We will be meeting with the hotel staff during our site visit in April and will be sure to post pictures in our Facebook group!

Meal Planning During the Gathering!

Now that our hotel and rotation are finalized, you can begin planning how you will feed your group for the meals you are on your own! We will cover this in more detail at the Spring Trainings, but here is an overview of where we will be for meals:

Saturday, June 23:

Lunch and Supper on your own during travel

Sunday, June 24:

Breakfast on your own during travel

Sunday, June 24 Lunch - Wednesday, June 27 Breakfast:

All these meals will be provided for you!!

We have added a box lunch on Sunday, June 24 to pick up upon your arrival to Texas A&M!

Wednesday, June 27:

Lunch: On your own during your bus activity

Supper: On your own, you will be at NRG Stadium

Thursday, June 28 (Synod Day):

Breakfast: At the hotel (Grab and go options for purchase, or on your own* in hotel room.)

Lunch: Buses will depart early from the hotel to take you to the Galleria area for lunch on your own. You will walk from the Galleria area to our Synod Day assigned ballroom.

Supper: On your own, you will be at NRG Stadium

Friday, June 29 (Service Learning day):

Breakfast: At the hotel (Grab and go options for purchase, or on your own* in hotel room.)

Lunch: Will be provided by the Gathering.

Supper: On your own, you will be at NRG Park

Saturday, June 30 (Interactive Learning Day):

Breakfast: At the hotel (Grab and go options for purchase, or on your own* in hotel room.)

Lunch: On your own, you will be at the Interaction Center

Supper: On your own, you will be at NRG Park

Sunday, July 1:

Breakfast: At the hotel (Grab and go options for purchase, or on your own* in hotel room.)

Lunch: Provided by the Synod at NRG Stadium, immediately following worship

Supper: On your own during travel

Monday, July 2:

Breakfast and Lunch on your own during travel.

*Before we depart Galveston, adult leaders will be given the opportunity to go to Walmart (or similar) to purchase breakfast and snack items for the remainder of the trip. Synod Journey leadership will make a limited grocery run each morning while in Houston to help groups purchase perishables (milk, yogurt).

NRG Stadium area food options to consider in addition to nearby restaurants:

- The ELCA Youth Gathering is providing opportunities for congregations to purchase a plated meal at NRG Stadium. Cost is \$26 per person per meal. Visit <http://elca.org/YouthGathering/registration/congregational-registration> for more information and to register your group. If you sign up, please email Catherine a copy of the confirmation letter you will receive. You will be responsible to pay this amount with your final payment on May 1.
- Fast food will be available at the concession stands in NRG Stadium. Expect stadium prices. Concessions will close as soon as programming begins, even if you're in line.
- If you have an adventurous group, you might consider hopping on the MetroRail to go to a different area for supper options. Just plan ahead to make sure you have enough time to get back, knowing that thousands of others will be doing this as well! Any costs riding the MetroRail are up to individuals and congregations.
- With the abundance of food delivery options like Uber Eats and Food Dudes in addition to normal restaurant delivery, you might pre-arrange having a meal delivered and find some green (or concrete) space for a picnic!

GETTING READY MEETINGS and MATERIALS

I love hearing how you are gathering with your groups on a monthly/regular basis to grow as a group and to prepare with the Getting Ready Materials! Remember – these are an expectation for our Synod Journey groups! Why? The learning and prep you do NOW directly impacts the experience you and your youth have on the Journey. If for some reason you haven't started, it's not too late - don't miss this opportunity to prepare your group to go deep! All Getting Ready materials can be downloaded from our Synod Journey "SJ Resources" page at <http://www.nemnsynod.org/sj-resources.html>.

Leader Tip: The Synod Journey Worship Team will be using the Story Kits as a framework for worship while in Galveston. We encourage you to use at least one of the Story Kit Resources with your group so they are familiar with the rituals.

APRIL SITE VISIT, ITINERARY UPDATE and JUNE MAILING

David Anderson and Catherine will hold the final site visit right before the spring trainings. We look forward to sharing the details with you, but know that more details will be finalized as we approach June. A detailed itinerary, final packing list, bus pick-up locations and times, and final updates will be mailed the end of May.

Blast Off for Books!

We **LOVE** that the Gathering is collecting books for literacy projects around Houston! And we **LOVE** that our congregations are super excited about this offering opportunity! What we would **LOVE** for you to consider is purchasing the books on Amazon and shipping them directly to:

Faith Lutheran Church
Blast Off for Books
4600 Bellaire Blvd
Bellaire, TX 77401

It's not impossible to bring books with you, but for space, weight and convenience in getting the books to the Interaction Center in the time frame they need them...shipping them is most helpful! For more information on Blast Off for Books visit <http://elca.org/YouthGathering/details/offerings>

CPR and FIRST AID TRAINING

Unfortunately, the synod will not be hosting a CPR Training for Adult Leaders. But we do **HIGHLY** encourage all adult leaders to be certified in First Aid and CPR. To find a training near you, you might visit:

Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class>
American Heart Association: <http://www.minnesotacpr.com/>

You might also check with your local hospitals, YMCA and Community Colleges. If you are hosting a training and are willing to invite outside groups, post the info on the Synod Journey Facebook group or email Catherine.

Synod Journey Adult Leader Facebook Group

As we get closer to the Journey, more updates will be posted on the "NE MN Synod Journey 2018 Adult Leaders" Facebook Group. If you or other adult leaders are not in this group, I encourage you to join! Other adults who are supporting your trip are welcome to join the group too - just email me their names, so I know they are legit to be part of the group.

We will continue to send email updates...but the reality when time gets short is that I can post something in 30 seconds in the Facebook Group and get you info in a timely manner, rather than collecting and formatting info for an email blasts!