



NE MN Synod Journey Worship “Sent”

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE:

This Worship Service serves to commission the youth and adult leaders from your congregation and beyond to learn about and serve God’s people while in Galveston and Houston, Texas. It may serve as a congregational continuation of the NE MN Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering and a tool for preparing youth and adults for this experience.

Whether or not you have youth participating in The Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering, we encourage you to use this resource with your congregation. How does our hearing God’s Word impact our daily lives and change both us and our encounters with God?

This worship resource can be used in its entirety or as pieces to be inserted into your worship or other gatherings.

We strongly encourage congregations to have youth lead this worship experience. While liturgies, prayers, etc. have been provided, we invite you to engage your youth in writing and developing their own worship pieces around this theme. Use the “Parts of Worship Overview” resource and this Worship service as a model to create your own worship service.

NE MN Synod Journey Worship, Summer 2018

INTRODUCTION OF “THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING”

(Invite one of your youth to read this introduction before beginning worship.)

Leader:

We gather as God’s people to hear God’s Word and celebrate its life-changing effect. We ponder its uncomfortable and confusing nature while simultaneously giving thanks for its promise of hope, grace, and love.

As we enter the summer, youth and adults from the NE MN Synod are actively preparing their hearts, minds, and suitcases to travel to Galveston and Houston, TX for the Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering. As we walk with these young people and, we continue to explore and experience how God’s call, love, grace, hope, and the gift of Jesus, change us and all of creation. We also lift up prayers for safe travels, meaningful encounters, and full immersion in the life-changing power of God’s love.

You are invited to join the Journey. Our worship service one year ago recognized our gathering as God’s people, and our worship earlier this winter introduced us to the Story Kit that we will use to make sense of the Scripture passages encountered during the Synod Journey and Gathering. Most recently, we celebrated our proclamation of faith in Jesus Christ. Throughout this past year, we have learned and celebrated how these texts challenge our expectations of identity, love, surrender, struggle, and, ultimately, Jesus, and we have embraced the mystery of our faith. Today, we will be commissioning our youth and adult leaders to use what we’ve learned when we live, work, and play with a large community of God’s people in Galveston and Houston, Texas. We commission these people to recognize that God truly changes everything.

GATHERING SONG:

We encourage you to select songs from the Journey Song List on the Synod Resource page. This is a great opportunity to introduce youth and congregation to the music they will experience on the Journey. Maybe gather a choir or handbell ensemble to herald the entry of the cross, and gather an intergenerational group to process into the sanctuary with the Story Kit Items, place at font.

(After the first two verses, you may choose to include a time of reflection, encouraging congregants to silently or verbally imagine what the Synod Journey will be like. Do they feel excited, eager, have a positive attitude...? Are they nervous, anxious, discouraged...? Perhaps provide small journals or pieces of paper for congregants - especially those attending the Gathering - to write down these feelings, as they can be brought back after the trip and reflected on.

After the second two verses, you may choose to reflect: What is your prayer that God may change the way you engage in and share God's Word in everyday life? How do you pray that the youth and adults attending the Gathering change others by actively sharing God's Word...?)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Welcome to worship!

Congregation: Praise God!

L: Give thanks for this day.

C: We are thankful for all of your creation.

L: We come eager to praise your name.

C: You make us glad to follow you.

L: Prepare our hearts, minds, and bodies for the journey ahead of us.

C: We pray for and support your ministry as disciples of Jesus.

L: We look forward to sharing our experiences with you.

C: Thanks be to God!

ALTERNATIVE CALL TO WORSHIP

(A more modern "pump up" for worship)

Have each Gathering participant sit in different places around the sanctuary. When the pastor announces "call to worship," the participants rise and walk towards the front of the sanctuary.

Read these words:

Leader: This call to worship symbolizes the way in which 450 youth and adults will gather in Galveston for the Synod Journey, then gather with 30,000 youth and adults in Houston for the ELCA Youth Gathering. Just as we have arrived at the font from different locations of the sanctuary, so will people arrive in Galveston and Houston from different locations across the NE MN Synod and across the United States. Both here

and at the ELCA Youth Gathering, we all come for the same purpose - to learn about and praise God.

C: Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

L: Our stories for the Synod Journey include numerous ways of recognizing God's life-changing powers. Moses hallowed the "holy ground" on which he stood, while revering God as the great I AM. Jesus celebrated diversity at the well when interacting with a Samaritan woman. Jesus also acknowledged both our surrender and our struggle to believe in the stories of Philip and Cleopas. Finally, Jesus demonstrated God's power to heal in the stories of the hemorrhaging woman and the revived daughter.

L: Gracious Lord,

C: We acknowledge the power that you have to truly change lives. Yet, we often neglect to allow this power to change us. Consequently, we fail to live out your love each day to its full extent, turning away those who most need our care and support. Forgive us for our shortcomings, and help us to display the compassion that can change others - and ourselves.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Through Jesus' death on the cross, your sins are eternally forgiven. As we hear stories that tell of your promise of our salvation, may we remember to live as forgiven people, and follow Christ's call to embody this forgiveness unto others - even those different than us. Jesus is hope. Jesus is love. Jesus is grace. Jesus is our redeeming life. Jesus changes everything. **Amen.**

ALTERNATIVE CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

(For non-traditional worship)

L: Confessing our sins is simultaneously an individual and group endeavor. We all have our individual shortcomings and regrets, and we often fall short of expectations placed by ourselves, others, and God. Yet, we retain this sinner status together as people of God. We often forget that, when we confess our sins in silence on Sunday mornings, God hears us all.

L: When we go to Texas, God will still be listening to all of us. This might seem overwhelming to us, but God can handle the task. To embody this idea, we are going to confess our sins as a group. I will give you thirty seconds of silence to think of something you'd like to confess out loud. Then, on the count of three, we will all shout it out. You can prepare a full sentence or just some key words. Whatever you choose to say, God will listen to you.

L: Your 30 seconds begins now.

(30 seconds of silence)

L: Ready? One, two, three.

(Shout the confession, leader quiets the congregation)

L: Amidst the chaos, God hears us. God hears us in this congregation, and God will hear us in a stadium full of 30,000 people. But God does not just hear us - God truly listens. God changes the lives of ourselves and our peers by acknowledging our sins and wiping them away. We are justified by this life-changing promise, and it gives us hope to navigate this busy and chaotic world. God's forgiveness of sins changes everything.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Let us pray,

C: We have been gathered here today to send forth from this place our leaders that will serve you alongside brothers and sisters from congregations all over the United States. We pray that you guide, protect, and enliven us with your Word, so that we might live as true witnesses of your love. We pray this through the One who changed and continues to change everything for us and for all creation, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

L: Do you ever wave goodbye when people leave your house? Do you ever wish people a "safe trip" before they leave for vacation? When these people return, do they ever tell stories about their trip or show you pictures?

L: Today, we are wishing people a safe trip down to Galveston and Houston - do you know where those cities are? (Texas - it's hot down there!) We are excited for them to go to church with 450 people from our synod, and 30,000 people from across the ELCA! That's a lot of people!

L: Part of our responsibility when wishing these people well is to pray for them. It can be as simple as a quick "God, please watch over the people in Texas." To kick off their trip, and to get us ready to pray for them each day, we are going to say this prayer and lay our hands on the people that we're praying for.

(Allow children to place hands on the Gathering participants)

L: Alright, repeat after me: “Dear God (**Dear God**) please watch over (**please watch over**) the people in Texas (**the people in Texas**). Amen (**Amen**).”

L: See, wasn't that easy?!? I challenge you and your family to do this every day that the trip is happening, and then maybe these people will come back to church and share pictures and their journey with you!

SINGING INTO SCRIPTURE

THEME SCRIPTURE VERSE : Ephesians 2:8

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: This Changes Everything! What does this mean?

(Each Journey Worship service will include this verse and reflection question. We encourage youth and adults from within your congregation to share brief faith talks in response to the theme and question.)

GOSPEL READINGS:

(These can align with the lectionary for the week or use the Emmaus story from Luke 24. Stress that Jesus joins the disciples on the road, even if they don't recognize it right away.)

SERMON

(Perhaps relate the gospel lesson to being sent to serve God)

(Perhaps have youth share their expectations, emotions, and thoughts about the upcoming journey - then have them give a similar sermon to convey possible changed feelings after the experience is over)

SONG

(maybe “The Lord Now Sends Us Forth,” ELW 538)

COMMISSIONING

(Invite all youth and adults who will be attending the ELCA Youth Gathering to gather in the center of the assembled people. For example, they could stand the middle aisle in the center of the sanctuary.)

Leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Leader: Today we bless and send these young people and adults as they leave for the NE MN Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering and encounter the Holy Spirit in new and amazing ways. We know that...

All: This changes everything.

Congregation or Leader: We thank the Holy Spirit for calling you to travel, worship, serve, learn, and play alongside peers from all over the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, experiences that will transcend city and school boundaries to form lasting and meaningful friendships that embody God's love. We also give thanks for the opportunity to worship and serve with 30,000 participants at the ELCA Youth Gathering, an experience that will deeply remind you of God's broad, interconnected, and welcoming community of believers.

Gathering Participants: God's call changes everything.

Congregation or Leader: In the Old Testament God told Joshua, "...the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." And in the New Testament, Jesus told his disciples, "...remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." We remind you, and ourselves, that God is speaking to us through these verses as well.

Gathering Participants: God's love changes everything.

Congregation or Leader: The writer of Ephesians tells us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." When you are challenged through this experience or when you doubt your strength and skills, remember that you are enough because of Christ.

Gathering Participants: God's grace changes everything.

Congregation or Leader: We already look forward to welcoming you home. As you realize how God has used this experience to transform you, know that we, your faith community, are ready to hear the new hope you have for the world, our community, and church. As members of the NE MN Synod, we look forward to the energy and leadership that you will bring back to our region to constantly keep our church moving forward. We hope that you will be open to sharing your stories with us and that we will be open to being changed by the stories you tell.

Gathering Participants: God's hope changes everything.

Leader: Let us pray. Gracious God, we thank you for calling these young people and the adult leaders who will accompany them on the NE MN Synod Journey to the ELCA Youth Gathering. As you have shown your love by sending your Son to live among us, we pray that your Spirit help those we send also be an expression of your presence in the world.

We know and we thank you that...

All: Jesus changes everything. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO CREED/STATEMENT OF FAITH

Leader:

The Creed allows us to take time to remember what we believe as God's people and confess it communally. The Creed tells us that we are created with all that exists, and that we are redeemed by Jesus Christ. It also says that we need the Holy Spirit to call us through the Gospel and keep us holy as believers of the faith. This changes everything.

Congregation:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING**

OFFERING SONG

OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray,

C: May our time, talents, and possessions be a collective offering to you from your people. Help us to use these gifts to change the hearts of both ourselves and those around us, so that we all might be gathered to serve the community made possible by your radical grace. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, all of God's creation. Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, we pray for the church and its ministry, may it be a welcoming and loving place for all. We are forever changed because of your love, may the church be a reflection of that love within our communities. Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

For peace, and justice in the world, the nations, and those in authority, may we know peace and an end to injustice. Thank you for all who work to end violence and hatred. Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for the well being of all creation. Thank you for this earth and the many creatures, big and small, who call it home. We are grateful for its beauty and abundant resources. Empower us to be loving stewards of your creation. Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Together we pray for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. May we all find comfort in your love, O gracious God. Thank you for all those who work to strengthen others, may they also find strength. Today we lift up.... (insert names)
Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

For all who came before us and who are now at rest, we pray. With thankful hearts we praise you, O God, for their lives and all the ways in which they have shaped us. May we be a living memory of their love. Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

God hears our prayers and celebrates our eternal life with him. We pray that we, too, hold on to the promise of everlasting life while trusting in your healing power here on Earth. Continue to hear our prayers, O God, as we believe in your mercy. In your name we pray, **Amen.**

INTRODUCTION TO THE SHARING OF THE PEACE

L: When we go to Galveston and Houston, we will be sharing God's peace with others as we work, worship, and even eat. Sometimes, these greetings will be formal handshakes like we often use in church. But more often, we will be exchanging high-fives and fist-bumps with youth from around the world. Today, we invite you to also spread the peace through a high-five or fist-bump!

SHARING OF PEACE

Leader: The peace of the Lord be with you

All: And also with you

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNION

L: Communion connects the believers of Jesus Christ. The bread and wine, though simple, convey a real presence of God, and this presence is shared with all those who commune. Through the Lord's Supper, we acknowledge Christ's sacrifice that made possible the forgiveness of our sins.

Communing on the Synod Journey and the ELCA Youth Gathering will be a powerful thing. It will become the one thing that will bind together all of the event participants, regardless of family background or place of origin. Especially when we are given Communion on Sunday at the ELCA Youth Gathering, God will be tangibly present; the bread and wine will unite us all in the body of Christ.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

L: Today, many people are gathered around the world praying the Lord's Prayer together as the body of Christ. Take note of the inclusive language used throughout the Lord's Prayer, "OUR Father in Heaven", "Give US our daily bread." Regardless of heritage, these words reveal God's unconditional love that changes everything.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

L: Jesus gathered his disciples together and taught them to pray:

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen**

INVITE TO COMMUNION

(You may choose to invite participants to take a different route back to their seats or even return to a different seat following communion, recognizing that this gift changes us, our perspectives and our paths.)

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION SONG

(maybe "Send Me, Jesus," ELW 549)

(maybe "The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve," ELW #551)

(maybe "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," ELW #773)

COMMUNION BLESSING

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gifts of his body and blood strengthen, keep and unite us, now and forever. **Amen**

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Holy One, we give you thanks for gathering us around your table and giving us your endless love. Let that love overflow more and more into our lives. As changed people, may we be empowered by your Spirit to love our neighbor and the earth that you created, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING/BENEDICTION

May God's Word inspire you to celebrate your faith. Remember the community made through common profession of God's life-changing love, grace, and hope. Hold fast to God's promises, and share your joy with others. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, **Amen.**

SENDING SONG

(maybe "Sent Forth by God's Blessing," ELW #547)

DISMISSAL

L: Go in peace - to invite, to be invited, to change, and to be changed!

C: **Thanks be to God.**

This worship liturgy was developed for congregational use by the Northeastern Minnesota Synod Journey Worship Team. Primary writing credit is given to Team Leader Shivon Miller (Minister of Congregational Life, Trinity Lutheran Church, Duluth, MN) and team member Jackson Churchill (college student, Luther College, Decorah, IA)