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GREETINGS!

My name is Beth Hartfiel and I am the Interactive Learning team leader for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering. Your organization's name and contact information has been shared with me as a potential partner for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering. It is my hope that this letter will help answer some questions about the ELCA, the Gathering and specifically Interactive Learning.

WHAT IS THE ELCA?

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with about 4 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations across the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mission - Together in Jesus Christ we are freed by grace to live faithfully, witness boldly and serve joyfully.

Vision - A world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation.

Values - Our values are grounded in faith, in our biblical and Lutheran confessional sources and our love of God and neighbor. They speak to the way this church lives and practices our faith, and they will guide how we journey forward in Christ as church together.

Visit ELCA.org for more information.

WHAT IS THE YOUTH GATHERING?

Every three years, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the ELCA gather for a week of faith formation known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. Through days spent in interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, young people grow in faith and are challenged and inspired to live their faith in their daily lives. Visit ELCA.org/Gathering for more information.

In 2018, the Gathering will be held in Houston with our major venues being at NRG Park: nrgpark.com/.

Youth and adults attend as congregational groups and not as individuals. The youth to adult ratio is usually 5:1.

WHAT IS INTERACTIVE LEARNING?

Interactive Learning is a “Holy Playground” of sorts, that invites Gathering participants to encounter God through a variety of learning styles and sensory experiences. All 30,000 participants have a dedicated day in the three day program rotation to experience the extensive offerings inside the over 700,000 square feet Interactive Learning space. From sports to creative expressions, service projects to quiet meditation, Interactive Learning offers something for everyone. A vital element of the space is partner exhibit areas.

WHAT IS AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING PARTNER?

Interactive Learning partners are exhibitors of sorts, though we shy away from using that term because partners come to the Gathering to do more than just exhibit. Interactive Learning partners invite Gathering participants into an engaging learning opportunity that supports the mission of the Gathering, our theme, and lifts up the work of the partner organization or group itself.

Interactive Learning Partners Values:

- + Inclusivity (race/ethnicity, gender identity, creed, ability)
- + Missional alignment with the ELCA
- + Ethical & sustainable business practices
- + Partnership

WHAT IS THE THEME FOR THE 2018 GATHERING?

The theme for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering is “This Changes Everything.” Our primary scripture will be 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.”*

Grace is a foundational and distinctive piece of the Lutheran faith. This gift, undeserved and freely given, changes lives and perspectives as people realize they are enough because of what Christ has done and are called into the world to serve their neighbor and share the good news.

Our logo is a visual representation of our theme and the 2018 Gathering experience. It incorporates the coming together of a mosaic to reflect the diverse host city of Houston, as well as the idea that we are a church where *all* are imperfect and incomplete, yet we each belong in – and have an important place in – God’s masterpiece. The cross at the center of the logo is the focus – it is God’s grace, through Christ’s life, death and resurrection, that changes everything for all people.

Visit ELCA.org/YouthGathering/About/Theme for more information.

WHAT ARE THE DATES FOR THE GATHERING AND INTERACTIVE LEARNING?

GATHERING DATES: June 27 - July 1, 2018		
INTERACTIVE LEARNING SPACE DATES:		
June 25, 2018	8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	Move-in begins
June 26, 2018	8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	Move-in continues
June 27, 2018	8 a.m.-1 p.m.	Move-in continues
	1 p.m.-4 p.m.	Interactive Learning Center open
June 28, 2018	9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.	Interactive Learning Center open
June 29, 2018	9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.	Interactive Learning Center open
June 30, 2018	9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.	Interactive Learning Center open
	5 p.m.-12 a.m.	Move-out

HOW DO I BECOME AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING PARTNER?

Organizations or groups that have not been a partner in the past but would like to be considered for 2018 will need to complete a brief application questionnaire:

1. Provide a 100 word or less description of your organization/group.
2. Why does your organization/group want to be part of the ELCA Youth Gathering?
3. How does faith play a role in your organization/group, if at all?
4. How would your organization's partnership enhance the Gathering experience, especially for youth participants?

The application can be found at: <https://goo.gl/forms/ktsP0tgffDcYiYnI3>

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

All partners register for a flat fee of \$500 which includes 2 registrations. Additional registrants cost \$125 per person.

The \$500 partner registration fee also includes 1,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space, a 6 ft. table, and 2 chairs. Partners are responsible for any additional costs associated with their exhibit space including things like internet, electricity, carpet, rope and stanchions. The final list of additional exhibit space items with exact costs will be available on August 15th.

Partners are responsible for all travel, meals, and hotel accommodation costs. Hotel accommodations will be assigned through the Youth Gathering registrar in January 2018. Once hotels have been assigned, you will receive your assignment information and instructions on how to make your reservations directly with the hotel.

WHAT ARE THE KEY DATES?

Interactive Learning Partner Dates	
May 15, 2017	Partner Applications open
July 15, 2017	Partner Applications close
August 15, 2017	Supply catalogs posted
October 1, 2017	Registration fee invoices sent
November 15, 2017	Initial activity plan description & rough floor plan due. Registration fee due (\$500)
January 30, 2018	Hotel assignments made
February 15, 2018	Late registration fee due (\$750)
March 1, 2018	Initial supply lists, updated floor plans, program descriptions and final list of partner registrants due.
April 1, 2018	Guidebook information due
May 1, 2018	Final floor plans, program descriptions & supply lists due
May 15, 2018	Initial shipping list due
June 27 – July 1, 2018	ELCA Youth Gathering!

We know this initial invitation can seem a little overwhelming. If you have any questions or would like to explore how your group or organization can be an interactive learning partner, my team is here to help! We work with all partners to bring dreams to reality, and help ensure an engaging and attractive space for youth and their adult leaders. We hope you will be in touch soon!

God's Peace,
Beth Hartfiel
Interactive Learning Team Leader
beth@waytolead.org

#ELCAYG2018

FOR IT IS BY **GRACE** YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED, THROUGH FAITH –
AND THIS IS NOT FROM YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. - EPHESIANS 2:8



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.