



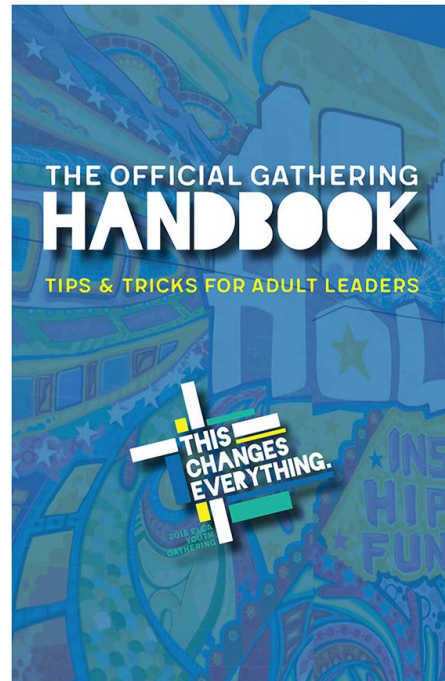
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



## 'The Official Gathering Handbook'

The Gathering seeks to be a place, an event, where young people can encounter God in new ways and grow in their faith. We know through research, evaluations and conversations that youth who are part of a well-prepared and well-led group have a fuller, deeper and all around better experience at the Gathering, and so a primary goal for Gathering leadership is to help you prepare and lead. This is the first edition of "The Official Gathering Handbook: Tips and Tricks for Adult Leaders," and it represents the collective wisdom of adult leaders from across our church. While this certainly isn't an all-inclusive guide to the Gathering, we hope that every adult leader – newbie or veteran, volunteer or paid, rural, suburban or urban – can find helpful hints and resources.

Be sure to check out "[The Official Gathering Handbook.](#)" because you're definitely not in this alone!



## Houston



Houston – people might know it as Beyoncé’s hometown, others as the world hub of the energy industry, some for its prominence as the flight-control center for NASA’s manned space missions, but we know it best as the host city for the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering! We also know Houston is a diverse, multicultural metropolis with thriving performing arts and culinary scenes, more than 55,000 acres of green space, a large and growing international community, and so much more.

The Gathering’s programming will take place in three main venues: NRG Stadium, NRG Arena and NRG Center, all located just outside of downtown Houston in the convention and sport entertainment complex known as NRG Park., as well as the hotels in the surrounding area.

Check out the [Visit Houston](#) website for more information about our host city from the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau. Also be sure to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for fun facts about Houston and the Gathering!

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## The tAble

The tAble (formerly the Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event or DAYLE) is a pre-event to the Gathering that blesses and empowers young people who live with a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities so that they might grow as faithful, wise and courageous witnesses. The event also gives participants the opportunity to acclimate and orient themselves to Houston and the venues in which the Gathering is being held.

The tAble underwent a name change from DAYLE to better represent the mission of this impactful ministry. The new name says that the definitely-abled are in fact able and that all are welcome to our table.



For more information about the tAble and how to register for it, check out our [website](#).





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## Devotion

### The call of Samuel – 1 Samuel 3:1-19



I remember hearing this passage as a little kid and having many questions, as kids usually do. How could Samuel have confused the voice of God and the voice of Eli? How did Eli hear God? How was Samuel able to trust Eli? And most importantly, how did Samuel know when to follow God? Although these questions were hard to answer, the story itself seemed very simple. Once Samuel knew who was talking to him, he immediately listened and followed. It wasn't until I heard this Scripture a few months ago that I realized how this seemingly straightforward Bible story truly changes everything, making a simple action very difficult. Currently a high school senior making decisions daily that affect my future, I find comfort in the fact that God is calling me, just like God called Samuel. But with so many voices, how am I supposed to filter out the ones that don't matter and focus on God? It can be difficult, especially in the hard times we are facing. But the important thing to remember is that more happens when we take action and listen, rather than when we stand still and simply hear. How are YOU going to find your calling as a child of God?



– Inger Smuts, California

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## 2018 Gathering timeline at a glance

**November 2016** – Theme and logo announced  
**November 2016** – Promotional materials available

**May 15, 2017** – [Volunteer application](#) opens  
**July 15, 2017** – Volunteer application closes  
**Sept. 15, 2017** – [Registration opens](#) and early bird rate begins  
**Nov. 15, 2017** – Regular registration rate begins

**Feb. 15, 2018** – Late registration rate begins  
**May 15, 2018** – Registration closes and all payments are due

**June 24-27, 2018** – [MYLE](#) and the [tAble](#)  
**June 27-July 1, 2018** – [ELCA Youth Gathering](#)



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### Contact us

Please [contact us](#) with your ideas and comments. Please forward this email to others who may be interested.  
Mail: ELCA Youth Gathering, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631.

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