

Have an idea of what you want to see at the Gathering? Let us know!  
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**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



## Happy Gathering year!

The new year brings new goals, and ours is to help you get to the Gathering! Here are a few things you should be thinking of for January and February from your Gathering timeline:

### Attend 2018 ELCA Network Extravaganza

Check out [Gathering workshops](#), and stop by our booth in the exhibitor hall.

### Check your account for housing assignments.

Remember, this is not the time to contact the hotel! More information on this later in this gNews.

### Continue using our Getting Ready materials

In January, we [Gather for Love](#) as we discuss how we love ourselves and those around us. In February, we [Gather for Relationships](#) as we reflect on our relationship with God, God's relationship with us, and our relationship with each other.

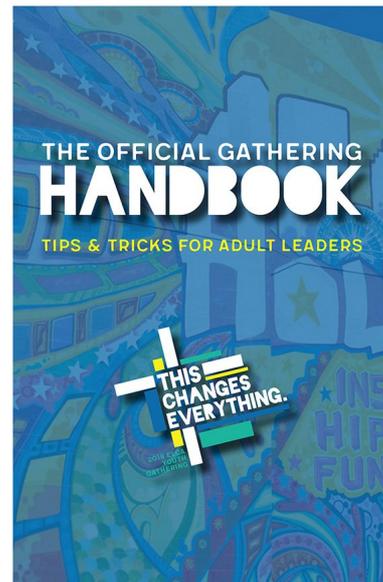
### Keep fundraising

Check out our [Pinterest page](#) for more ideas!

### Register

Regular registration ends Feb. 15. Be sure to register before late registration begins and rates go up to \$440.

For more tips and tricks, check out our [Official Gathering Handbook](#).



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## Community Life webinar





Join us on Jan. 11 for our Community Life webinar. The Community Life team leader, Liz Fisher, will be leading us and giving us details on what to expect from Community Life at the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering. Join us on Zoom or on Facebook Live to learn more. The webinar will begin tomorrow night at 7pm Central.

Make sure you save the date for our next webinar, Feb. 8 at 7 p.m. Central, to learn about Interactive learning. [RSVP here!](#)

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## T-shirt contest

Calling all youth and young adult artist! Are you coming to the Gathering? Would you like to see your design on over 30,000 Gathering shirts? Here's your chance! We're having a contest for youth and young adults attending the Gathering to submit their designs to be on the Gathering's Service Learning shirt! These are our bright orange shirts that are worn on the day we engage in service learning. [Submissions must be in by Jan. 15!](#)



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## Contact your Gathering synod coordinator

Have questions about the Gathering? Need help getting a plan together? [Contact your Gathering synod coordinator](#). One of the best resources for your congregation during the months spent planning for the Gathering is your Gathering synod coordinator. People with past Gathering experience have been chosen by each synod to serve in this capacity. They are field workers for the Gathering and will be the first to have the answers to your questions! Connect with yours to find other congregations that are traveling to Houston or to attend a training meeting.

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## Hotel assignments

The Gathering staff has been busy making sure that the hotels we've contracted with in Houston are ready to greet you next June! For their part, all of the hotels are eager to make you feel at home, even if the time you spend in your hotel is short. Remember, you will be out and about in the city and at NRG Park for most of the day, returning to the hotel only after the Mass Gathering in the stadium.

Housing is assigned by synod. That simply means that all the congregations from each synod will be in the same hotel, although some of the larger synods may spill over into two hotels. You will know which hotel your synod is staying in by Jan. 15, and if you're attending the [2018 ELCA Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza](#) in Houston, you may have an opportunity to go see it.

Important tip to remember: Don't call your hotel! The people who answer the phone will not know who you are! Until March 15, the date when you can begin to send your rooming lists and deposits to the hotel, front desk personnel can't see anything in their reservation systems. It's only after your reservations have been processed and your confirmation email has been generated, that your name can be seen along with those of your group. So please be patient.

Our hotels are as excited as we are to see you in Houston!

## 2018 Extravaganza

Are you one of more than 900 children, youth and family ministry leaders gathering in Houston for the [2018 Extravaganza](#)? We hope so! If not, there is still time to [register](#) to take in Gathering-specific workshops and check out the Houston landscape. In addition to the inspiring main stage [speakers and musicians](#), there are more than 100 [workshops](#) and learning opportunities, over 50 [exhibitors](#), networking, worship and much more that is the Extravaganza. We hope you join us January 26-29 in Houston! (Or come early for the “Have a Great Gathering” [Intensive Care Course](#), January 25-26!)



## Devotion: The baptism of Jesus

Jesus and baptism seem to be connected in the sense that our baptism cleanses us from the sins that Jesus took to the cross. It connects us to the Holy Trinity and initiates us into the faith journey we walk with Jesus. Baptism's sparse use in the Old Testament symbolized an internal cleansing paired with the external washing, bringing us closer to God. Why, then, does Jesus get baptized in Matthew 3:13-17? Surely the Son of God, sent to the earth to save us from sin, doesn't need to cleanse his heart or strengthen his bond with his father.



Jesus didn't need to be baptized, which is why his baptism changed everything. He showed how willing he was to walk with us in faith as a both a teacher and a student. He brought himself before God and did as we are asked to do in order to show that his divinity came from his being flesh and bone. By getting baptized, Jesus transitioned from being God's mortal son to being the mortal Son of God. To see God work in this context changed our relationship with God and solidified our trust that God would take away our sins. While this idea was nothing new, the fact that Jesus was willing to partake in it validated its importance and created a lasting tradition in the Christian faith.

Emma Kirchoff, California

## 2018 Gathering timeline at a glance

**Feb. 16, 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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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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