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Introducing the Gathering theme song contest, Gathering pro tips, and more.  
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**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



## Gathering Synod Coordinators

Do you have questions about the Gathering, MYLE or the tAble? Contact your Gathering Synod Coordinator! Gathering Synod Coordinators have been trained and equipped to help you on your Gathering journey. The next time you have a question, before contacting the Gathering office, we encourage you to see if your Gathering Synod Coordinator can help you. Don't know who your coordinator is? [Find them here!](#)



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## Volunteer application webinar



Would you like to volunteer at the Gathering and help our young people grow in faith and encounter Christ? Serving the youth of this church is a vocational calling that requires careful discernment. The volunteer application process opens in May 2017 via links from our website. We have four categories of volunteers: Local Volunteers, Community Life, Gathering Volunteer Corps, and Servant Companions. Each group has the opportunity to contribute to the Gathering in fun and innovative ways, ranging from hospitality at our welcome booth, to walking along side our groups with their service-learning opportunities.

For more information on volunteering at the Gathering and the application process, [sign up for our webinar](#) and tune in on April 6 at 7 p.m. Central time.

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## Getting Ready materials

The Gathering's Getting Ready resources are based in group building, Bible study and faith-based conversation for use with congregational groups before and after the Gathering. Twelve lessons will be developed – nine for use in the months leading up to the Gathering and three for taking your experience home. Eight of the nine pre-Gathering lessons will be available in August 2017. The ninth lesson will be for use in the final weeks leading up to the Gathering. Because it will contain last-minute details, it will not be posted until the spring of 2018. The three post-Gathering lessons will be available shortly after the Gathering. It is our goal to create most of the Getting Ready curriculum with themes that could be used for your entire youth ministry group, not just those attending the Gathering.



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## Theme song contest

The ELCA Youth Gathering is offering people from across our church the opportunity to submit their original music composition to be selected for the theme song of the 2018 Gathering in Houston, Texas.

The contest runs until April 15, 2017. Check out our [website](#) for more information about the contest.



## #HTX



Being the fourth largest and most diverse city in the United States, Houston offers plenty to do for service opportunities, leisure and sightseeing. Houston has vibrant and culture-filled communities, such as Independence Heights, which was the first city in Texas founded by African Americans. It continues to embrace that and is working to revitalize their neighborhood to bring it back to how it was a hundred years ago.

Houston has a rich arts community. From the world-class Museum of Fine Arts to the many murals scattered around the city and everything in between, Houston has art that can appeal to everyone's artistic taste. In fact, more people visit art attractions or museums than attend sporting events in a year.

Do not let that fact change your perception of sports in Houston, because Houston is very much a sports town. During the summer months, there are plenty of games to watch in state-of-the-art facilities. The MLB's Houston Astros play in Minute Maid Park, and the Major League Soccer's Houston Dynamo and the Houston Dash of the National Women's Soccer League share the nearby BBVA Compass Stadium.

Whether it's a sports game, art or visiting and volunteering in the historic communities, plus so much more, Houston has a lot to offer and a lot to do.

– Cody Miller  
Service Learning Project Manager

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## Devotions

### Luke 19:1-10 Jesus and Zacchaeus

Throughout the Bible, we read about plenty of tax collectors, and we learn that they were not a fan favorite, to say the least. Zacchaeus was not only a tax collector; he was the chief tax collector and a very wealthy man. Now, as you could imagine, those characteristics didn't help Zacchaeus' image. When Jesus came to Jericho, Zacchaeus, just like the rest of the crowd, desired to see him. When Zacchaeus couldn't see over everyone else, he climbed a sycamore tree. This plan didn't quite work out for Zacchaeus, because as soon as Jesus approached, he told Zacchaeus to come down because he needed to stay with him that night. All those who heard what Jesus said to Zacchaeus were appalled, saying Jesus was going to be the guest of a sinner. I find these

remarks to be funny, because what they didn't realize is that was exactly the point. Though Zacchaeus was indeed a sinner, Jesus sought him anyway. Jesus took the initiative to come to Zacchaeus, as he does for us. Faith is a two-way street, but Jesus always does his part. He is always seeking us out in the crowd when we are lost, longing to stay with us. Jesus calls us by name and tells us to get down from whatever tree we are stuck in. Often we find ourselves stuck in these metaphorical trees, trying to solve our problems alone. Though we may think these problems can be fixed by taking them head on and climbing up to find Jesus, Jesus has already found us, and he just wants us to come down. This changes everything because it shows us that whatever problem we may have, Jesus can handle it. He blesses us every day with his grace and mercy, even when we are just lowly sinners to the world, because we are all still children of God. All we have to do is come down, and accept it.

– Abbigayle Johns, Ohio



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## 2018 Gathering timeline at a glance

- May 15, 2017** – [Volunteer application](#) opens
- July 15, 2017** – Volunteer application closes
- Sept. 15, 2017** – [Registration opens](#) and early bird rate begins
- Nov. 16, 2017** – Regular registration rate begins
  
- 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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**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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