

AN EXPLORATION OF FAITH FOR **YOUNG ADULTS**

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING



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

**THIS
CHANGES
EVERYTHING.**

2018 ELCA
YOUTH
GATHERING

In the summer of 2018, 30,000+ youth and adult leaders came together for the ELCA Youth Gathering under the theme: “This Changes Everything.” The response to this theme has been positive and a request for resources to build on this theme brought forth the following resource for use with young adults.

The primary scripture for the theme is 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.

The logo for the ELCA Youth Gathering is a visual representation of theme and the 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.

This resource gives you three sessions to use with young adults in a variety of settings. Use it wherever you gather together for discussion, learning, sharing, engaging or just hanging out. Invite young adults to a time to dig deep into their faith, the faith in which we confess, the faith in Jesus Christ. Invite them into a time to see and engage in the faith that Jesus changes everything. Invite them to invite friends to this time together. Create a place where all are welcome, all thoughts are valued, all people are valued. As a leader, be an example of these things and willing to share how you see that Jesus changes everything.

These three opportunities for young adults to share insights, questions, hopes, fears and futures will offer us a chance to affirm that our lives are also intimately involved and included in the grace of God.

We will have time to read scripture, share in our own perceptions and grow in appreciation of our own lives and the life of the world around us.

We hope this is a meaningful and deepening experience for everyone involved. If you have any questions about this resource please contact the ELCA Youth Gathering Office at gathering@elca.org.

Brent Christianson & Chelle Huth
Curriculum Writing Team

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THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

SESSION 1

LEADER INFO

The main focus of this session is:

Each person, each and every part of creation, is unique and holy in and of itself.

In this session we will look at the word “This” and how it can direct us to the mystery of a God who never stops creating. In a world where media is trying to sell us the “this” that will change our lives, or transform our very being, we can get lost in this chaos and lose sight of God who is actively engaged in our world every minute of every day. This session will help us refocus and engage with the biblical texts that pull us back to remembering the “this” that God has done and continues to do with the world, with us, through us.

SOCIAL MEDIA



On your ministry’s social media profiles, post the “THIS” poster and your group’s responses to God’s continued work in the world. Be sure to use the hashtag #ELCAYG2018.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- candle
- piece of poster board or newsprint with the word “THIS” printed in bold marker
- markers
- projector/screen
- computer with download or wifi capability to view video
- paper, pens/pencils

INTRODUCTION

As people gather, welcome them and encourage them to meet one another. As your session start time nears, ask people to gather together. Be sure to thank them all for being there.

When you are ready to begin say: **The focus of today is that each person, each and every part of creation is unique and holy.** In this session we will look at the word “This” and how it can direct us to the mystery of a God who never stops creating. In a world where media is trying to sell us the “this” that will change our lives, or transform our very being, we can get lost in this chaos and lose sight of God who is actively engaged in our world every minute of every day. This session will help us refocus and engage with the biblical texts that pull us back to remembering the “this” that God has done and continues to do with the world, with us, through us.

Gathering Prayer:

As you prepare to pray, light the candle and explain that the candle represents the light of Christ in our midst and in our lives.

Pray together this prayer or one of your own:

Gracious God, we thank you for this time to be together. We thank you because we know you are here with us. We thank you because you are holy and your holiness chooses always to be with us and your creation. We thank you because you have made each of us unique and holy as well. We thank you because you have placed us in a creation where all things reveal you. Bless us and our time together. In Jesus name, amen.

Introductions:

Take time for introductions. Encourage people to share their names and why they are here today.

WORD

Say: Today we will look at that word “This” and how it can direct us to the mystery of a God who never stops creating.

Say: Let’s take a look at what media says “this” is. Show this short video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAz4b-wo5EI&feature=youtu.be>

Ask: What are things that you might have described using the phrase “This changes everything”?

After all have shared say: The medieval Franciscan mystic and theologian, Duns Scotus, made the claim that absolutely everything has a uniqueness that reflects God. He used the Latin word for “this”(haec) to do so. Everything and everyone has a ‘thisness’ about it that is unique and holy that reflects God. We are wonderfully made in God’s image ‘thisness.’ How we live out this identity is our daily calling. We’re going to look at how people, creation and even God possess a ‘thisness’ - a uniqueness that reflects God, that proclaims what is holy. That is, God’s grace is universal and God chooses to share God’s grace in specific people and places and situations ... in each “this.”

Say: We’re going to watch a video. The focus of this video, for our purposes, is that this father/son duo are enjoying their uniqueness as created by God through sharing their talent and fully enjoying themselves and sharing it with others. This is pure joy in our creation and uniqueness!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gHvATmUsSg>

After the video ask:

- What were you experiencing as you watched this?
- What thoughts popped into your mind?
- What are some things you have done to share your “thisness” or uniqueness?
- How boldly have you shared?

Thank everyone for their responses.


...people, creation and even God possess a "thisness" - a uniqueness that reflects God, that proclaims what is holy.


God's Story:

Break the group into three small groups (if you have a sizeable group, break them into several small groups and assign the readings to a few groups, not just one.) Give each group some paper and pens.

Assign the readings and the focus area for that text as listed below. Give the groups their guided questions to help them think deeper into the text. Ask them to pay attention to the following: Consider what the story does to us. Think about the 'thisness' of those mentioned. How might the text be described in one sentence and consider not what it means but what the reading does to you.

GROUP 1

"Thisness"

Philemon, verses 1-23

- What might be a one sentence summary?
- What is the 'this' of Onesimus? Slave or Human being? Is that important?
- How about Paul? Apostle/Authority or 'brother'?
- How about Philemon? Slaveholder? Rich man?

GROUP 2

"Thisness" Of things in creation

Genesis 1:1-31

- What might be a one sentence summary?
- What was a recurring statement in the text?
- What does hearing these words do for us?

GROUP 3

"Thisness" Of People:

Galatians 3:27-28

- What might be a one sentence summary?
- What does hearing these words do for us?
- What is significant for people – the labels we use to define them or something else? If it is something else, what is it?

Give groups time to read their assigned scripture and discuss the guided questions. As they come to conclusions, have them write specific insights, question and, new perspectives that they found interesting or significant from the Biblical texts or the groups observations on the "THIS" poster board/large paper. Keep this for use in the final session.

Our Story:

The uniqueness of each thing in all creation is not there to separate, but to form community and connection.

Ask: How have you experienced connection to God and community in your life? Where have you felt connected to a community that you found God present? In people? In experiences? In your own reactions? (Allow time for responses.)

Thank everyone for sharing their thoughts and responses. Say: we are called to community and connection. The "this" is God's wonderful, ongoing work of creation in the world. Challenge yourself to at least once a day look at something or someone to find one "this" (God creates) about that object of our attention.

SENDING PRAYER

God, you have always chosen to be part of your creation. You have chosen to love and the share and, in Christ, have chosen to enter even into death. You have given life to all things, even to death! Be with us in the days ahead and help us to celebrate how all things and all people uniquely point to you. In Christ, amen.

After the prayer have people turn to their neighbor and draw the sign of the cross on their neighbor's forehead and say these words: "You have been created and redeemed by God."

After all have finished say: Go in peace, celebrating God's ongoing "thisness!"

THIS **CHANGES** EVERYTHING

SESSION 2

LEADER INFO

Rev. Reinhold Niebuhr, American theologian, penned an often-used prayer about change, "The Serenity Prayer" which reads:

***"God grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference"***

Change can feel good and it can feel uncomfortable, it can challenge and confuse or confirm. In this session we will explore and share experiences of change in our lives, in our world, our society and our faith.

SOCIAL MEDIA



On your ministry's social media profiles, post the "THIS" poster and your group's responses to God's continued work in the world. Be sure to use the hashtag #ELCAYG2018.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- candle
- piece of poster board or newsprint with the word "CHANGE" printed in bold marker
- markers
- projector/screen
- computer with download or wifi capability to view video
- paper, pens/pencils

INTRODUCTION

As people gather, welcome them and encourage them to meet one another. As your session time nears, ask people to gather together. Be sure to thank them for being there.

When you're ready to begin say: **The focus of this session is Change. Change can feel good and it can feel uncomfortable.** Some people thrive on change, others find it stress-filled. Change can challenge and confuse us or it can confirm something for us. Today we are going to share experiences and thoughts of change in our lives, in our world, our society and our faith.

Gathering Prayer:

As you prepare to pray (the following prayer or your own), light the candle and explain that the candle represents the light of Christ in our midst and in our lives.

Dear God, life flows, time flows, everything changes one way or another. God, sometimes change is welcome and refreshing and sometimes change can scare us. We thank you for being with us just now as we share our own experiences and learn from each other and from you. We ask this through Jesus, amen.

Introductions:

Take time for introductions or re-introductions. Encourage people to share their names, why they came today and one thing they are looking forward to (in their life, not just in this session.)

WORD

Say: Today we're going to talk about "change" (and not pennies and quarters).

Ask:

- Can anyone here define 'change'?
- How do you feel about change?

Watch the following video clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvZKFBWFiQ>

After the clip ask:

- What are changes in music over the last few centuries?
- What did you discover while watching this video?
- What are changes we have seen and experienced...
 - In our world?
 - In our society?
 - In the church?
 - In myself?
 - In God? (or in our thinking about God)

God's Story:

Say: We're going to dig deeper into what the bible texts say about change. As you read and discuss the passages I encourage you to write your thoughts or questions, agreements or disagreements with the text that spring up from these readings and the discussion about "Change" on the poster board/large paper using the markers you have supplied.

Read **Deuteronomy 26:5-11**

Ask:

- Does anyone want to offer a one sentence summary?
- What does this passage tell us about change?
- What does the text bring out for you?
- What did you discover in hearing this text?
- In what ways are "change" presented here?

Say: Let's watch this video clip by Glennon Doyle Melton talking about life being both beautiful and brutal.

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYOR50iQ1Cg>

Ask: Have any of us here experienced a change that could be described with both words "brutal" and "beautiful"?

- How did this "brutiful" change shape you?
- How have you helped others change through their "brutiful" changes?
- Why do you think these changes are brutal and beautiful?

Say: Thank you everyone for sharing. Let's spend time with the question: "How have I changed in a specific way in my life?" When we take time to examine our changes and hear from others on how they have changed, it helps us feel more open to change and perhaps it's less scary. Let's take time to listen to each other describing changes we have experienced in ourselves and our lives.

When all who wish to share have done so, move on to the next scripture.

Ask someone to read **Romans 12:1-2**

Say: Faith involves change, it appears.

Ask:

- What do we think Paul means by "transformation"?
- How could that be possible?
- How about this – does God change?

Read Mark 6:1-6

Say: In these verses from Mark, Jesus, who has just performed miracles of healing and restoration of life, returns to his hometown. Jesus appears different to those who had known him earlier in life.

Ask:

- Who can offer a one sentence summary?
- What does this text 'do' to you?
- What changes do the people see in Jesus?
- Why do you think it was hard for the people to believe that Jesus is the Messiah?

Say: Douglas John Hall, the Canadian theologian, has written that love for another involves change simply because that 'other' simply does not stay put and the same. God, who loves, chooses to 'change' for the sake of God's love for the other – for us and all creation!

Douglas John Hall "God and Human Suffering (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1986) page 156

Our Story:

Say: Today we've spent time digging deeper into "change."

Ask: What are one or two take-a-ways about change that you have from today?

Thank everyone for sharing their thoughts and responses. *Say:* change is an inevitable part of life, God is with us in the midst of change, and continues to work through us for change. This week, look for change each day, anywhere – inside, outside, small or large. Take time to notice change and make notes of your observations.

SENDING PRAYER

God, your creation is dynamic and always moving just as our lives are dynamic with our own power, thought, feeling and community and dynamic in your grace. Help us not to fear change and help us to seek change that is good and whole for us and our world. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

After the prayer have people turn to their neighbor and draw the sign of the cross on their neighbor's forehead as you say a blessing based on the Serenity Prayer from Reinhold Niebuhr:

God grant you serenity to accept the things you cannot change,
 Courage to change the things you can,
 And the wisdom to know the difference

Say: Go in peace, celebrating God's ongoing presence in an ever-changing world!

THIS CHANGES **EVERYTHING**

SESSION 3

LEADER INFO

"Everything" is quite a concept. "Everything" can be overwhelming and it can be beautiful.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "Everything" as:

1. a: all that exists
b: all that relates to the subject
2. all that is important: you mean everything to me
3. all sorts of other things —used to indicate related but unspecified events, facts, or conditions

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/everything>, June 14, 2018)

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reads:

***"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."* (NRSV)**

Today we will share what the idea of "everything" means and does to us. It could make us feel small or it could give us a sense of pride in being part of the 'everything' of God's grace.

SOCIAL MEDIA



On your ministry's social media profiles, post the "EVERYTHING" poster and your group's responses to God's continued work in the world. Be sure to use the hashtag #ELCAYG2018.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- candle
- piece of poster board or newsprint with the word "EVERYTHING" printed in bold marker
- markers
- projector/screen
- computer with download or wifi capability to view video
- paper, pens/pencils

INTRODUCTION

Say: "Everything" is quite a concept. "Everything" can be overwhelming and it can be beautiful.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reads: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." (NRSV)

Today we will share what the idea of "everything" means and does to us. It could make us feel small or it could give us a sense of pride in being part of the 'everything' of God's grace.

Gathering Prayer:

As you prepare to pray, light the candle and explain that the candle represents the light of Christ in our midst and in our lives.

Dear God, our faith tells us that you are everywhere at every time and that everything flows from you and to you, is held by you and holds you. But it really is hard to understand! So just now, let us know that you are here now and that you hold us. Open us to you and to each other for Christ's sake, amen.

Introductions:

Take time for introductions or re-introductions. Encourage people to share their names and share something about our favorite kindergarten/early childhood memory.

WORD

Say: A young child who was amazed by something beautiful she was seeing said to her grandmother, "Oh Grandma! Everything is everywhere!"

Ask:

- Who would like to define "everything?" Give it a try.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "Everything" as:
 1. a: all that exists
b: all that relates to the subject
 2. all that is important: you mean everything to me
 3. all sorts of other things —used to indicate related but unspecified events, facts, or conditions (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/everything>, June 14, 2018)
- Share a time you had an experience like the young child above – maybe a sense of awe or some kind of perception of 'everything'!

Say: Let's watch Lauren Hill's video of her song "Everything is Everything" to hear what she has to say.

Show this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3_dOWYHS7I

(See lyrics on page 17 of this document. Make copies to share, if possible.)

Ask:

- What did you hear Lauren say she believes through these lyrics?
- How about based on what we defined "everything" to be just a few minutes ago?
- Are you clearer on what "everything" is yet?

God's Story:

Say: We're going to dig deeper into "everything" looking at bible texts. As we read and discuss please be sure to write your thoughts about "Everything" on the poster board/large paper using the markers supplied.

Read **Ephesians 1:15-23**

Ask:

- What might a one sentence summary of this one sentence be?
- Without thinking about what it means, what impact does this passage have on you?
- How about just verse 19? Let's hear it again.

Say: In nearly all English versions of the Bible the verse reads "all the fullness of God dwells..." The thing is, the phrase "of God" does not appear in the original Greek. "In him all the fullness dwells"

Ask: Why did English translators add "of God?"

Say: At the time this text was written 'Gnosticism,' a philosophy that stressed gaining secret knowledge, was very popular. "The Everything" (ta panta in Greek) was a kind of mystical achievement that came to those who 'strove mightily.' For Christians, then and now, "The Everything" is not an achievement for those who have earned it, but the reality of God's grace and mercy!

Ask:

- Does it make a difference to us whether it is "all the fullness of God" (a phrase that does appear later in Colossians) or "all the fullness"?
- Why or why not?

Read **1Corinthians 15:26-28** using the CEV translation printed here:

"Death is the last enemy to be brought to an end, since he has brought everything under control under his feet. When it says that everything has been brought under his control, this clearly means everything, except for the one who placed everything under his control. But when all things have been brought under his control, then the Son himself will also be under the control of the one who gave him control over everything so that God may be all in all."

Ask:

- Who wants to offer a one sentence summary?
- What is the 'feel' for you of these verses?
- Is there another way we might phrase "God is all in all?" Let's try it.

Our Story:

A Little Exercise in Macro and Micro

Say: Dictionary.com defines "Macro" as "anything very large in scale, scope or capability." It defines "Micro" as "anything extremely small in scope or capability."

Ask:

- What might a 'macro-everything' be?
- How is God present in 'macro-everything'?
- What might a 'micro-everything' be?
 - A hint of a possible answer. We are all sitting next to several of them!

"There's as many atoms in a single molecule of your DNA as there are stars in the typical galaxy. We are, each of us, a little universe." Neil deGrasse Tyson, Cosmos

Ask:

- What does it mean for faith when we acknowledge "everything" to be the whole universe – even dark energy?
- What does it mean for faith when we acknowledge "everything" to be the whole "me" (even our own dark energy?)

Ask:

- How would we summarize today's discussion?

Say: God is present and working in the world! God sent Christ for our salvation. God continues to CHANGE EVERYTHING! Thanks be to God for THIS!

Thank everyone for their responses, their sharing and their time. Let's take an opportunity to thank each other for participating in these times of sharing...

SENDING PRAYER

Dear God, we thank you that you are almighty and everywhere. But we thank you even more that you always choose to be with us, among us and in us as one who loves, who unites, who makes holy and makes whole. Be with us as one who changes everything in us each day to appreciate our own unique holiness and to share that in love and service to others. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

After the prayer have people turn to their neighbor and draw the sign of the cross on their neighbor's forehead and say these words: "You are a beloved child of God. The God of Everything!"

After all have finished say: Go in peace, sharing God's love in "This Changes Everything!"

 **We are, each of us,
a little universe.**

NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON 

LYRICS to "Everything is Everything" by Lauren Hill:

Everything is everything
 What is meant to be, will be
 After winter, must come spring
 Change, it comes eventually
 Everything is everything
 What is meant to be, will be
 After winter, must come spring
 Change, it comes eventually
 I wrote these words for everyone
 who struggles in their youth
 Who won't accept deception,
 instead of what is truth
 It seems we lose the game
 Before we even start to play
 Who made these rules?
 (Who made these rules?)
 We're so confused
 (We're so confused)
 Easily led astray
 Let me tell ya that
 Everything is everything
 Everything is everything
 After winter, must come spring
 Everything is everything
 I philosophy
 Possibly speak tongues
 Beat drum, Abyssinian, street Baptist
 Rap this in fine linen, from the beginning
 My practice...
 I philosophy
 Possibly speak tongues
 Beat drum, Abyssinian, street Baptist
 Rap this in fine linen, from the beginning
 My practice extending across the atlas
 I begat this
 Flipping in the ghetto on a dirty mattress
 You can't match this rapper slash actress

More powerful than two Cleopatras
 Bomb graffiti on the tomb of Nefertiti
 MCs ain't ready to take it to the Serengeti
 My rhymes is heavy like the mind of sister Betty
 (Betty Shabazz)
 L-Boogie spars with stars and constellations
 Then came down for a little conversation
 Adjacent to the king, fear no human being
 Roll with cherubims to Nassau Coliseum
 Now hear this mixture,
 where Hip Hop meets scripture
 Develop a negative into a positive picture
 Now everything is everything
 What is meant to be, will be
 After winter, must come spring
 Change, it comes eventually
 Sometimes it seems
 We'll touch that dream
 But things come slow or not at all
 And the ones on top, won't make it stop
 So convinced that they might fall
 Let's love ourselves and we can't fail
 To make a better situation
 Tomorrow, our seeds will grow
 All we need is dedication
 Let me tell ya that
 Everything is everything
 Everything is everything
 After winter, must come spring
 Everything is everything
 Everything is everything
 What is meant to be, will be
 After winter, must come spring
 Change, it comes eventually

Songwriters: Lauryn Hill / Lauryn N. Hill
Everything Is Everything lyrics
 © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC



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QUESTIONS?

gathering@elca.org

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