

**CREATED
TO BE**

2024 ELCA YOUTH GATHERING
JULY 14-21, 2024
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA



"I praise you, for I am
fearfully and wonderfully
made. Wonderful are your
works; that I know very well."

Psalms 139:14

Every three years, thousands of high school youth and their adult leaders from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 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.

So, you're interested in attending the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering...

...but you're already concerned about potential conflicts with sports, band, etc. and are wondering how to best have that conversation with your coach, band director, team leader, etc. Included in this document are some resources to help you out.

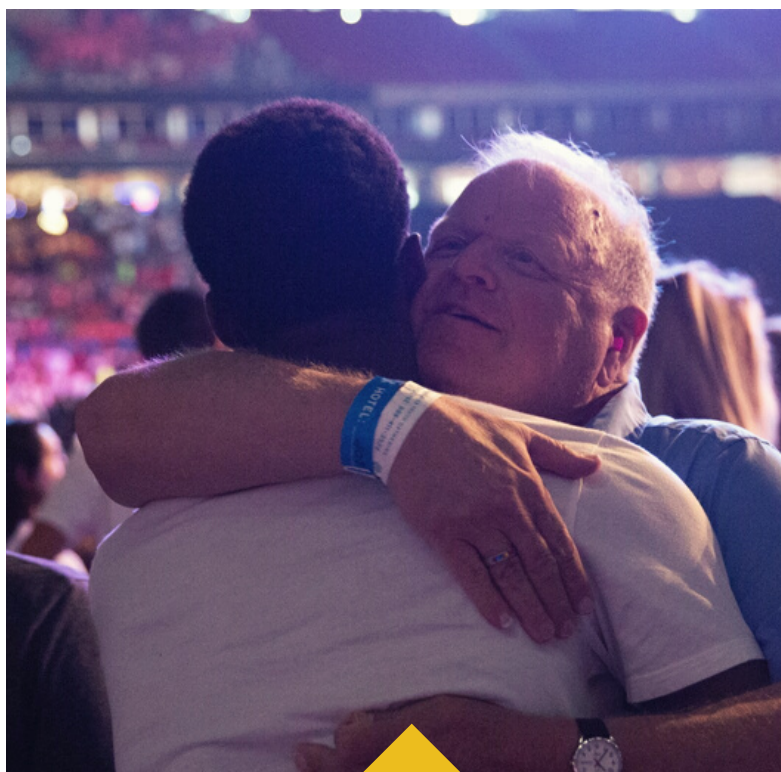
Erin is also willing to communicate directly with any coach, teacher, or leader as an official representative of Epiphany Lutheran Church (especially where multiple Epiphany students will experience the same conflict), if you pass along to me the name, contact information, and information about the specific activity/team/etc.

Conversation Guide

Answers to common questions about the Gathering, tips and tricks for making this trip work with other commitments, and important questions to ask your coach or leader.

Tips to Consider:

- Have this conversation EARLY. We know these dates a year in advance so that you can begin having this conversation NOW.
- Be prepared to put in extra work for your team ahead of and behind the Gathering if asked to do so.
- Emphasize the service learning aspect of this experience. The Gathering will *change* you for the better as a human being and as a teammate. You will grow as a leader, as a team player, and as a person.



Communicate early, include clear and complete information, and remind as often as needed.

What are the official dates of the ELCA Youth Gathering Trip including travel time?

Including travel to and from New Orleans, our group will be gone from Sunday, July 14 to Sunday, July 21, 2024.

What else is involved in the time commitment for this trip?

In addition to the trip itself, we will spend time throughout the program year (October-June) doing group building, leadership development, and fundraising, and diving into the *Boundless* theme for the event.

What makes this trip so special?

This trip is *not* a vacation. The Gathering is a year-long experience of service, relationship building, and skill-building that culminates in a week-long experience in New Orleans. In New Orleans, we will gather with thousands of students from across the United States and even other countries for four days of service, experiential learning, and relationship building. We will have the opportunity to learn from the people of New Orleans, hear incredible speakers about a variety of relevant topics, and above all experience the church in ways that are experienced nowhere else.

Because this event only happens every 3 years, students only have the opportunity to attend one or maybe two times in their entire lives.

Conversation Guide (cont.)

We want to help you make the Gathering a part of your faith timeline. If there is anything else we can do to support you in having these conversations with coaches, band directors, team leaders, etc. please don't hesitate to reach out!

Questions to Ask Your Coach:

- How can I adjust for being out of town these dates?
- What can I pick up ahead of and behind the Gathering to help the team?
- Will you please support me in my participation in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity?



Use the form letters on the next two pages as a basis for getting this conversation started.

We recommend starting this conversation as **early** as possible. Begin with the form letter sent as an e-mail, or handed directly to your coach, as much as a year in advance.

After initial conversations, remind your coach again periodically of this commitment and it's value to you: at the end of this year's season, during any winter/spring training, and again before next season begins.

Be a team player and a leader. You will grow in this coming year, and the Gathering and preparation will be a huge factor in that growth.

Don't be afraid to acknowledge what you know you will miss, but also be clear that this is a decision that is important to you. This is a skill you will carry with you for the rest of your life--choosing what's best for you between two important and valuable experiences.

PARENT LETTER

An editable form letter to use as an e-mail or letter to a coach or leader outlining the Gathering dates, commitment, and importance.

Hi **[Insert Coach/Director Name]**,

I wanted to reach out to you as far in advance as possible regarding an opportunity that **[StudentName]** has coming up that includes a significant conflict with their participation in **[TeamName]**. ***{Include details about any significant conflict that you know may be an issue.}***

Our church's triennial Youth Gathering takes place in 2024 in New Orleans, July 16-20. Travel dates will have the group leaving on Sunday, July 14 and returning Sunday, July 21. For most of the students participating, this event is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that involves education, faith growth, mission work, and community building. It is an opportunity that will impact them and their faith for the rest of their lives.

This event will involve high school youth and adults from all over the United States as well as several other countries around the world. The Gathering is a very service-focused event, including both in-kind offering and hands-on assistance to host cities. Participants will be invited to bring items of donation for the in-kind offering, and all groups will devote a day to hands-on service in New Orleans. In addition to the prominent service component, the Gathering is a time designated for building relationships among the students in our youth ministry, with other groups from Southern Ohio, and time for learning about local, national, and international concerns both through activities and through speakers.

I am trying to be proactive to see if there is anything I can do to ease the pressure for **[StudentName]** as they consider this opportunity wondering if they can make it work with their commitments they know they would have to **[TeamName]**. You and I both know that **[StudentName]** is fully committed to **[TeamName]**. ***{Insert personal examples of this commitment level here. For example, "He regularly shows up early for practices and games," "She has only missed X games in her time on this team," "He has served as a captain and is viewed as a leader among teammates," etc.}*** This opportunity will empower **[StudentName]** with leadership, service, and faith and they will come home from this trip a better teammate and human for **[TeamName]**.

The opportunity to attend the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans with our church is important to **[StudentName]** and to us as parents.

You may not even officially know this early what the **[TeamName]** commitments will look like in July 2024, but I wanted to reach out and be proactive to let you know about **[StudentName]** and our family's commitment to this opportunity with our church.

As a parent, I have great appreciation for you as a **[coach/teacher/leader]** and the work that you do. You have a significant influence in **[StudentName]**'s life, and your support of this opportunity would be greatly appreciated. I want to make sure we are working in partnership with you in any way we can.

If you have additional questions about this opportunity and it's importance, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or to our Director of Youth & Family Ministries, Erin Haligowski (ehaligowski@epiphanydayton.org or 937-266-7052).

Thank you so much in advance!

[ParentName]
[EmailAddress]
[PhoneNumber]

STUDENT LETTER

An editable form letter to use as an e-mail or letter to a coach or leader outlining the Gathering dates, commitment, and importance.

Hi **[Insert Coach/Director Name]**,

I wanted to reach out to you as far in advance as possible regarding an opportunity that I have coming up that includes a potentially significant conflict with my participation in **[TeamName]**. ***{Include any significant conflict that you know may be an issue – band camp, team conditioning, scrimmages/games, etc.}***

My church's triennial Youth Gathering takes place in 2024 in New Orleans, July 16-20. Travel dates will have our group leaving on Sunday, July 14 and returning Sunday, July 21. This event is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me that involves education, faith growth, mission work, and community building. It is an opportunity that will impact me and my faith for the rest of my life.

This event will involve high school youth and adults from all over the United States as well as several other countries around the world. The Gathering is a very service-focused event, including both in-kind offering and hands-on assistance to host cities. Participants will be invited to bring items of donation for the in-kind offering, and all groups will devote a day to hands-on service in Minneapolis. In addition to the prominent service component, the Gathering is a time designated for building relationships among the students in our youth ministry, with other groups from Southern Ohio, and time for learning about local, national, and international concerns both through activities and through speakers.

I am trying to be proactive to see if there is anything I can do to ease the pressure as I consider this opportunity wondering if I can make it work with the commitments I know I would have to **[TeamName]**. You and I both know that I am fully committed to **[TeamName]**. ***{Insert personal examples of this commitment level here. For example, "I regularly show up early for practices and games," "I have only missed X games in her my time on this team," "I have served as a captain and am viewed as a leader among teammates," etc.}*** This opportunity will empower me with leadership, service, and faith and I know that I will come home from this trip a better teammate and human for **[TeamName]**.

The opportunity to attend the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans with my church is important to me and to my family. I am willing to commit to extra make-up practices or work before and after the Gathering to make this opportunity happen.

You may not even officially know this early what the **[TeamName]** commitments will look like in July 2024, but I wanted to reach out and be proactive to let you know about my commitment to this opportunity with my church.

As a **[student/teammate]**, I have great appreciation for you as a **[coach/teacher/leader]** and the work that you do. You have a significant influence in my life, and your support of this opportunity would be greatly appreciated.

If you have additional questions about this opportunity and it's importance, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or to my Director of Youth & Family Ministries, Erin Haligowski (ehaligowski@epiphanydayton.org or 937-266-7052).

Thank you so much in advance!

[StudentName]