

ROCKY MOUNTIAN SYNOD YOUTH GATHERING PROPOSAL Draft

MISSION OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SYNOD (RMS)

Together we proclaim and embody God's unconditional love for the sake of the world.

MISSION OF RMS YOUTH GATHERINGS

God loves you no matter what, God's grace is yours to have and to share. We are called to serve God and others for the sake of the world through discipleship (Matthew 28), service (2 Corinthians 4:5), and proclamation of the word (Jeremiah 20 & Mark 16: 15).

VISION OF RMS YOUTH GATHERINGS

Youth gatherings are intended to be a place to equip our youth and their leaders to live into what God has called them to be as his faithful disciples. A youth gathering is an opportunity for youth to be gathered together as the body of Christ, learning from each other, and being sent out to live as Christ has called them into a life of discipleship, service, and sharing of the gospel. Remembering that we are a church who gathers at the table to share in Christ's meal and who are baptized to live and die in newness of life will inform all parts of our faith formation journey and is what grounds the vision of our gatherings and our life together in the RMS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. While the focus of the gatherings is centered on the youth, it is also an important event for adults and ministries to connect, network, and live into being the body of Christ, better together, as the RMS.

PURPOSE

Connection

Youth gatherings serve as a vehicle to connect our youth with one another across the landscape of the RMS. This is an opportunity for youth to experience what it can mean to be church, better together, outside of their own context, yet still in a safe space. In many instances this may be the only connection that our youth will have to the synod. It is here that we can encourage our youth to continue building relationships with one another – with those in their local areas and across the synod – as they leave a gathering with new relationships and ideas for collaboration. This is also a place where youth can reconnect after having engaged in other events that have been collaborative in our synod or the church-wide organization.

Deepening of faith

Gathering a group of youth away from what the normal routine allows for time and focus on a deepening of their faith. The opportunity exists to look at God and God in action through a different lens when the context and leadership are new and fresh. Youth crave thoughtful and deep conversation that relates to where they are in their faith journey; gatherings provide a safe space to explore that. Youth and their leaders are seeking ways to relate faith and spirituality to the everyday events in their lives.

Retreat

The lives that youth lead are often jam-packed with school, sports, extra-curricular activities, and time spent with families. A youth gathering can provide the space for a young adult to relax and let themselves be comfortable just being who they are with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Providing safe space to relax and take care of one's spiritual health is a benefit of this time away from the day to day tasks of life.

Take away

A youth gathering provides much instant gratification while you are actually at the event, but the work there is just the beginning. When we are able to provide connections that can go home with our youth – human connections, follow-up ideas/themes for study and contemplation, new partnerships for service and learning – then we have successfully planted a seed for being church, better together. This is also an area where connecting our leadership provides the opportunity for more collaboration in our own areas and contexts.

RMS YOUTH GATHERING PROPOSAL

Beginning in 2018, the RMS will sponsor a RMS Youth Gathering to be held each year in January. The youth gathering will be scheduled on the weekend of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and run Saturday afternoon through Monday morning. The youth gathering will be for middle school and high school youth, with joint and unique program tracks for each age group throughout the weekend. One gathering will allow for congregations to travel only once and meet the needs of both age groups in one setting. This is an important change logistically to improve access for all of our congregations and community.

The youth gathering will be held in different locations on a three-year cycle that will include Southern Colorado, Northern Colorado, and a travel year. The diverse geographic landscape of our synod informs the need to include different venues in a way that provides opportunities and greater access for all to attend our youth gatherings. In years when there is an ELCA Youth Gathering the RMS Youth Gathering will be held in Colorado.

A long term, scripture-based vision with corresponding theme development will be done for the triennium. The themes will be determined for each triennium by the RMS Gathering Leadership Team. This will allow for the area teams to start developing programmatic details far in advance.

The vision for the first three-year cycle is as follows:

2018 • Colorado Springs, Colorado • Church for the sake of the World

2019 • Estes Park, Colorado • Vocation and self-reflection

2020 • Albuquerque, NM • We are church, better together, sharing our gifts and stories.

Each triennium the vision shall remain and a theme will be developed with the vision as the guiding principle.

LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING STRUCTURE

Executive Team: The executive team will consist of five members who commit to a minimum of two years of service and third year 'ex-officio' availability. This is the team that will provide stability, vision and oversight of the RMS Youth Gathering.

Chairperson: The chair of the team will have responsibility for oversight of the the whole gathering. This person will work with the Executive and Area Engagement Team to provide direction and coordination. The chair will also work closely with the representative from the Office of the Bishop.

Office of the Bishop Representative Staff: The Office of the Bishop will provide staff support in areas such as contracts, budget, marketing, and communication to the wider synod. The Office of the Bishop will also provide an online collaboration tool, such as Basecamp, for use by the team.

Communicator: The communicator on the team will be the person who develops marketing information and communication amongst the team, the Office of the Bishop, and to the wider synod using multiple platforms of communication.

Large Group Program: The person in this position will have oversight of theme development and large group gatherings including responsibility for working with speakers, musicians, and the Area Engagement Team.

Registration: The registrar for the gathering will be the person to create and manage registration of participants, needs with the hotel in relationship to participants, and church or ministry group coordination.

Area Engagement Team: The Area Engagement Team is a minimum one-year commitment for focus on a particular gathering. This team will know the area in which we will hold the gathering and work to make the detailed aspects of the gathering flow. It is not a requirement to live in the area to be on this team, however, it is a requirement to be able and willing to travel to the area and dig into knowing the resources and aspects of that area. Some of the roles of this team are defined below and others may be added and supported dependent upon the location of the gathering in that year.

Area Coordinator: This person will be the lead in coordinating and communicating with and between the Executive Team and the Area Engagement Team. This person will work closely with the Office of the Bishop in securing hotel and other contract needs specific to the area event. This person will be identified early in the process and build the rest of the area engagement team with assistance from the Executive Team and will be the ongoing point of contact. This person's work may begin 1-2 years prior to their gathering but will be focused only on the gathering in their area.

High School Lead: This person will be responsible for the high school track of the gathering. In particular, this person will need to develop what the programming for high school will entail and how that will be communicated and engaged. This person will work closely with the Large Group leader of the Executive Team and the Middle School Lead.

Middle School Lead: This person will be responsible for the middle school track of the gathering. In particular, this person will need to develop what the programming for the middle school will entail

and how that will be communicated and engaged. This person will work closely with the Large Group leader of the Executive Team and the High School Lead.

Worship Lead: This person will work with the Large Group leader and the musicians and speaker to develop worship experiences.

Hospitality Coordinator: This person will work with the Area Engagement Team to provide resources, support, and people to support the gathering. They will develop a team of 15-20 volunteers who can be available during the gathering for logistical and program support. They also will work with the camps and other ministries who would like to have space for tables and displays.

SYNODICAL OWNERSHIP AND ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

This proposal envisions Youth Gatherings to be a ministry of the Rocky Mountain Synod, approved by the Synod Council and supported by the Office of the Bishop. As such, Youth Gatherings are to uphold the values and theological witness of the RMS, including abiding by all synod policies and safe haven guidelines.

To ensure that Youth Gatherings are accessible to every community around the RMS, are a reflection of the RMS' guiding principals for faith formation, and, ultimately, are financially sustainable, we suggest the Office of the Bishop provide the following support:

Budget / Financial Oversight: A budget for expenses and income that helps the planning team to plan realistically and wisely. The Office of the Bishop would take responsibility to communicate this budget to the team and/or chairperson and to assist in tracking the income and expenses. The Office of the Bishop will send out the checks and other payments on behalf of the gathering and communicate with the executive team timelines and other relevant information regarding payments. We also request that a budget of \$1,000.00 (or more) be in the synodical budget for the event.

Contracts: The representative from the Office of the Bishop will be responsible for working with the Chair and the Area Engagement Coordinator to establish and sign all major contracts including, but not limited to, hotel, other required accommodations and services, musicians, and speaker including travel.

Marketing and Communications: The Office of the Bishop will have all information and links for marketing on their website, email news, and any other pertinent outlets for communication. Synod Assembly and Theological conference will be a time to communicate the event as well. When it is appropriate, sharing resources for developing graphics or other marketing materials will be appreciated. Additionally, the Office of the Bishop will set up the registration so that registration can happen off of the synodical website and work with the Executive Team Registrar to communicate and share the information on registration.