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## THE LETTER

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AUBURN, NE

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**TO:** SENIOR YOUTH GROUP MEMBERS AND PARENTS  
**FROM:** SENIOR YOUTH GROUP FACILITATOR (SARAH BOGDANOFF)  
**SUBJECT:** 2019 LCMS NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING (NYG)  
**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 16, 2018  
**CC:** PASTOR RATHJEN  
BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**First**, my intent is that parents and respective Youth will read this letter together. You're receiving it because you and/or your Youth will be eligible to attend the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering (NYG) next year!

**Quick Intro:** At the Youth's request (and pending guardian approval, indicated by signature on The Covenant mentioned later) we'll try to spend a day or so in Minneapolis before the Youth Gathering begins, taking in the sights and learning our way around the city. Then, on the evening of the 11th, we'll experience our first Mass Event – filling up U.S. Bank Stadium (where the **Packers** play the **Vikings** sometimes) with 20-30,000 other LCMS Lutherans. The next few days will be spent moving between U.S. Bank Stadium and a large convention center where Bible studies, break-out sessions, and concerts will be held and booths, service projects, and all kinds of fun activities will be located. At the Youth Gathering, you will be able to experience everything from packing food for the hungry to flying down giant inflatable slides. Best of all, you'll grow in your faith and build nationwide friendships that will last a lifetime! The Youth Gathering may not be happening for another year almost, but getting there will take some doing.

**Before you read past this paragraph**, please take 5 minutes to go to the Senior Youth Group page on Trinity's Website. Click on the "More Upcoming Event News" tab, and watch the two very short videos about the Gathering that are posted there. (Here is a link, if that helps:  
<http://www.trinityaubne.org/senior-youth-group/#1487435866988-a117e8d4-dc01>.)

Now that you have watched the videos, I will try to explain why that was so important. There are a few things I am hoping you got out of that less-than-five-minutes (depending on your internet connection):

1. The scriptural focus of 2019's Gathering – **Psalm 46**. (More on this in The Covenant, which we'll get to a bit later, and in the months to come.)

2. Some of the “**Whys**” – God’s Word in different ways, Service, Community and TONS of other Youth, Memories - the list goes on and on!

(Now is a good time to start thinking of your own, personal “Why” – hint-hint, cough-cough, nudge-nudge...)

3. **The sheer amount of time, work, money, and other resources that goes into this event.** That’s not just here in Auburn, either! Trinity Youth Group on Sundays, fundraising, planning, and congregational support are just the tip of the iceberg. Please take just one more minute to think about all the people dedicating their lives, their profession, their free-time, and their funds to this - NATIONWIDE! Think especially of those getting ready in Minneapolis for tens of thousands of people to worship, learn, serve, stay, get around, eat, play, stay alive, etc. This is not an easy feat; this is a BIG deal. **They are committed. We need to be, too!**

Speaking of commitment, I want to quickly mention one instance that is a prime example of how important commitment really is. Rally Day Breakfast announcements started at church in mid-July. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, 10 of 11 kids sat in the Youth Room and committed to be there on August 26<sup>th</sup> to do our very first Youth Group fundraiser of the year. Communication about that big day continued pretty much every week via text, the website, and announcements after church. Even with all that, though, within a week of the event, 6 Youth dropped out. That’s right, only 4 of the 11 kids eligible to attend the NYG were there at church at 6am on the 26<sup>th</sup> to cook. Over half of the kids that had committed to be there had bailed. The point is not to be negative or call out something bad; the breakfast actually turned out pretty well! We got lucky and had a couple parents and other adults that were happy to step up and help out, and eventually a couple more kids showed up. It just needs to be said how difficult it is to plan and accomplish things like Fundraisers, other events, and even Youth Group on Sunday mornings, if participants can’t be counted-on to be there. Not everybody will always get lucky every time. Now...take Rally Day and multiply it by literally THOUSANDS, and that’s how much commitment is necessary to pull off something like a National Youth Gathering.

So, before we move on to boring details, take a moment to decide: **ARE YOU IN?** When something else comes up that you think might be fun, too, **ARE YOU STILL IN?** If another school, family, or friend-related obligation comes up, can you prioritize - **ARE YOU STILL STILL IN?** The commitment needs to start, right now.

There will be Bible Studies, there will be Fundraisers, there will be planning and packing and work. Your signatures on The Covenant (which we’ll get to in just another minute) will help me know that the commitment is there; keep that in mind as you read on!

The National Youth Gathering is not the only reason to come to Youth Group Bible Study on Sunday Morning. It’s not the only reason to do Fundraising. It’s not the only reason to work on strengthening your/your kids’ faith. All that said, it is **A** reason. Over the past year and a half, Youth Group involvement at Trinity has improved drastically! You helped out with the Church Christmas, taught Sunday School a few times, had a little fun painting your Youth Room, consistently showed up enough to do a Bible Study every. single. Sunday., and were even able to organize/complete a service event at the People’s City Mission in Lincoln. The best part? You did this pretty much all on your own! Now that you have **regular attendance** at Sunday morning Bible Study and have proven your **ability to serve**, it is time to get ready for the Gathering (WITHOUT losing track of either of those other two things).

I initially met with just the kids, and there are a couple reasons I did this:

1. Member's of Trinity's Senior Youth Group are confirmed. To me, this means they are no longer dependent on their parents/Sponsors to maintain and strengthen their faith; they are responsible for doing this themselves. This definitely doesn't mean they are on their own, though. Just like adults, they should have a community of fellow believers to work with. It is their show; I am just there to help them work together and serve as a mediator to the adult world as necessary.
2. The National Youth Gathering is an opportunity (for some their first/only opportunity so far) to "live" away from their parents. I want the kids to be able to see themselves with a degree of independence on this trip, all while keeping parents informed and onboard. I have probably watched about 18 hours of NYG media on YouTube in preparation for this event, and one of the quotes that stuck in my head is that "Every time a child goes away from home, they grow up a little bit more." This is a chance of a lifetime for Youth to learn how to grow in faith on their own, while still under their parents' roof.

All that said, there are no secrets! If any parents have any questions or concerns about what was discussed, let me know! "Minutes," of a sort, from that meeting (and all our meetings) are posted online, and I will continue to post any information having to do with the NYG on the Youth's Website for parents to keep up-to-date on whatever Youth might possibly maybe "forget" to pass along.

Now on-to the good stuff!

**Event Details:** The 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering will be held in Minneapolis, MN from 11-15JUL19.

- Registration and Other Program Elements at Minneapolis Convention Center
- Opening/Closing/Evening events at U.S. Bank Stadium
- Servant events throughout the Twin Cities

Events look to start about 9am (sometimes earlier) and go to about 10:30pm, with time before and after for travel, planning/scheduling, and "Community Group" study. These will be jam-packed days!

(Ref. Attachment 1: TENTATIVE SCHEDULE for more details.)

"Held every 3 years since 1980, the LCMS Youth Gathering (Gathering) provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God's people to learn more about Jesus Christ, the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity.

During the five days of the Gathering, youth spend time together in God's word, worship, service and fellowship with others from across the synod. This event is organized by LCMS Youth Ministry in Saint Louis, MO."

<http://www.lcmsgathering.org/faq-items/what-is-the-lcms-youth-gathering/>

**Additional Day:** The Youth have expressed interest in spending an extra day in Minneapolis for sight-seeing purposes. The most popular request seems to be the Mall of America, but there may be others (I heard there's phenomenal ice cream and a waterpark)! Since we will likely all be pretty beat after the Gathering, it is proposed we head up early on the 10<sup>th</sup> to explore/get checked-in to the hotel. Then

we'll do a little more exploring and attend the District Event/ NYG Opening on the 11<sup>th</sup>. We'll participate in the Gathering and then head home right after the Gathering ends at noon on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Travel:** The current plan will be to drive there from here in a rented 15 passenger van. There will probably be another vehicle that caravans with us; between the two, we can rotate Youth, and have plenty of room for a couple parents and everybody's luggage.

**Hotel:** Based on our needs, the NYG Committee will be assigning us a hotel with a block of rooms together. It may be downtown, or it may require a little bit of travel. Unless it's a family situation, the following will apply: Rooms will consist of a single gender, and adults will have their own bed. No one adult will be roomed with a single Youth, regardless of gender. To save costs, the goal will be to fit four people to a room. Depending on numbers and who goes, some rooms may not have an adult in the room, but all rooms will be near an adult's room and will have a phone with group adults' numbers and emergency numbers nearby for easy access.

**Getting Around:** Depending on our needs, we can either drive ourselves around, take the light-rail/ public transportation, or we may end up on a shuttle service, depending on where our hotel ends up.

**Adults:** The NYG Committee requires at least two adults attend with every group. Micah and I plan to fulfill that requirement. The NYG Committee also has a pretty strict recommendation of a total of 3-4 adults to accompany a group the size of the one TLC is planning to send. This recommendation is meant to ensure there is enough room at the Gathering events for kids. Trinity should adhere to that but may be on the high end due to our specific needs.

As of now, the goal is for parents accompanying the group to have their expenses covered (funded via an even split between other attendees). There are sections in The Covenant to clarify and document any interested adults' participation. If more than the allotted 3-4 (maybe 5, depending on our group's needs) adult spots for our group show interest, there will be a selection process.

Any adults attending will not really be treated as Chaperones; the NYG Committee recommends they act more like Parent "Shepherds," letting the Youth wander while keeping them safe and headed the right direction. One more thing to consider – the last gathering group recorded an average of ~20,000 steps a day (woo Fitbits)!

**Buddy System:** Throughout the Gathering, all Youth will be required to stay in a group of three or more. There may not always be an adult to go with every group.

**Cell Phones:** Every group of three or more will have at least one cell phone with group adults' numbers and emergency numbers programmed for easy access. Cell phones will not be taken away unless improper use is discovered. Youth are expected to keep cell phones in a pocket or bag during sessions or activities but can have them out during breaks.

**Friends:** Non-members and friends are encouraged to attend the National Youth Gathering with us! We ask that, if they want to come, they start participating. Right now! That's not only a fundraising thing, but we would want to get to know them and start talking with them about our beliefs and community. We also need their commitment at the same time as ours (ref. **Timeline** below). There is a spot in The Covenant to fill out with any friends' names, and then you will need to grab an extra copy of all these forms (extras will be kept on the counter in the Youth Room) and turn them in with yours.

**NE District Event:** Planning is still in the works, but the current thought is to do something on 11JUL18, in the hours leading up to the Gathering's Opening Event.

**Servant Event:** The Covenant has a little more detail, but the Servant Event will be a big focus for Trinity Senior Youth Group. The NYG is not all about us. Start thinking about whether you want to help off-site, on-site, or packing food!

**Extras:** The Covenant also has a little more detail on some additional fun things to think about, if interested, like a 5K run/walk, choir, symphony, and/or dance troupe (ref. **Timeline** below, too, for when more info will be available on those things – ask me if I forget).

**Budget Estimate:** (See tentative breakdown in Attachment 2.)

The intent is for families to supply the \$150.00 down payment with registration (except Parent “Shepherds,” whose registration will come from the Youth Account). After that, the Youth Treasurer and I will coordinate for the hotel down payment, travel arrangement costs, other miscellaneous costs, and registration remainders. As of now, that total is looking like \$1418.33, but we hope to get that down with Fundraising efforts (see below and The Covenant for more detail on fundraising). If we get to the point fundraising where we can refund the \$150.00 down payment for registration, then thanks be to God and we will!

By signing The Covenant, families agree to supplement the Youth’s fundraising as necessary to fully fund their family’s attendees. A chart will be maintained (updated at least monthly by the Youth Treasurer) in the Youth Room, tracking the Youth’s Fundraising Goal and the (ideally dwindling) expected amount each Youth’s family is responsible for at the 01MAY19 deadline. Please stop by on Sunday mornings to check in!

NOTE: Any families with concerns about funding can always contact me to talk through options! Please don’t think that money has to be something that automatically holds Youth back from attending.

**Timeline:** (NYG & [Trinity-Specific](#)):

00SEP17	→	Media Kits Available
00FEB18	→	Initial Information Mailer Sent
00AUG18	→	Registration Mailer Sent (Keep Congregation ID Handy)
05SEP18	→	Online Registration Opens (Data Entry Only)
<a href="#">16SEP18</a>	→	<a href="#">Letter and Paperwork to Youth and Parents</a>
<a href="#">07OCT18</a>	→	<a href="#">Paperwork Due (Commitment)</a>
<a href="#">17OCT18</a>	→	<a href="#">Youth Facilitator Completes Online Registration</a>
17OCT18	→	Actual Registration Allowed (First-Come, First-Served)
<a href="#">17OCT18</a>	→	<a href="#">Youth Facilitator Sends Registration Material</a>
00NOV18	→	Registration Confirmations (Officially Accepted)
00FEB19	→	Dancers/Choir/Symphony Try-Outs Info
00FEB19	→	5K Information/Registration/Info
01MAR19	→	Last Day of Regular Registration
02MAR19	→	Registration Rate Increases
00MAR19	→	PALS (Primary Adult Leaders) Find Out Hotel Assigned
<a href="#">00MAR19</a>	→	<a href="#">Parking Information Should Also Be Available</a>
00APR19	→	Hotel Deposit Due (One Night Deposit for Each Room)
00APR19	→	Find out more about NE District Events
01MAY19	→	Full Payment Due and Registration Closes
29MAY19	→	Last Day for Subs/Cancels (\$100 is Un-Refundable)
	→	Servant Event Assigned – <a href="#">Send out Packing List!</a>
<a href="#">07JUL19</a>	→	<a href="#">Church Service for Youth Going to NYG</a>
10JUL19	→	Travel to MN, Check In, Register, Explore!

11JUL19	→	NE District Event and Opening Mass Event!
12JUL19	→	NYG!
13JUL19	→	NYG!
14JUL19	→	NYG!
15JUL19	→	Closing Mass Event, then Drive Home!
21JUL19	→	<a href="#">Youth Turn in their Reports/Pictures/Etc.</a>
04AUG19	→	<a href="#">Youth Presentation to Congregation</a>

NOTE: While there are dates for late registration and cancellations, this costs money and is a lot of paperwork hassle. Trinity Senior Youth Group can and should follow through with the plans being made. IF, however, plans change, just let me know and we will work through it!

**Fundraising:** As of now, the money that the Youth fundraises is the only source of funds (outside of family contributions) going toward this 2019 NYG trip. There may be an amount in the Youth Sinking Fund eventually, but that is not being counted on at this time. Please keep this in mind as you review The Covenant and plan your participation in upcoming Fundraisers. Attendance at fundraisers will be tracked, and funds may be divided proportional to attendance if participation is determined to be ... lopsided.

**Meetings:** Apart from concentrated planning sessions with the kids after Sunday Morning Youth Group, I am not a huge fan of meetings about things that can be communicated in writing and read at convenience. If that just does not work for you and you would like to sit down and talk with me, or with all of the parents, I am more than happy to set it up! Just let me know.

**Follow-Up:** In the Spring of next year, there will be a follow-up letter requesting a guardian's signature approval for each Youth on things like Hotel Info/Rooming List, an Approved Driver List, Additional Day Plans, etc. There will also be a Packing List after our Service Event is assigned and probably a ton of other updates. In the meantime, stay tuned on the website!

**One Final Note:** If parents have any feedback or recommendations on any of the above (or below), please let Sarah know! Email is always good, but text/call/talking on Sunday works, too. Feel free to poke around the NYG website (link posted right after the two videos on the Youth Group's Website).

**Final Final Note:** I know that the kids prefer to communicate via their text group, but it is not my intent to keep anything hidden from the parents. If you would like me to contact you with website updates or text summaries, I can, just let me know that, too!

**ACTION NEEDED:** Please read through The Covenant (Attachment 3), determine your family's commitment level, and submit Attachments 3-8 with a \$150.00 down payment. (All respective forms must be filled out for both Youth Group Members and Adults; however, there is no need to supply a \$150.00 check for Parent "Shepherd" applicants.) **Please do this no later than 07OCT18. This will allow me to get all the data entered and a check ready to send before the 17OCT18 mail-in date.**

NOTE: Checks should be made out to "Trinity Youth Group," as all payments to the NYG Committee will come from their Youth Account. (We can do money order/cashier's check, too, but this will keep things simple.)

**ACTION NEEDED:** Please work together, parents and Youth, to write up a paragraph on WHY you want to attend the 2019 LCMS National Youth Gathering (remember, I mentioned that earlier and gave you a little nudge). Take this seriously! Consider it somewhat of an



application to go. We will be taking about everybody's responses during future Sunday Bible Studies, so be ready to explain and share! Turn this in with the rest of your forms.

Disclaimer - I will not have time to be chasing people down during regular business hours, so prepare to get repetitive late-night or early-morning phone calls/knocks on the door if I haven't heard from you! You can give everything straight to me, put it in my church mailbox and let me know it's there, send to me in the mail, or give it to Micah or Pastor to give to me; either way, everything should end up with me.

Here's my information: Sarah Bogdanoff (619)993-1120  
2406 R Street [sarah.e.bogdanoff@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.e.bogdanoff@gmail.com)  
Auburn, NE 68305

**Completely Un-related:** I will be working the last Sunday in September through possibly the second Sunday in November. The last thing I want is to lose the momentum the kids have built up as far as Sunday Morning Youth Group attendance. I heard such awesome things about the Youth's parents subbing while I was out of the state earlier this year, that I figured I should probably go ahead and ask for that help again. There is a sign-up sheet on the Youth Room door, and I will check in as seems necessary or talk to others if there are still open spots when we get closer to the end of September. Thank you very much for any help we can get!

The Youth have chosen to keep going with a really easy and interesting video series called "The Story." It's kept in the cabinet in the Youth Room, and the kids know how to run the Playstation to watch the DVDs. There is a book that goes with the DVD, too. It contains TONS of discussion questions; we usually pick three or four of the more interesting ones and see how the conversation goes from there.

**Regarding both the NYG and the Substitute Facilitator Thing:** Trinity's Youth Group is a blessing; your encouragement and participation makes a world of a difference!

#### ATTACHMENTS:

1. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
2. TENTATIVE BUDGET BREAKDOWN
3. "THE COVENANT" (INTENT/COMMITMENT LETTER)
4. PARTICIPANT WORKSHEET
5. SPECIAL NEEDS WORKSHEET
6. ADULT LEADER WORKSHEET
7. MEDICAL CONSENT AND LIABILITY RELEASE FORMS
8. PICTURE PERMISSION SLIP (ONLY IF NONE ON FILE FOR YOUR YOUTH)

