



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH *of Alamo Heights*

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Dear Partners in Ministry,

My name is Dianna Hopkins, and I am currently serving as the volunteer Synod Coordinator for the 2009 Youth Gathering in New Orleans. My full-time ministry is at Christ Lutheran Church where I serve as the Director of Faith Formation & Family Life.

In January, all the Synod Coordinators across the country were invited to New Orleans to be trained and to receive information about the 2009 Gathering. This Gathering will be a very different experience than any held before. While I was at this training, I heard someone sum up the Gathering in this way- "This isn't your mother's Gathering...this is the Mother of all Gatherings!" I laughed then but now as I look at the overall picture, I think that statement isn't too far from the truth.

This year the theme is "Jesus, Justice, and Jazz", with a large focus on service, and I have to say this may be my favorite as it is extremely relational to the youth and shows how we can impact a city so greatly. This gathering will be very different from others. So, to help explain differences from previous gatherings, especially within the registration process, I will be holding four informational meetings in the next two months throughout the Synod. I'm asking that each congregation send a staff member or volunteer to one meeting. I know a few congregations may be hesitant to send youth to New Orleans, especially after Katrina had such a devastating effect. However, I strongly encourage you to at least attend the meeting, and let me share with you what I saw, learned, and know.

During this meeting I will provide critical information on things such as the registration process, transportation to and from the Gathering, transportation while in New Orleans, hotel accommodations, safety, what to expect from the 2009 Gathering, and so much more. Additionally, I have resources for you to take back to your congregation including a video about Katrina's impact, and a slide show of pictures of the city, dome, and convention center. Here are the dates and locations of the meetings:

First Lutheran, San Marcos	Thursday, April 17	10:00am-1:00pm <i>(lunch provided)</i>	RSVP by April 10
Immanuel Lutheran, Alice	Saturday, June 21	1:00pm-4:00pm	RSVP by June 14
St. Martin's Lutheran, Austin	Thursday, June 26	6:30pm-9:30pm <i>(light dinner provided)</i>	RSVP by June 19
Christ Lutheran, San Antonio	Sunday, June 29	2:00pm-5:00pm	RSVP by June 22

So that we can set-up at each location and have enough materials available, it is important that you RSVP before the deadlines above by calling or e-mailing me. When you RSVP, please let me know which meeting you plan to attend, and how many from your congregation are coming.

Registration packets are being mailed in March from ELCA, and registration will open in January. After all our congregations are registered and when we are closer to the date of the Gathering, I will hold an additional meeting *in each conference* for your adult leaders and sponsors to attend. The dates for this Adult Leader Meeting will be set in early December, and another letter will be sent out to all registered congregations.

I know you and the youth in your congregation will have an amazing experience at the Gathering. It is my hope to be of assistance to you as you journey forward with registration and preparing for this mission experience. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me using my e-mail address listed below. You may also contact Whitney Myers or Heather Hansen, Synod Youth Ministry Co-Coordinators at the synod office.

Many Blessings,

Dianna M. Hopkins

Dianna M. Hopkins, Synod Coordinator for the 2009 National Youth Gathering

