



## October 2018 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

Cathy and I were privileged to travel with our Synod youth and home team leaders on the ABT Synod bus trip to and from the CLAY (Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth gathering) 2018 in Thunder Bay. Soon you will read some of my thoughts regarding the CLAY gatherings in the October-November edition of the *Canada Lutheran*. Here is the full article:

I'm already counting the days to CLAY 2020, the joint youth gathering between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church in Canada, which will take place in Calgary, AB., on the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT).

I'm already counting the days to CLAY 2020 because I'm a youth gathering fanatic. I've been to several, well thirteen gatherings, and only missed two since being ordained a Pastor because I was facilitating a youth journey to the Lutheran Centre in Mexico City, and because I had just received a call to serve as Assistant to the Bishop.

I'm counting the days. Let me tell you why:

The bus trip. There is nothing better than travelling for several days on a packed bus handing out snacks, teasing, laughing, watching movies, singing, worshipping together, sharing the Eucharist, packing and unpacking. Some of my fondest and most vivid memories of Gatherings are of the bus trip. It is true, that it is all about the journey not the destination.

Forming community. There is nothing better than conversation, opportunity for prayer, listening, learning, building relationships with youth and leaders...and knowing that we are not alone.

Leadership development. There is nothing better than encouraging and affirming gifts for leadership in youth. Gathering after gathering, whether national or synodical, youth are given opportunities to share in and develop their leadership skills. Reading scripture at worship, being in charge of loading a bus, leading in prayer each morning as the bus doors close and the journey continues, gathering in small groups. Walking with a youth who begins as a gathering participant, becomes a home team leader and then storyteller at CLAY 2018.

Hearing stories from and learning from the youth. There is nothing better than hearing and learning from the youth. Gathering at CLAY 2018 under the theme, "Threads," there was much time spent on story-telling, story-tending, and what it truly means to listen. Five Large Group Gatherings (LGG) tended to the following themes/questions, including: How to listen to the

stories of others, How to trust God in our unravelling, Where God fits within our stories, Good news stories from God, and Where do we go from here as unfinished but beloved children of God? Throughout CLAY 2018, there were opportunities for all to share our own stories and practice tending to the stories of others, with Home Team members, strangers, and new friends, and even Bishops!

Working together. There is nothing better than working together toward a common goal. At CLAY 2018, for example, with different home teams and CLAY volunteers, the youth continued to fulfil their commitment to address issues such as homelessness and unaffordable housing through the National Youth Project. By first learning of the issues contributing to poverty and homelessness, and then acting and advocating in supporting the local networks and agencies through partner programs, the youth visited a mock homeless shelter, gathered/donated socks, and sent postcards to the Federal Government and local Members of Parliament, in hopes of raising awareness and advocating for a greater responsibility and accountability in addressing the underlying causes of homelessness.

Learning together. There is nothing better than a common learning experience. While at CLAY 2018, for example, participants took part in the second-largest KAIROS blanket exercise in the world, and the largest ever by youth. This learning experience helped participants gain a better understanding of colonization and the process of displacement endured by Indigenous Peoples here in Canada. De-briefing in home teams which followed, was facilitated by Indigenous Elders and Leaders who were also present to provide support during the exercise.

Worshipping together. There is nothing better than singing, praying, laughing, crying, dancing, receiving, giving, Eucharist together.

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Oh, and I'm counting the days to the Synod of Alberta and the Territories 2019 Youth Gathering, June 3-5! Watch for further information coming soon.

In Christ Jesus –  
Shalom,  
+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

*"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)*