



This past week, July 22-26, we in the ELCA experienced one of those regularly recurring miracles in our lives together as 37,000 young people, chaperones, and other leaders headed to the Lutheran Youth Gathering. But this year was different. Read on!

Dear Partners in Ministry:

Before Hurricane Katrina, the Gathering was scheduled to be in New Orleans. After Katrina, Gathering planners met and prayed and decided that the city needed the Gathering as much as the Gathering needed the city. This 37,000-strong convention is the largest post-Katrina gathering to hit New Orleans.

But what was different? **Service.** Every youth and chaperone from this Gathering went out to do a day of service. Remarkable projects were involved. Some cleaned city parks. Some read stories to school age children. But some rode boats forty-five minutes in order to replant wetlands. What were their instructions you ask? Watch out for red ants, alligators and snakes (true story)! Another group went to a pauper's cemetery and cleaned out brush and debris. They found themselves also reburying bones, grateful that they were able to pray for God's blessing on the individuals and families represented there. The mayor of New Orleans, C. Ray Nagin, issued a proclamation declaring July 24 "A Special Day of Honor" on the ELCA and the gathering's volunteers for contributing to the city's recovery.

Many congregations from the Minneapolis Area Synod have youth and youth workers and volunteers at this historic event. As they return, we hope you will listen—over and over again—to their stories and will share in their excitement. The verse in Matthew 5 comes to mind "*No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.*" Let us then all listen, together, to these stories of faith in action and put these stories front and center in our synods and congregations lives. Will you share these stories with us so we can share them with others who were not able to go? Please call or email us if you can (**details below).

This is one of those things that we do as a whole church that makes a difference in a huge number of lives. There are many more, and you'll continue to hear about them in these letters. We also have many more stories and resources for mission support and stewardship always available, updated, and waiting for your use at <http://makingchristknown.wordpress.com>. Please check these resources regularly!

We, like you, are experiencing a significant slump in our income over the summer. I ask you to look at your budgets and consider an additional gift to your synod at this time. Thank you for your faithfulness to this ministry we share. May the generosity of grace and the excitement of service fill you with joy!

Faithfully,

Glenn Ose, bishop's associate
Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA

**We would LOVE to highlight and share some reflections, stories and highlights from youth who attended the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering: Jesus, Justice and Jazz. Does your youth, volunteer, youth worker or congregation have a story you would be willing to share with the whole synod? Call or email Rachel Swan at 612-230-3311 or r.swan@mpls-synod.org for details.