

MEMO

To: ELCA Synod Bishops and Synod LYO/Youth Ministry Staff
From: The Board of the Lutheran Youth Organization, ELCA
Re: Call for Voting Delegates for 2009 LYO Convention

The 2009 Lutheran Youth Organization Eighth Triennial Convention will be held July 26 to July 30, hosted at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS. The Board of the Lutheran Youth Organization has determined the allocation of voting delegates from each ELCA synod for this next Convention in accordance with the current Constitution, and is extending this invitation to service.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16-17)

In this passage Paul announces the sole qualification for salvation, for full inclusion among God’s people: faith in the life-giving righteous-ness of God revealed in the gospel. The Lutheran Youth Organization is deeply committed to living out this standard, as affirmed in its stated purposes and witnessed throughout its twenty year history within the ELCA:

*--to exhibit the inclusive unity that is God’s will for the church;
--to actively seek and encourage membership from all people, regardless of culture, color, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or ability. (Constitution of the Lutheran Youth Organization of the ELCA, 2.01.i and 2.01.j)*

The current Board of the Lutheran Youth Organization intends that the 2009 LYO Convention will be a strong sign of this inclusive unity, in the church and for the world, in keeping with the church’s stated strategic priority to *“pursue ardently the ELCA’s commitment to becoming more diverse, multicultural and multi-generational in an ever-changing and increasingly pluralistic context...”* (Strategic Priority #4, Plan For Mission, April 2003)

In pursuit of this community of full inclusion in a pluralistic world, the Board is prayerfully inviting each synod to identify and send a richly diverse group of **up to 8 gifted and engaged young disciples** to the Eighth Triennial Convention of the LYO, July 26-July 30 in Hattiesburg, MS. We strongly urge that the composition of this group of up to 8 voting delegates include:

- ***preferably three, and at least two, young people of color or whose primary language is other than English.***¹
- ***at least one definitely-abled young person.***²
- **The Board asks that there be no more than 5 youth of European American descent in any group of 8 synod voting delegates.**

If the synod group is less than 8 young people, then **for every two youth of European American descent there shall be at least one youth of color or whose primary language is other than English, or one definitely-abled youth.**

In addition, the Board strongly recommends that synods offer intentional welcome as voting delegates to young persons who may be lesbian or gay, in keeping with ELCA Churchwide Assembly Resolution CA05.05.18. This resolution was passed at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly in Orlando, Florida, and states: “RESOLVED, that this church welcome gay and lesbian persons into its life (as stated in Churchwide Assembly resolutions in 1991, 1995 and 1999), and trust pastors and congregations to discern ways to provide faithful pastoral care for all to whom they minister.”

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Lutheran Youth Organization, the Board of the LYO invites young people from synods across this church to join us in making the 2009 LYO Convention a powerful and shining example of gospel diversity for all God’s people, lighting the way for the next 20 years:

“...set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

All synods will receive separate instructions for the registering of voting delegates, and **up to two adult leaders** (if two, then it is recommended that they be one of each gender). These complete instructions will be provided in December directly to all synod offices as well as online (www.elca.org/lyo), and a new on-line registration process will be open from **January 20 to April 1, 2009**. Please feel free to direct questions about this call for voting delegates to ELCA Youth Ministry staff who serve with the Board and provide leadership for the planning of the LYO Convention:

Dianha Ortega-Ehreth, Assistant Director for Youth Ministry, ELCA
Dianha.Ortega@elca.org
1-800-638-3522, ext. 2581
773-380-2581 (direct line)
773-380-2109 (fax)

Bill Bixby, Director for Youth Ministry, ELCA
Bill.Bixby@elca.org
1-800-638-3522, ext. 2459
773-380-2459 (direct line)
773-380-2109 (fax)

- ¹ In the ELCA, the term “person of color” denotes an individual who identifies with one of the following ethnic communities: African Descent; Asian American or Pacific Islander; American Indian and Alaska Native; Latino/Latina; Arab and Middle Eastern; or Multi-Ethnic.**
- ² In the ELCA, the term “definitely-abled” is used to refer to any person with a challenging condition that can be physical, cognitive or social/emotional. The focus of the ELCA’s ministry with these young people is on their abilities, powers and callings within the church and the world.**