

National Youth Gathering Returning to Orlando in 2007

CHOSEN, the 2007 National LCMS Youth Gathering, will take place July 28-August 1, 2007, at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando.

It had been announced at the 2004 Gathering in Orlando that New Orleans would host the 2007 Gathering. However, with less than 21 months until the 2007 event, the Youth

city be selected for the 2007 Gathering."

Deliberations included consultation with the Board for District and Congregational Services, the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, Morial Convention Center authorities, LCMS Risk Management and LCMS Travel and Meeting.

Gathering requires 500,000 square feet of convention space, a venue for 35,000 participants for [mass] events, 14,000 hotel rooms within walking distance or a 15-minute shuttle ride, and food options in a price range and of a volume to feed a crowd of teenagers. With less than two years to plan, we simply cannot wait to find a city and expect to

New Orleans natives. The DCS Board expressed unanimous approval for the move to Orlando; similar endorsement for New Orleans was not expressed.

In an email addressed to Rev. Dittmer, Gene Menzel, Executive Assistant for Parish Services in the LCMS Southern District, expressed understanding of the Gathering's decision to leave

not something we have in great supply.

"Choosing to leave New Orleans is an emotionally difficult decision to make. It is a vibrant place for the Gathering, its people and leaders have been generous to our youth. The reality of having to make this move is not one we take lightly," Dittmer continued. "2007 would have been the third visit by the National Youth Gathering to New Orleans in the event's 30-year history."

The 2007 Gathering will use Orlando as a hub for a "dramatic array of Servant Events," according to Mark Kiessling, Program Director for the event. "Projects will include opportunities for youth to impact our host city as well as hurricane impacted areas along the Gulf Coast, from Florida to Texas."

LCMS Servant Events will offer pre- and post-Gathering serving opportunities in the impacted region for construction, environment and human care assistance in 2007 as well as significant servant opportunities



Ministry Office and the National LCMS Youth Gathering, with unanimous approval from the Executive Committee of the Board for District and Congregational Services, will heed the recommendation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Risk Management and Insurance Office that, "without a critical path/timeline established as to when it is estimated that New Orleans could be rebuilt to accommodate the 35,000+ individuals in 2007 coupled with [the] need to continue [the] planning process, it is recommended that an optional

A meeting with officials in early October revealed that "the reality of insuring the five-day youth event in New Orleans to allow for the integrity of the event's program to be realized, would be extremely difficult," according to an October 14 statement from the Gathering office.

Following Katrina, the Youth Ministry Office and LCMS Travel and Meeting inquired about potential space and dates for the Gathering in six other US cities.

"The reality we face," shared Rev. Terry Dittmer, Director for Youth Ministry, "is that the

book a location at a reasonable price."

Of the cities contacted, only Orlando had the necessary dates, hotel, and convention space available at an "impressively affordable" cost. Orlando was home for the 2004 Gathering, Beyond Imagination.

The rationale to move to Orlando was endorsed by the Gathering Executive Council at an emergency meeting held in St. Louis on October 4. Members of the Gathering Executive Council included individuals also serving the LCMS Southern District Disaster Relief Office and

the city. Menzel writes, "I accept that the YMO and planners must make some major decisions and get things in place to be ready for 2007. We do not feel that we are being abandoned as I am certain that the 2007 Gathering will still have a flavor of New Orleans no matter where it will be held."

Youth Ministry plans for an October 7 announcement to the Church regarding the venue

District Senior High Youth to Engage in "Immortal Combat"

Florida-Georgia District senior high school youth will gather in Jacksonville, FL, next March to engage in 'Immortal Combat' — learning to be equipped for the challenges the world presents.

As the Gathering announcement elaborates, "We live in a world that challenges us daily — and God has called us to wage war with His weapons and bring to our world the peace and hope found in our Savior Jesus!"

Pastor Vic Belton will be the Gathering speaker, and Pastor Paul VonWerder will lead the Bible Study. Musical group FUSEBOX will lead Gathering praise and worship.

The March 3-5, 2006, Gathering will be centered in the Radisson Riverwalk Hotel in Jacksonville. Cost is \$135 per person based on four people

per room, covering housing, all events, a pizza/munchie buffet on Friday night and a box lunch on Saturday. Those who register



by January 10 will receive a \$20 per person discount. All registration materials and payment are due by February 1.

All registrants will participate in an off-site Servant Event assisting with a mobile food pantry for a major distribution

event. Each participant is being asked to bring two or more non-perishable food items to be donated to Jacksonville-area food banks as the Ingathering Mission Offering.

The Gathering offering will be donated to the ministry of the Florida-Georgia Mission Planting funds, which provides startup monies to establish new ministries in the District.

Co-chairing the Gathering planning committee are DCEs Heidi Bierlein and Esther Barg. Committee members include DCE Jeff Wielert, DCE Dennis Rach, Pastor Tim Droegemueler, Megan Armstrong-Miessler, Danielle Heffern and Pastor Marc Kappel.

Complete registration information is available online through the Florida-Georgia District web site, www.flga-lcms.org. □

"The LCMS does care about the people and congregations of Louisiana and the Gathering desires to return to New Orleans one day. CHOSEN will involve massive opportunity for participants to serve hurricane-impacted areas and hurting people — in a safe, viable environment for our young people. And the Gathering will do what for 30 years it has done by the grace of God — nurture and affirm young people in the faith and provide opportunities for youth and adults to boldly come together in the name of Jesus to witness their salvation in Him." - Rev. Terry Dittmer, director of LCMS Youth Ministry

shift were delayed by a request from Louisiana Lieutenant Governor, Mitch Landrieu that the city be allowed more time to demonstrate its viability to accommodate the Gathering.

New Orleans officials remained hopeful that the five-day delay would provide time for more answers to numerous questions raised about the city's plan for redevelopment and its impact on the Gathering. On October 11, New Orleans representatives asked the Gathering to delay yet another 60-90 days before making any decision. Dittmer stated, "Given the nature of the Gathering, time is

in the springs and summers of 2006, 2007, and 2008. Southern District representatives have shared that numerous smaller groups serving the region over a longer period of time will be "far more manageable" than hosting the entire Gathering. To learn more about Servant Events available visit the LCMS Youth Ministry Web site at www.lcms.org/youth.

Registration for the 2007 National LCMS Youth Gathering will open in the fall of 2006. For more information, visit the Gathering Web site at www.lcmsgathering.com. □

LCMS Youth Ministry Unveils New Logo



Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Youth Ministry has a new look.

According to the Youth Ministry web site, the new logo features three fish, drawing from an ancient symbol for the Christian church, to represent the focus of the LCMS vision for youth ministry. The logo fish are "cross-eyed" suggesting that all youth ministry first focuses on Christ and strives to help build

a young person's relationship with his or her Savior.

The use of three fish calls to mind our triune God and represents the relational nature of youth ministry including relationships with God, with each other, with adults and family members and with the local congregation. Building strong relationships is a key element in effective youth ministry. With a bit of humor, the logo is ap-

propriate for youth ministry in that fish and youth both travel in schools. The fish "swim" together, focused on Christ.

The new logo replaces the two versions of the butterfly logo used to mark LCMS Youth Ministry over the past 23 years. The new logo was designed by Rev. Terry Dittmer, Director of LCMS Youth Ministry, and graphically interpreted by Steve Teson of St. Peters, MO. □

