



## Reflections on Camp Noah

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Meet LYO Vice-President Walter M.L. Hampton II

Youth Gathering 2006

My San Antonio Experience

Teen from Mexico Visits Sayre Congregation before Youth Gathering

September 11, Five Years Later

Remembering Katrina



By Elizabeth Elterich, AiM, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Bethlehem

*(Ed. Note: Camp Noah is a weeklong, faith-based day camp offered for elementary-age children in grades K-6 who have experienced disaster. It is staffed by trained camp counselors and is supported additionally by a local mental health professional. Camp Noah combines disaster recovery support for children with fun-filled recreation to form a unique and healing experience. Elizabeth Elterich served as a counselor at Camp Noah in July.)*

Genesis 6-8 tells the familiar story of Noah and the flood, in which God destroys all the earth except for Noah, his family, and two of each kind of living creature on the earth. In the end, God makes a covenant with God's people, promising that "never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be flood to destroy the earth." As a sign of the covenant, God places a rainbow in the sky, saying, "When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

It was this story that we used each day of Camp Noah to help children from kindergarten through sixth grade come to terms with all they had experienced during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita along the Gulf Coast in 2005.

There had been four long training sessions for those of us who would be counselors, helpers, musicians, camp nurse, and arts and crafts people at Camp Noah. Still, as we boarded our plane in Philadelphia on July 15, we weren't exactly sure what we were going to be doing with these young survivors of natural disasters.



Sunday morning we worshipped together as the Camp Noah Team at St. Michael Episcopal Church in Texas City, TX, the site of our camp. More planning meetings and setting up our classrooms followed worship. At 3 p.m. campers and parents began to appear for our first meeting together.

Children were shy and parents uncertain about this new place and these "strangers" from the North who'd come for a week to work with their children. There were smiles and thank-yous by the end of our time of sharing, singing, and praying together. The evening was spent with more planning, praying, sleeping, and preparing for Monday morning at 9 a.m., when Camp Noah would begin.

It takes many people to provide Camp Noah. Our team included 25 people from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, 10 youth from Texas who teamed with our five youth from Reading to provide skits, music, and support, volunteers from St. Michael Episcopal Church in Texas City, and Faith Lutheran Church in Dickson City, TX, a mental health team of 12, and 16 teenagers from Alaska who came to camp after their week at the Youth Gathering.

The goals of Camp Noah are two-fold: to help children who have experienced natural disasters find hope in the midst of all the changes in their lives; and to share the message of God's steadfast love and grace for each person forever.

Monday's theme was "Preparation – Noah Builds the Ark." We let the children tell their stories of preparation. Some had time to put things in boxes or trash bags, others grabbed what they could and took off in cars or by foot to places they thought would be safe. Four of the seven children in our third grade class had evacuated for Katrina, had come to Texas, and had to evacuate again for Rita. The other three children were from the Galveston area and had evacuated for Rita. That day, each child made a promise ribbon, a safety pin with a rainbow ribbon attached, reminding them that God keeps God's promises forever.

Day Two's theme was "Impact – The Rains Came and Noah Boarded the Ark." We encouraged the children to remember what they were able to bring with them and what they had to leave behind, reminding them that the God who knows them by name was with them and watching over them. That day we took two sticks, made a cross with them, and formed a mobile with cards. On one side of the card they showed

what they had been afraid of during their time of evacuation; on the reverse they showed the people who helped them during the evacuation.

On Wednesday, the theme was "Temporary Housing – Life on the Ark." This day we moved from telling stories of what had happened to stories of hope and how their lives had changed. We made a "feelings chart" with a clothes pin they could move around to indicate how they were feeling during the days of transition and those feelings that continue for them each day.

On Day Four, we talked about "Signs of new life—Noah sends out the dove." With their own newly made puppets, the children told stories of what was new for them since the storms—new homes, new schools, new friends, all new surroundings. We made noisy shakers that day and sang and celebrated all that was new.

The other wonderful activity of the day was for the children to have their own piece of clay to build a bridge from where they had been before the storm to where the bridge took them into a new life. What wonderful creations those were! Some built very sturdy bridges, others were long and wavy, like the bridges connecting the islands to the Louisiana mainland.

One bridge was very short and compact with something sitting on the bridge. When I asked the creator to tell me about the bridge, she said it was a bridge crowded with lots of people who were lost and afraid.

I found containers and boxes for each bridge so that they could be taken home as a reminder of how God leads us across bridges during our lives.

Day Five's theme was "Hope for the Future – Noah and Family Begin a New Life." We spent our final day together talking about what was new and hard to get used to in their new lives in a new place. We also talked about the fact that those of us from Pennsylvania would probably not see these children again, but that our prayers, memories, and pictures will keep us together forever. Together we made a six-foot-long, colorful paper rainbow. At the very end of our time together, we cut the rainbow into 11 pieces so that we can remember each other and remind ourselves that God keeps God's promises forever.

Those five days were some of the hardest of my life. The

stories of these children have forever touched my heart. We know Camp Noah made a difference, not just for that week, but we hope for their lifetime.

You, too, were there. You supported me with financial gifts and prayers. Over 60 coloring books and crayons went into their preparedness boxes, given by you in love. Together, we share God's love and the knowledge that God keeps God's promises forever.

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SEPTEMBER 2006



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Meet LYO Vice-President  
**Walter M.L. Hampton II**



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By Karen Matthias-Long, Director of Ministry Resources, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

More than 300 youth delegates from across the ELCA attended the Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) convention in San Antonio, Texas, from July 9-12. At the convention, delegates acted on resolutions and elected new officers.

Walter Hampton II, former president of our synod's Lutheran Youth Fellowship and one of six youths who represented the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod at the convention, was elected Vice-President of the LYO.

Walt is a member of Christ Mertz Lutheran Church, Dryville, where he has been involved as a Sunday school and vacation Bible school teacher and congregation council member. Walt is presently putting his efforts into developing an active youth group in his home congregation.

As a student at Brandywine High School, Walt was involved with band and chorus. "I really enjoyed being involved with those activities, but most of my time was taken up with our Indoor Percussion Unit. This group was a lot of fun ... and we usually placed well at competitions." Walt graduated from Brandywine in June and will be attending Eastern University to study youth ministry.

Walt's introduction to youth ministry at the synodical level was through the junior high event held at Bear Creek. Since then, he has been active in the Lutheran Youth Fellowship and was elected its president for the 2004-2005 term. His

responsibilities as president included attending LYF events, serving as liaison to the youth ministry planning team, running the LYF assembly, reporting the work of the LYF to the synod assembly, and attending the Council of Synod LYO Presidents.

When asked about his faith journey, Walt says, "I think everyone's faith journey is constantly changing, continuously moving from high point to low point and back. For me, my involvement in youth ministry has been a reminder of Christ's love in those low points I may have experienced. Whenever my faith gets "low" or when I question it altogether, God throws me something to do – a meeting to go to – or an event to attend. These are the things that keep my faith healthy. Youth ministry has kept my faith alive and strong."

Youth, Walt feels, have opinions that are valuable to the church. "The biggest problem I see in the church and in the world today is communication. Adults need to listen to each other as well as to youth. Honest communication between adults and youth is important. The youth are the church as much as adults are. If we can communicate with one another, we can make a big difference together."

Walt says that he is honored to be serving as vice-president for the churchwide LYO. His term lasts three years. His responsibilities will include planning the next LYO convention (three years from now). He may be involved with assisting with the leadership of youth convocation at the churchwide assembly.

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By Bruce Saylor, AiM, St. John Lutheran Church, Easton

The ELCA Youth Gathering offered a life-changing experience for all who attended, especially for the group from St. John Lutheran Church, Easton. We were a small group but we were mighty. We attended the second week (July 11-16), along with 24,000 youth, volunteers, and chaperones.

The Gathering was particularly meaningful for the three youth participants and the adult advisors from St. John's who, except for me, were attending their first gathering. I am Bruce Saylor, and I have been to five previous ELCA youth gatherings. The following is my group's perception of the 2006 Youth Gathering in San Antonio, Texas.

"I've never been to anything this large with so many youth," said Christie Kragness, female advisor. "There's a bunch of other people here who feel the same way I do about faith, especially young people, and I've never felt that before."

Susan and Katie, both youth, told me that the Bible studies were "easy to understand, and we could connect it to what happens in our lives." Another youth from our group, Ian, said "It's great just knowing that there are so many people worshiping God. I loved singing, clapping hands, and praising God."

Each day of the Gathering began and ended with stage productions at the Alamodome. Morning gatherings included



technology-enhanced Bible study. Both morning and evening gatherings featured guest speakers, music, dance, drama, video and special effects, storytelling, audience participation, and worship. Participants chose from a variety of activities between mass gatherings, such as community volunteer opportunities -- known as servant events -- in and around San Antonio, interactive workshops, and fun and games at the Interaction Center in the Gonzalez Convention Center.

Keynote speakers were featured during the morning and evening gatherings at the Alamodome. Authors, advocates, and athletes spoke to Lutheran youth about faith and global issues. My group agreed that this event has been a real eye-opener to what problems in the world we have yet to solve, and how we are the future generation to help out the world.

The Gathering also offered Lutheran youth the opportunity to participate in a variety of stewardship programs. As of July 17, more than \$530,000 had been raised for "Hamiltons for Hunger." Under the "Hamiltons for Hunger" effort, every participant was asked to bring \$30 or "three Hamiltons" to raise \$1 million for the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

Donations are still being collected. Worship offerings from both weeks were about \$580,000 and will benefit domestic and international ministries that support children, youth, and families. About \$100,000 in gift cards was collected during the Gathering as an "in-kind" offering to benefit six San Antonio organizations.

At the concluding worship service on Sunday, July 16, the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), encouraged participants in the 2006 ELCA Youth Gathering to "speak the truth" as God's witnesses in the world. Bishop Hanson encouraged the young people to share the message of God's love. "Speak the truth that God loves you, forgives you, has reconciled you and the whole creation to God's self, and has given us the ministry and message of reconciliation," he said, urging the youth to "commit to live and learn together, so that together we can build a world of justice and peace."

If I had to rate the five Youth Gatherings that I have attended, this was by far the hottest but also the best thought-out gathering of them all.





## My San Antonio Experience

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Dianna Morgan, 15, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dallas, Pennsylvania

Words cannot truly explain my experience at Cruzando. It was an eye-opening experience that I will never forget.

At first, my youth group wasn't excited about the trip. When we saw the video of the previous youth gathering in Atlanta, we all laughed. We thought that what they were doing was ridiculous. But, somehow, 18 of us went to San Antonio — and had an experience that we did not want to end.

The feeling of being with 25,000 Lutherans who are all seeing the same things as you are is unbelievable. A smile never left my face when I was in the Alamodome. We sat on the floor almost every night, and when I turned around to see everyone, it was gorgeous. All of those people were hearing the same thing I was. I have never been to something with so many people in my life, besides a Philly's game.

The theme of the week was "Cruzando — Journey with Jesus." Cruzando means "crossing over." On our way home on the last night, which was spent in a crummy Days Inn in Richmond, VA, I was up tossing and turning. My mind was on what I had crossed over during the week.

I crossed over the thought of judging people before I speak to them, meeting new people can unite an everlasting friendship, showing how I worship God whether it is singing to the house band, or dancing to "Shine" by Newsboys, or



singing and dancing to "I get down and He lifts me up" with 25,000 people, or just even praying for what is on my plate with a group of friends. I've crossed over that and I am so proud I did.

I loved dancing to the house band with my youth group and all the other bands as well. We ended up starting the first conga line! You know, worship is great when there's a conga line!

I would never have changed a moment of this trip for the world. It made me much closer with my youth group, God, and my daily life in general. It let me feel comfortable with talking about God in a way I could never do before.

As I said in the beginning, we did not want to go to the ELCA Youth Gathering, but when we were there we did not want to leave. I cannot wait until the next one in 2009.



## Teen from Mexico Visits Sayre Congregation before Youth Gathering

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By Cinda Brucker, AiM, St. John, Sayre

“She is just a delight!”

This comment was often heard after someone met Carolina Barroso, the 15-year-old international guest from the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. Carolina visited St. John Lutheran Church, Sayre, in the weeks prior to the National Youth Gathering in San Antonio.

Carolina arrived in Sayre from her orientation in Austin, Texas, on June 16 and she quickly won the hearts of St. John’s members. Her host family, Frank and Christy Maffei, and their daughters Emily, 14, and Alexandra, 7, introduced her to the pleasures of life in the country in the Endless Mountains. Carolina thought that croquet was such a fun game that the Maffeis sent a croquet set home with her. She also considered riding the 6-wheeler and visiting the creek a blast.

Her schedule filled up quickly as other members took her along on their outings to Watkins Glen, Ithaca’s Science Center, the 4th of July fireworks, Lancaster’s Sight and Sound Theater, and the WELCA picnic at Mt. Pisgah State Park.

Christy Maffei, her host mother, said, “Carolina took us out of our comfort zone and opened our house to a new experience.” One of those experiences was watching Mexico lose to Argentina in the World Cup Soccer matches,



but cheering Argentina on during the subsequent matches. Carolina was willing to try new foods, new games, and new experiences – and to cope with it all in English, which she cheerfully tackled even when some of the idioms surprised her. She was often chilly, saying that Pennsylvania’s summer was like her winter, and she missed her daily siesta.

Technology made her stay easier since Carolina, the Maffeis, and Carolina’s grandmother e-mailed news to each other frequently, including the news of her grandfather’s election to the senate.

Carolina accompanied St. John’s youth group to San Antonio, where she graciously interpreted Spanish signs and lyrics for her Pennsylvania friends.

Christy Maffei said that the experience was such a positive one that their family is planning to apply to be a host family for future exchange students through the school, too.

The Maffeis sent her home with a poem written by Christy:

Warm and caring  
Always sharing  
The many things she knows

Teaching us  
Without any fuss  
And also learning as she goes

Taking in all the things  
Our area brings  
Even when the river must overflow

With great sadness we will see her depart  
But know she left us with happy hearts  
God’s peace be with you, Carolina Barroso.

Pastor Rodney Saylor and the rest of the congregation of St. John, Sayre, miss her as well, and intend to keep in touch with her.





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### **Bishop Hanson's letter on the Fifth Anniversary of the September 11th Attacks**

September 2006

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

September 11, 2001, changed the context of the church in this nation. The terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., and the crash of a plane controlled by hijackers near Shanksville, Pa., shattered thousands of lives and galvanized millions more around the country and across the globe.

In the moments and days following the events of September 11, people responded with prayer and action. Unprecedented numbers of people gathered to pray, to express anguish, and to receive consolation from one another and from the Word of God. The Rev. Stephen P. Bouman, bishop of the ELCA Metro New York Synod, wrote: "For a brief time our houses of worship were the most important places in the community, and the Bible was a living document of drama encompassing our own."

Faith leaders demonstrated courage and dedication by providing a place to gather, a place for the community to grieve, and a place for attending to immediate needs. There were ecumenical and interfaith words of sorrow and compassion, and a worldwide reaching out to people suffering in the United States.



Five years later, the wounds from that day remain just under the surface for many whose lives were devastated — those still grieving the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, the loss of a way of life, or a loss of trust in God.

Terrorism is intended to create fear and mistrust. If our reality is shrouded in fear and mistrust, we have not fully heard the story of God's love expressed through Jesus' death and resurrection. As it says in the ELCA Church Council's "[Message on Living in a Time of Terrorism](#)," we are called to "affirm the Gospel's gift of living beyond fear."

We give thanks for the many ways Lutherans have responded "beyond fear" to this tragedy. We give thanks for Lutherans across the country who opened their hearts and gave generously to help the survivors of this tragedy: more than \$10.6 million in gifts and matching funds were donated to ELCA Domestic Disaster Response.

- In New York, these gifts funded counseling services, outreach programs, day camps and scholarships for children affected, and supported many other programs funded by Lutheran Disaster Response of New York (LDR-NY).
- Congregations in the Washington, D.C., area have rallied around survivors and the families of those lost in the Pentagon.
- Lutherans in the Shanksville area have provided hospitality to victims' families and others who visit the crash site of United Airlines flight 93.

We give thanks for congregations, individuals, and agencies such as [Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#) that work for justice for immigrants and others who are suspect simply by virtue of their ethnicity or religion.

In a culture that says, "Get over it," we as faith leaders have an opportunity to create safe spaces for people to tell their stories, to express their fears and their pain, and to be reminded of God's presence in times of trouble.

In the first chapter of Luke, Zechariah's prophecy tells of the God who does not forsake us: "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79).

With deep gratitude, I give thanks to God for the witness of this church. God has been present through us — through our hands and our feet, through our ears and our voices, through our generous gifts of time and money, through our prayers and lament.

I am grateful for the partnership we share in the mission to which God calls us.

Living in God's amazing grace,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### **Remembering September 11th - Five Years Later**

Local memorial observance of the fifth anniversary of the September 11th attacks may vary according to congregational circumstances. These resources are shared for those congregations that wish to include elements of remembrance in their worship. These resources were created or recommended by clergy from the New York Metro area and persons from the ELCA Worship staff and Domestic Disaster Response staff at the Churchwide office.

**Prayer Litany from "9/11"** - Commissioned by St. Peter's Lutheran Church, New York City

**Prayer of Lament** - Recommended by Rev. Robert Rimbo, Holy Trinity Lutheran, New York City

**Sermon Starter** - Sept. '06 Liturgical Press, "Homily Helps" Contributed by Rev. Amandus J. Derr, St. Peter's Lutheran, New York City

**Scriptures & Sermon Starters** - Contributed by Rev. Kevin A. Massey, ELCA Domestic Disaster Response

**Benediction and Sending** - Recommended by Rev. Amandus J. Derr, St. Peter's Lutheran, New York City

For additional worship resources for use in remembrance of the September 11th terrorist attacks, please visit the [ELCA Worship website](#).





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Excerpted from the 8-30-06 issue of *Today's Stuff* by Pastor Barry Mitchell

*(Ed. Note: The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod will be sending a truckload of supplies to the Lutheran Disaster Response Distribution Center in Biloxi, MS, this fall. You are invited to participate through gifts of goods and money. Find out what is needed by [clicking the disaster response link](#) on the home page.)*

On August 30, 2006, Heather L. Feltman, Executive Director of Lutheran Disaster Response and Director of the ELCA Domestic Disaster Response, wrote, "Bells tolled in New Orleans yesterday morning, marking the moment one year ago when New Orleans' levees buckled and unleashed a torrent of water that ripped homes from their foundations and sent the city into an uncertain future. The horrific images of human suffering and the overwhelming destruction along the Gulf Coast remain with us a year later.

"In the days following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I watched our Lutheran Disaster Response network respond with compassion and grace, offering help and hope to survivors as well as to their caregivers. The scale and scope of this disaster challenged even the most experienced of disaster responders.

"Circumstances drove our response in ways not foreseen. We made mistakes along the way, but through our mistakes we learned about ourselves and what we are capable of in the future. Tens of thousands have been helped while thousands more are waiting for assistance. We will continue



to accompany those still in need – this is what long-term recovery is all about."

We at Emmanuel's, Emanuelsville, have been privileged to be a small part of these disaster recovery efforts, traveling with groups from the church twice to Mississippi's Gulf Coast and hosting the Benefit for the Bayou which sent a large monetary gift along with a truckload of supplies a few weeks ago.

Nothing I had seen on television prepared me for the experience of being at the site of the storm. We went for the first time in November, three months after the storm. On the first day, we drove to a street of new homes, now little more than shells, filled with the clutter of what remained of the furnishings that were left by the storm. The decision was made that the house was beyond saving and we were moved to another neighborhood.

We cleaned out a small brick house, moving still water logged household items out to a pile by the street, where it would be picked up for disposal.

I remember thinking, "How could things still be soaking wet three months later?" I will never forget the stench when the refrigerator door peeked open as we moved it out to the street. It's hard to believe, but some of this work is still being done in New Orleans and other places along the coast a year later.

We were encouraged to take a drive along the coast, where houses simply disappeared and the few things that were left were hanging from the broken branches of the remaining trees. We cried with our host family as they showed us the empty space where their dream home used to be. We trashed ruined photo albums and irreplaceable family treasures. Nearly every family we met were grieving the loss of a friend or family member.

The work continues as some now reclaim their homes and their lives, while others still await help. We are planning to return in November, hoping to rebuild some homes and do whatever we can to bring hope to those who survived Hurricane Katrina.

Thanks to all of you who have responded with prayer and gifts, and thanks to those who have gone to the Gulf Coast to help. May God bless all of those who live in fear of another storm as we continue to remember them in our

prayers.

