



# Lutheran Youth Gathering



Youth study Scripture. (All photos: Nathan Lantz)



LCC musicians lead NYG participants in song during worship.

From July 8-12, 2016 Lutheran youth from across the country converged on the campus of Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario for Lutheran Church-Canada's (LCC) 2016 National Youth Gathering (NYG).

In total, more than 140 youth gathered for the event, the theme of which was "Living H<sub>2</sub>O," drawn from the story of Jesus and the woman at the well: "Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life'" (John 4:13-14).

Dr. Micah Parker of Trustguy Ministries was back again this year to serve as a main presenter at the National Youth Gathering, as was LCC President Robert Bugbee. Youth spent six main sessions learning about how we receive the living water Jesus gives, addressing the topics of who gives living water, what it means to be created by living water, recreated by living water in baptism, to serve with living water, to be connected to living water, and to





# her in St. Catharines

share Jesus through living water. And it wasn't just something they heard from main speakers—youth also broke into small groups for "H<sub>2</sub>O Breaks" to dig deeper into the topics themselves.

Youth had the opportunity to explore other aspects of faith and life as well through a series of four breakout sessions. Topics ranged from relationships and pop-culture to apologetics and missions, with youth choosing from a wide variety of presenters and topics: Dating, Sex

and Other Romantic Relationships (Lynn Gergens); The Uncertainty Principle—The Noting of 'Doubting' Our Faith (Geoff Kullman); I Wish I Could Take That Back (Micah Steiner); Aslan is on the Move!—The Christian Church and the Fine Arts (Michael Gillingham); From

Adele to Zombies: Christianity & Pop Culture: Bacon & Bieber & Bourne (Dr. James Gimbel); Can You Trust the Bible? Responding to Cynics, Skeptics And Such (Dr. Tom Winger); So Many Ways to God? So Many Religions? (Rev. Roland Syens); Sharing Hope (Rev. Larry Gajdos); LWLMC—Mission Bucket List, Drop by Drop (Arlene Kish and Janice Buchner);



President Bugbee addresses the youth.



Youth beautify the grounds at Luther Manor.



Dr. Micah Park of Trustguy Ministries leads a breakout session.



iBods at this year's gathering.



CLTS President Winger leads a breakout session.



These Guys entertain the gathering.

Keeping Your Faith in College/University and Beyond (Rev. Eric Moffett); CLWR – Unbend the Trend-Good Soil (Jennifer Ardon); Questions-Brokenness-How to Stop Hurting (Lynn Gergens); Faith in the Field (Micah Parker); Puttin on the Skits (These Guys). Youth leaders also had the opportunity to take some workshops dedicated just to them, with Leon Jameson leading “Don’t Survive, Thrive in Youth Ministry.”

Through it all, the theme of living water was woven throughout the weekend, including in the worship for the gathering, with LCC musician Jennifer Jade Kerr writing and introducing the theme song for the event. The words of “Lifegiver” remind us that we “come to the water to receive what You offer. Only You can deliver. Lifegiver. You’re our Lifegiver.”

“When we drink of the world, we just go back for more finding that we’re more thirsty than we were before,” one verse reads. “Your water’s different. It is living power. And it satiates us forever.”

Kerr was joined by Kelti Malone, another talented LCC singer-songwriter, in leading worship music at the gathering, with Winnipeg LCC member Brian Layer on bass. Other presenters during the gathering included These Guys, an improvisational comedy trio bringing humour and insight to the day-to-day experiences of teenagers and adults. The gathering also benefited from the many “iBods” present— young adult volunteers who helped the event go smoothly under the direction of Phil Guebert.

Being on the campus of Brock University also gave many youth the chance to explore pastoral ministry in a new light. Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary (CLTS) sits on the same campus, and seminary leaders were on hand to share their experiences in the pastoral ministry with interested young men. CLTS also hosted the youth gathering for a special breakfast event one of the mornings.

Youth had the opportunity to give back to the seminary too: one of the gathering’s options for servant events included helping wash windows at the seminary and move bookshelves. Other options including visiting with seniors, dementia patients, and adults with special needs at a number of facilities; handing out flyers for a local Lutheran congregation’s upcoming Vacation Bible School; doing garbage pickup in St. Catharines; making quilts; doing yard work and cleaning for other various groups; and more.

A highlight of the trip was the opportunity to visit Niagara Falls, where youth saw a dramatic example of water at its most powerful. When the flow is at its highest, more than 168,000 cubic metres (six million cubic feet) of water go over the falls’ crest line every minute. That kind of power can transform landscapes, carving deep chasms with its mighty flow. When combined with God’s Word, water can do even more impressive things: transform human hearts and bring the spiritually dead to life.

That’s the message participants at this year’s youth gathering have taken home with them. May it equip them to share the living water of Jesus with friends and family there too!