

LiveLove(d) Participant Commissioning Service

For use in a congregational setting, worship service, or at a special service for Gathering participants and their families. The pastor or leader may invite the youth and adults going to the Gathering to the front of the church.

Note: *There are leader parts that can be shared by a parent, church leader, and other members of the congregation.*

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Dear fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, you are about to embark on a great journey where you will gather with 25,000 other people who will confess with you and with us that they are loved by God which inspires them to live out God's love in this world. You are on your way to San Antonio, Texas. You will spend five days in worship, spiritual and personal growth, meeting new people, experiencing new things, and celebrating faith in Jesus Christ. What a great and amazing crowd of witnesses you shall be in the streets of San Antonio.

Leader: There are five sub-themes to the Gathering theme.

(Have each of the following five bullets read by one or more parents, church elders, adult mentors, and other supportive adults)

- + At the Gathering you will explore the meaning of love as you consider that each participant is a "Beloved" child of God and a part of God's whole community of believers.

- + You will look at the idea of being "deloved" and how sin separates us from the love of God and twists and distorts our lives with all kinds of temptations and cravings.

+ You will be reassured of God's love in Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection as you consider "LOVE Lived" and how Christ is the embodiment of God's love, truly the love of God in flesh and blood.

+ "Live LOVED" considers our Christian identity formation begun in baptism when God lays His claim on us in water and Word and we become children of God.

+ Which brings us to "Live LOVE" where you will consider how we live for Jesus, empowered by His Spirit and live out acts of service which He has prepared for us.

Leader: You are on your way to experience a pilgrimage that more than 260,000 young Lutherans have taken for more than three decades. As members of this congregation, we have watched and worked and prayed with you as you have prepared for this great event. You have made your preparations, raised money, packed your suitcases, prayed, and studied, and now you are ready to gather with more than 25,000 young Lutheran Christians from across the country and from around the world. Why?

All: To worship. To pray. To serve. To rejoice. To proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Savior and to celebrate the Good News of our salvation to which we have been called and which we confess together.

Leader addresses the young people.

Leader: You have spent months preparing for this event and have grown into a close community of God's people. While you are gone, will you continue to love and care for each other as a family? Will you encourage one another to do everything to God's glory? Will you dedicate yourselves to making this a good experience for everyone? Will you represent our congregation in a God pleasing fashion and share His love with all whom you meet?

Youth: Yes, with God's help, we will love and take care of one another and we will strive to please God in all that we do.

The leader addresses the adult leaders.

Leader: The adult leaders of our young people are a special blessing to all of us. You have cared for our youth and have nurtured their faith. You have prayed for them and encouraged them. We thank you for your commitment to serve. Now, as you prepare to leave, we commend these young people into your care. Will you continue to love and guide them and will you celebrate this adventure in faith with them?

Adults: Yes, with God's help, we will continue to love and care for these young people and to grow with them in faith.

The leader then addresses all Gathering participants.

Leader: Dear friends, youth and adults, as you meet other Lutherans at the Youth Gathering and many more in the city of San Antonio, will you extend the love and friendship of *(insert the name of your congregation)* for us?

Youth and Adults: Yes, we will share the Christian love of this community of faith with the people we meet in San Antonio.

The leader addresses the congregation.

Leader: Parents, family members, and friends, you have supported this group and helped them prepare for the Gathering. Will you pray for them while they are gone, asking God to keep them safe and to fill them with His Spirit enabling them to celebrate in His Name?

Congregation: Yes, we will keep all of these travelers in our thoughts and prayers.

Leader: Let us pray together . . . Lord, You have called us to be your people by the power of Your Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ and you have given us our confession of faith. We give thanks for Your gracious love and mercy, for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the community and identity we share with each other in Christ. You are our God who calls us to:

ALL: LiveLove(d)!

Leader: We commend our loved ones into Your care as they travel. Watch over and protect them. When they arrive in San Antonio, open them to the joy and excitement awaiting them. Build their faith and strengthen them in understanding Your love for them. Direct them to see and experience Your love in all that they do. Make them reflections of Your light and help them to share Your light with everyone they meet. You are our God who calls us to:

ALL: LiveLove(d)!

Leader: When it is time to return, bring each one safely home to us, enriched by their experiences at the Gathering. We give You thanks and praise for the opportunities ahead of these youth and adults as they gather in San Antonio. In Your most gracious name we pray.

ALL: AMEN.

Leader: Lord God, Loving Father, You show us Your love through Jesus Christ, Your only Son, our Lord. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise that among the many changes of this world, our hearts may be fixed where true love and joy are found; through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

ALL: AMEN.

Here the pastor or youth leader may introduce the youth and adults who are going to the Gathering and say a personal word to each.

Leader: The National Youth Gathering will be a life-impacting event for each of you. Just when we think that we have an idea of how wide God's embrace is, we find out it's wider. When we begin to think that we understand how long God will wait on His people, we find out it's longer. When we think we know how high is His majesty, we find out it's higher. And when we think we have experienced the depths of His love, we learn that it is deeper. (*)

BLESSINGS AND BENEDICTION

Leader: So, it is time to go!

Congregation: Go with God's blessings!

Leader: It's time to grow!

Congregation: Grow in the name of the Lord!

Leader: It's time to gather!

Congregation: Gather then with God's people, and as you do, LiveLove(d).

Leader: May God bless and keep you, now and forever in the name of our incredible God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Congregation: Amen! Go in peace. Serve the Lord!

Youth and Adults: Thanks be to God!!!

(*) Based on Ephesians 3:18.

This commissioning was written by Rev. Dr. Terry Dittmer, Director, Office of National Mission - Youth Ministry, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.