



"Very Positive and Very Genuinely Lutheran" Reflections on LCC's 2025 National Youth Gathering

by Alex Klages

I had the privilege and opportunity to take part in Lutheran Church–Canada's (LCC) 2025 National Youth Gathering "Unbreakable," held at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. As a father to three of the youth participating and a 7+1 leader for our Trinity youth group—as well as being a pastor in LCC—I appreciated being there and seeing first-hand how things went.



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Group shot by Robynn Fraser

What I was excited to see was how the youth from across the country, with varying communities and backgrounds, came together and enjoyed getting to meet each other. I saw my own youth getting out of the mindset that they are kind of on their own as Lutherans. The area of Manitoba where we live is very heavily Mennonite in background and practice, and they often feel alone as Lutherans. I was delighted that they made new connections with youth from all over the country. My kids are eagerly planning a trip west because of friendships forged with kids from out there, and we connected positively with another youth group here in Manitoba and have hopes to get together with them some time as well.

There were a few dimensions to the event: worship, large group sessions, Bible studies, small group sessions, activities, a servant event morning sponsored by the Lutheran Laymen's League of Canada, and a group outing to Bingemans Park. The worship services were from *Lutheran Service Book*, using various orders of prayer from there as well as Divine Service Setting Four for the Sunday main service. While some of the songs in worship were less familiar to our group, there were also some familiar hymns which were sung with great gusto by the gathered group. Rev. Paul Roggow's sermons were brief and to the point as he preached on the theme passage, Ephesians 6:11-18.

The large group sessions were mainly and ably led by LCC Past President Robert Bugbee and Jennifer Kerr. In these sessions we explored in a largely anecdotal way the meaning of the various parts of the armour of God described in Ephesians 6. My youth were very excited every time Pastor Bugbee taught, and learned a great deal from him, and also connected really well with Jennifer's teaching sessions.

The Bible studies were set up to reinforce the points made in the main sessions. The adult leaders group I participated in had Rev. Roggow as our study leader. The youth were divided into study groups by age and sex, with a combination of pastors and well-trained lay leaders teaching them from a provided study outline. Our youth genuinely enjoyed digging into God's Word and getting to know other youth through these times of in-depth study.

The small group sessions for the youth leaders were the ones I attended; and I found them helpful both as a youth leader and as a pastor for understanding some of the struggles and issues our youth grapple with today, many of which are exacerbated by the digital devices we have all become accustomed to carrying. There was definitely deep food for thought! The youth in my group attended various of the small group sessions and found them interesting, intriguing, and helpful in different ways.

Activities my group took part in included several high-energy games like ultimate frisbee out on the soccer pitch across from the dorms, and dodgeball in the gym. There were also lower-energy activities like trivia contests, board gaming, chalk sketching, colouring, beading, and other creative pursuits. As a youth leader, there were good support sessions for the leaders in the evenings and clear directions on how to do things—something greatly appreciated for my first time out!

The food at the Wilfred Laurier food service was ample and greatly enjoyed. Our group was especially excited to find the milk and chocolate milk dispenser after a couple days of drinking a lot of pop and juice and water. I heard no complaints about the menu from my group!

Monday of the NYG was mostly off-site. In the morning, we headed out to various servant events. I personally helped with bundling packages for Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots (LAMP), and learned a little more about the work of LAMP in bringing the good news of Jesus to remote communities in



LCC National Youth Gathering 2025 (Photo by Robynn Fraser)



LCC National Youth Gathering 2025 (Photo by Thomas Winger)

Canada's north. We worked out of the basement of Holy Cross in Kitchener, and got a nice tour of the church as part of our time there. Other activities youth in our group did included assisting with Lutheran Bible Translators of Canada, at Creation Ministries, and at a couple different seniors' homes in the Kitchener-Waterloo community.

Monday afternoon at Bingemans Park was a lot of fun. The Lutheran Laymen's League of Canada provided participants with an amazing bagged lunch and great reusable lunch bags. After lunch, the kids at the water park enjoyed the slides and such while the minigolf and bowling group had fun playing a rather tricky minigolf course and then bowling as much as we could before time ran out.



LCC National Youth
Gathering 2025 (Photo
by Thomas Winger)

Throughout the event, Rev. Peter Knelsen was an able emcee, introducing events and people well. Rev. Glenn Worcester set up a squad contest idea which also helped keep the various groups engaged and interacting with each other (even though our red group, Petra, lost!).

It was a very positive, and very genuinely Lutheran, youth event. It was a great joy for the youth from my family and congregation who attended, and I can imagine some of them will want to attend and/or serve as 'minions' at the next gathering in three years' time. A big thank-you to LCC's National Youth Gathering committee for their work in organizing this year's event!

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