

Cont...Testimonial...Memories of attending an ELCA National Youth Gathering

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Tina H. – River Of Hope, New Orleans, LA – 1997

Personal Journal of
Tina H.

In July of 1997, our youth group was privileged to have the chance to visit New Orleans for the National Youth Gather; Rive of Hope. Even though it was awhile back, for me it still lays fresh in mind as one of the most wonderful experiences I have ever had! In the beginning it was a bit difficult to convince my mom it was O.K. for me to go, but once she was on board with my chance of a lifetime, the planning began...

Packing for the trip was the easy part, preparing for the hours and hours in the van was a different story! It turned out to be one of the best parts of the trip. We spent time at different churches along our route. Camping out in whatever space they had available, making TONS of friends along the way. We were able to join up with another church from MD and we traveled along together.

Once we got there, it was amazing to see what New Orleans had to offer. It was like the city was alive itself! There was music everywhere, and TONS of people. You could smell food from every direction it seemed like. The only down side of the ENTIRE trip was this...THE HEAT!!! It was very, very hot and humid, but we got used to sweating! The hotel was BEAUTIFUL. We got our room assignments and scattered! It didn't take long to get comfortable...

THEN...the fun began! We spent time joining youth from all over. We took smaller groups with new people and spent time getting to know other kids just like us. Not just learning their schools they attended, and fun stuff they did, but how they spent time with God as well. It was amazing to see how other kids from all over did similar things we did with a twist of their own...We got to sing, and praise as loud as we wanted with thousands of other people. Making a bond we never knew could be made!

We got to tour the city and see Bourbon Street! I still have the pictures... the laughter of the good times we had shown on every one. The architecture of the older buildings shining in the background. We learned how to have a personal relationship with God, and ALL his people. It was an amazing experience I would not give back for anything in the world.

To the younger generation getting ready to embark on your personal voyage, I give you this advice... Take everything your trip has to offer...Meet everyone with a smile...Make friends at every opportunity, you will have them forever...Go with an open heart for the Lord...Be an amazing disciple of Christ, ALWAYS...Never turn down the chance to volunteer for part of a group...Sing out with all your heart...and most importantly...PACK THE CAMERA!!!