

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

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Jessica P. – Dancing at the Cross Roads, St. Louis, MO – 2000

My name is Jessica P. (formally K.). I was a member of this youth group for 4 years. I was one of the member's that got to attend the National youth Gathering in St. Louis in 2000. The trip that I took with Bill and Eva would be one that I would never forget. Let me give you a little background. My family moved to St. Louis in 2000. In fact, we (my sister and I) drove with the youth group to St. Louis and then left them to drive to our new home which is 100 miles from St. Louis. I still live in Rolla, Missouri.

First off, I have to say that Bill and Eva are the two most loved and respected youth leaders that I have ever had; I never joined another youth group! The Fundraising to be able to attend this trip was a lot of hard work but was worth the time and energy when we left in the 15 passenger van to St. Louis. You would think that a 22 hour van ride with lots of other youth members would not be fun, but you are wrong...Just do yourself a favor, do not ask Bill how many miles that we have left to go. He will always give you the same answer, **just one more mile**. The hotels were wonderful, the pools were great, and the restaurants were awesome. I thought that the trip was the best part; until we arrived in St. Louis.

...and the fun continued and never stopped. To me the experience was overwhelming and life changing. Every day there was music and dancing, the openings each day were great. You could dance and sing and rejoice every minute of the day. There were concerts and dances and big dinners. You picked your activities. Some things we all did together and others you met new friends to attend activities with. The adults wanted to know where you were, but they let you make friends and enjoy the experience. We saw the sights, which was really cool at the time because I had never been to St. Louis before.

This trip changed my life in a few different ways. I got to connect with many Lutheran's that believe the same things that I believe. I met friends that I still keep in contact with...I can tell you how wonderful this trip was for me, but you need to experience it for yourself! I got to attend this gathering with my older sister before she went to college. It is something that brought us closer together.

The last day of the trip is always the hardest. I had to say goodbye to all of my youth group...Then I got in the car with my family to begin a whole new life. When I look back on my trip, I learned how to love and be thankful for all that the Lord gave me and sing his praises every day. I also learned that no matter how far you are away people, they are always with you! The bonds I made on this trip will be with me forever. I've made a new life for myself. I am married and have two little boys. The oldest is attending a private Lutheran School. *I will never forget Dancing at the Cross Roads...*