

# High School Workshops

## **What Is Service?**

**Track: High School**

**Presenter: Sarah Adam Kirberg**

In this session, we will learn from each other about service. In a time when it seems like teachers have all the answers, this interactive workshop will focus on the knowledge and wisdom of the participants. Come share your experiences and learn from your peers!

Sarah Adam Kirberg is originally from the Twin Cities in Minnesota, but coincidentally didn't consider herself a Lutheran until she moved to Colorado in 2014. She attended Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, where she was first introduced to Lutheranism. She then served in Madagascar with the Young Adults in Global Mission program where she learned that the Malagasy Lutheran Church is HUGE! Upon her return to the US, she decided to do another year of service through the ELCA. She moved to Denver and participated in Urban Servant Corps, where she lived in intentional community with an atheist, a vegan, and a 50-year-old (to name a few). She loved Urban Servant Corps SO much that now she works for them as the Community Life Manager. If you want an interesting story, ask her about the time she hosted a radio show in Madagascar.

## **Bible Stories Told and Re-Told**

**Track: High School**

**Presenter: Joy Emenyonu**

What if the lions in the lions' den were actually a bunch of bullies at school? Or if Noah was actually a black woman transcending oppression to complete the will of God? Many of us have heard the traditional Sunday school Bible stories like Noah and the Ark, or Daniel and the Lions' Den as children. These stories were often told using colorful illustrations and simple language so we could understand easily. But what if we looked at these from a new perspective? What if the Bible stories had more to tell us than when we were kids? In this workshop, we will re-examine some of our favorite Bible stories and re-envision them in relation to our lives and the world we live in today through conversation and studying the Bible stories of our youth (pun intended). Maybe through this we can see God's calling in new light as told as by our beloved childhood Bible stories.

Some of you may remember me from the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston this past summer where I was blessed to host alongside Ben and Abby and to give a testimony to my experience as a person of color being in the church. A little bit about me: I was born in Aurora, CO, but my family and I are Nigerian. I have two really cool younger sisters. Our parents immigrated to this country in 1999 before raising our family with deep values of love, education, and faith. We were raised in the church and as a result I was/am a part of the St. Mark's Youth group in Aurora. Currently, I'm a freshman studying Human Health at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia on a pre-med track. This essentially means that I'm going to school with the intent of becoming a doctor. My desire to pursue this career is from my love of science and from my way of interpreting God's call to be God's hands and feet in the world. I have a really long and difficult journey ahead of me, but with God all things are possible, and I know that the God that brought me this far will see me through.

## **Telling Your Story**

**Track: High School | Limit 25**

**Presenter: Amie Adams Mortenson**

If you like writing and telling stories, this workshop is for you! Come learn about the power of stories to communicate our faith. This workshop will focus on different kinds of creative writing and speaking from a variety of Christian authors and speakers. We'll look at the process of creating a story for a presentation just like the speakers at the gathering have done and you'll learn techniques for sharing your own story.

Amie Adams Mortenson works at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she directs the Service and Outreach ministry and leads a variety of Faith Formation activities. Amie studied Writing & Rhetoric and Religion at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, and spent five summers working at Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camps. She is originally from Iowa and moved to Colorado in 2017. Amie is also a first-year grad student working toward a Master's of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. When she isn't working or studying, Amie loves kayaking, hiking, and pretty much anything involving the mountains.

## **What's Next?**

**Track: High School**

**Presenter: Anndi Russell**

In this session, students will explore the following questions: What do we mean when we talk about vocation? How can I figure out what that means for me and how can that inform the

decisions I make for life after high school? Students will look at the concept of vocation as an intersection of their passions, their talents, and the world's needs, and they will dig into their thoughts/excitements/fears around making decisions for life after high school (whether that's college, career, military, or other). This session will allow students to get creative with playdough, have time for quiet reflection, and participate in small and large group discussions.

Anndi Russell is a Denver-based Regional Admissions Counselor for Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Her job entails working with high school youth and their families as they navigate the college search and application process and discern what life might look like for them after high school. Her work over that past few years has allowed her to cultivate a passion for working with youth, from her time at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp to her year as an ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission volunteer in Madagascar. She's excited to be back in Estes Park for a weekend (she used to work at a ranch just down the road!) and to continue supporting the youth of the Rocky Mountain Synod in this new way.

### **Hands in Praise- Sign Language in Worship**

**Track: High School | Limit 32**

**Presenter: Hands in Praise Choir**

Words have a limit. Words don't satisfy what is being expressed. Experience the joy of using sign language to sing praises. Absolutely no sign language experience is necessary to answer the "call" to sign or discover the "passion" of sharing this unique language of the deaf with all audiences (hearing or non-hearing). In American Sign Language the meaning and emotion in a song is absolutely eloquent and artistically expressed - adding a new dimension to praise. The whole body becomes the "musical instrument" of the song - the words, the feeling and the spiritual meaning. This is a workshop where "hands on" can't be anything but "hands on." Attendees of the workshop will learn to sign the chorus of "How Great Thou Art" and will sign the chorus at the at the worship service at the end of the gathering.

"Hands in Praise" is an American Sign Language Christian Choir. Members of the choir represent 11 different churches in Northern Colorado. There are 24 members of the choir in Colorado, 8 performing members, 13 support members in Colorado and 3 out-of-state members in Wyoming, Tennessee and South Carolina. The choir is united in their belief there is only one God who exists eternally in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The outreach ministry of Hands in Praise is to worship God in song by signing in American Sign Language (ASL), the official language of the deaf. We believe signing draws us into a deeper level of

worship. It is to edify the body and to glorify God that we put our "Hands in Praise." Visit [www.HandsInPraiseASL.com](http://www.HandsInPraiseASL.com) for more information.

## **Loving Your Neighbor As Yourself: Why It's Important to Relieve Hunger**

**Track: High School**

**Presenter: Sophia Behrens**

*Loving Your Neighbor As Yourself: Why It's Important to Relieve Hunger* will focus on Matthew 22:36-40, specifically the idea of loving your neighbor as yourself. Through interactive learning, we will learn about what ELCA World Hunger does and some facts about hunger in general. Participants will be able to take time to think deeper about the root issues of hunger and how hunger affects their communities. Activities within this workshop include Kahoot, watching a video on ELCA World Hunger (with a debrief), and looking at hunger through our faith as Lutherans. Loving your neighbor as yourself includes reaching out to those who may be struggling and offering help.

Sophia Behrens began her work with ELCA World Hunger at the 2017 Rocky Mountain Synod Youth Gathering by hosting a hunger meal. She has been a member of the RMS Hunger Network since January of that year and was trained as a World Hunger Ambassador about a year ago. She enjoys going to congregations and other ministries around northern Colorado and talking about world hunger! Other aspects of the church that Sophia is involved in includes serving on the Youth Core Leadership Team for the ELCA, being a peer minister in her home congregation, and being a part of the RMS Youth Council Task Force.

**i am enough.**

**Track: High School**

**Presenters: Kinna Nordstrom-Kemp and Students from St. Mark's and HKBP**

***"In a society that profits from your self doubt, liking yourself is a rebellious act." – Caroline Caldwell***

"Who, me?" Especially you! In this workshop, you will hear stories of fat shaming, racism, and bullying from Kinna and her youth panel, and how their faith has guided them through the hurt into freedom! Martin Luther said, "We are freed from sin and brokenness, to be freed for a purpose." We are freed from fear and hating ourselves and able to live more fully into our daily vocation of loving God, and loving our neighbors AS OURSELVES.

Kinna Nordstrom – Kemp is a Luther Seminary graduate, working with amazing youth from Aurora, CO. We call ourselves OHANA because we are family & no one gets left behind or forgotten in our group (Lilo and Stitch anyone?). We are an ecumenical and multicultural youth group, who are 99% youth of color. We will be joined in this workshop by youth from HKBP Montclair Lutheran Church who are an Indonesian-Specific congregation. These things are important for us to note in a denomination that is mostly white and can make it challenging for our youth to feel welcomed.

## **Starting the Conversation**

### **Track: High School**

#### **Presenters: Kari and Jason Eckert**

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10-19 year olds in Colorado. While that statistic may be surprising and alarming which is more shocking is that nobody seems to be speaking to those that are affected most, teenagers. At this session you will learn some of the signs of depression, anxiety, and suicide and will spend time talking in small groups about what YOU can do about it. The solution to this public health epidemic lies with you, Colorado's teenagers. Let's Start the Conversation.

Robbie's Hope was established by Kari and Jason Eckert to provide support to our local resources in an effort to broaden and deepen the awareness of depression and suicide prevention in our local schools. Robbie was 15 years old and a Sophomore at Lakewood High School. He was a great student excelling in all his classes, especially math. Robbie was at home in the pool or on the courts playing the two sports he loved deeply, swimming and tennis. Surrounded by his friends at meets and at matches he was full of joy. Robbie brought so much joy and happiness to those around him. The past two summers he taught young golfers through First Tee of Denver and young swimmers at Rolling Hills Country Club. Seeing his students success always brought a smile to his face and when they failed his compassion shown through and gave them hope. Despite his gift of bringing love and joy to others Robbie was suffering in the darkness, battling privately with incredible pain. He succumbed to the silent illness of depression and took his own life on Thursday, October 11, 2018. Robbie will always be remembered for his grace, kindness to others, wit and joyful presence. He was always looking out for others and putting them before himself.

# Middle School Workshops

## **Hands in Praise- Sign Language in Worship**

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Anndi Russell is a Denver-based Regional Admissions Counselor for Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Her job entails working with high school youth and their families as they navigate the college search and application process and discern what life might look like for them after high school. Her work over that past few years has allowed her to cultivate a passion for working with youth, from her time at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp to her year as an ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission volunteer in Madagascar. She's excited to be back in Estes Park for a weekend (she used to work at a ranch just down the road!) and to continue supporting the youth of the Rocky Mountain Synod in this new way.

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## **Praying in Color**

**Track: Middle School**

**Presenter: Pastor Leta Behrens**

The Praying in Color workshop will be a time spent in trying out a colorful and creative way to pray. Participants will learn about different journaling ways of praying and spend time in active brainstorming, creativity and of course in prayer with a variety of colorful activities. Learning to pray in a variety of ways alone and with others is a way in which we enter into discernment about our lives and communication and connection with God. As we explore "Who Me?" and vocation at this retreat, learning about active and meditative prayer will help connect participants with their identity as a child of God. We will also engage in actively thinking about a Star Word that can help us focus throughout the year. Star Words are based on the Matthew text about the Wiseman and the guiding of the stars. Through these word choices we can see how we receive gifts of grace from God and experience a concrete way to watch for God connecting with us all year. Participants will leave having experienced a session of praying in color and ideas and handouts for continued exploration.

Pastor Leta Behrens is a Co-Senior Pastor at Our Saviour's in Fort Collins, Colorado. She loves children and youth and diving into new ways to engage spiritually with our inner and outer worlds. She loves spending time outside in the sun and with her family (husband and 2 high school youth!) and she is passionate about connecting people with God, themselves and one another.



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### **Focus on Your Calling: Guided Meditation**

**Track: Middle School**

**Presenter: Maddie Fairfax**

Do you ever feel like life is too crazy to find time to connect with God? Do you ever wonder if God really has a calling for you? Sometimes we need to create room in our lives and brains for quiet space to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this workshop, we will walk through a series of guided meditations together, to help you focus on God's calling for you. We will also do some light stretching, adaptable for all ability levels. At the end of our time together, you should be able to leave uplifted in the fact that you are fearfully and wonderfully made by God, who deeply cares for you and the ways you shine Christ's light into the world.

Maddie Fairfax serves as the Faith Formation Coordinator at Zion Lutheran in Loveland. As a native flatlander, she loves the opportunities Colorado offers to experience God in the beauty of the mountains. And as an introvert thinker, with a head full of mental sticky notes, she is often looking for ways to create mental space for spiritual growth and dialogue. Her first experience with guided meditation was as a volunteer coach for Girls on the Run. Now she uses it as a tool for faith formation in her personal life, and she is excited to share it with youth. Maddie is an alum of Young Adults in Global Mission and Sky Ranch summer staff, both formative experiences in her own journey of exploring calling and vocation.

### **Leading A Service Project**

**Track: Middle School**

**Presenter: Amie Adams Mortenson**

Have you ever wanted to lead a service project at your church or at your school, but you weren't sure where to start? In this workshop, we'll look at some practical ideas about how to plan and lead a service project. We'll explore different kinds of projects, how to get people

involved, and more. At the end of the workshop, you will receive information about different ways to get involved with the ELCA to take back to your church and youth group.

Amie Adams Mortenson works at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she directs the Service and Outreach ministry and leads a variety of Faith Formation activities. Amie studied Writing & Rhetoric and Religion at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, and spent five summers working at Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camps. She is originally from Iowa and moved to Colorado in 2017. Amie is also a first-year grad student working toward a Master's of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. When she isn't working or studying, Amie loves kayaking, hiking, and pretty much anything involving the mountains.