



Urban Plunge to Chicago

From June 10 – 14, 23 youth and 4 adults from 6 churches in the Northern Great Lakes Synod went to Chicago for a week of immersion learning, sightseeing, service and fun. What follows is a summary description of that experience.



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from the
Northern Great Lakes Synod



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From the Youth: "It was fun, Everyone was so interesting, I liked the Night Ministry walk and learning about other cultures, The Corn in a Cup, The food at Bubba Gumps, The Street Magician, The people were awesome, It was fun walking through the city, Getting the spare tire stolen, It was a good experience – Slashed away at stereotypes, The Indian Tacos!, New friendships, Playing Catch Phrase, The architecture, Seeing homeless people, Walking in different neighborhoods and seeing the differences, Playing tag, The feeling of helplessness among those we visited was striking, Getting a different perspective, Bonding with new friends, Meeting people from other Lutheran churches, We assume things about other people – this experience helped me hear the real story."

The Urban Plunge Too: June 10 – 14, 2013

We worked with the Youth in Mission program through the Lutheran School of Theology where we stayed at the Youth Center.



Monday: The week began with Giordano's pizza and a walk through Hyde Park. The pizza was Chicago style stuffed (see left). As we walked through our new neighborhood in small groups, we noticed very wealthy homes and very small homes without windows that we later learned were subsidized housing. Since we were on a seminary campus which was near the University of Chicago, there was significant police and security presence.



Tuesday: We visited the Kateri Center, a ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago serving a community of American Indian Catholics through faith formation and Native traditional prayer. We heard the stories of Georgina and Michael, and of Bill the flute player (see right). We watched a movie on the first Wounded Knee and we learned about the hopes and dreams, challenges and joys, of many Native people and the differences and similarities between our world and theirs. We joined them for a lunch of Indian Tacos (above right): fried bread, hamburger, beans, lettuce, tomato, and cheese.

It was very good!

Here we are with our whole group at the St. Kateri Center of Chicago, www.katericenterchicago.org.

Tuesday afternoon we participated in another neighborhood walk in a neighborhood



known for its abundance of homeless youth, many of whom have found their way to this particular neighborhood for its reputed welcome of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender people. Our youth were asked to scan the neighborhood for places where they might sleep, if they were homeless, or where they might hide their stuff. We learned that the average age of the homeless is 9 years old, and that homeless youth looked just like we did; similar clothes, shoes, even Ipods, and yet they struggled with issues of welcome, identity, loss of community, and a support network.

We found a local eatery for supper and enjoyed Flub A Dub Chubs hotdogs and burgers. Every evening closed with conversation, devotions, and prayer.

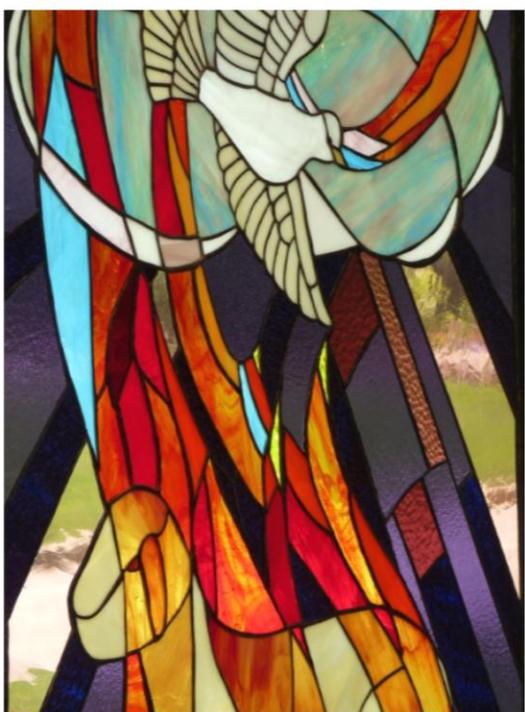
Wednesday: We enjoyed breakfast in the LSTC cafeteria compliments of Youth in Mission. We headed to The Lutheran Center for worship and a tour of the Churchwide Headquarter offices. Below Left is one of the windows hanging in the chapel. For lunch, we ate previously packed sandwiches as we drove to Telpochcalli Community Center in the heart of The Little Village, a Latino neighborhood. Here, Ernesto, Maria, and Esperanza share their stories with us. Later we were joined by five local teenagers who walked the neighborhood with us. They spoke of the gang activity in the area, the metal detectors at the doors of their school, what they do for fun, their plans for the future, and their fears. We shared with them stories of moose sightings, four-wheeling, our neighborhoods, our future hopes, and our fears. After our walk and some heartfelt good-byes and good wishes, we returned to our vans to find



that one had had its spare tire stolen. Our Urban Plunge experience was complete. We had been robbed! We went to a local restaurant for supper, La Taqueria Los Comales, and tried Rice Milk and Tortas. Very, very good!

Thursday: Our original plans for the day fell through, but we were happy to fill the day with sightseeing. The day included the Lincoln Park Zoo with picnic, Navy Pier, a trolley ride to Michigan Ave, Millennium Park Bean (next page left) and Fountain, and a street magician. Our evening ended with conversation about all that we had seen, heard and learned.

While there was some disappointment that the traditional “service” day had not happened, we realized that hearing





the stories of people, and spending time with them, did more to correct stereotypes and fight racism than making sandwiches or ladling soup would have. We come home with a deeper appreciation of our many blessings, and a broader understanding of how God is at work in the world. We have seen the face of Christ in our Native American, Latino, and outcast brothers and sisters. Now the issues that we hear

reported in the news have a face and a story and that will shape our hearing and our doing. Special thanks to Mr. Vance Blackfox for his coordination of these immersion experiences and his leadership. Thank you to Bethany- Republic, Trinity- Rhinelander, Good Shepherd – Houghton, and First-Dollar Bay for your offering contribution to support the ministries that we visited. Thank you to Robin Jarvi (Bethany – Republic), Pastor Bucky Beach (Good Shepherd-Houghton), Pastor Kari Vadis (Trinity- Rhinelander), and all the churches that supported the participation of the young people who came on this trip.

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