

The logo features a yellow spotlight beam shining down on the text. The text reads "Northern Great Lakes Synod Youth Ministry Spotlight" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Northern Great Lakes Synod Youth Ministry Spotlight

Connecting Through Faith – a story about Dietrich

Dietrich Rasner is an active high school junior at Forest Park School in Crystal Falls, and he has the busy schedule to prove it. In addition to his extracurriculars, he's also a member at United Lutheran Church. The collaborative nature of youth ministry between congregations in the Northern Great Lakes Synod has opened up opportunities beyond what's available in his own backyard. In the past couple of years, Dietrich has attended the ELCA Youth Gathering, gone on summer service trips, attended Quake, served as a Leader-in-Training at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, and more. For Dietrich, the most impactful part of all of these experiences has been the people he's met.

When he was younger, Dietrich lived in Houghton, and he's maintained relationships with friends in that area since moving to Crystal Falls. When he started attending events with other youth groups, it allowed him to not only spend time with those friends again, but form new friendships with other young people from across the synod that have become special to him. Now faith-centered experiences, like service trips or a week at camp, have an added layer of excitement because they involve connecting with this network of friends. He not only knows he'll have fun because there will be familiar faces there, but that he'll have the opportunity to meet new people and continue making new friendships.

In addition to the relationships formed with his peers, Dietrich has also been greatly impacted by the people he's met on service trips. He knows that by serving others, he's both helping those individuals and gaining valuable insight himself. Hearing the stories of people living through great struggles who are able to center joy and gratitude for what they have has offered him a new

perspective. Informed by his experiences, Dietrich feels that as someone who has more than enough, he is called to help others. He's learned that even a small amount of effort can bring about great change in the lives of those in need.

For Dietrich, there's something special about large Christ-centered gatherings. When he was at Quake, a weekend-long faith retreat for 6th-12th graders, he could feel the power of the youth. Christian youth experiences like these are different from school because you can feel that everyone in the room is gathered for the same purpose. His experience at the 2024 Youth Gathering in New Orleans had the same effect on an even larger scale. Worshipping with over 16,000 other attendees, singing with that number of voices, and the sheer excitement and energy in the room gave him the chills. The privilege of being able to travel to a new place is not lost on him, and he's grateful for the opportunity to be gathered with so many people for a unified reason.



As Dietrich looks forward to his senior year, figuring out which youth ministry opportunities fit into his schedule is part of the planning. He's set to be a Leader-in-Training at Fortune Lake for the second time, and he's looking forward to seeing friends and getting to know the younger campers

he'll work with in this role. Young people like Dietrich are at the heart of this work, and we give thanks to God for them and their willingness to participate and the youth leaders, pastors, families, and congregation members who make it possible for them to have faith-shaping experiences like these.