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## Church youth leader braves meteorological, rhetorical storms overseas

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Patrick Golden helped load coffee beans into supply bags, which the United Methodist Council on Relief gave to people in the Philippines after a typhoon hit.

Patrick Golden, a Bellaire native who attends St. Paul's United Methodist Church, flew to The Philippines this July as a nonvoting delegate for the Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly for United Methodist Church.

While there, he faced two storms that helped him realize some important life lessons.

When Golden arrived in Manila, Typhoon Rammasun was not far behind. By the time the group arrived at the dormitory in Tagaytay, the [windows](#) had been shattered, and the building was beginning to flood. All 350 of the delegates huddled in one room, navigating language barriers as they attempted to communicate. "I got to know the people from my jurisdiction a lot better during that time," Golden said. The next day, the attendees were able to move to a resort instead. Golden realized how fortunate the group was to have that option. "We might get the benefit of moving to a different venue, but the large majority of people just have to move on in spite of their homes being destroyed," he said.

Once the event got underway, a storm of a different nature began to brew. Of the 10 pieces of legislation on the table, four centered on gay rights, such as changing the language in the church's Book of Discipline to be [more](#) inclusive. Sometimes the discussions and voting gave way to yelling and fighting. "For Africans, homosexuality is taboo...it's criminalized," Golden said. "We have to understand where they're coming from instead of calling them ignorant. We can't let issues like this split apart the church."

Golden said this experience further strengthened what he's learned at St. Paul's. "For me, the Global Young People's Convocation gave me the opportunity to express the openness that I've gained from St. Paul's to people around the world," he said. "We're a lot more focused on helping out the homeless and...helping out other people who need to be loved other than spending time arguing and debating about religious theology. I think sometimes we get way too bureaucratic, way too political. Let's [stop](#) yelling at people...and get back to the most important thing, and that's to love God and your neighbors as yourself."

NAME: Patrick Golden

AGE: 18

OCCUPATION: Student at the University of Texas

COMMUNITY CONNECTION: Grew up in Bellaire

FAST FACT: Golden started his first semester at the University of Texas this fall with a double major in government and economics.

Leah Schmalz is a [freelance writer](#). She can be reached at neighborhoods@chron.com.

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