

The Joyful News

The Women of the ELCA
Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization



August 2014

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A Message from the President

Dear Sisters-in-Christ,

“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” Isaiah 58:12

The Ninth Triennial Gathering was an incredible opportunity for attendees—all six (yes, SIX!) generations in attendance. From our first worship service on Thursday evening through the last worship service on Sunday, the focus was on learning and celebrating how we, the Women of the ELCA, are actively mobilizing each other to act boldly to rebuild the ancient ruins, repair the breach, restore the streets in which we live.

Bishop Eaton, in a remarkably dynamic speech, talked about women from ancient times being the foundation for building the church. Over the years women have continued to move forward boldly to support and encourage the extension of roles of women in the church. Without the Women of the ELCA and the predecessor bodies, she stated that she would not be in the position she holds today.

We further examined the “repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets to live in” through plenary talks from The Rev. Susan Sparks, a pastor, lawyer, and comedian. The entire assembly, although rolling with laughter throughout her story telling, came away with the message to go out into the world and through the grace of Jesus Christ advocate for justice and peace.

The Rev. Becca Stevens described the real work of housing homeless women, women who walked on the dark side of society—prostitution, trafficking, drug



WOMEN
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Purpose Statement...

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

abuse. Through love and caring, many of these women have been able to recover, walk on their own in the world, and contribute in a very positive way. Her organization, Thistle Farms, has saved many women. I encourage you to see for yourself what love can do. Use this link to learn more about Becca Stevens and her work: <http://www.thistlefarms.org>.

Dr. Diane Jacobson led a Bible Study of "Mary's Song: The Magnificat," which is included in the July/August *Gather* Magazine (page 30). She first walked us through a comparison of Mary and Elizabeth's lives and their mutual journey to an understanding of their calling. If you do not have *Gather* Magazine, it is well worth subscribing for the Bible studies, as well as the wonderful articles. You will find information for ordering *Gather* Magazine later in this newsletter.

We engaged in remarkable workshops, service projects, and wonderful fellowship that continued throughout the week with our sisters-in-Christ. No one was a stranger, no one was an outsider. It was an incredibly powerful celebration of who we are as women and Women of the ELCA.



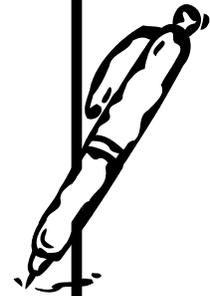
Walk with God in your Hearts,

Kathy Meier
President, Metro DC SWO



Mark Your Calendar!

October 18	SWO Board Meeting Good Shepherd, Alexandria
January 10	SWO Board Meeting St. Matthew's, Woodbridge
March 14	SWO Board Meeting St. Mark's, Springfield
April 11	SWO Spring Convention [TBD]
June 13	SWO Board Meeting Holy Trinity, Falls Church



MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW FOR THE METRO DC SWO SPRING CONVENTION!

Be sure to save the date of Saturday, April 11, 2015. Details will be forthcoming in the December issue of *The Joyful News*.

Please contact Kathy Meier at 703-881-3333 or kathleenmeier@comcast.net or Marcia Ihnen at 703-979-5570 or mcihnen@aol.com if you are interested in joining the Convention Planning Committee or would like information about hosting the convention.

Around the Synod...

What's Buzzing at First Trinity Lutheran Church?

The short answers are the bees and lots of things happening.

First Trinity was founded in 1851 as a German Lutheran congregation at 4th and E Streets NW. in central Washington, DC. German Catholic and German Jewish congregations began nearby about the same time. The neighborhood changed through the years, and after a decline, has become enlivened by lots of new growth and excitement. Recently our congregation is growing and there are new things going on.

I interviewed some of our congregation members for their thoughts on what makes First Trinity a vibrant congregation.

Music—Where else are you likely to hear Bach and “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” during the same service? Our liturgy varies throughout the year and is upbeat and singable. The acoustics are great, so we’re a singing congregation. Our Cantor Steve Brodd is a gifted musician and a true blessing. The services always feel “just right.”

Diverse Members—No matter who or what you are, there’s another person like you.

A Welcome to All—People tell me they feel at home the first week, and it doesn’t take long to get involved.

Thursday Night Church—A soup and salad supper followed by a brief worship with Taize’ hymns and a Life in Balance Benedictine study afterward.

Supportive and Family—We’ll love you in Christ. We have a wide range of ages with lots of young adults, but the faithfulness and dedication of the longtime members are an obvious foundation of the congregation.

The Sunlight in our sacristy helps show our energy and lively openness.

Beehive—Our newly installed beehive on the roof piques everyone’s curiosity. They’re thriving and multiplying and doing their job.



Here's a picture of Paul Diehl, our beekeeper, and our hive on First Trinity's roof. Queen Esther is in the bottom and laying lots of eggs. If you look carefully, you can see lots of bees at the bottom of the hive.

What's helping us grow?—Welcome packets for first time visitors, receptions after every service (everyone munches and gets to know each other), once a month restaurant luncheon for visitors /newcomers, Senior luncheons about quarterly, Women’s retreats, new plans always afoot, and three great pastors! Since St. Matthews (Washington, DC) has been worshipping with us several years while they redevelop their site, we have the services of Pastor Phil Huber, joining our own Pastor Tom Knoll and Pastor Wendy Moen. They make a gifted team.

We continue to support **Community Family Life Services**, founded in 1969 to provide services to the poor, homeless, and jobless, and **Lifeline Partnership** for Adults with Developmental Disabilities, founded in 1954. These keep us grounded in service to others.

~ Bonnie Priebe, First Trinity, DC

PROGRAM IDEAS AND RESOURCES

Free E-Newsletter

Bold Connections is the free Women of the ELCA e-newsletter. Go to the home page at www.womenoftheelca.org and sign up in the *Bold Connections* box on the right to receive regular, timely news and information from the churchwide organization.



Scholarships!

The Women of the ELCA is offering scholarships to women who are members of the ELCA. The scholarship money will be awarded in four categories:

- to Lutheran laywomen studying for a career other than ordained ministry
- to women interested in pursuing additional education for administrative leadership
- for women in their final year at an ELCA seminary
- to women administrators and faculty at ELCA colleges and seminaries for participation in leadership training and management training institutes.

Additional information and downloadable forms for the 2011-2012 school year are available on the Web site, www.womenoftheelca.org. The application period is **from December 15, 2010 through February 15, 2011**.



Grant Proposals

The Women of the ELCA is seeking grant proposals from non-for-profit organizations, both domestic and international, that are dedicated to education, healthcare, and advocacy for women's emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Online applications and

downloadable PDF files will be available on the www.womenoftheelca.org Web site, **through February 15, 2015**. Proposals will be accepted from December 15, 2014 through February 15, 2015. Please see the web site for complete information.



Gather's 2014-2015 Bible Study

A new life partner, a new child, a new job, a new home: most of us recognize how our lives are changed by these experiences. In *Transforming Life and Faith*, we will consider how our lives and our faith journeys are transformed by the events we experience and the people we meet. In both the Old Testament and New Testament, and especially in Acts of the Apostles, we will read about people who have life-changing experiences: Paul on the road to Damascus, Moses in the wilderness of Midian, Lydia praying by a river in Macedonia, an Ethiopian man traveling from Jerusalem to Gaza. We will watch them turn to and with God as their minds, hearts, and daily lives are altered. And we will reflect on the ways we, too, have been and will be transformed and called by God to serve God's mission in the world. Download more information about the 2014-15 Bible study at <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/gather-magazine-pages-49.php>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Schersten LaHurd is a lifelong teacher: Red Cross swimming lessons, high school English, parish education, and, for the past 30 years, biblical studies, Islam, and interfaith relations in colleges, seminaries, the church, and the wider community. After earning degrees from Augustana College (Illinois) and the University of Chicago, she received a Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. She is author of "Luke's Vision: The People of God," the 1998 Bible study for *Lutheran Woman Today* (now *Gather*).

Reports from the Metro DC SWO Delegates on the Ninth Triennial Convention, July 21-23, 2014

Charlotte, NC, July 21-23. Three delegates traveled to Charlotte to represent the Metropolitan Washington Synodical Women's Organization at the Ninth Triennial Convention, which took place just prior to the beginning of the Gathering. And an exciting Convention it was! I will cover some of the highlights in this report.

We elected four new officers to the Churchwide Executive Board of the WELCA: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. We also elected 17 Members to serve on the Churchwide Executive Board of the WELCA. The new churchwide board can be found on page 8.

The Convention adopted a budget for 2015 in the amount of \$2,941,593, which is \$18,022 less than the 2014 budget and \$520,805 less than the 2013 budget.

In addition, the Convention considered a Resolution that had first been approved at the 2011 Triennial and was scheduled for a re-reading and second vote during the 2014 Convention. The resolution outlined a major amendment to the Churchwide Constitution that would reduce the size of the Executive Board to 4 officers and 9 Board Members (currently there are 4 and 17). After considerable debate and a call for further explanation of the effect of this change on the budget, the Synodical units, and the workload of staff members, the delegates voted **NOT** to adopt the amendment, so the resolution failed.

The following Memorials were considered by the Convention Delegates:

1) **Awareness and Prevention of Human Trafficking**

Summary: SWO Boards are to convene a committee charged with reviewing resources and helping the organization to promote resources that can help units to inform, educate, and mobilize their congregations and communities through prayer, ministry, and political action.

2) **Bullying, Harassment, and Related Violence**

Summary: The delegates of the Ninth Triennial convention encourage synodical organizations to identify other organizations that are working to combat bullying, harassment, and related violence, and to partner with these organizations to facilitate presentations at synodical events. All expressions of Women of the ELCA are asked to champion this concern for the safety of our children and to advocate for congregational education to prevent bullying, harassment, and related violence in church, school, and society.

3) **Creating Safe Churches for Children**

Summary: Delegates are to encourage participants and congregational units of Women of the ELCA to support their congregations in reviewing their childcare policies and providing child abuse education and prevention training for all staff and volunteers who have contact with children and youth.

4) **Solar Energy for Phebe Hospital in Liberia**

Summary: Requested an avenue for funding through WELCA for developing a proposal for solar power to the hospital, and consider making this a special project of WELCA so women throughout the ELCA can help support solar energy for Phebe Hospital in Liberia.

Background: Project has a long history with ELCA. In 2011, served 63,000 outpatients and 6,000 inpatients. Largest public health institution in Liberia and provides training for Midwives, Physician Assistants, and Registered Nurses. Electricity is not available, and power is generated via diesel generators at cost of \$35,000 per year. Declining funding puts future of hospital in jeopardy. Solar power could be used (location 6 degrees north of the equator—with abundance of sunshine).

Final outcome after revisions: Hold in prayer the fragile country of Liberia as it struggles to recover from the tragedy of fourteen years of war, affirm the extraordinary efforts of Northeastern Minnesota Synodical Women’s Organization to work with its partners to develop a proposal for providing solar power to the Phebe Hospital, and further that the NMSWO continue to inform the churchwide women’s organization about the progress of this project over the next triennium and encourage women throughout the organization to pray for and support this extraordinary initiative.

5) **Unit Representation on Synodical Board**

Summary: Change to the Constitution to allow two women from the same congregation to serve on synodical boards if necessary.

Final outcome: Committee recommended that convention send this memorial to the executive board for study and action.

~ Kathy Meier, SWO Presidential Delegate, St. Matthew’s, Woodbridge

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Being selected as one of your three delegates to the Ninth Triennial Convention was an honor and I thank you for the privilege. Along with Wilma Dublin and our SWO President Kathy Meier, our Metro Synod Women of the ELCA had a part in electing a new WELCA Board and voting on several resolutions.

One of the highlights of this Convention was the report by The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, as she spoke on the “State of the ELCA.” Bishop Eaton made clear her belief that women now serve as Pastors (and Bishops) in the ELCA due to the many years of work by the Women of the ELCA and its predecessors. She thanked the Women of the ELCA for the strong financial support they have provided “for a couple of centuries to missionaries so that the good news of Jesus Christ might be heard and experienced and felt among people all over the world,” as well as mentioning the more recent ELCA Malaria Campaign to which WELCA has contributed over \$84,000.

Her theme was “We are church; We are Lutheran; We are church together; We are church for the sake of the world.” She made this point very clear in her observation that no single church, community, nor synod can care for the undocumented children currently seeking refuge in this country; but TOGETHER we can. She noted that the ELCA and Lutheran Social Service agencies are hoping to work in those communities that are overwhelmed. “We need to pray for them as well,” she stated. “That’s how we are as church together, and we are church for the sake of the world.” This pronouncement brought a rousing cheer from the delegates.

Her concluding comments again stated, “We are a church stronger together than we are apart.” She emphasized that basic spiritual disciplines of prayer, silence, Scripture study, giving of time and talent, doing works of justice, and worship are not some gimmick, but basically what Christians have done for 2,000 years and need to continue to do into the future.

~ Fran Eck, Delegate, St. Mark’s, Springfield

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I offer my sincerest thanks to the members of the Metro DC SWO for the opportunity to attend the Triennial convention as a first-time delegate. I arrived prepared, thanks to President Kathleen Meier, with much anticipation for the convention business that had to be addressed. Overall, it was an uplifting and learning experience for me. I left renewed and inspired to do my part in helping to carry out the important work of our organization.

There were many reports, elections, and programs, and of equal importance were the Bible Studies that helped us to refocus on who we are and why we do what we do. As women of the ELCA, why should we care about issues of justice in society and church? Why do we care about the hungry and homeless children? Why do we want to create awareness about human trafficking or tell the stories of abuse survivors? Why give a scholarship to a seminary student? Why do we pray for peace in the world? The obvious answer is that we love to help those in need. The Bible Studies offered timely, deeper, thoughtful

reminders. We heard about Jesus' identity and purpose in Luke 4:14-21. Jesus, 'spirit-filled,' read the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." Jesus claimed the text for himself. We too as children of God, made in God's image, were urged to claim that text for ourselves.

Who are the Women of the ELCA? We follow Jesus and have a purpose, command, and gospel to share. In Mark 8: 34-35, Jesus calls us to "deny" ourselves, to move outside our comfort zones and be bold women. We asked for discernment as we participate in God's work in the world. We will continue our work supporting poverty and justice ministries that transform lives. We will extend the hand of welcome to continue to build an inclusive and diverse church. You stood with us too, as we sang lustfully/eagerly and with conviction, the lyrics of David Haas' hymn, "We Are Called."

We are called to act with justice.

We are called to love tenderly.

We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.

~ Wilma Dublin, Delegate, Good Shepherd, Alexandria

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Women of the ELCA Elect New Executive Officers and Board Members

The triennial convention elected the following Women of the ELCA executive officers:

- Patti Austin, president (member of All Saints Lutheran in Lilburn, GA)
- Jody Smiley, vice president (member of St. Michael Lutheran in Blacksburg, VA)
- Becky Shurson, secretary (member of Faith Lutheran in Yucaipa, CA)
- Ely Smith, re-elected treasurer (member of Trinity Lutheran in Parkland, WA)

The triennial convention elected the following to the Women of the ELCA executive board:

- Cindy Arnett, Sierra Pacific Synod
- Deborah Banks-Williams, Metropolitan Chicago Synod
- Lois Bylund, Northwestern Minnesota Synod
- Lydia Davila, Caribbean Synod
- Dinah Dutta, Central States Synod
- Gwendolynn Edwards, Nebraska Synod
- Joyce Gibson, Montana Synod
- Nancy Giddings, Minneapolis Area Synod
- Sandra Grier, Upper Susquehanna Synod
- Joan Iverson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod
- Gwendolyn King, Southeast Pennsylvania Synod
- Barbara Miller, Southeast Michigan Synod
- Lisa Plorin, Western North Dakota Synod
- Anna Sarver, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod
- Dawn Smith, Northwest / Lower Michigan Synod
- Karen Voris, Alaska Synod
- Jackie Wilson, Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod



All officers and executive board members will serve a three-year term from 2014-2017.

Triennial Gathering Recap—July 24-27, 2014



In her “Message from the President” on the front page, Kathy Meier gave a very good summary of the excellent featured speakers for the Gathering. The July 2014 *Bold Connections* e-magazine gives a well-done recap of the both the Ninth Triennial Convention and the Gathering itself. If you are a subscriber, please enjoy reading about all of the goings-on.

Metro DC SWO had 41 attendees at the Gathering, and our “METRO DC SWO” Team raised \$600 for the “5K Run, Walk, and Roll” event to benefit WELCA’s “Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls” initiative. It’s impossible to “do it all” at a triennial gathering, so check out some of the activities through this summary and the links provided for additional information.

- In-kind giving (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/women-elca-tradition-sharing-generous-giving/>) tradition continues—During the time of this gathering, women contributed \$14,785 in gift cards; 15,877 minutes in phone cards; 6,635 toilette items; 3,717 pair of socks and underwear; 118 quilt kits; 116 quilts; and 1,508 prayer shawls. At the “quilting cottage,” women made quilts to be sent overseas.
- Practicing discipleship through servant events (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/456/>)—Servant opportunities focused on one of the four actions in Isaiah 58:12 and offered opportunities to learn and practice collective stewardship and discipleship. The Quilting Cottage, for example, was one of the many servant events available where donated quilts and the 90+ made on the spot (with more on the way) were to be sent around in the world via Lutheran World Relief. Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls, another service opportunity, uses activities to look at the heart of the Women of the ELCA’s Health Initiative. Other servant opportunities included receiving the stories of women in the military; creating safe havens for girls; learning more about the plight of women in the Congo; and community organizing.
- Accepting all (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/learning-accepting/>) explored in workshop—Striving to help build inclusive congregations through a ministry of graceful engagement, faithful conversations and educational hospitality, ELCA women attended a workshop to learn more about “ReconcilingWorks,” an organization initially established in 1983 as a way for Lutheran congregations to publicly declare their welcome to gay and lesbian people.
- Young women gather at chocolate lounge (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/chocolate-brings-em-in-them/>)—The point of the Chocolate Lounge was to have the young adult women in their 20s and 30s interact and get interested in Women of the ELCA.
- Deepening inter-generational relationships (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/its-life-changing-relationships/>)—Young adults aged 18 to 30 and women in every other generation participated in an interactive workshop on intergenerational space, *Café* (<http://www.boldcafe.org>) groups and openness to the needs and experiences of younger women.
- Presiding bishop (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/we-sister-act-act/>) urges women to be an undercover force—Eaton spoke of the many ways women serve in their congregations and highlighted the \$84,000 raised by Women of the ELCA for the ELCA’s Malaria Campaign. She said, “You have to understand that you also are leaders, that women are leaders in congregations. Sometimes I think we discount our leadership if we are not elected to positions of elected leadership in our congregations.” And she reminded us that “We’re a sister act, so let’s act.”
- Nearly \$40,000 collected in Thankoffering Service (<http://www.welcatg.org/news/page/4/>)—During closing worship, 25 percent of thankofferings will support Women of the ELCA’s Katie’s Fund; 25 percent to Women of the ELCA’s scholarships; and 50 percent to International Leaders–Women, a priority of *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA*—a five-year campaign seeking to raise \$198 million in support of new and expanded ELCA churchwide ministries.

Experience the triennial gathering for the first time or again through social media at this blog post: <http://www.welcatg.org/news/experience-welcatg-again/>. View the many photos divided up and labeled into days that were posted using this link: <http://photos.womenoftheelca.org/Other-2>.

Triennial Gathering—Viewpoint of a “First Timer”

As a first-time attendee to a Triennial Gathering, I was one of over **700** who attended the “First Timer Breakfast” on Friday of the Gathering. It was a real eye-opener, as I was clueless as to how many of us NEWBIES would be there. But that meant that there were over **1600** RETURNEES... wow, mind-blowing... so these Gatherings *must* really be something special, right?

Oh, sure, I’ve been to many other conventions—both organization- and work-related—in my 60-plus years, but I wasn’t prepared for the marked and bubbling enthusiasm of these Women of the ELCA. Let me tell you, after several days with these remarkable women, it’s overwhelmingly obvious that **we ARE a powerful force!**

What an experience! We cheered for and laughed with our speakers... we enthusiastically greeted strangers as friends, who then became friends... we greeted our new bishop and enjoyed an ice cream social... we exchanged ‘tchotchkes’ or gave them away—bracelets, bookmarks, pins, pens, magnets, and such...

We sang and danced at our seats... we kept time with the music... we learned new songs in several different languages... we worshiped, shared our Thankofferings, and went to the Lord’s Table together...

We brought in-kind gifts... we brought quilts... we brought prayer shawls... we chose to work on thirteen different Servant events... we could chose to attend up to four Workshops of the twelve different ones offered...

We patiently waited in lines... we purchased books and had some signed by the authors... we screened and discussed new films that explored the Gathering theme in various ways... we made interesting purchases at the plethora of the gathered vendors...

We ran/walked/rolled for 5K together (I was #67, a walker), raising money for the “Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls” initiative... we went on tours of what Charlotte had to offer...

We painted-by-number a mural that took shape as a tree with many branches, symbolizing our theme of many generations... we later added names to the branches and leaves of those who helped us on our spiritual path... and finally we watched in awe as Stephanie Burke, the Gathering’s artist-in-residence, created a luminous overlay of Christ himself as the tree during our closing worship service...



Team METRO DC raised \$600!



Mural of our paint-by-numbers efforts, overlaid with this beautifully illuminated picture of Christ



See more pictures of this exciting venue at <http://photos.womenoftheelca.org/Other-2> and, compliments of Paulette Sandene, on our SWO website at <http://dwyercl2.wix.com/welca-metrodcsynod>.

We learned so much... we were humbled by what we learned...

And in three years, we hope to be RETURNEES to the Gathering in Minneapolis! In the words of Bishop Eton: “We are a sister act—so sisters, let’s act!”

~ Cheryl Dwyer, St. Mark’s, Springfield