

**2016-2017 REPORT TO THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY
METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON, D.C. SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION**

Women of the ELCA 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.”

THE METRO DC SWO MINISTRY APRIL 2016 THROUGH MAY 2017

2017 SWO Convention: The Annual Spring Convention of the Synodical Women of the ELCA celebrated the theme of “All Anew,” which was based on Isaiah 43:19, “I am about to do a new thing ...” It was held at Peace Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA, on Saturday, May 6, 2017 and by all reports it was a success! The women of Peace were wonderful hosts and treated us to a Continental breakfast and a delicious sandwich lunch along with their warm hospitality.

At our business meeting, the voting members approved our standard reports and passed our current year’s budget and a draft budget for 2018-2019. They also elected a new Vice President and re-elected our Treasurer and one Board Member for two-year terms as well as one Nominating Committee member (Ann Nuss, Saint Luke, Silver Spring) for a one-year term. We are still seeking to add two additional Nominating Committee members for next year’s convention. You will find a list of current Executive Board members included at the end of this report.

The Reverend Sarah Scherschligt from Peace Lutheran led our communion worship based on the Holden Evening Prayer Service and Bishop Richard H. Graham gave the homily. After the service, Patti Austin, president of churchwide Women of the ELCA, installed our SWO officers and board members for the upcoming 2017-2018 year.

Our Plenary Session, “All Anew—The Women of the ELCA,” was led by Patty Austin, who was also our special guest and representative from churchwide WELCA. Using PowerPoint slides with many photos she took over her three-year tenure as churchwide Women of the ELCA president, she gave us an interesting first-hand look through her travels to Tanzania and Guatemala at what is happening internationally with the Women of the ELCA as well as what is going on within the US. She held an interesting Q&A session at the end of her talk.

Our workshops were well received and included “Gifts for You” by Patty Austin; a session on “Women in Agriculture around the World” presented by Kristin Vought, Philanthropic Associate, Lutheran World Relief; a study of Post-Modern Christianity entitled “A Vision of the Future Church” led by the Rev. Mike Gutzler (Holy Trinity and Mosaic District); and an interactive “Introduction to Tai Chi” session led by Alan “Rob” Robertson, Catalyst Personal Fitness.

Our community booths and vendors included Beading for Haiti (Chris Jensen, Peace Women of the ELCA), ELCA World Hunger (Dorothy Sorrell), Fair Trade Winds (Paul Culler), Gifts of Hope (Carolyn Sowinski), Lifeline Partnership (Suzanne Blume), Lutheran Social Services/National Capitol Area (Lisa Johnson), Lutheran World Relief (Kristin Vought), Thrivent (Sheri Swackhamer), La Sagrada Familia (The Rev. Rosario Hernandez), SWO Human Trafficking Awareness (Wilma Dublin), and SWO/Women of the ELCA/Tenth Triennial Gathering (Karen Evans, Bonnie Priebe).

From the 60 convention attendees, we collected 348 “Personal Care Kits” for Lutheran World Relief as in-kind gift donations (which were transported the following Tuesday to the LWR warehouse in New Windsor, MD). Our convention offering was divided equally between churchwide Women of the ELCA and a local charity, Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA).

At the end of May, we are wrapping up our two-year project to raise money for *La Sagrada Familia*, affiliated with Saint Luke Lutheran Church in Silver Spring, MD.

Human Trafficking Awareness Initiative: Acting on a memorial from the 2014 Triennial Convention and as a follow-on to our 2015 SWO Annual Spring Convention focus, our SWO Human Trafficking Awareness committee continued its work to raise awareness of the human trafficking in our area and to also report what is being done to combat it.

SWO Vice President and our committee chair Wilma Dublin has been a strong leader and catalyst for this committee, and as she has now completed her tenure, we are seeking a new committee chair. Here are some of her accomplishments with the committee:

- Last summer, she served as a mentor to a group of victims at a trial in Alexandria after which the trafficker was found guilty and is now awaiting sentencing.
- She advised us that the June issues of *Gather* and *Living Lutheran* featured articles addressing this issue.
- She conducted seminars to encourage awareness of this problem to several of our churches within the synod and to some other groups who requested information, showing the short DVD “Chosen” to some of them.
- Her articles in our newsletter, *The Joyful News* and on our website along with the committee’s poster campaign against Human Trafficking in early 2017 helped to spread the word that Human Trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery—it involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit human beings for some type of labor or commercial sex purpose.
- The committee and their poster campaign highlighted the multi-lingual National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) number 1-888-373-8888.
- Their poster campaign involved mailing and hand-delivering packets of posters, flyers, and other handouts to every church in our synod and encouraging them to place the posters in their church buildings and to seek permission to post them in their communities in grocery stores, libraries, and other places with pedestrian traffic.

Spearheaded by the diligence of committee chair Wilma Dublin and board member Karen Evans, their committee efforts on Human Trafficking Awareness even made the churchwide Women of the ELCA news! Terry Lackey, Director for Communication of churchwide Women of the ELCA, wrote the story of their poster campaign for churchwide Women of the ELCA "News & Events" section and also published it in the April 1, 2017 issue of the monthly "Bold Connections" e-newsletter. You can read it at <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/march-2017--hitting-the-streets-news-522.php?category-id=6>.

Communication: The website and Facebook page continue to be active with links to and the promotion of SWO events, messages of interest to the units, WELCA information, and blogs. In addition, we now post the minutes of our SWO Executive Board meetings on our website.

Our newsletter, *The Joyful News* was published in August, December, and March, informing units about current events within the SWO, resources available, happenings around the Synod, and promoting our fundraiser for the last two years, *La Sagrada Familia*. A special edition was also sent in June that reported on the April SWO convention and highlighted the upcoming *Grace Gathering* in August in New Orleans and the 10th Triennial Gathering coming up in July 2017 in Minneapolis. The email distribution project for *The Joyful News* continues to be successful, saving the organization a considerable amount in postage and paper. A paper copy is sent to those units and some individuals not wishing to receive the digital version. ***If your church office or WELCA/SWO contact is not receiving The Joyful News, please advise us.***

Our SWO 2015-2017 Giving Project: The *La Sagrada Familia* campaign has been our focus for the past two years and was active through the end of May 2017. *La Sagrada Familia* is a mission project of the ELCA (Metro DC Synod) and works closely with Saint Luke Lutheran Church. It has over ten years of experience in accompanying the Latino and other immigrant populations in defending housing rights of apartment dwellers, creating jobs, and especially improving educational opportunities for children. Pastor Rosario Cruz and her volunteers from Saint Luke and a group of students from the Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Maryland provide food, clothing, school supplies, and help with homework, crafts, and games during an after school program. Psychological help is also available as is an ESOL program geared to adults. We will be gifting them our collection in June after the campaign has ended.

2017 Tenth Triennial Convention and Gathering: Registration continues for the 2017 Tenth Triennial Gathering, themed “All Anew,” to be held July 13-16, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This year they are encouraging registration for young women ages 6-18, with special programming for our younger guests. At last count, we have 23 women planning to attend from our Metro DC Synod.

The Tenth Triennial Convention precedes the gathering and is to be held July 11-13, 2017, in Minneapolis. Our three voting representatives this year are included at the end of this report.

Growing the SWO: This is an ongoing mission to expand our active units in the Synodical Women’s Organization. We are able together to do more than we could do as an individual church. We have been talking to you, trying to understand your needs and desires. We know we are a diverse group across a large age span. But that does not mean we should continue doing everything we have always done, the same way we have always done it. There is something for everyone—a prayer group, a Bible study group, a circle, a monthly meeting, service projects, a Prayer Shawl group, a *Café* group for mothers and/or younger members—or perhaps you have an idea you would like to try. All of these things are possible through Women of the ELCA. Let us come to your congregation, explore with you the opportunities with the WELCA of today.

If your church does not have an active membership with SWO, please consider joining with us in making a difference. Contact me at DwyerCL2@verizon.net and together we can do great things!

Cheryl Dwyer
President
Metropolitan Washington, DC Synodical Women’s Organization
Women of the ELCA

**METROPOLITAN DC SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS
April 2016 – May 2017¹**

OFFICERS:

President – Cheryl Dwyer (St. Mark's, Springfield)
²Vice President – Wilma Dublin (Faith, Arlington)
Secretary – Fran Eck (St. Mark's, Springfield)
³Treasurer – Karen Ager (Peace Lutheran, Alexandria)

BOARD MEMBERS:

Board Member – Sue Cottrol (Good Shepherd, Alexandria)
⁴Board Member – Sheena Foster (Luther Place, Washington, DC)
Board Member – Marcia Ihnen (Holy Trinity, Falls Church)
Board Member – Karen Evans (Saint Luke, Silver Spring)
Board Member – Bonnie Priebe (First Trinity, Washington, DC)

2017 TRIENNIAL CONVENTION VOTING MEMBERS:

Cheryl Dwyer (St. Mark's, Springfield)
Laura Hamke (New Jerusalem, Lovettsville)
Marcia Ihnen (Holy Trinity, Falls Church)

¹ Unless otherwise noted here, these Officers and Board Members will continue to serve for the next year from May 2017 through Spring 2018.

² Paulette Sandene (Faith, Arlington) was elected VP at our May 6, 2017 convention for the term of May 2017 through Spring 2019, as Wilma Dublin has completed her term of office.

³ Karen Ager was re-elected as Treasurer at our May 6, 2017 convention after her appointment to serve as acting Treasurer; her new term will run February 1, 2018 through January 31, 2020.

⁴ Sheena Foster was re-elected as a Board Member at our May 6, 2017 convention after her appointment to serve as an acting Board Member; her new term will run from May 2017 through Spring 2019.