

The Joyful News



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

December 2015

IN THIS ISSUE:

A Message from the President.....	pages 1-2
Mark Your 2015/2016 Calendar!	page 3
Around the Synod	pages 4-5
SWO Presents \$5,500 to Our LCMs!.....	pages 5-6
250 th Birthday of New Jerusalem Lutheran Church	page 6
“Connected by God’s Love” Working Retreat	page 7
How to Listen to Trafficking Survivors	page 8-9
Bulletin Board.....	page 10
SWO Giving Campaign 2015-2016: <i>La Sagrada Familia</i>	page 11

* * * * *

Please email articles for *The Joyful News* to the editor, Cheryl Dwyer, at DWYERCL2@VERIZON.NET or send via snail-mail to:
8500 Oak Chase Circle
Fairfax Station, VA 22039-3322



A Message from the President

My dear Sisters in Christ,

Over the past three years of communicating with you at the beginning of Advent, we have talked about preparing for this blessed holiday of Christmas. Advent is the time of many types of preparing – buying those special gifts, decorating our homes, baking the cookies, planning family get-togethers. And, most importantly, we center our hearts and minds to hear the messages that comes to us through our meditations, anthems and hymns, scriptures, and sermons.

We also talked about the beginning of a new liturgical year and how we may be thinking of ways to help us stay connected to and practice of our faith. This is particularly poignant during these terrible times of social violence and terrorism.

The November Devotion offered by the Women of the ELCA (womenoftheelca.org) is the wonderful old hymn, “Now Thank we all Our God.” The history of that hymn is included in the devotion and it reflects a very serious and terrible happening. The author of the hymn, Martin Rinkart, a clergyman from Eilenburg, Germany, wrote this during the Thirty Year War, where they experienced, fear, hungry refugees crowding into the city, devastation of the countryside, and thousands of people dying. We may be experiencing different horrors in our time, caused by different sets of circumstances, but the outcome is not much different.

As I sing or read the hymn, I am mindful of this man’s eyes turned to God. He has a faith strong enough to see the wonder of God’s gifts, and to pray with joy for God “to keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed; and free us from all harm in this world and the next.” (The hymn and history are printed, following this letter.)

As we all prepare for this coming season, I encourage you to seek out some of the publication resources provided by the WELCA—*Café*, *Daily Grace*, *Gather Magazine*, Look at the program resources listed on the website (there are several for Thanksgiving and Christmas). Most of all, take the time for meditation and Bible study, and then reflect on your life and your own relationship with God and those around you.

May God’s grace be upon you, and may your heart be filled with the joy of thanksgiving for the miracle of baby Jesus.

Your sister in Christ . . .

Kathy Meier
President, Metropolitan DC Synodical Women’s Organization



November devotion: Giving Thanks to God

*Now thank we all our God
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who, from our mothers' arms,
has blest us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.*

*Oh, may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
And keep us all in grace,
and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all harm
in this world and the next.*

*All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given;
the Son and Spirit blest,
who reign in highest heaven;
The one eternal God,
whom earth and heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.*

– Evangelical Lutheran Worship 839, 840

What a beautiful hymn of thanksgiving for God's blessings! Have you ever wondered where it came from and what inspired the hymn writer? I have—so I looked it up. Here's how it came about.

In 1617, a young clergyman named Martin Rinkart came back to his home town of Eilenburg in the German state of Saxony, newly appointed to serve the church in that ancient walled city.

But the very next year, war broke out—the war later named the Thirty Years' War. Wave after wave of hungry refugees crowded into the city as armies devastated the countryside over and over again.

Martin and the three other pastors in town worked day and night to serve their suffering people—and then, two decades into the war, plague broke out in the starving city. One pastor ran away, hoping to escape death. The other two died of the plague, leaving Martin the only minister in Eilenburg during the worst of the epidemic. He presided over nearly 4,500 funerals in 1637—sometimes 50 in a day. Altogether, 8,000 townspeople died of plague that year, including Martin's beloved wife, Christina.

And yet, during that horrible time, Martin was able to write this beautiful hymn. Can you imagine writing this joyful hymn of praise and thanksgiving even as war, disease and starvation raged all around, with no end in sight?

Pastor Martin lived to see better times. His hymn was published as a table prayer and quickly became well-known. The war finally ended in 1648, and his hymn was sung at the signing of the peace treaty. Pastor Martin died in his hometown the next year at the ripe old age of 63, having survived famine, pestilence and war. Do you think they sang his hymn at his funeral?

Pastor Martin's beautiful hymn, translated into English by Catherine Winkworth, appears in our Lutheran hymnal as well as in those of many other denominations. And I know many of us will sing it at our Thanksgiving tables. Will you?





Mark Your 2015/2016 Calendar!

December 15	Churchwide Grants and Scholarships applications open
January 9	SWO Executive Board meeting St. Mark's, Springfield, VA
January 18	Day of Service St. Matthew's, Woodbridge, VA (see page 4)
February 15	Churchwide grants and scholarship applications due
February 22	SWO 2016 Convention registrations <u>open</u>
March 5	SWO Executive Board meeting Home of Kathy Meier
March 7	SWO Executive Board nomination forms <u>due</u>
March 14	SWO 2016 Convention Delegate registrations <u>due</u> and Early Registration <u>close</u>
March 31	SWO 2016 Convention registrations <u>close</u>
April 16	SWO Convention—"I was a stranger..." St. Luke, Silver Spring, MD (see page 3)



*Wishing you all a Blessed
Christmas and
a Joyful New Year!*

*...from your Officers and Board
Members of the Metro DC
Synodical Women's Organization*



Around the Synod...

SWO 2016 CONVENTION

“I was a stranger...”

The Metropolitan D.C. Synodical Women’s Organization Convention will be held on **Saturday, April 16, 2016, at St. Luke Lutheran Church, 9100 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, MD.**

Our theme, “**I was a stranger...**” will delve into the issue of immigration and refugees. This is another topic so troubling in our world and there is a great deal of conflict and discussion on how to resolve the issues and whether or not they can be resolved. There will be a one-hour plenary session for all attendees to hear the facts and be involved in discussion. Further planning of workshops, worship, and other activities are on-going.

Elections will be held during the business meeting for several positions on the Board as outlined in this newsletter under “Nominations and Elections.” Please search your heart and prayerfully consider serving in this capacity. It is a wonderful faith growing experience that encourages new ideas, creativity, and leadership as well as building friendships, having fun, and contributing far beyond your daily circle.

The January 2016 Special Issue of *The Joyful News* will bring you more information and forms to begin the process for running for election, serving as a delegate, and registration.

**SAVE THE DATE!!!
SATURDAY, April 16, 2016 at
St. Luke in Silver Spring, MD**



Nominations and Elections

Nominations are being requested for election of members to the SWO Executive Board. Positions open: President, Secretary, and three Board Members.

These are critical positions for the success of our SWO. We invite you to consider serving

and/or seek out interested candidates within your unit. Appropriate forms will be included in a special January Convention Issue of *The Joyful News*. In addition, Mary Seale from the nominating committee member will be contacting you after the first of the year requesting names and will be happy to answer any questions for a prospective nominee.

Mary Seale 301-249-1332
All Saints, Bowie, MD
(MGSEALE@VERIZON.NET)

Please note that all nomination forms should be sent to Mary at:

Mary Seale
302 Aden Court
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774



SWO PROJECT FOR 2015-2016: LA SAGRADA FAMILIA

The SWO project for our active year of 2015-2016 is *La Sagrada Familia* (The Holy Family) in Langley Park, MD.

As you know from the recent letter mailed/emailed from Kathy Meier, SWO President, *La Sagrada Familia* is a mission project of the ELCA (Metro DC Synod) and works closely with St. Luke Lutheran Church.

Please learn more about this worthy project on page 11.



ST. MATTHEW’S “DAY OF SERVICE”

St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in Woodbridge, VA, is once again opening it’s “Day of Service” to **all women in the Metro DC synod**. It will be a full day of opportunity to provide grateful service to Wounded Military Men and Women and to provide Much Needed Quilts to meet Lutheran World Relief’s need for quilts. Also, new this year is

the opportunity to make a simple dress for a girl around the world.

Where: St. Matthew's Lutheran Church (lower level) – 12351 All Saints Place, Woodbridge, VA 22192

When: Monday, January 18, 2016, 8:30AM – 4:00PM

What to do now: Start gathering some not-yet-used fabric for the quilts or pillow cases for the dresses. .. then save this date for a Day of Service!

Bring: Sewing machine with neutral thread if possible, **but non-sewing volunteers are very much needed to measure, pin, fold, press and tie the quilts.**

Questions? Contact Carol Moonan – cdmoonan@gmail.com or 703-491-9634.



SWO Presents \$5,500 to Our Synod's Lutheran Campus Ministries!

In the Metro DC Synod, there are several Universities or Colleges that provide a College Campus program for Lutheran students. There are amazing groups of young people engaged in this ministry who are eager to serve in the community by being mentors, helping build self-esteem, and providing solid role models for elementary school children. They involve themselves in projects and share time together in worship, in song, and in social gatherings that help build their own faith background.

The program enriches college students' partnership with ELCA by serving as a link between their college community and congregations, pastors, youth directors, synods, and ELCA organizations.

A Recent Meeting!

On November 1, 2015, the Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization presented a check for \$5,500 to the Metro DC Synod Lutheran Campus Ministries (LCMs). The check was accepted by Rev. Ray Ranker of the University of Maryland Lutheran Campus Ministry on behalf of the Synod LCMs. The donation will go into the Metro DC Synod's LCM account and will be used for all participating LCM's in the Synod.



SWO President Kathy Meier along with Treasurer Cheryl Dwyer and Board Members Bonnie Priebe, Karen Ager, and Marcia Ihnen attended the campus ministry's usual Sunday evening program at Hope Lutheran in College Park. It was a delightful and spirit-filled evening sharing dinner and worship with 25 young people who are enthusiastic about their studies, the possibilities for their lives, and their faith. Kathy presented the check during the worship service and used the opportunity to share information about the activities of the churchwide Women of the ELCA as well as the SWO. Kathy commended the students for their work mentoring and tutoring the elementary school students in Langley Park.

As visitors, we were invited to join and mingle with the students at the tables set up for dinner. We noted a true sense of belonging among the students as they gathered at the Sunday evening dinner/worship. A couple of

the students we spoke with mentioned that they love having a place to come where they can be among friends and don't have to eat "dining hall food."

During the worship and communion service that followed, a film was shown of student video clips wherein they spoke of growing in their faith as a result of Pastor Ray's influence. The relaxed service certainly suited the group and we were impressed with their total cooperation of putting things away and cleaning up afterwards.

Two of our group had the following comments on our visit, which summed it up nicely:

"I was glad for the opportunity to mingle with the students. There seemed to be so much energy in the room. I wish we could harness it."

"I enjoyed our visit to Hope Lutheran Church to present our check. I've been aware of the energy and involvement of this campus ministry group for several years, so it was great to see the group in action. They seem so young! It's hard to remember my own college days and that energy..."

Our financial support affirms and lifts up the valuable community services offered by these students. **Thank you to all of the congregational WELCA units who contributed to the SWO Lutheran Campus Ministry fundraiser over the last two years!**



CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF SERVING AT NEW JERUSALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH, LOVETTSTVILLE, VA

~ Information courtesy of Kay Garrett, a member of New Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Lovettsville, VA

Celebrating our Past, Building Our Future

Here at New Jerusalem we have had a busy year of events celebrating our 250 years. It is impossible to share in a reasonable amount of space the many events and special services that we have enjoyed during 2015—so I will simply relate the two contributions to the festivities made by our WELCA Bible study group.

In May our WELCA group sponsored a trip to Gettysburg Seminary. We began our day with an introduction and brief history of the seminary. We continued with a tour of the Civil War Hospital—now a museum—and we enjoyed a delightful lunch in the cafeteria followed by a worship service in the beautiful chapel. If you have not been to the Gettysburg Seminary, you should make the trip—it is an inspiring place to visit.

Gettysburg Seminary has an important place in our history because our pastor of 39 years, Pastor Michael Kretsinger, was a graduate of Gettysburg in 1954. He and his wife (New Jerusalem's organist and choir director for 61 years!) were married in the seminary chapel.

In August our WELCA group hosted a tea for "girls of all ages." We brought out our best teacups, teapots, sterling spoons, and other finery. We made our best fancy cookies and met the event with great excitement. It was a special occasion, our guests were as excited as we were, and many left saying, "make this an annual event..." Uh-oh!

Visit us online at <http://www.njlclovettsville.org/>.



“Connected by God's Love” Working Retreat

~ Submitted by Bonnie Priebe, First Trinity, DC



I joined Ruth Fortis' group of about twenty women from several states for their yearly Wednesday through Saturday gathering at the Ziegler Hospitality Center in New Windsor, MD, beginning October 21st. We worked inspecting, tagging, and labeling goods that had come in for SERRV (Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation and Vocation) sales on one of our days.

Then some of us packaged and inspected Lutheran World Relief backpacks, readying them for shipment overseas. They need to be absolutely uniform with no variations.

Photos: [top] readying LWR backpacks, [lower left] quilts ready for compacting, [lower right] quilt bales ready for shipping



The rest of the group carefully folded quilts (also LWR) for the green pressing machine, which compacts 35 quilts into about half their bulk. They are then wrapped into sturdy and waterproof bales and, with 12 bales loaded onto a pallet, they're ready to be shipped off to a place that needs them.

When we weren't working, we got to know each other, had devotions, learned more about Lutheran World Relief (one of my very favorite organizations), ate, and shopped at the SERRV store. I plan to join them again next year.



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.

How to Listen to Trafficking Survivors [1]

By *Heather Evans* [2] 11-13-2015



Print [3] Image via *Christy Thompson* [4]/Shutterstock.com

A few years ago, while attending a community event, I had a life-shaping encounter. A woman came to greet me, and as we were talking she learned I was a therapist.

“I was sexually trafficked for 12 years of my life,” she said.

Trying to come to terms with what she just shared, she proceeded to elaborate on scattered details of her story, as well as her strong sense of burden for the vast issue of human trafficking around the world.

As it happens, I had been spending time learning about this issue and was already considering how to take action. I told her about a group of people working to start a coalition in the Lehigh Valley, Pa., in order to raise awareness and provide training for aftercare services to victims. Her response was full of emotion. She seemed burdened and desirous of action, but overwhelmed with fear and hopelessness.

During that night, and several forthcoming visits, she would have much to share, and I would have much to learn.

First and foremost, this woman taught me that understanding an issue is not enough. I am confident that we still must try to educate. But focusing a spotlight on human trafficking alone will not move to action.

“People don’t want to know,” she said. “They don’t want to believe it’s true and is happening.”

She taught me about the hopelessness and brokenness that results from the trauma of sex trafficking. She is a successful entrepreneur, but feels fragmented. In order to live and survive, she has had to distance herself from this other part of her identity and her life.

What I learned from her is the importance of listening in this line of work. She described it as breaking the silence.

“Do you know what we need? We just need someone to listen ... someone who cares without a face of disgust and without a look of blame that says there must have been something you did to cause this,” she said.

Meeting this woman has brought to life the hundreds of pages of stories and information that I had consumed over the previous years. These were humbling moments. In spite of all that knowledge, I had to put it on the shelf and learn to listen first — to be a student of one who directly knows and needs to be heard.

This woman would be the first of dozens of women our coalition leaders have met in our work over the last few years. Our coalition in the Lehigh Valley region was formed simply because there was a need. National statistics could not be denied — sex trafficking existed

in our region, and we were ignorant, passive, unprepared, and complicit in the midst of its prevalence.

Our initial vision included a basic goal of raising awareness and seeking to coordinate efforts for a unified response that would comprehensively address this form of modern-day slavery through prevention, awareness, action, and aftercare. But as our awareness efforts soon led many trafficking survivors to us, statistics and stories were replaced with personal, local faces that would need our help and in turn, would change our lives.

Interacting with trafficking survivors is a cross-cultural experience. Many of their stories are riddled with addiction, abuse, neglect, out-of-home placement, loss, rejection, and suffering. (And this does not even begin to address the culture of the commercial sex industry.) The language of “the life,” the rules of “the game”, and the many nuances of a relationship with a trafficker — whether known as daddy, boyfriend, boss, abuser, or lover — are only a few of the cultural differences for a woman coming out of the commercial sex industry.

As I sit with a woman who has secrets, stories, and experiences that are much different than my own, what can I offer? The world views her as dirty and as choosing this lifestyle. Others view her as to be pitied and a cause to be rescued. What does she need? What

do *we* need to understand about women who have a history of prostitution or sex trafficking?

Recently I asked another woman this question. Separated from her trafficker for only two months, she had a fresh understanding.

“Because of the nature of the commercial sex industry, most women will feel like they will be judged. It’s shameful once we come to terms with the ugliness of our sin. It’s very difficult to feel that we are worthy of love and even understand God the Father’s work. What helped me was the tenderness — the fact that women came to my rescue and were kind. God revealed himself through these women,” she said.

Listening well acknowledges each person’s value and dignity. Effective listening magnifies their strengths, resilience, courage, and capacities to survive, which will in turn enable them to be restored. Listening well revives a voice that has been silenced. Listening honors. Listening teaches and changes the listener because through listening we enter in to suffering, evil and darkness. Yet, it will bring us closer to Christ, who entered in, that we might be changed, redeemed and glorified.

Listening brings healing to the speaker and to the listener as it can make us more like Christ.

Source URL: <https://sojo.net/articles/how-listen-trafficking-survivors> **and Links:**

[1] <https://sojo.net/articles/how-listen-trafficking-survivors>

[2] <https://sojo.net/biography/heather-evans>

[3] <https://sojo.net/print/217668>

[4] <http://www.shutterstock.com/gallery-4303p1.html>

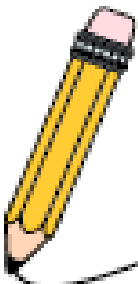


Grant for Ascensions Psychological and Community Services

The Women of the ELCA has awarded a grant to Ascensions Psychological and Community Services, a Washington, DC center helping women in the Washington, DC area. The goal of the program is to provide families with the therapeutic interventions and tools necessary to decrease incidents of child abuse, low self-esteem, and unhealthy relationships.

Self-healing opportunities are available. Ascensions provides holistic psychological interventions to families in Washington, DC’s most impoverished communities. Their mission is to help disadvantaged families rise above past and current difficulties to a place of renewed wellness. The Metro DC Synodical Women’s Organization offers congratulations and thanks for the service Ascensions Psychological provides to the DC Metropolitan area citizens.





Did you know that you can access *The Joyful News* online? It is available at the SWO website:

- Go to <http://dwyercl2.wix.com/welca-metrodcsynod>.
- Scroll down the home page and click The Joyful News link at the bottom left of the page.
- Click the latest date selection or either of the two archived newsletters from the Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization.



Grants and Scholarships*:

Open: December 15, 2015 **Close: February 15, 2016**

- Application process for 2016 grants opens [under **OUR WORK>Grants**].
- Application process for 2016-2017 scholarships opens [under **OUR WORK>Scholarships**].

December 15, 2015 is also the **deadline** to apply for a seed grant in the *Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls* health initiative [under **OUR WORK>SPECIAL INITIATIVES>Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls**].

For more information on any of these topics, go to www.womenoftheelca.org.

**** SEE OUR LOCAL RECIPIENT ON PAGE 9!!! ****



Day of Service—JOIN US!

St. Matthew's, Woodbridge, VA
Monday, January 18, 2016
8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

We'll assemble *Quilts of Honor* for Wounded Military Men and Women and to make *Mission Quilts* to help Lutheran World Relief.

PLEASE JOIN US!!! See pages 4 and 5 for more information...

Café*:

Café is a free online magazine that can be found monthly at www.boldcafe.org. It offers topical exploration of timely issues for young women matched with a theological reflection and discussion questions. Many groups of young women gather each month, often in some inviting café setting, to discuss *Café's* hot topic. *Café* articles tie into the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA and introduce the organization to young women. Since *Café* is also available by podcast, the organization provides an audio connection that's appreciated by many.

Gather*:

Every year the Women of the ELCA produces nine months of subdivided Bible studies for the community, published in *Gather* magazine, along with a three-month summer study.

Gather can be ordered through Augsburg Fortress (\$15.00 for 1 year /10 issues) by calling (800) 328-4648 Monday - Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm (Central Standard Time Zone) or online from <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/gather-magazine-pages-49.php>.

NEEDED: Newsletter Editor! Our newsletter, *The Joyful News*, needs a new editor! The work is very satisfying and you meet some every interesting women in the process. Interested? Questions? Contact Cheryl Dwyer at DWYERCL2@VERIZON.NET

*Reprinted with permission from *Interchange*, the churchwide newsletter of Women of the ELCA. Copyright 2014 Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Bulletin Board



**METRO DC WOMEN OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
GIVING CAMPAIGN
FOR
LA SAGRADA FAMILIA (THE HOLY FAMILY)**



**IN LANGLEY PARK, MD
2015-2016**

La Sagrada Familia is a mission project of the ELCA (Metro DC Synod) and works closely with St. 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. Langley Park is one of the most densely populated and crime-ridden locations in the DC area. The children are at high risk for gang violence, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy.



Pastor Rosario Cruz and her volunteers from St. 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 ESL program geared to adults.



Let's help this blessed service by acting boldly in our faith with the gifts God has given us.

Please make checks payable to METRO DC WELCA noting *La Sagrada Familia* in the memo line and send to:

Cheryl Dwyer
8500 Oak Chase Circle
Fairfax Station, VA 22039-3322

