

The Joyful News



Incoming President's Message
Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization

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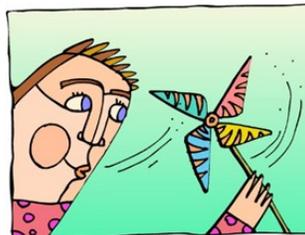
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Dear Sisters-in-Christ,
Acts 2:1-2 "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting."



When our son was in middle school, he attended after school tutoring. I dropped him off after a particularly stressful day, and went to run some errands. At the store, the pinwheel display caught my fancy. I picked one in his favorite blue and silver colors. Though he played it cool, he was clearly delighted by it on the way home. It's now in my home office where I see it daily. I love how it accepts both the slightest breeze and my hardest whoosh of air and spins freely.

I have been reflecting on our mission and purpose statement. I read, "As a community of women...empowered by the Holy Spirit..." and I wonder how receptive



we may need to be to the slightest nudge of the Spirit. Does it take the "rush of a violent wind" to wake us and stir us to action? In this community of women, we continue to discover what it means to live in the Spirit. We demonstrate our faithfulness in caring for ourselves, one another, the church, the society and the world. Our Convention let the Spirit shine as we raised up mental health. I encourage you to read all about it and continue reflecting and acting on what we learned together.

Our website opens with the banner, "Women of the ELCA are committed to ending human trafficking." We have studied, discussed, advocated, given support and worked toward this healing. Recently, I learned about another form of human labor trafficking. People recovering from substance addiction do not "pay" for treatment, but rather are housed, fed, and put to work caring for aging mentally ill and disabled people. They are not paid for

their labor, and often work 16 hour days with little to no training. Indeed, they even have access to the very drugs to which they were addicted. To be honest, I thought we had done our part by taking a year to raise awareness throughout our congregation. My re-awakening to the pain and suffering of those who are trafficked and those doing the trafficking is just beginning. It's not pretty and it's not easy. As Bishop Graham reminded and encouraged us at our Convention, when we continue to talk about the hard issues and to make the invisible visible, the Spirit brings healing, wholeness and forgiveness. We do not have to do it perfectly. The Spirit enables us to do it with passion and joy.

Thank you for allowing me to begin serving in a new role. Together, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have much to discover, enjoy, and transform.

Together in Christ,
Donna Nelson, President,
Metro DC SWO



Outgoing President's Message by Cheryl Dwyer



"Thanks" is a very small six-letter word for a HEART Full of appreciation for all of you for helping to make my two-year tenure as your leader as President of the Metro DC SWO such a great experience ... to the officers and board members of our SWO who joyfully served with me ... to The Joyful News dedicated editorial team who made our newsletter come alive ... to everyone who helped to make our SWO Conventions such wonderfully moving and learning experiences ... to all of us who enjoyed the fellowship of our Tenth Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis together ... and especially to all of you faithful sisters-in-Christ who work your miracles both behind the scenes and as leaders in our synod, in your churches, and in your Women of the ELCA units—THANK YOU All! ... I look forward to continue working side-by-side with you!

Thank You to the Giants by Donna Nelson

Those of you who know me know that I am not a huge sports fan. In any case, you may have guessed that I am not thanking the San Francisco baseball team! When I arrived in Silver Spring in January 2014, I had never heard of the Women of the ELCA. Though I had been active in ELCA churches before, they did not have active units. I showed up at a Circle meeting and was immediately touched, moved, and inspired by these women of faith and action. Fast forward to the 2014 Triennial Gathering where I was blown away by the witness and work apparent there.

In a whirlwind, I agreed to step up to the president's role for the Metro DC SWO just days before the Convention. I am humbled and inspired by the welcome I am receiving. To paraphrase a quote from Isaac Newton in 1675: If I see further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.

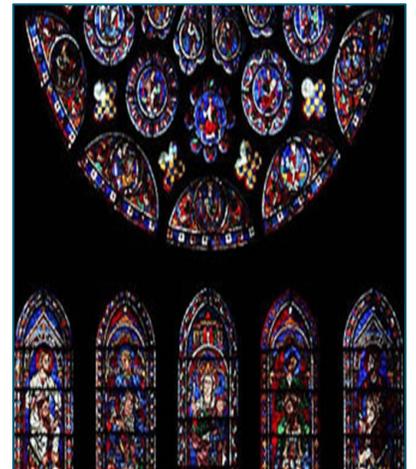
Thank you to all of you who have built the strong foundation for this vital organization. In particular, thank you to the outgoing Board members: Cheryl Dwyer, Marcia Ihnen, and Fran Eck. We appreciate your generous sharing of your gifts, your support for all of us in our callings, and your work to engage in ministry and action, and to promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

Support the Women of the ELCA

Now you can support Women of the ELCA with an even sweeter smile - an AmazonSmile, that is.

AmazonSmile is a simple, automatic way for you to support Women of the ELCA every time you shop at Amazon.com, at no cost to you. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5 percent of what you spend at Amazon to the churchwide women's organization.

Your privacy is protected—Women of the ELCA is never informed of your purchases, the amount you spend, or even that it's you who's supporting Women of the ELCA through AmazonSmile. It couldn't be easier.



An illustration of New Testament evangelists on the shoulders of Old Testament prophets, looking up at the Messiah from the south

Rose window of Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres in Chartres, Paris, France

SWO Business Meeting

The voting members elected Donna Nelson (Saint Luke, Silver Spring, Maryland) as our new President, Sue Cottrol (Good Shepherd, Alexandria, Virginia) as our new Secretary, and re-elected Board Members Bonnie Priebe (First Trinity, Washington, DC) and Karen Evans (Saint Luke, Silver Spring, Maryland). They also elected new board members Joan Enerson (St. Mark's, Springfield, Virginia) and Pat Nau (Christ, Fairfax, Virginia). The new board was installed by our special guest and our representative from church-wide Women of the ELCA, Executive Board Treasurer Anna Sarver.

Ann Nuss (Saint Luke, Silver Spring, Maryland) and Laura Hamke (New Jerusalem, Lovettsville, Virginia) were elected to a one-year term as part of our Nominating Committee for officers and board members for the 2019 convention. We are seeking one additional committee member to work with these lovely ladies throughout the year to fill our slate for 2019-2020. Contact Donna Nelson at nelson-donna06@gmail.com or 847-224-2819 to volunteer or to get more information.

SWO
Convention
May 2018

You will find the list of new officers and their contact information on the last page of this newsletter. Please tuck it away for future reference!

Worship

SWO Convention
May 2018

We began with an inspirational bilingual Worship Service adapted for our morning worship and led by The Reverend Varinia Espinosa (of St. Mark's) and The Reverend Heidi Eickstadt (of Abiding Presence) with the homily delivered by The Reverend Richard H. Graham (Bishop, Metropolitan Washington D.C. Synod). The interactive bilingual service was very a very moving experience of both English and Spanish hymn singing and text.

We especially welcomed our Spanish sisters as, in addition to the bilingual worship service, a professional translator interpreted English to Spanish via 'tour guide' equipment that the SWO rented for the hired translator during the sessions that were delivered in English.

[*Commented:*]

As always, Bishop Graham grounded us in Scripture and faith, painted a picture of God's care and love for us, and left us with words of challenge and hope.





In-Kind Gifts

We welcomed 88 convention attendees, who contributed boxes and boxes and trunks full (!) of personal toiletries for Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA) as in-kind gift donations for LIRS patrons as these organizations work hand-in-hand.

The generous outpouring of in-kind gifts was amazing! The LSS NCA exhibit or even helped to us transport some of them to their office.

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Offering

Your convention offering of \$2,630 was shared equally between churchwide Women of the ELCA and the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). LIRS focuses on rebuilding hope and creating a culture of welcome for immigrants and refugees. You can find out more about the wonderful work these folks are doing and how we all can help at <https://www.lirs.org/>.



Plenary Session

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Northern Virginia provided speakers for our separate and simultaneous plenary sessions—one in Spanish and one in English—entitled "NAMI--In Our Own Voice." Presenting our Spanish session were Melisma Cox and Aida Pitot, and Kirsten Obadal presented our English session. Comments collected after the convention confirmed that our topic in dealing openly and honestly with mental illness and how it affects not only individuals but also their families was right on target and our speakers were much appreciated.

The speakers embodied the title of delivering their stories in their own voices, as each of them gave us a short history of their battle with mental illness or with that of a family member. They described the feelings of isolation and loneliness, of anger and being out-of-control, and of not being able to take care of themselves at all times. The audience truly felt as though we were walking in their shoes as they explained what they experienced first-hand and the difficulties they faced in their lives. They told how they got the help they needed, what it was like to have to rely on medications to be able to function, but also how great it was to be able to function in the world again. They also admonished us to be patient, caring, and especially understanding of someone who is struggling with any form of mental illness. Their message was well received.

The first person accounts were moving, informative, and inspiring. After the event, I shared with a friend who suffers from anxiety and depression that I was amazed to see that almost everyone raised their hand when asked if we knew someone who has mental illness. He was very encouraged that the stigma is going away and we are talking about these issues openly and hopefully.

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Does Your Risk Make A Difference?



One of the new initiatives at the SWO Convention was the simultaneous translation into Spanish. Several women enjoyed and used the translation service. Among them was Maria Herrera, a member of the La Sagrada Familia community of Saint Luke Lutheran Church. She has given permission to share that her 22 year old son

suffers from schizophrenia. He was not receiving treatment, and it was a very difficult situation. As a result of what she learned at the Convention, she and Pr. Rosario Hernandez were able to get him admitted to the hospital to begin treatment. He has since been discharged. Though it is still a struggle, he is doing better with medication. Thank you for taking the risk to address mental health and work to make it accessible in Spanish. Your risk made a difference!

SWO Convention Continued

Churchwide Representative

Churchwide Women of the ELCA sends a representative from the Executive Board that was elected at the previous Triennial Convention to every SWO Convention. Our representative this year was **Anna Sarver**, who was elected to her second term on the executive board of Women of the ELCA in July 2017. She serves as treasurer and on the executive committee. She previously served as a churchwide board member for the 2014-2017 triennium and she attends Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Greensburg, PA, which is in our own Region 8.

Anna brought us greetings from the churchwide Executive Board of the Women of the ELCA and discussed what our churchwide board has been doing since their election. She reminded us of all the resources that Women of the ELCA offer by simply downloading them online as well as the projects and opportunities for growth and grants that are available from the Women of the ELCA website at <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/>.

Workshops

Three separate workshops were presented only in English and two additional workshops were presented by NAMI of Northern Virginia, one in English and one in Spanish. The NAMI Spanish workshop was presented in the Workshop I session and the English version was presented in the Workshop II session. The other three English workshops were presented at both sessions.

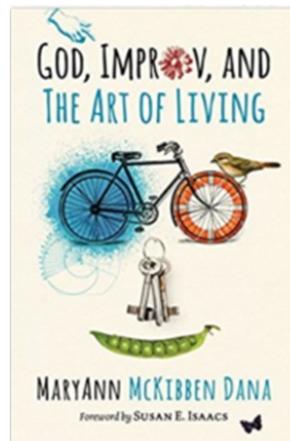


“God, Improv, and the Art of Living”

... was presented by **The Reverend Maryann McKibben Dana**, Writer, Speaker, Pastor, Personal and Professional Coach, and Running Coach. Those who attended one of her two workshops experienced how the principles of improvisation can guide us in our daily lives, when we are faced with detours and disappointments—when life doesn't go according to “the plan.”

This workshop reminded me of “The Sound of Music”. How do you hold a rainbow in your hand? We improvise! We pivot, we say “Yes, AND” and we move through life with God’s grace and love as our constants.

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“NAMI--Personal Stories with Q&A”

... was presented in two separate sessions. The first workshop was presented in Spanish by Clara Campos, who was joined by Cheryl Johnson for the second workshop, which was presented in English. Both workshops gave the attendees a view of what life is like first-hand when living with someone who is affected by mental illness or who live with it themselves.

Their testimonies, insight, and honest answers to questions were very useful in helping us understand that living with mental illness is a normal part of life for many people, removing any “stigma” from it. Depression affects so many people and to hear how these women are coping with day-to-day challenges was very encouraging.

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“Update: Refugee Resettlement”

... was addressed by **Kay Bellor**, Vice President of Programs at LIRS, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, headquartered in nearby Baltimore. Founded in 1939, LIRS is an internationally recognized leader known for innovative services for refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied migrant children and families, and other vulnerable populations. Kay is responsible for integrating the agency's mission, vision, and values into the design and implementation of services, and creating systems to effectively deliver services that meet the goals of the agency's strategic plan. Ms. Bellor spoke to the state of the Refugee Resettlement program in the current political climate. Attendees found out how congregations and individuals can support the efforts of LIRS.

What is there to say in a week when the leader of the free world calls immigrants “animals”? We say, “God loves us, all of us, all nations, and you, too.”

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SWO Convention Continued

“Mask Off: Understanding Your Spiritual Gifts and Walking in Your Purpose”

... was facilitated by **Sheena Foster**, a Board Member of our own Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization, Women of the ELCA, and currently the Executive Director of Can I Live, Inc, a national non-profit resident association that equips and empowers residents of public housing to become self-sufficient. Sheena presented an interactive workshop designed for women under 40—although attendees of all ages were welcome!

We were asked to complete a spiritual gift assessment of sixty questions that helped identify which gifts we have received from the Holy Spirit and where they are strongest. After completing our gift assessment, we identified the strongest-rated gifts that we have been blessed with. We shared this information with the group and discussed what they might mean for each of us. For some of us, this was a moving experience to recognize this in ourselves.

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Thank You to Convention Organizers and Hostesses

Stubborn gladness

Those words sum up the work behind our 2018 SWO Convention - “Take Heart: Getting to Wholeness.” Taking on an issue that can truly feel like a “ruthless furnace,” depression, suicide, and mental illness, we thank the women who made the Convention possible.

A special thanks to:

Cheryl Dwyer

Marcia Ihnen

The women of St. Mark's
Lutheran Church

We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure, but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless furnace of this world.

~Jack Gilbert "A Brief for the Defense"

We appreciate your work, faithful leadership and witness, and friendship. Thank you for sharing your stubborn gladness!

Human Trafficking



Our Commitment: We, the Women of the ELCA, are committed to help eradicate human trafficking by creating awareness in our communities, advocating for more protection and rehabilitation for victims, and participating in anti-trafficking campaigns in our churches, schools, and neighborhoods

March, 22, 2018. The U.S. Senate passed the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA). This is a historic and major legislative victory in the fight

to stop human trafficking. This bill provides access to justice for survivors of online sex trafficking and gives states critical tools for combatting this crime. The bill provides a much-needed update to the Communications Decency Act (CDA) to help hold websites like Backpage accountable when they knowingly facilitate sex trafficking.

Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) spearheaded this legislation through Congress and we are grateful for the tireless efforts of survivor advocates like **'Shared Hope International'** who relentlessly fought to help keep others from facing exploitation online. But most of all, we thank the thousands of supporters who took action on **SESTA** by sending letters to their elected officials and signed petitions.

Please continue to use the link - [Download these daily prayer petitions](#) . "Daily Prayers to End Human Trafficking". These prayers and reflections were written by people of Northeast Wisconsin. Permission is granted to adapt them and share them as you wish.

"Give justice to the weak and fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3-4)



Dear God we know that the root causes of human trafficking are many and run deep. We know that addressing them is long, difficult work. Lord, we pray for legislators who are working to pass laws to protect victims and provide law enforcement and the judicial system with the tools they need to end sex trafficking. We pray for law enforcement officers and judges who deal compassionately with victims and get them the help they need. Help us to remember your unfailing strength, hope and forgiveness. We ask for your guidance so we might make a difference. In your loving name we pray. Amen



National Hotline for reporting and getting help



1-888-373-7888

FOSTA/SESTA signed into law!



Dear Wilma,

Today, in the **presence of survivors and advocates the President signed into law H.R. 1865**, the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (also known as FOSTA/SESTA)!

With the President's signing of H.R. 1865, anti-trafficking advocates and **survivors of sex trafficking and their families celebrate this long awaited progress** in the effort to combat online sex trafficking.

Today's bill signing comes days after [federal agencies seized Backpage.com](#)—a website that the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations reported is knowingly facilitating child sex trafficking—and **charged seven Backpage executives in a 93-count indictment**.

With FOSTA-SESTA signed into law, state prosecutors can prevent similar websites from taking over Backpage's market share and **courtroom doors have been opened to trafficking survivors** who seek to hold exploitative websites civilly liable. These concurrent efforts by federal law enforcement, Congress and the President are drastically changing the landscape that, until now, has allowed the sex trafficking industry to thrive. [Read our full statement here](https://sharedhope.org/2018/04/statement-regarding-fosta-sesta/)

Thank you for your advocacy! Your voice helped to make these victories possible.

Sincerely,

Linda Smith

Founder and President



SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL
□ PO Box 65337 □
Vancouver, Washington 98665 □ □

Shared Hope International is committed to leading a worldwide effort to eradicate sexual slavery ... one life at a time. □ □

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Earth Day Celebration focuses on the Chesapeake Bay

From children to adults, there was something in the Earth Day celebrations at Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, MD, for everyone. On Saturday, April 21, children and adults joined “Friends of the Parks” to clean up litter along Sligo Creek just blocks from the church. On Sunday, April 22, the congregation was treated a light luncheon and a presentation on Stormwater Management for Congregations.

We’ve had a lot of rain in recent weeks. Have you considered what happens to the rainwater? I never had given it a thought! Well, it turns out that many congregations have property in the Chesapeake watershed, the largest estuary in the United States. We learned that Saint Luke alone contributes 5 million gallons a year to the Chesapeake Bay. That’s around 100,000 bathtubs! To help manage that better, we have cut back on lawn fertilizer and salt on the asphalt. We have installed one rain cistern. Our plans for “God’s Work, Our Hands” Sunday includes furthering our efforts to minimize the impact on the Bay.

Sligo Creek is just blocks from Saint Luke Lutheran Church in Silver Spring.



If you would like to learn more about this important topic, please contact Donna Nelson at welca@saintluke.us.

Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization

We are WELCA



What is WELCA? It's an easy way to say Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Quite a mouthful, we know. Our organization includes Lutheran women who gather in over 7,000 locations in the U.S. and the Caribbean, for service, study, advocacy, fellowship, and more! WELCA embraces all kinds of ministries that support our mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. There is a place for you in Women of the ELCA.

Connections

Please submit articles for the **August** issue of **The Joyful News** by **July 1, 2018** to metrodcsw@gmail.com



Women of the ELCA

<http://www.womenoftheelca.org/>



SWO Website

<http://dwyercl2.wixsite.com/welca-metrodcsynod>

N H T R C

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

<http://polarisproject.org/national-human-trafficking-resource-center>



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Metropolitan Washington DC Synodical Women's Organization 2018-2019

Contact Donna Nelson at MetroDCSWO@gmail.com.

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