



**2015-2016 REPORT TO THE SYNOD COUNCIL
METROPOLITAN DC SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION**

PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE METRO DC SWO

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 MARCH 2015 THROUGH APRIL 2016

Annual Convention. The Annual Spring Convention of the Synodical Women of the ELCA was held at Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, Maryland with the theme “I was a stranger . . .” This is the second consecutive year in Maryland, and we were pleased to welcome seven new and four under age 40 in the total of 70 participants.

A worship service, with Pastor Connie A. Miller presiding, included a theme-based homily by Pastor Elizabeth Platz, and the Saint Luke Celebration Bell Choir provided lovely music. Offerings were divided between Women of the ELCA, Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, and Lutheran Immigration and Social Services. In-kind gifts of care packages and gift cards were received for Artemis House and NOVA HTI's (Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Initiative's) Polaris Project, both local organizations offering shelter and/or assistance to human trafficking victims.

The one-hour plenary session, “Immigration and Refugee Crisis: Lutherans in Action,” provided participants with information on the process for the United States to accept immigrants and the subsequent resettlement process once immigrants have been vetted and approved for entry. The session provided information to assist participants filter some of the misinformation that is so widely spread by unreliable sources. Joanne Kelsey, Assistant Director for Advocacy at Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and Aerlande Wontamo, Sr. Resettlement Manager with Lutheran Social Services, led the discussion. The Q&A session brought many questions and answers, but also highlighted the need to continue to pursue this subject during the year and into the future.

Workshops included a follow-up session on the main Immigration and Refugee theme with “How to Help your Congregation Sponsor a Refugee Family,” led by Katie Miller-Holland from LSS. In addition, the Church-wide rep, Karen Voris from Alaska, presented a Bible study on “Radical Hospitality;” Maddie Tallman provided a presentation “A Year of Accompaniment in Argentina;” and Bonnie Elizabeth Kendrick

guided the women through a program of chair yoga exercises. Evaluations indicated the participants found the total program informative and interesting.

The business meeting for voting members included the normal reporting and budget approval. Elections were held for both the Synodical Women's Executive Board and voting members to the 10th Triennial Convention to be held in July 13-16, 2017 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. You will find a list of current Executive Board members included at the end of this report as well as the voting members for the Triennial Convention.

Exhibits included ELCA World Hunger Appeal, with Dorothy Sorrell; Fair Trade Winds with Paul Culler; Gifts of Hope, with Carolyn Sowinski; Lutheran Social Services with Kiersten Rossetto-Nassar; *LaSagrada Familia*, with representatives of Saint Luke; "Our Body, A Gift from God," with Saint Luke representatives; SWO Human Trafficking Task Force, with Wilma Dublin, VP of the Metro DC SWO; and Women of the ELCA, with Cheryl Dwyer.

During lunch, Kyle Warfield, a student at Gettysburg seminary, presented a video on *La Sagrada Familia* that he prepared as part of a senior project/thesis. This is now available for the SWO to use in furthering our efforts in support of *La Sagrada Familia*.

Human Trafficking. Following the 9th Annual Triennial Convention mandate, the Executive Board established a committee to develop a program to educate units on this issue. Wilma Dublin, Vice President of SWO, was appointed to the position of chair, and with the help of Barbara O'Keefe, Suzana Chowdhury, and Marva Benn, sought out information and materials to develop a SWO program to share with our units. Several churches have asked for programs for their full congregation, and Wilma, as well as Gail Hamblen from the Global Peace Foundation, has conducted seminars between their early and late services. This is an ongoing program, available to any congregation and/or the women's group, within our Synod. We encourage all congregations to participate in a briefing or seminar to inform and bring understanding of the issue, recognize a person or persons who might be victims of trafficking, and be familiar with the hot lines and places to refer victims to receive assistance. We can only help stop this horrible abuse of women and children if we are willing to be informed and to act when necessary.

Communication. The website and Facebook page continue to be active with the promotion of SWO events, messages of interest to the units, WELCA information, and blogs.

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 the fundraiser for the year. The e-mail distribution project for *The Joyful News* has been successful, saving the organization a considerable amount in postage and paper. A paper copy is sent to those units not wishing to receive the digital version. ***If your church office or WELCA/SWO contact is not receiving The Joyful News, please advise us.***

A successful 2015 giving project for the SWO. On a Sunday afternoon in November, five Executive Board Members were invited to participate in a gathering with the participants of the University of Maryland Lutheran Campus Ministry in College Park. A lovely dinner was sponsored by a church of one of the students, a meeting was held, and a worship service was planned and led by several students. During the gathering we were able to present to Pastor Ray Ranker a check in the amount of \$5,500, to be used for programs and events by the LCMs in the Metro DC Synod. We spent a wonderful evening in conversation with about 30 very interesting and energetic young men and women following their faith. Thank you all for your support of this program; I am certain you would be very happy to see that your stewardship of our young adults is well placed.

Growing the SWO. Efforts to expand the number of active units in the SWO continued this year. With Human Trafficking and now our Immigration and Refugee issue, there is much to talk about, much to consider, and much to share with one another.

The Synodical Women's Organization offers opportunities for our Synod churches to have a conversation about the value of the SWO. There is a clear need to work together and together we can do much to help others in our community, in our Synod, in our nation and, yes, the world. WELCA is an organization of women in ministry, committed to making a difference in our world. If your church does not have an active membership with SWO, please consider a commit to join with us in making a difference.



In Memory of Barbara O'Keefe

In November, 2015, we lost a very dear friend and colleague. Many of you knew Barbara and her work in Global Mission; others knew of her work and dedication to the Synodical Women's Organization. She was at times a very quiet worker – knitting prayer shawls, assisting a friend who was sick, bringing a kind word to a person in need. She was at times a noisy worker – making her points, sharing opinions, leading committees and task forces, being President of the SWO. And whatever she did, it was with grace and humility. We greatly miss Barbara's presence as we do our work, and we are grateful for the gifts she brought to us. I am certain she has found her mission, work, and peace in her heavenly home.

**METROPOLITAN DC SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
CURRENT OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS**

April, 2015 – April, 2016

OFFICERS:

President – Cheryl Dwyer (St. Mark's, Springfield)
Vice President – Wilma Dublin (Holy Trinity, Falls Church)
Secretary – Fran Eck (St. Mark's, Springfield)
Acting Treasurer – Karen Ager (Peace Lutheran, Alexandria)

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

2017 Triennial Convention Voting Members

Laura Hamke (New Jerusalem, Lovettsville)
Marcia Ihnen (Holy Trinity, Falls Church)