

## METRO DC SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION (SWO) 2017-2018 REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

### PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE METRO DC SWO, WOMEN OF THE ELCA

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 MAY 1, 2017 THROUGH MAY 1, 2018

**Our Annual Spring Convention.** “All Anew” was the theme of our 2017 annual convention held at Peace Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA on May 6, 2017. The convention agenda included an opening Eucharistic service with the Rev. Sarah Scherschligt, Peace Lutheran, presiding and the Rev. Richard H. Graham, Bishop Metro DC Synod, providing the homily. Four workshops were available for participants: “Women in Agriculture around the World” led by Kristin Vought (Philanthropic Associate, Lutheran World Relief), “A Vision of the Future Church” led by the Rev. Michael Gutzler (Holy Trinity, Falls Church, VA), “Introduction to Tai Chi” led by Alan “Rob” Robertson (Catalyst Personal Fitness), and “Gifts for You” led by Patti Austin (President, Churchwide Women of the ELCA). Patti also brought greetings from our churchwide Women of the ELCA and provided the churchwide Women of the ELCA update, as well as delivering our plenary address discussed the topic of “All Anew: Women of the ELCA.” Participants also enjoyed eight exhibitors along with a Continental breakfast, a delicious lunch, and wonderful fellowship.

Offerings collected were equally divided between churchwide Women of the ELCA and Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA). ACCA’s mission is serving those in need by providing early childhood care and education, food, rental assistance, furniture, and other services to low-income families in the Annandale/Bailey’s Crossroads area. In-kind offerings were Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief.

Delegates to the business meeting adopted a budget of \$9,950 for the coming year and elected the following Officers and Board Members for two-year terms: Vice President, Paulette Sandene (Faith, Arlington, VA); Treasurer, Karen Ager (Peace, Alexandria, VA); and Board Members, Sue Cottrol (Good Shepherd, Alexandria, VA), and Sheena Foster (Luther Place Memorial, Washington, DC). Elected to our Nominating Committee for a one-year term was Ann Nuss.

**Communication.** The website and Facebook page created in 2013-2014 have enjoyed a growing level of activity. The website is being used to promote SWO events and Metro DC Synod events, to post links to churchwide Women of the ELCA and their Blog, and to follow the projects and information provided by our SWO Human Trafficking Awareness committee. You will find SWO activities and events as well as links to registration for the SWO Convention, to *The Joyful News*, and to other events and information of interest. These tools allow **ALL** women to individually get information on what is happening within the SWO and the Women of the ELCA. Like us on our Facebook page and become our friend so you can follow us and share what is happening with your friends. Use the website and keep up-to-date on events and activities.

Links for your information: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/metrodcsw>  
and SWO Website: <HTTP://DWYERCL2.WIX.COM/WELCA-METRODCSYNOD>

**Tenth Triennial Convention 2017.** The Tenth Triennial Convention took place in Minneapolis, MN on July 10-13, 2017. Laura Hamke, Marcia Ihnen, and I represented our Metro DC SWO as voting members at the Convention. We discussed and voted on various business items and memorials, and we elected a slate of officers for the triennium 2017-2020. There were a total of 303 voting members in attendance along with a good number of interested attendees.

We had greetings from the Minneapolis Area Synod from The Rev. Ann Svennungsen, Bishop, and Ms. Janice Schmidt, SWO President. Speakers on immigration included Linda Hartke (CEO, LIRS—via pre-recorded video) and Chris Grumm (Chris Grumm Consulting Group, Portland, OR). The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, had a global message for us. Although her message contained many sad realities, her outlook is upbeat and hopeful, and she reassured us that the work we are doing is helping throughout our country and our world.

Of the \$48,092.47 collected for the Tenth Triennial Convention offering, half will support the “PV for Phebe” project providing solar energy to Phebe Hospital in rural Liberia and half will be used for Women of the ELCA ongoing ministries. Of the total, \$10,539.47 was collected at opening worship and congregational units and individuals sent an additional \$37,553.

The voting members approved seven of the proposed Memorial Resolutions for our members to act on during the next three years, plus a final one from the floor recommending “thanks and appreciation” for all those who worked on the Triennial Convention:

- Resolved to raise awareness of the tainted water in Flint, Michigan, and/or offer tangible support to the people in Flint.
- Resolved to support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child and clearly condemn all forms of corporal punishment of children.
- Resolved to educate and act to reduce domestic abuse and violence and help survivors recover.
- Resolved to encourage all participants to hold in prayer the Bible Women of India.
- Resolved to establish **July 11, 2017–February 4, 2018**, as a time of prayer in ELCA congregations to end human trafficking, and to work in cooperation with other agencies, task forces, and groups to end human trafficking and support its victims.
- Resolved to “go green” at the Eleventh Triennial Convention and Gathering in 2020, encouraging voting members and participants to reduce waste by using their personal electronic devices instead of paper and by bringing reusable cups and refillable water bottles.
- Resolved to support the leadership needs in the ELCA by encouraging women to seek ordination as “ministers of word and sacrament” and “ministers of word and service” as well as to promote support for the ELCA Fund for Leaders.

**Tenth Triennial Gathering 2017.** The Tenth Triennial Gathering took place in Minneapolis, MN on July 13-16, 2017, with the theme of “All Anew.” This was a wonderful Gathering with lots of exciting speakers and special events. Our Metro DC SWO was represented by 22 women from 10 churches in our synod. The gathering also welcomed 14 international women as our guests—four of whom are pastors—from El Salvador, Honduras, India, Liberia, Nigeria, and South Sudan. The official gathering attendance figure was 3,322, with over 1,100 first-time attendees. The gathering used two of the Exhibit Halls in the Minneapolis Convention Center, one for our worship services and plenary sessions and the other for exhibits, vendors, and service projects.

The speakers were outstanding—Bishop Eaton, Kelly Fryer (author of *Gather* magazine’s summer Bible study), Leymah Gbowee (Nobel Peace Prize winner, ELCA International Leaders scholarship recipient, and peace activist from Liberia), and the Rev. Alexia Salatierra (a national leader in areas of poverty and immigration and an ELCA pastor)—and they challenged us. The workshops were many and varied with excellent facilitators. The worship services were so very moving, especially the closing worship—our closing Sunday morning worship was a wonderful service for many of us—3,000-plus voices raised in song and praise to our Living God! The Rev. Angela T. Khabeb, a Lutheran pastor from Waukesha, Wisconsin, gave the sermon on the parable of the sower of the seeds based on the Gospel of Mark—she was funny, poignant, engrossing, and simply electrifying!

Six of our Metro DC SWO women were among the 404 participants in the **5K Run, Walk, and Roll** special event on to raise funds for the Women of the ELCA “Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls” initiative. Four ‘officially’ joined our SWO team “Cheryl’s Cherubs”—Barbara Sanders (Saint Luke), Donna Nelson (Saint Luke), Wilma Dublin (Holy Trinity), and me (St. Mark’s)—with Lynne Wathen (Good Shepherd) and Rachel Wolf, a friend of Vicki Haugen from St. Louis, also joining in the event. We’re proud to report that “Cheryl’s Cherubs” raised over \$1,800 to help the initiative.

**The Joyful News.** Our SWO newsletter continued to disburse our news, with thanks to the three editors: Donna Nelson (Saint Luke, Silver Spring, MD), Laura Hamke (New Jerusalem, Lovettsville, VA), and Sheena Foster (Luther Place Memorial, Washington, DC). It was published as usual in August, December, and March and sent to all synod congregations (and some women who asked for their own copy), mostly via email as a PDF document but also as printed copy mailed to some without email access. A “special edition” was published in June that gave highlights of our annual SWO Convention and advertised the 2017 Tenth Triennial Gathering, and the August issue mainly covered the Triennial Convention and Gathering happenings.

Over this past year, *TJN* passed on special messages from the Women of the ELCA, published stories of activities and projects within the units, and kept units up-to-date on what is happening in and around our synod and SWO. Of special note are the Human Trafficking Awareness articles from Wilma Dublin plus updates of the local and federal actions taken to eradicate this human tragedy. *TJN* is available to **ALL** women on-line through our SWO and synod websites as well as the email and US Postal Service deliveries described above. This is **our women’s** newsletter and we very much appreciate the input of stories and information from our units.

**Human Trafficking Awareness.** 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. Their articles in *TJN* and on our website 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, highlighting the multi-lingual National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) number 1-888-373-8888.

**Growing the SWO.** This is a 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 our women, trying to understand their 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, Prayer Shawl groups, a *Café* group for mothers and/or younger members. All of these things are possible through Women of the ELCA. Let us come to your congregation, explore with your women the opportunities with the WELCA of today.

Bishop Eaton tells us, "We are church together." We are also sisters in Christ, and the Synodical Women's Organization has a place for all women. We would be happy to come to your congregation and tell you what it is like in today's SWO and WELCA. Contact me at [DwyerCL2@verizon.net](mailto:DwyerCL2@verizon.net) and together we can do great things!

**Our SWO 2017-2018 Giving Project.** The *Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)* campaign has been our focus for this year and will be active through the end of May, 2018. LIRS has welcomed more than 500,000 migrants and refugees to the United States through the initiative of Lutheran congregations that inspired their formation in 1939, and Lutheran churches remain their vital partners as they continue to welcome newcomers. Donations can be sent to:

Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization  
c/o Karen Ager, Treasurer  
PO Box 44735  
Fort Washington, MD 20749-4735

**A Thank You.** To all women in the congregational units, thank you for the support and leadership you provide to your congregations' ministries and also to the ministry of the Metro DC Synodical Women's Organization. It is a sincere pleasure serving together and using our hands to carry out God's work.

**Opportunities.** The Board of the Synodical Women's Organization is always looking for ways to enhance communications for the women in our Metro DC congregations. We need women who have computer skills and would enjoy the creativity of developing a newsletter, women who enjoy working on websites, and women who enjoy social media and have some skills developing and maintaining these types of sites (such as Facebook and Twitter). These activities can be done from home with minimal guidance from the Communications Team Leader. Contact me at [DwyerCL2@verizon.net](mailto:DwyerCL2@verizon.net) for more information.

## CURRENT OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS May 6, 2017 – May 5, 2018

| OFFICERS:   | BOARD MEMBERS:                                   |
|---|--|
| President – Cheryl Dwyer, St. Mark's, Springfield   | Sue Cottrol, Good Shepherd, Alexandria           |
| Vice President – Paulette Sandene, Faith, Arlington | Karen Evans, Saint Luke, Silver Spring           |
| Secretary – Fran Eck, St. Mark's, Springfield       | Sheena Foster, Luther Place Memorial, Washington |
| Treasurer – Karen Ager, Peace, Alexandria           | Marcia Ihnen, Holy Trinity, Falls Church         |
|   | Bonnie Priebe, First Trinity, Washington         |

To each of the officers and board members who have unselfishly provided an extraordinary service to this organization, it is with a great deal of gratitude that I say THANK YOU for their contributions of time and talent.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Dwyer  
President, Metro DC SWO