

PRAYING FOR OTHERS. RAISING GREAT KIDS. GROWING IN FAITH. LAUGHING OFTEN. AFFIRMING OUR GIFTS. STUDYING THE WORD WITH FRIENDS. SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER IN OUR CALLINGS. SHARING A MEAL WITH AN ELDER. ENGAGING IN DEBATE AND ARGUMENT. TAKING A WALK. PROMOTING JUSTICE AND INCORPORATING CALLING ELECTED OFFICIALS. ADVOCATING FOR THE BOLD IN OUR COMMUNITY. READING LWT. SMILING EVERYDAY. GIVING THANKS. PRAYING FOR OTHERS. RAISING GREAT KIDS. GROWING IN FAITH. LAUGHING OFTEN. AFFIRMING OUR GIFTS. STUDYING THE WORD WITH FRIENDS. SUPPORTING ONE

# CELEBRATING BOLD WOMEN'S DAY

A resource from Women of the ELCA



Women of the ELCA's mission is mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. We know that each woman will act boldly in a way that's unique to her, so we talk about each of us "finding our bold." This is a phrase that has caused more than one editor to pause, scratch his or her head (usually his), and say, "There's something wrong with this sentence." No, there's nothing wrong. Boldness comes in many forms. Some boldness is firm and quiet. Some is bright and loud. We want to help each other find that bold, live it out and celebrate it.

Bold Women's Day—observed annually on the fourth Sunday of February—celebrates all Lutheran women who have acted or are acting boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. Some women are bold in their unceasing prayers. Other women are bold in their service to those in need. Still other women are bold in their advocacy or through their hospitality. Whether you live out your bold story of faith in the workplace, family or community, your faith compels you to make a difference in the lives of others. It's all about living out your baptismal call, about being a disciple of Christ.

Lutheran women aren't the only ones who think about being bold. Emily Dickinson reminded us that "fortune befriends the bold." Robert Frost said that "freedom lies in being bold." Of course, Martin Luther is known to have weighed in on boldness too. While "sin boldly" is the popular Luther reference,

Luther's statement is often not understood in its full context.

Luther was writing to his friend, Philip Melanchthon, in 1521, admonishing him to "preach a true and not a fictitious grace; if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin," as one translation puts it. Luther reminds Melanchthon that God does not save those who are only imaginary sinners. Luther recognized that we are sinful in this life even as we respond to our baptismal call to discipleship. "Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong," says another translation, "but let your trust in Christ be stronger" yet and rejoice in Christ who conquers sin, death and the world. We Lutherans have a theology that gives us great freedom to be risk takers. Our ability to act boldly is rooted in our baptism and continually enabled, empowered and supported by God's grace.

**Be bold, take risks on account of the gospel, but believe more boldly still in Christ Jesus; that's what Luther tells us. And that's what Women of the ELCA celebrates through Bold Women's Day: women who are bold, women who take risks on account of the gospel, women who believe more boldly still in Jesus Christ.**

## How to Use This Resource

*Use this resource as a starting point in planning your annual observance of Bold Women's Day. We encourage you to celebrate Bold Women's Day on the fourth Sunday of February, but another day will do just fine if it better fits your schedule. Pull together a small planning team, including women of different generations. Provide each with a copy of this resource in advance, and have everyone read through the resource before your first meeting.*

*Start with "When you gather in community" and "Bold program resources available." Feel free to mix and match, designing an event that is just right for the women who are gathering. These are just a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing. Advanced planning, effective publicity and attention to hospitality will ensure a successful event.*

*Instead of a group observance or in addition to one, you can suggest ways in which women in your congregation can celebrate Bold Women's Day individually. Take some of the ideas in "Ways to celebrate on your own" and turn them into a newsletter article, a bulletin insert or a Sunday morning announcement (or all of those) as a way to invite individual participation.*

*Once your group or individual celebrations have occurred, share what you've done by sending an e-mail to [Women.ELCA@elca.org](mailto:Women.ELCA@elca.org) or by posting on Facebook ([www.Facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA](http://www.Facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA)).*

## When you gather in community

- ❑ Create an illustrated timeline of women's leadership in your congregation. Post a long sheet of paper (from 6' to 10' in length) in your fellowship hall. Begin with the date your congregation was formed (or an earlier date, if ministry had occurred before then) and note major decades along the top of the sheet. Invite members to add in dates and activities of women in your congregation, such as the first time a woman was elected to the

congregational council or the first time a woman was a lay reader or assisting minister. You'll have fun recalling these events, and the younger people in your congregation might be surprised at when some of these "firsts" took place.

- ❑ Did you ever see this quote? "Anonymous was a woman." Discover stories about the women in your congregation who have contributed greatly to ministry in your community but who have done so with little fanfare or recognition. Interview older women. Document their lives. This makes a great oral history project. Consider sharing these stories in a written format. This would be a real gift to your congregation.
- ❑ Books provide great jumping-off points for a Bold Women's Day observance. Pull together a display of books about bold women from your church library. Invite women and men to donate books about bold women for your local library. Focus on children's books and donate them to a homeless shelter for families. For congregations with book clubs, select three books about bold women and meet in February to discuss them (perhaps one a week for three weeks) and then culminate your literary discussions with a potluck on Bold Women's Day itself. Don't have a book club? Try one out for February. It may even become a permanent fixture.
- ❑ Hold a family night in your congregation. Start with a potluck supper or a catered meal—your choice. Then invite families to answer questions together. Use these or come up with your own: What's the boldest thing someone in your family has done? Whom do you admire for his or her boldness? What does acting boldly on your faith in Jesus Christ mean to you? Create a bold chain: Using construction paper cut into strips, have family members write their responses to these questions, one answer per strip. Have each family construct a short chain. Then have the families connect their chains as a witness to the boldness in your community. Hang the chain as a reminder of that boldness.

- ❑ Arrange to show the documentary film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell." [www.praythedevilbacktohell.com](http://www.praythedevilbacktohell.com). It tells the story of our Lutheran sister Leymah Gbowee, who gathered Christian and Muslim women together in Liberia to bring about peace in their country, a country torn apart by an extended civil war. Hold a discussion afterwards.
- ❑ Don a costume and use our Katie Luther [skit](#) to introduce this bold woman to the children in your Sunday school.
- ❑ Give the gift of community to the women you love—family, friends and other women in your congregation—by making them [individual partners](#) in Women of the ELCA. For \$20 per year, an individual partner receives subscriptions to *Lutheran Woman Today*, *Café* and *Threads* while gaining access to global networks, advocacy efforts and more.

#### Some other group ideas include:

- Pray the "Litany of Boldness" found on page 5. Use in worship or to open a program or retreat.
- Honor the women in your congregation with a Bold Women's Day [certificate](#).
- Invite the young women from the campus ministry group at your local college out for coffee. Ask about their hopes and fears. Pray with and for these women. Tell them about [Café](#) and invite them to subscribe ([www.boldcafe.org](http://www.boldcafe.org)).
- Sponsor a fair-trade fair. Visit [Lutheran World Relief](#) ([www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org)) to learn more about how buying fair-trade coffee, chocolate and other items supports families, farmers and communities around the world.
- Plan a noon tea, bake sale, car wash, spa day or flea market. Contribute the money you raise to a Women of the ELCA ministry.
- Honor women from your community who have acted boldly for the community's sake. Hold a special potluck or tea in their honor.

## Ways to celebrate on your own

- ❑ Reflect on the question, "Who have been the bold women in my life?" Use ["Journaling: Create Your Own Sacred Writing"](#) as a guide in putting your reflections in written form.
- ❑ Make a gift to Katie's Fund in honor of a bold woman who has inspired you. If she's still living, let her know what a difference she made in your life. Or invite her out to lunch and tell her why you think she's bold.
- ❑ Capture your own life story. Reflect on the question, "How have I acted boldly on my faith in Jesus Christ?" Record this in some way—in a journal, in a blog, in a letter to your children or a video.
- ❑ Use your favorite search engine and embark on an online treasure hunt to learn more about bold women. Start with Elizabeth Fedde (1850-1921), a Lutheran deaconess who established the Norwegian Deaconess Home and Hospital in New York, and Dr. Anna Sarah Kugler (1856-1930), who was the first of several female doctors sent as Lutheran medical missionaries to India.

#### Some other individual ideas include:

- Donate a book about a bold woman to your church or community library.
- Read the biography of a bold girl or woman. Try a biography of Katharina von Bora Luther or Hildegard of Bingen. For a contemporary woman, read *This Child Will Be Great*, a memoir by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman elected president of an African nation. Your librarian can suggest others.
- Commit to three new ways you can act boldly on your faith during the coming year.
- Watch the documentary film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell." [www.praythedevilbacktohell.com](http://www.praythedevilbacktohell.com). It tells the story of Leymah Gbowee, a Lutheran peacemaker who gathered Christian and Muslim women together to bring about peace in Liberia.

## Bold program resources available

Several of the many resources made available by Women of the ELCA speak to being bold. Follow the links, download the free PDFs, print and photocopy for all who participate. Be sure to read through the sections "How to use this resource" to help in planning your event.

### Finding Your Bold: An Ice-Breaker

Explore what "bold" is and determine your best bold. This is the perfect resource for opening a retreat or a celebration of Bold Women's Day.

### A Bold Life of Faith: Katharina von Bora Luther

There's a little bit of Katie in all of us. Learn about Katie while learning more about yourself. (1 one-hour session)

### Act Boldly bookmark

Make this easy-to-assemble bookmark for yourself or as a group project. It's a handy reminder of your mission as a participant in Women of the ELCA.

### Act Boldly for Health

This three-part Bible study supports "Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls," the Women of the ELCA health initiative. (3 one-hour sessions)

### Act Boldly for Mission

This three-part Bible study explores how women can boldly take part in God's mission to love, bless and save the world. (3 one-hour sessions)

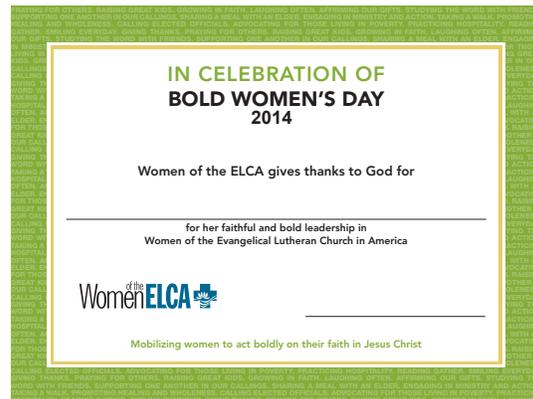
### I Am She

This multi-session resource, perfect for a weekend retreat, helps participants discover their "best bold" and put it into action.



## Bold Women's Day Certificate

Recognize women for their boldness with a downloadable certificate. Use on Bold Women's Day or at any other appropriate gathering.



## How are others celebrating Bold Women's Day?

Six women in Irondequoit, New York, were honored in 2009 for their bold faith by Transfiguration Lutheran. Biographies of the six women were printed in a small booklet.

The women of Hope Lutheran in Klamath Falls, Oregon, passed out business card-sized sayings about being bold. They also used a bold women's litany during worship in 2009.

Members at Prince of Peace Lutheran in Springfield, Missouri, celebrated throughout the entire month of February 2009, leading up to the arrival of an interim pastor. Women in the congregation preached and led worship.

In 2007 the women at Augustana Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, celebrated Bold Women's Day by dedicating quilts, school kits and prayer shawls during worship. They also used a bold women's litany during worship.

How are you celebrating Bold Women's Day? Send an e-mail to [Women.ELCA@elca.org](mailto:Women.ELCA@elca.org) or post on Facebook ([www.Facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA](http://www.Facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA)).

## A Litany of Boldness

**L:** O Creative God, you made us in your image.

**C:** You call us into discipleship in Jesus Christ.

**L:** You empower us through the Holy Spirit.

**C:** Let your lovingkindness be upon us as you accept our prayers.

**L:** O God of our ancestors, we remember the bold witness of our foremothers who paved the way for all women, lay and ordained.

**C:** We give you thanks, O God.

**L:** O Holy One, who breathes life into us all, we raise before you the bold women among us today.

**C:** We give you thanks, O God.

**L:** For those who pray, for those who parent, for those who study, for those who advocate,

**C:** We give you thanks, O God.

**L:** For those who laugh, for those who share, for those who extend hospitality, for those who smile,

**C:** We give you thanks, O God.

**L:** O Gracious One, forgive us when we are too timid to live up to the boldness you have placed within us.

**C:** We pray to you, O God.

**L:** O Gracious One, enable us to recognize, honor and support the boldness you have placed within others.

**C:** We pray to you, O God.

**L:** O God of infinite possibility, grant to us all the opportunity to act boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ.

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**L:** O God of abundant life, grant to us all emotional, physical and spiritual wholeness so that we might best serve others in your name.

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**L:** O God of strength, give us courage, hope and open hearts, that we might experience expanding possibilities and grow through change.

**C:** Hear our prayer.

**L:** Nurturing God, you have inspired and empowered women throughout all ages.

**C:** Give us the courage and wisdom to act boldly on our faith in you, O Creating, Redeeming and Sustaining One. Amen.