

interchange

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Are you ready for new challenges?

by Eva James Yeo

IT'S A NEW YEAR! Take time to imagine how you can continue to boldly redefine women's ministry in 2016. Are you ready for the challenge? Our mission statement—"Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ"—should give you the charge you need to help all women find their place in Women of the ELCA.

I want to invite you to consider how you might mobilize the next generation of girls, young adults and women of all ages to become a part of this community of women.

As you gather in your congregational units, I invite you to think about transformation and growth in a new way. Transformation can be challenging because it is part of the unknown. It is unpredictable, exciting and possibly radically different.

Have you evaluated your model for mission lately?

If not, discuss what has worked for your unit and what has not. Begin to redefine your unit's mission by encouraging women to participate for the first time. You might tweak what has worked and let go of what hasn't. Evaluating and assessing your model for mission can help you target areas of weakness, growth and renewal.

Personally invite all women in your congregation to be a part of your evaluation and planning for the new year. Provide a place in your discussion for young adult women to share what interests them. Hearing the voices of all women—those who participate now and those who might not know about the organization yet—may spark interests and ideas and offer a place for women to be heard and supported. (See several ideas for ministry on next page.)



Eva James Yeo is director for membership for Women of the ELCA. She supports congregational, intercongregational and special units. For help with starting or reorganizing your unit, call or email Eva, 800-638-3522 ext. 2450, eva.yeo@elca.org.

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Linda Post Bushkofsky, *executive director*
Terri Lackey, *director for communication*
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Editorial Office

Women of the ELCA
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
Phone: 773-380-2730 or
800-638-3522, ext. 2730
Women.ELCA@elca.org
womenoftheelca.org
facebook.com/womenoftheELCA
twitter.com/womenoftheELCA

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Women of the ELCA 
interchange

Download *Interchange* with
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the "Publications" tab at
womenoftheelca.org.

Women of the ELCA awards nearly \$50,000 in grants in 2015

by Inez Torres Davis

WOMEN OF THE ELCA awarded \$47,583.81 in grants to 18 domestic and nine international programs in 2015 to promote women's complete and total health: physical, emotional and spiritual.

Our grants program funds projects and agencies dedicated to education and advocacy, empowering women and girls to lead healthier lives.

The 18 domestic grants totaled \$34,900 and ranged in size from \$1,000 to \$3,000. They were awarded to programs in Washington, Arizona, Colorado, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Maine, North Carolina, Georgia and Washington D.C.

The nine international grants totaled \$12,600 and benefited programs in Cameroon, Ghana, India, Kenya and Uganda.

Women of the ELCA grants are issued from money earned from several endowments designated for that purpose. Your gifts also make these grants possible. Consider including Women of the ELCA grants in your estate planning.

For the list of grants, visit Women of the ELCA's website and look under the News & Events tab.



Inez Torres Davis (ineztorres.davis@elca.org), Women of the ELCA's director for justice, oversees the grants process. The program is being reassessed and will be on hiatus in 2016.

Share Your Story *(continued from page 1)*

Below are several ideas generated at the Ninth Triennial Gathering workshop, *Streets to live in: A WELCA model*. Is your group interested in transforming these ideas into a new ministry?

Do you have an active ministry you would like to share? Share your ideas by emailing eva.yeo@elca.org.

- Sponsor a first-time participant at the triennial gathering
- Befriend college girls as "grandmother away from home"
- Pair up intergenerational prayer partners
- Build on intergenerational relationships through ministry
- Begin an outreach to new moms, especially those who are single
- Start an after-school program
- Begin after-work groups that younger women can attend
- Highlight a WELCA resource of the month
- Continue to lift up human trafficking information (welca.org/humantrafficking)

Bold means vulnerable at Eugene, Oregon, church

by Jakki McDonald

THE WOMEN'S MINISTRY at Bethesda Lutheran Church, Eugene, Oregon, wanted our 2015 Bold Women's Day Sunday to be special.

We wanted something with meat and real substance that would make an impact on all involved. We especially wanted our men to hear our voices—not to be deaf to what matters in the lives of women.

Because we live in a world where so many women are hurting, our women's ministry team realized we could find hurting women within our own congregation. These are truly bold women who have lived through difficult circumstances, yet continued to walk in faith trusting the Lord—as savior and companion.

The theme of "Women's Voices" became our guiding principle as we sought women willing to share their stories from the heart. I was one of several who spoke about our experiences of

- unexpected widowhood
- surviving childhood sexual abuse
- fostering and adopting special needs children
- broken children and broken dreams
- ugly divorces
- loving someone with mental illness or dementia, or
- raising step-grandchildren as a single woman.

Rather than stand before the congregation and speak the stories that were so close to our hearts, we recorded them with the help of our worship team leader. When we

We suggest you observe Bold Women's Day on the fourth Sunday in February: Feb. 28, 2016. But you can celebrate it whenever it best fits into your church's calendar. Find resources at womenoftheelca.org/BWD.



listened to the finished recordings for the first time that Sunday morning, my tears mingled with those of others in the congregation as we heard the depth of pain and the hope and joy. The stillness in the sanctuary was a testament to the impact these stories made.

Bethesda's new sign language dancers rounded out the program with Holy Spirit-graced dance performed to "Come to Jesus."

Women in the congregation handled the entire service—from special music to Scripture readings. We used many of the resources suggested on Women of the ELCA's site.

At the time of this writing and planning for Bold Women's Day 2016, we are talking about highlighting women involved in volunteer work.



Jakki McDonald is an active member of Bethesda Lutheran Church. She's the adoptive mother of a young adult special needs daughter and two loving step-daughters. Her husband is a computer programmer and "the nicest nerd you'll ever meet." She teaches water aerobics and is development director for a non-profit that sponsors healing retreats for women and men affected by abortion.

It's cool to go to Phoenix

Executive board approves 2020, 2023 convention, gathering sites

by Terri Lackey

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2017 TRIENNIAL GATHERING has yet to begin, and the Women of the ELCA executive board approved 2020 and 2023 convention and gathering sites at its meeting in Minneapolis, Oct. 23–25.

The churchwide board also took a short tour of Minneapolis and the convention center where the gathering will be held, set a 2016 annual churchwide budget and the 2017 triennial convention and gathering budgets, learned fundraising tips and installed a new board member.

The board approved an executive committee recommendation to hold the triennial convention and gathering in Phoenix, Ariz., in 2020 and in Spokane, Wash., in 2023.

The site visits to four cities proved that “one cannot judge location without seeing it,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA. “Phoenix was not on our radar, but we had a great experience there, and they offered us a financial package that could not be beat.”

Ely Smith, executive board treasurer, who went on the site visits, acknowledged Phoenix is hot in the summer, but she said the food was terrific. “I’ll go there just for the food. The city might be hot, but it’s cool to go to Phoenix.”

The board approved a 2016 budget of \$3,154,073. Of that, nearly \$300,000 is budgeted for the triennial convention. That sum is built into the budget each year for convention expenses. So that expenses do not exceed expenditures in 2016, the board is “going to have to find additional revenue,” said Deborah Banks-Williams, chair of the budget and finance committee. In her report to the board, Bushkofsky said “a significant amount of time must be devoted to looking at our finances and how we are going to move forward.”

Over the past 18 years, annual offerings have dropped by more than 50 percent—from \$3.6 million in 1997 to \$1.7 million in 2014, she said. “The greatest challenge before the board and staff is how to sustain and grow financial support for the critical ministry of the churchwide organization, the ministry that creates

resources to support women as they support each other on their spiritual journeys.”

In other action, the board

- Approved a triennial convention budget of \$943,110 and a triennial gathering budget of \$1,017,500. The expectation is that gathering expenses would be covered by registration, offerings and other forms of income.
- Installed Anissa Canova, Gouldsboro, Pa. (Northeastern Pennsylvania SWO), as a new board member.
- Heard staff reports, including a plan to move *Gather* magazine’s subscription fulfillment services from Augsburg Fortress to Cambey & West.
- Elected new executive committee members. Those are Deborah Banks-Williams, Lois Bylund and Gwendolyn King.
- Approved a policy against electioneering. (See page 5.)
- Heard a report about the organization’s human trafficking exhibit at the ELCA Youth Gathering last summer.
- Approved a request from the Southeastern Michigan Synodical Women’s Organization to revise its constitution to reduce the size of its board from eight to six.
- Approved forwarding to the Tenth Triennial Convention proposed language changes to the churchwide constitution, SWO constitutions, congregational unit constitutions and special unit constitutions. In all instances where the language states “voting members of **the ELCA**,” the board recommends a change “to voting members of **an ELCA congregation**.”
- Set the April 2016 board meeting in Chicago.



Terri Lackey (terri.lackey@elca.org) is director for communication for Women of the ELCA.

Churchwide board adopts policy against electioneering

AT ITS OCTOBER 2015 MEETING, the churchwide executive board adopted the following policy against electioneering. The policy applies to the election processes around the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017), including the election of voting members to the convention and the election of churchwide officers and board members.

“A similar policy has been used throughout the life of our organization,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director.

“We live in a different world today, however, where social media permeates all that we do. Women must be cautious in their use of social media so that they don’t run afoul of the policy against electioneering,” Bushkofsky cautioned. “A status update on Facebook can easily get wide exposure and suddenly one or more women will be at odds with this policy, whether they intended to or not.”

The policy reads:

*There are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit AND
There are a variety of services, but the same Lord AND
There are a variety of activities, but the same God who
activates them in everyone.*

Women of the ELCA affirms and believes all women should have equal opportunity for involvement and leadership in the organization.

Women of the ELCA further believes that the Spirit that binds us all through baptism is the guiding factor for each voting member to prayerfully review and consider each nominee’s biographical information prior to conventions of the SWOs and the triennial convention of the CWO.

Each participant further understands that promoting one candidate over another through campaigning is in fact interfering with God’s plan and actions for participants of Women of the ELCA.

When the board adopted the policy, it also determined that the policy should be added to the welca.org website and included on the nomination form. Further, nominees will be required to sign off on the policy and synodical presidents will be instructed on ways to assist voting members in their understanding of the policy.

Do you know about your SWO? Does your SWO know about you?

by Audrey Novak Riley

EVERY SO OFTEN I get a phone call from a congregational leader who wants to know how to do this or that or something else, and I always ask her if she’s in touch with the leaders of her Synodical Women’s Organization. And almost every time, she’s surprised to learn that such a thing exists.

Synodical Women’s Organizations are a great resource for every unit. Your SWO leaders know about exciting program ideas and resources you can use, and they’re eager to share them with you. They can help your unit treasurers navigate all the details of that role, and they’re ready to

share what they know. And they can connect you with sisters throughout your area—to help all of us be more effective leaders and more loving disciples of Jesus Christ.

So who are your Synodical Women’s Organization leaders and where do you find them? Well, they’re all volunteers, just like you, elected at your annual or biennial SWO convention. They’re not part of the synod staff, so if you call your synod office, the people might not know who you mean. Your SWO leaders will have their names,

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Triennial gatherings are affirming, transformational

THE 15 WOMEN SELECTED TO SERVE as triennial gathering promoters (TGPs) for the Tenth Triennial Gathering met in Minneapolis Nov. 6–8 to get the lay of the land.

The promoters learned more about the gathering venue, received training for their important role as TGPs and spent Saturday in groups of three discovering Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

They also spent time telling their stories of their triennial gathering experiences.

Jessica Miller, a promoter from Fargo, N.D., said she's attended four gatherings, the first because she was a scholarship recipient.

The gatherings “are the place where I have experienced the deepest sense of affirmation and community among women. I had affirming conversations that don't happen anywhere else. (Triennials) are transformational.”

TGPs will operate on assignment as they are available and willing. To make arrangements for a TGP to visit your convention or large gathering, please email Terri Lackey (terri.lackey@elca.org).

“All Anew” is the theme for Women of the ELCA's Tenth Triennial Gathering. Information about speakers and workshops can be found at welcatg.org as it becomes available. Registration begins in September 2016.

The TGPs and their home synodical women's organizations are:

1. **Elizabeth Burgess**, 7B, New England
2. **Elizabeth Gaskins**, 6C, Indiana-Kentucky
3. **Donna Greifzu**, 8D, Lower Susquehanna
4. **Maria Lokensgard**, 3F, Southwestern Minnesota
5. **Beth Meyer**, 4A, Nebraska
6. **Joy Michalick**, 3E, Northeastern Minnesota
7. **Jessica Miller**, 3B, Eastern North Dakota
8. **Jean Minkin**, 9D, Southeastern
9. **Karen Olson**, 3A, Western North Dakota
10. **Kandy Pflaster**, 4A, Nebraska
11. **Karen Ronchetti**, 2C, Pacifica
12. **Rissee Snelgrove**, 4F, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast
13. **Diane Spicer**, 9E, Florida-Bahamas
14. **Camille L. Trott**, 9D, Southeastern
15. **Randi Ven Huizen**, 2D, Grand Canyon



all anew

Visit welcatg.org to download a “Save the Date” poster and to learn more about the theme and event.

“All Anew” is the theme for Women of the ELCA's Tenth Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis, Minn., July 13–16, 2017. The theme is supported by several biblical texts that speak of renewal.

The logo is in the joyful, organic shape of a butterfly—or is it a flower? It represents transformation and growth. Splashes of color honoring the four elements (earth, water, fire, air) spill outside the lines to create an uplifting symbol that is bright, bold and vibrant.

Summer Bible study focuses on conflict, reconciliation

by Elizabeth Hunter

ANGELA SHANNON, a pastor at King of Glory Lutheran Church in Dallas, Texas, will share “The Heart of the Matter,” a three-session Bible study on learning to deal with conflict through the ministry of reconciliation. The study begins in June in *Gather* magazine.



“Repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation are healing words,” Shannon writes. “We hear these words spoken from our pulpits, in our hymns and various places throughout our churches. Yet we see conflict in our society and the ways in which we harm each other. We are about to enter an election year where the politics are as shrill and mean as ever.”

Although we look to the church for a safe haven from conflict, Shannon says, “life follows us through the doors, and there, too, we find conflict.”

“Conflicts are nothing new to the church,” she writes. “What’s miraculous is that God continues to create us anew. God insists on entrusting us with the ministry of reconciliation.”

She continues: “In working with congregations, I have found that although people are familiar with the healing

words of Christ’s church, we must continue to learn the practical application of these words.”

The Heart of the Matter

Session 1: Treasure in clay jars. “But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Session 2: Seeking God. “When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:14)

Session 3: The ministry of reconciliation. “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.” (2 Corinthians 5:17–19)

Subscribe to *Gather* magazine (gathermagazine.org) for this and other Bible studies that run in every issue.



Elizabeth Hunter (elizabeth.hunter@elca.org) is editor of *Gather* magazine.

Do you know about your SWO? Does your SWO know about you?

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phone numbers and email addresses listed on your SWO’s website and in your SWO’s newsletter.

You can also find out who they are by searching for “SWO” on welca.org, emailing women@elca.org or calling 800-328-3522, ext. 2730. Please tell us the name of your congregation and its city and state, and we’ll look up your SWO leadership for you.



Audrey Novak Riley (audrey.riley@elca.org) is director for stewardship for Women of the ELCA.

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Dated material for immediate delivery

Winter 2016

Please route to:

- Women of the ELCA leaders
- pastor(s)
- other church leaders

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

'The Ripple Effect' is theme of Conference of Presidents

by Deborah Calvert

OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS will take place February 19–21 in Chicago at the Lutheran Center. The planning team for this event has worked diligently to come up with creative and fun ways to hold the meeting. The theme is “The Ripple Effect,” and the Scripture is Amos 5:24.

Our invited guests for the weekend include two ELCA staff: the Rev. Kathryn Johnson, director, ecumenical and inter-religious relations, and Judith Roberts, program director, racial justice ministries. The Rev. Rhonda Pruitt, pastor of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Arlington Heights, Illinois, will serve as chaplain.

The churchwide constitution of Women of the ELCA, in Article XV, Section 2, Items 1–4, sets out the goals of the annual Conference of Synodical Presidents:

1. To provide and receive information related to emphases, priorities and projected programs of Women of the ELCA.
2. To make recommendations to the executive board.
3. To develop leadership skills.

4. To foster community and renewal.

Please cover our 64 synodical presidents and the six executive board members with traveling mercies and grace as they journey to Chicago for leadership development, spiritual revival and community renewal.

Also, let us keep our newly elected synodical treasurers in prayer as they step into their new role on February 1.

If you are a first-time synodical treasurer or returning treasurer who has not attended the training within the past five years, mark your calendar. The annual treasurers training for new treasurers will be held in Chicago, May 20–21, 2016.



Deborah Calvert (Deborah.Calvert@elca.org) is associate executive director for Women of the ELCA.