



Police officers work on a quilt at First Lutheran. Quilts will be donated to police and fire departments to be given to victims of crimes and fires. Photo by Kevin Green/Copyright Longview News-Journal, used with permission.

Longview, Texas, public servants tied in knots

By Terri Lackey

POLICE OFFICERS AND FIREFIGHTERS in Longview, Texas, lived up to their reputation as public servants last year by helping a Lutheran quilting group tie off quilts. At the invitation of the First Lutheran Church, Longview, quilting circle, four firefighters, three police officers and two Red Cross workers stopped by the church one weekday for a couple of hours to complete the quilts.

“We had the quilts ready and all they had to do was tie the knots,” said Marie Hacker, chairwoman of the Longview quilting group. Hacker said the group has donated quilts to the police and fire departments for years. The departments, in turn, give the quilts to victims of fire and crime.

Hacker told *Longview News-Journal* reporter Angela Ward that they wanted to get to know their public servants on a more personal level. “Getting everybody involved [in making quilts] gives us a chance to” to do that, she said.

Longview police officers John Rolls and Chris Clayton were two of the officers that helped tie off quilts, according to the *Longview News-Journal*. “Rolls said his mother and grandmother were both quilters so he was somewhat familiar with the process, but it was a new experience for Clayton,” Ward reported.

Hacker said her group makes about 125 quilts a year and donates 100 to Lutheran World Relief and the others to the local police and fire departments. The quilts they donated to the fire department this year have “fire department specific” patterns, some with fire hydrants and some with Dalmatian dogs on them, Hacker said.

“The fire captain liked them so much he wanted one for himself, so we’re doing that for him now,” she said.

The invitation for police and fire fighters to help the quilting group netted a newspaper article and a spot on the local news, Hacker said. Inviting public servants to one of your quilting sessions could be a good way to get publicity and let your community know what your church is doing to help local citizens.

It doesn’t hurt to get to know your local police and fire officers personally, either. It could come in handy someday.

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Terri Lackey is managing editor of Gather magazine.

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Linda Post Bushkofsky, *executive director*
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Women of the ELCA 
interchange

A STEWARDSHIP DEVOTION

Gifts that shape the common good

by Emma Crossen

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Reflection

Stewardship often begins with the question "How do I use my gifts to benefit the common good?" We even ask it of others to help them get more involved. How can *she* use *her* gifts to benefit our common good?

We should be careful, though, or else we'll use this question to avoid change.

For instance, consider a women's group that says the common good requires four officers, monthly Bible study and at least two annual fundraisers. To support this "common good," they set out to find women to fill these roles and carry out these activities.

What happens if the women in the congregation are tired of doing business meetings but love monthly Bible study? What if they can't find four women to serve as officers but they do have new women who bring gifts for organizing retreats, planning service projects and building relationships through prayer?

What if they let these new gifts reshape their vision of the common good? Instead of needing four officers, they could appoint a coordinating team. They might revive a prayer chain through email and Facebook, invite more women to join and see how those prayers shape new relationships. They might replace the spring luncheon with an annual retreat at a nearby state park.

Instead of trying to squeeze each other's gifts into an old vision of the "common good," what if they asked each other, "How is my vision of the common good changing because of the gifts you bring?"

1 Corinthians reminds us that the common good has many expressions.

Women of the ELCA describes the common good in big, broad language that leaves room for variety and change. In the words of our purpose statement: *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.* There are many ways to live out this purpose with a variety of gifts, activities and service. As scripture says, "It is the same God who activates all of them in everyone."

Prayer: God who is one, guide us to learn more about each other and the gifts we bring, so we can further our vision and pursuit of the common good. Amen.



Emma Crossen is director for stewardship and development.

2014–2015 Bible study author offers gathering workshop

AUTHOR CAROL SCHERSTEN LAHURD will lead a workshop, “Introduction to Transforming Life and Faith,” at the Ninth Triennial Gathering that will introduce participants to “Transforming Life and Faith,” the 2014–2015 Bible study to be published in *Gather* magazine. Copies of the Leader Guide will be available at the gathering bookstore.

“A new spouse, a new child, a new job, a new home: most of us recognize how our lives are changed by these experiences,” says LaHurd, seminary teacher and former coordinator of the Middle East peace-making campaign of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. “In ‘Transforming Life and Faith’ we will consider how our lives and our faith journeys are transformed by the events we experience and the people we meet.”

In ‘Transforming Life and Faith’ we will consider how our lives and our faith journeys are transformed by the events we experience and the people we meet.

“In both the Old Testament and New Testament, and especially in Acts of the Apostles, we will read about people who have life-changing experiences: Paul on the road to Damascus, Moses in the wilderness of Midian, Lydia praying by a river in Macedonia, an Ethiopian man traveling from Jerusalem to Gaza. We will watch them turn to and with God as their minds, hearts and daily lives are altered. And we will reflect on the ways we, too, have been and will be transformed and called by God to serve God’s mission in the world.”

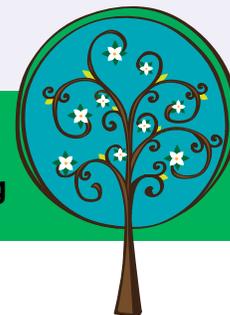
Carol Schersten LaHurd is a lifelong teacher: Red Cross swimming lessons, high school English, parish education, and, for the past 30 years, biblical studies, Islam, and interfaith relations in colleges, seminaries, the church and the wider community. After earning degrees from Augustana College (Illinois) and the University of Chicago, she received a Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Currently she teaches part-time at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and is educational outreach consultant for the seminary’s Center for Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice.

White-water rafting tour added

GATHERING PLANNERS JUST ANNOUNCED the addition of a tour that offers a one-of-a-kind family opportunity. “Rockin’ the Rapids” will take participants to the U.S. National Whitewater Center, the world’s largest artificial whitewater river and an official U.S. Olympic Training Site. The All Sport Pass that’s included with this tour provides access to mountain biking, eco trekking, climb a zip canyon crossing & adventure course, whitewater rafting and kayaking, mega zip line, stand up paddle board and flat water kayaking and mega jump.

This tour runs from 12 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, July 24, 2014. The cost per person is \$130 (10 years and up) or \$120 (9 years and younger). Transportation and lunch are included with this activity.

For those who have already registered for the gathering online, they can access their online registration and add this tour. For those who registered by fax or mail, they should contact the registration office (outreachregistration@niu.edu or 815-753-7922).



For more information about both these additions and to stay on top of all the gathering news, go to welcatg.org and click on the “news” link. #welcatg

Engaging the triennial gathering theme

Women and girls across the church are invited to engage with the Ninth Triennial Gathering theme, **of many generations**, whether or not they are attending the gathering in Charlotte, N.C., this July. Prayers are invited for the participants and the presenters, that the experience may strengthen and challenge them in their faith walks. On a more tangible level, women are invited to gather in-kind gifts, make prayer shawls or participate in a quilt challenge.

Make a prayer shawl

WOMEN ARE INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE to a Prayer Shawl Collection, whether attending the Ninth Triennial Gathering or not. The shawls will be given to ministries in the ELCA North Carolina Synod. For complete instructions, visit welcatg.org. A downloadable fact sheet is available there that includes a label to be added to the finished shawls.

“Over 2,200 prayer shawls were made and donated in 2011 at our Eighth Triennial Gathering,” reports Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director. “Can we exceed that number this year?”

Shawls can be made by women working alone, or women can gather together regularly to knit or crochet the shawls. “Imagine women and girls of all ages, gathering in prayer, learning from and with each other, creating beautiful shawls together,” says Post Bushkofsky. “It’s a tangible introduction to our gathering theme, **of many generations.**”

Patterns for both knitted and crocheted shawls can be found at shawlministry.com, if needed. Many books on prayer shawls are available at local libraries.

Shawls can be brought to the exhibit hall, The Dor, at the Charlotte Convention Center during the gathering. Shawls can also be mailed to the following address, for arrival between May 15, 2014 and June 15, 2014.

Women of the ELCA
In-Kind Gifts
8765 W Higgins Rd
Chicago IL 60631-4101



Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director, is working on a prayer shawl to donate at the Ninth Triennial Gathering.

There’s joy in giving

CONTINUING A LONG-STANDING TRADITION, when women and girls gather in Charlotte, N.C., this July for the Ninth Triennial Gathering, they are invited to bring along in-kind gifts. In-kind gifts will include quilt kits (fabric and thread), gift cards, phone cards, hygiene items, socks, bras and underwear. For a complete list, visit welcatg.org. A downloadable fact sheet is available there.

These gifts have been selected by working in community with women in local agencies and Lutheran Social Services of the Carolinas. The in-kind gifts will be distributed among many of the agencies and organizations leading the interactive learning opportunities at the gathering.

Women and girls can focus on one in-kind gift or collect all of them. It can be a congregational unit project

Engaging the triennial gathering theme

continued

or it can involve the whole congregation. Participants are invited to add in a local component by giving a gift in their community for every gift given to the triennial gathering collection.

In-kind giving is about relationships and partnerships. In-kind gifts are a way for all women to participate in the triennial gathering, whether attending the event or not. We give these tangible items to meet immediate needs and to stand in solidarity with the recipients.

Will 2011 giving be exceeded? At that gathering, participants collected \$10,420 in gift cards, 11,160 minutes of phone cards, 600 health kits, hundreds of school supplies, 58 clothing support kits and nearly 800 bags of socks, all given to Spokane, Wash.-area agencies and ministries. In addition, participants made 80 quilts on site that were given to Lutheran World Relief.

In-kind gifts can be brought to the exhibit hall, The Dor, at the Charlotte Convention Center during the gathering. Items can also be mailed to the following address, for arrival between May 15, 2014 and June 15, 2014.

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In-kind giving at the Eighth Triennial Gathering (2011) in Spokane, Wash., had a lasting impact on the community.



JULY 24-27, 2014
Ninth Triennial
Gathering

of many
generations

Are you up for challenge?

QUILTERS OF ALL ABILITIES ARE INVITED to create a quilt interpreting the Ninth Triennial Gathering theme, **of many generations**. The challenge comes not only in interpreting the gathering theme but also in working within certain rules. New to the challenge in 2014 is the requirement that all quilts must include the challenge fabric. To obtain a fat-quarter of the challenge fabric, send an email request to women.elca@elca.org, or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2730.

The finished size of the quilt must be 40 inches square. Traditional or original patterns may be used, and the quilts may be pieced or appliqued or a combination of techniques may be used. Each quilt must be quilted, not tied. Both machine quilting and hand quilting are acceptable.

The challenge is open to all women who are members of ELCA congregations. The quilt must be the work of a single individual; no group or two person quilts will be accepted. The quilt must be constructed and quilted by the person named on the entry blank. The quilter need not be planning to attend the Ninth Triennial Gathering (2014) in order to participate in the quilt challenge.

Quilts must arrive in the churchwide office by June 15.

For complete instructions, visit welcatg.org. A downloadable fact sheet is available there.

Supporting women and children through grants

WOMEN OF THE ELCA'S GRANTS PROGRAM provides support for women and children living in crisis. Here is the story of Ruth's House in Beaufort County, N.C., a 2013 recipient.

Ruth's House began providing safe shelter to women and children escaping domestic violence in February 2013. It grew from a vision shared by an ecumenical group of pastors. Programs at Ruth's House improve women's self-concept and self-worth, provide job training and improve life skills.

The children of those women being helped at Ruth's House had only a patch of ground for play. There was no playground equipment for a safe way to relieve the stress within their young lives. Mothers and children had no means to interact physically within a "play" setting. Enter a \$1,500 grant from Women of the ELCA in the spring of 2013.

By providing the mothers and children at Ruth's House with quality playground equipment, WELCA's grants program made it possible for families to have an outdoor area where motor, social and communication skills are daily developed. The playground equipment brings joy! The healing process quickens through play for children and their mothers. A time of unstructured play heals little lives from a violent past and prepares them for healthy futures!

**The playground equipment brings joy!
The healing process quickens through
play for children and their mothers. A
time of unstructured play heals little
lives from a violent past and prepares
them for healthy futures!**

Kim Etheredge, Ruth's House executive director, has her office in the house and sees the families on a daily basis. She described a young mother with two children ages two years and seven months whose children use the playground. Kim shared that the mood of all in the house changed recently when two-year-old Benji went out to play on the swings and sliding board. She described his squeals of delight and his belly laughs as bringing a smile to everyone within hearing! Even his mother who had not smiled or laughed since coming to the shelter was smiling and seemed heartened to see her children have fun. She shared her joy at seeing her child act "like a normal child." Now the hard part is getting him to come back inside the house!



Asked what kind of a difference WELCA's grant has made at Ruth's House, Debbie Ryals, president of Ruth's House board, states: "The Women of the ELCA grant has made a huge difference in the atmosphere at Ruth's House. We were intent on our safe shelter being a house, with the feel of a home to the families who have come to us. Children often heal through play and mothers get a bit of a break when children can play safely while they watch. These are the things families find in a home setting. And now these things are found at Ruth's House. A playground helps to make a house a home for young children!"

"If you have never made a gift to Women of the ELCA's grants program," says Inez Torres Davis, grants administrator, "please do so! If you have before, we welcome you doing so again! Your support of this program means we can continue to strengthen the safety of women and children living in crisis situations. Thank you."

What happened to January and February?

BY NOW YOU MIGHT BE WONDERING, where were the January and February issues of *Interchange*? You didn't misplace them. We didn't publish them.

Because the churchwide annual budget for 2014 anticipates lower income and revenue, reductions had to take place on the expense side, and the budget for *Interchange* was cut. The new budget allows us to publish only six issues per year (instead of the 12 issues per year that we've been used to over the last ten years or so).

So, in January and February of this year, we stood back and regrouped, planning ahead in a new way for *Interchange*. Between issues, when you want to stay connected with the churchwide women's organization, you still have options.

 Follow the organization on Facebook: facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA.

 Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, Bold Connections, delivered free each month to your inbox. Sign up in the "stay in touch" box at the bottom of any page of womenoftheelca.org.

 Follow the organization on Twitter: twitter.com/WomenoftheELCA.

 For the more visual among us, follow the organization on Pinterest: pinterest.com/WomenoftheELCA.

 Don't forget to check the "news and events" tab on our website, womenoftheelca.org, where you'll find the latest news.

Calendar

For information on any of these events, contact Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or e-mail Women.ELCA@elca.org.

MARCH 2014

7 World Day of Prayer

22–23 ELCA Women and Justice Task Force, Chicago, Ill.

APRIL 2014

12 La Crosse Area SWO convention, Zion Lutheran, Galesville, Wis.

25–27 Churchwide executive board meeting, Louisville, Ky.

26 Delaware-Maryland SWO convention, St. Benjamin's Lutheran, Westminster, Md.

MAY 2014

2–3 Northwest Wisconsin SWO convention, Plaza Inn and Suites, Eau Claire, Wis.

St. Paul Area SWO convention, Redeemer Lutheran, White Bear Lake, Minn.

3 Allegheny SWO convention, Location TBD

Metro Washington D.C. SWO convention, St. Matthew Lutheran, Woodbridge, Va.

Southwestern Minnesota SWO convention, American Lutheran, Windom, Minn.

9–10 Northwestern Pennsylvania SWO convention, Olmsted Manor, Ludlow, Pa.

16–17 Southwestern Pennsylvania SWO convention, Bishop Connare Center, Greensburg, Pa.

JUNE 2014

7 Southeastern Pennsylvania SWO convention, St. Matthew Lutheran, Springfield, Pa.

13–14 Northeastern Minnesota SWO convention, University of Minnesota, Duluth, Minn.

14 Northeastern Pennsylvania SWO convention, Union Lutheran, Schnecksville, Pa.

20–21 South Carolina SWO convention, Redeemer Lutheran, Newberry, S.C.

South Dakota SWO convention, First Lutheran, Brookings, S.D.

20–22 North Carolina SWO convention, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, N.C.

21 Northeastern Iowa SWO convention, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa

Southeastern Iowa SWO convention, Bethesda Lutheran, Ames, Iowa

Western Iowa SWO convention, St. Paul Lutheran, Holstein, Iowa

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Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

Join in the triennial convention offering

YOU ARE INVITED to contribute to the offering that will be collected at the opening worship of the Ninth Triennial Convention. The churchwide executive board has designated this offering to be distributed in three ways. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, will receive 25 percent of the offering. Another 25 percent will go to On Eagle’s Wings Ministries, a North Carolina-based organization that restores women and girls who have been sexually exploited through the commercial sex industry. The final 50 percent will go to the ongoing



Photo by Elizabeth McBride

churchwide ministries of Women of the ELCA. These designations were made in response to memorials on related topics that were adopted at the Eighth Triennial Convention in 2011.

You and your congregational unit can participate in the triennial convention offering and make a significant contribution to these important ministries. You will find an envelope for your convention offering

in this issue of *Interchange*. Mail it to the churchwide office, and your unit’s gift will be publicly recognized during the convention in Charlotte.