

LEADERSHIP NEWS FROM Women of the ELCA

interchange

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 1 / WINTER 2017



all anew

in this
issue

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IN A FEW SHORT MONTHS, those of you who have registered for the Tenth Triennial Gathering will see old friends and meet new ones. You'll worship, sing and praise God together.

Those of you who haven't registered still have time before the Jan. 6 early bird deadline. But just barely! So go to welcatg.org to register online now.

Workshops

As of late last year, we've scheduled 14 workshops for the gathering, which will be held in Minneapolis, Minn., July 13–16, at the convention center.

Workshops include topics that range from learning more about women in the Old Testament and exploring ideas about ending human sex trafficking to discovering how faith, courage and love can provide an antidote to shame and learning how to explore your spirituality through writing.

Workshops are not only inspirational, they are practical, offering information you can take home and share with others. Each 90-minute workshop is offered four times, twice on Friday afternoon and twice on Saturday afternoon. No advance registration is required.

Servant events

No matter when or why women in our organization gather, our purpose and mission call us to act and serve. Our five gathering verses promise renewal and that often comes from serving others.

On Friday and Saturday afternoon, make your way to the exhibit hall and into servant events area (intentional service and action that will improve the lives of others). Activities range from making feminine hygiene kits to engaging in environmental issues. Many of the servant events will be led by our in-kind gifts recipients, sparking ideas for transforming and creating new ministry projects back home.

Documentary films

Two documentary films—"Dreamcatcher" and "Beauty of Their Dreams"—will offer different ways to explore the gathering theme and our organization's commitment to promoting healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world. One film will be shown on Friday evening and the other on Saturday evening. Each will be followed with a facilitated discussion session.

Event information about the triennial gathering is available at welcatg.org.

Women of the ELCA Interchange is a publication of the women's organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The purpose of *Interchange* is to equip and empower Women of the ELCA participants with the information and resources necessary to carry out the organization's mission. *Interchange* is distributed free of charge to the congregational, synodical and churchwide leadership of Women of the ELCA, and to Women of the ELCA cluster and conference coordinators and newsletter editors.

Linda Post Bushkofsky, *executive director*
Terri Lackey, *director for communication*
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Download *Interchange* with clickable links by visiting the "Publications" tab at womenoftheelca.org.

Wonder no longer about year-end gifts

by Audrey Novak Riley

I LOVE GIFT-GIVING OCCASIONS, from Christmas and birthdays to plain old Tuesdays, don't you? It's fun to think about gifts that will bring a smile to someone you love, and it's even more satisfying to know that your gift will not only warm a heart, but change a life. What sort of gift does that? Your year-end gift to Women of the ELCA does.

When we give to Women of the ELCA, we help mobilize women throughout our church—and even beyond—to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ in so many ways. Our gifts—yes, yours and mine!—make a real difference in people's lives. So let's give together!

Now, if you're wondering what kind of gift to Women of the ELCA would be the handiest and most versatile, wonder no longer. Thankofferings, regular offerings and "Where Needed Most" gifts are amazingly useful.

But what about sizes? Wonder no longer. A \$50 Thankoffering from every unit would be perfect. Synodical women's organizations might try on a \$500 year-end gift. Every individual is different, of course, but a \$25 Thankoffering or "Where Needed Most" gift might be a flattering fit.

Do you like to tuck a little something extra in with your gifts? Wonder no longer—here are some suggestions. A unit might consider adding to their year-end gift by giving a dozen *Gather* subscriptions to the congregation's library or a nearby retirement home (see gathermagazine.org). A synodical organization might make a point of sending two first-time participants to the Triennial Gathering as well as being a generous Friend of the Gathering (see welcatg.org and givemn.org/organization/welcatg).

And if you're wondering how to make sure your year-end gift gets here in time, wonder no longer! As long as your gift arrives before January 31, 2017, it's a year-end 2016 gift.

And thank you!

Give online with a credit card (instantly!) at welca.org/give or use the envelope enclosed in this newsletter and mail your gift to:

**Women of the ELCA
ELCA Gift Processing Center
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield VA 22116-8009**



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

Anti-racism education team offered new curriculum

by Inez Torres Davis

IN AUGUST 2016, 24 women met in Kansas City, Kansas, for anti-racism education training through Today's Dream: Tomorrow's Reality (TDTR).

Most of the women trained in Kansas—some ordained—were new to the movement. All are committed to racial justice in the church and society.

In April 2017, Women of the ELCA's network of anti-racism educators and advocates will be 20.

Of the first 110 who began TDTR education 20 years ago, about 35 have continued the training. It has been a journey of looking into and rebuffing evil. It has brought the healing of God's grace into our lives. Over the years, Women of the ELCA has developed several resources for racial justice advocacy.

In 2016, we developed a new three-part TDTR curriculum. Each part includes a Bible study, resources and a PowerPoint.

- **Part one: "How We Got Here"** traces White privilege from the Doctrine of Discovery to #blacklivesmatter.
- **Part two: "Where We Are"** connects us to each other as we struggle to do God's will.

- **Part three: "Having Helpful Conversations"** focuses on the tools and skills needed to talk constructively about race in the church.

Women of the ELCA also offers many free racial justice advocacy resources online at welca.org/racialjustice.

At the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans last summer, the assembly referred a motion (CA16.05.23) to the Church Council to form a task force for "the purpose of developing a comprehensive set of strategies to equip congregations and synods to work towards becoming a more authentically diverse church." The work of the task force included consulting with Women of the ELCA because of our racial justice advocacy work.

To get in touch with a trainer in the TDTR network, contact Inez Torres Davis at ineztorres.davis@elca.org.



Inez Torres Davis is director for justice for Women of the ELCA.

Voting members should watch for proposed constitutional changes in the mail

WHEN VOTING MEMBERS GATHER next July to conduct the business of Women of the ELCA, among the items on the agenda are several proposed constitutional changes being brought by the churchwide executive board to the convention.

The constitutional review committee of the churchwide executive board is currently compiling the various proposed changes acted on by the churchwide executive board in the 2014–2017 triennium.

Under the terms of our churchwide constitution, proposed constitutional changes must be mailed to the voting members at least six months prior to the convention. That allows sufficient time for voting members to read the

proposed changes and consider and discuss the proposed changes prior to the triennial convention. Additionally, the proposed changes will be posted on welca.org.

Sometimes the proposed changes are of a grammatical or editorial nature, such as when all the constitutions were updated at the Ninth Triennial Convention (2014) to change the term "delegate" to "voting member." Other times the proposed changes are of a more substantive nature.

If approved at the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017), the constitutional changes become effective immediately. Even with those changes that effect the constitution of a congregational unit or synodical organization, no further action is required.

Financial challenges, great signs of life greet WELCA

by Terri Lackey

OFFERINGS TO WOMEN OF THE ELCA continue to dwindle in a time when the organization needs nearly \$900,000 to fund a constitutionally required triennial convention in 2017, the churchwide executive board learned at its fall meeting. The board met at the Lutheran Center in Baltimore, Maryland, Oct. 21–23.

At the same time, interest in the organization and the Tenth Triennial Gathering has increased, said Linda Post Bushkofsky, Women of the ELCA's executive director.

In late September, with 66 percent of fiscal year 2016 complete, regular offerings, Thankofferings, designated gifts, special offerings and SWO convention offerings have fallen almost \$1 million below budgeted projections.

In 2015, the organization realized a \$243,840 deficit. "Our biggest challenge continues to be regular offerings," said Ely Smith, executive board treasurer from the Southwestern Washington Synod. "There could be a number of reasons for that. We hope that by fiscal year end (Jan. 31) we'll be more on track." Regular offerings are collected in congregational units to benefit the unit, the synodical organization and the churchwide organization.

To balance the organization's proposed budgets for fiscal years 2017 and 2018, the board agreed to allow the transfer of nearly \$600,000 from two endowments—New Ministries (\$84,186) and Eshelman (\$515,000). The transfer would deplete the Eshelman Fund.

"The constitution of our organization requires that we have a convention," said Bushkofsky. "The alternative (to taking money from endowments) is to cut staff or cut money from programs and ministries."

Bushkofsky said that if money were cut from programs and ministries "then what work would the staff do? We are at a critical point because every decision we make will have a counter effect."

The staff has not received a pay increase in three years, according to Deborah Calvert, associate executive director. The 2018 budget does not allow for an increase, she said.

The board adopted the fiscal year 2017 budget of \$3,246,995, and the proposed budget for fiscal year 2018 will be sent to the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017).



Inez Torres Davis, left, conducts anti-racism education with the executive board.

Suggestions for raising money to pay for the triennial convention included asking every Women of the ELCA congregational unit to send \$50 to the churchwide organization.

Smith reminded board members to encourage units to give to any ELCA fund, such as disaster or hunger, through Women of the ELCA. Every dollar goes to the intended fund, she said.

"That way we can recognize the financial impact of women for the entire church," Smith said.

Executive director's report

Interest in the Tenth Triennial Gathering, July 13–16, 2016, in Minneapolis, Minn., is at an all-time high, Bushkofsky said.

"Unsolicited requests from individuals wanting to speak or present workshops at the triennial gathering have far exceeded such requests in the past."

Additionally, requests for triennial gathering materials from individuals and units in the Upper Midwest "especially have been robust this fall."

Gather, the magazine of Women of the ELCA, is seeing increased subscriptions. And donations from subscribers—a previously untapped source—are significant, she said.

continued on next page

"In the churchwide office, we've noticed a definite uptick in the number of inquiries from women wishing to start new congregational units," she added. "Lots of people are latching on to the reality that our organization is a powerful force for good and they want to be associated with us."

She said, "an incredible ministry is happening in the name of Jesus through the women of this organization. I celebrate that on a daily basis, even as I pray for deliverance from our challenges. It is my hope you do the same."

The executive board's next meeting will be April 20–23, 2017, in Chicago.

Read about additional board actions online at womenoftheelca.org under the News & Events tab.



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



Executive board members Gwendolyn King, l-r, Lois Bylund and Dawn Smith chat during a break. Photos by Sarah Carson

Devotion: Pray for Women of the ELCA's wellbeing

by Valora K Starr

OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE IS CRUCIAL—it speaks to who we are, what we do and how we do it. God provides direction to us by giving us a purpose. Participants of Women of the ELCA have a purpose. They are servant leaders—disciples—always listening for God's direction.

Women of the ELCA has three levels or expressions—the congregation, synod and the national organization or churchwide as it is commonly known.

God's word in Jeremiah 29:5–7 tells us to build houses, plant gardens, multiply and pray.

All of us should be at home in every expression. "Build houses and make yourselves at home" (v. 5). Just as we move from room to room in our own homes and know each room's function and purpose, we should know our purpose for this organization at all levels of expression.

"Plant gardens and eat what they produce" (v. 5). Each expression has specific work to carry out to produce what

we need so that the organization can live.

"... multiply there, and do not decrease" (v. 6). This part of God's plan calls for and expects Women of the ELCA units to grow and thrive. God is not interested in excuses.

"Pray to the Lord on [Women of the ELCA's] behalf for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (v. 7). Servant leadership is all about living out the plan. We are called 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.



Valora K Starr (valora.starr@elca.org) is director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA.

Boot camps bring new life to leadership training

by Eva James Yeo

WHAT IS A WOMEN OF THE ELCA BOOT CAMP? I've attended two—one sponsored by the Indiana-Kentucky synodical women's organization (SWO) and one by the Grand Canyon SWO—and each was different.

But both were designed to show how the organization is redefining women's ministries. And both were formatted to bring new life to leadership training, according to Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky.

Boot camps bring new life to leadership training. —LINDA POST BUSHKOFSKY



Valora Starr talks to Grand Canyon boot camp participants. Photos courtesy of Suki Kisling, Grand Canyon SWO

Participants also learn about the organization's work, and the award-winning Bible studies, publications and more than 40 free resources provided through the churchwide organization.

Boot camps help leaders invite other women in and support them on their faith journeys.

One woman said that she enjoyed participating in “the fellowship, meeting other women and learning what’s going on in their churches. Also, the sense of support and belonging, a feeling of true Christian community.”

Women in leadership should invite others to learn how Women of the ELCA is making a difference in the church, the society and the world. Women of the ELCA participants are living their faith by alerting women to justice issues such as human trafficking, offering resources and Bible studies, being good stewards, and supporting a health initiative—Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls.

For more information about sponsoring a boot camp, contact Eva James Yeo at eva.yeo@elca.org.



Eva James Yeo (eva.yeo@elca.org) is director for membership for Women of the ELCA.



Grand Canyon boot camp participants color on a triennial gathering table top coloring sheet.

They are also a fun way to bring women together to learn, encourage, support and live out our mission.

Boot camps are open to all women—from young to seasoned. They help participants explore how the organization is fulfilling its purpose in new ways and how they can become involved. When done right, boot camps explain the structure of Women of the ELCA, including churchwide, synodical, congregational, conferences and clusters, inter-congregational and special units.

They invite all women to become active participants of the organization, helping them gain leadership skills that help inside and outside the organization.

News briefs

How are you celebrating Bold Women's Day?

Bold Women's Day is observed annually on the fourth Sunday of February. It celebrates all Lutheran women who have acted or are acting boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. 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 being a disciple of Christ.

How is your congregation celebrating Bold Women's Day? Let us know by emailing us at Women.elca@elca.org and put Bold Women's Day in the subject line.

ELCA to create human trafficking worship resources

Women of the ELCA participants have been doing anti-trafficking work for more than a decade, said Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky. "It's been a grassroots movement that spread across the churchwide organization."

At the 2016 Churchwide Assembly last August in New Orleans, voting members approved a memorial (CA16.02.03k) "calling for a dedicated time of prayer to end human trafficking and to create resources to support congregations in this effort . . . including dedicated times of prayer each year, such as January 11, Human Trafficking Awareness Day."

The assembly also asked the ELCA worship team to

create worship resources surrounding the issue of human trafficking, including prayers and litanies. The worship team, in turn, asked Women of the ELCA to consult on those resources, Bushkofsky said.

Women of the ELCA continues to create resources (found at welca.org/humantrafficking) that equip people to tell the story of human trafficking and move into action against it, she said.

Looking for some extra Bible study resources?

Gather is excited to offer a selection of past Bible study lessons for sale online. "In Good Company: Biblical Women" is a nine-session Bible study that explores the stories of biblical women in both the Old and New Testaments. You can purchase a digital download of the entire series or purchase one or more individual lessons by going to resources.elca.org/Products-Women.html. Be sure to check back for more studies in the coming months!

Deadline for scholarships is February 15

The deadline for applying for a Women of the ELCA scholarship in one of four categories is Feb. 15. Scholarships are offered for Lutheran (ELCA) laywomen, administrative leadership, ordained ministry and for ELCA college and seminary leadership. Learn more at welca.org under "Our Work" then "Scholarships."

As financial leaders, women should join credit union

LUTHERANS HELPING LUTHERANS. That's what the new ELCA Federal Credit Union is all about, said the Rev. Arnold Pierson, president and CEO of the new banking cooperative for ELCA Lutherans that opened in June 2016.

"This is a socially responsible way for (ELCA) Lutherans to do their banking," said Luis Reyes, vice president and COO of the credit union.

Who can join? Anybody who is a member of, works for or volunteers for an ELCA church or agency and their family members, Pierson said.

"Women are generally leaders of finance," Reyes said.

Individuals can join now by opening a savings account with \$25. A credit union account allows a member to save money with better rates and lower fees than at most other financial institutions, Reyes said.

Members of the credit union can access auto and personal loans, credit cards, checking and savings accounts, surcharge-free ATMs, online banking and bill payment and more.

To learn how to save or borrow money through the socially responsible ELCA Federal Credit Union, call 877-715-1111 or visit www.elcafcu.org.

Women of the ELCA interchange

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- pastor(s)
- other church leaders

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

***Do you see this woman?* is 2017 COP theme**

by Deborah Calvert

THE 2017 CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS (COP) will take place in Chicago at the Lutheran Center, February 17–19, 2017. 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.

The planning team for this event has come up with some creative ideas to get our message across. The theme for the conference is “Do You See This Woman?” and our Scripture passage is from Luke 7:36–50.

Congregational units and individuals may participate in the in-kind offering by donating gift cards (Visa, Wal-Mart or Target) in any amount. The gift cards will be given

to an organization that supports homeless youth. You may send them to your synodical president and she will bring them with her, or you may send them directly to churchwide. Presidents will also be invited to bring their SWO’s a generous offering at worship during the meeting.

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 roles on February 1.



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