

interchange

VOLUME 28, NUMBER 3 FALL 2015



Using God’s gracious gifts

STEWARDSHIP: EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT DEFINITION. Here’s one that works for me.

Stewardship means
to use the gifts God has generously given to us
to care for the gifts that God has graciously entrusted to us
so that those who come after us can rejoice in them in their turn.

Our loving God has given us so much—everything we have, everything we are, *everything*. And one of the many gifts that God has graciously entrusted to us is our beloved community of women created in the image of our loving, generous God.

When you lovingly, generously use some of what God has given you to care for Women of the ELCA, you are helping to sustain our organization for our daughters and granddaughters, nieces and great-nieces, young friends and younger friends for generations yet to come. Your faithful support of Women of the ELCA will make a difference in the lives of women you may never meet, maybe even in the lives of women not yet born—who, through the organization your generous giving sustains, will reach out to love and serve our neighbors in Christ just as you have done.

That’s the power of grateful, generous stewardship! *Thank you.*

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Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter;
whoever finds one has found a treasure.

Faithful friends are beyond price;
no amount can balance their worth.

Faithful friends are life-saving medicine;
and those who fear the Lord will find them.

(Sirach 6:14–16)

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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.

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Women of the ELCA 
interchange

Download *Interchange* with clickable links by visiting the "Publications" tab at womenoftheelca.org.

From biblical times to today: Women are generous givers

by Audrey Novak Riley

STEWARDSHIP—GIVING GENEROUSLY to support the ministry we all care about—is really a lot more enjoyable than some people think. It's about connection, affirmation, attachment, invitation and gratitude. Those are all good things, right?

Connection.

Have you ever thought about how much you care about Women of the ELCA? Now think of all the women you know and all the women you don't know who are active in every expression of our organization. They care just as much as you do. We all care about Women of the ELCA.



Affirmation.

Sometimes people feel that stewardship somehow isn't as good as other forms of discipleship. It's not as spiritual, not as noble . . . it's for people like tax collectors and Judas, who was in charge of the disciples' common purse. But you know, that common purse must have been pretty plump to keep 13 hungry men going along the road for all that time and still book a big enough upper room for a good Last Supper together. Who kept that purse plumped up?

The Gospel of Luke tells us at the beginning of Chapter 8.

Soon afterwards [Jesus] went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women . . . who provided for them out of their resources.

It was the "women who provided for them out of their resources," that is, out of the resources that had been entrusted to them by our generous and loving God.

Luke even names some of these generous women disciples: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and "many others." Thanks be to God for those generous women disciples.

And there are "many other" generous women disciples still providing for Jesus' ministry today—some of them are even reading this newsletter. Just like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and the rest, generous women who care about ministry are still making it possible.

Attachment.

Giving to Women of the ELCA makes a difference in people's lives—especially in the lives of those who give. How?

Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34). Giving nourishes a relationship that may be just in its beginning stages or that may have grown routine. When we give, we grow more attached to the organization we support. Giving makes the heart grow warmer.

Invitation.

Will you join me in giving to Women of the ELCA? It's easy to do. There's a “Donate Now” link at the top of every page on our website, womenoftheelca.org. We can join Faithful Friends and become sustaining givers. We can send in a Thankoffering any time the Spirit moves us. Our congregational units and synodical women's organizations can forward our regular offerings and convention offerings for us. We can direct Thrivent Choice dollars to Women of the ELCA. We can even set up our bank accounts to make regular monthly gifts for us, the same way we set up our bank accounts to pay our electric bills.

Gratitude.

Thank you for all you do as leaders of Women of the ELCA. Through your generosity in serving and giving, you make a real difference in people's lives—not only your own, but in those of people you may never meet, people whose stories you may never hear. *Thank you.*



“Because I like what WELCA's been doing lately”

Not long ago, the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA received a very generous gift from a longtime participant. I telephoned her to say thank you, and after we chatted for a bit, I asked what inspired her to make such a gift. And she said, “Because I like what WELCA's been doing lately.”

Do you like what WELCA's been doing lately? Has something in your congregational unit, your synodical organization or the churchwide expression caught your imagination? Then think of your sister who acted on that feeling—and give boldly. *Thank you!*



Audrey Novak Riley (audrey.riley@elca.org) is director of stewardship and development. She wrote all the articles in this issue.

Faithful Friends are steadfast supporters

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Sturdy shelter. Beyond price. Life-saving medicine. Yes, we thought, those phrases certainly describe the many steadfast supporters of Women of the ELCA. So that's what we've named our new giving program: Faithful Friends.

Faithful Friends is an easy way for you (or your congregational unit or synodical organization) to give monthly to Women of the ELCA by automatic withdrawal from your checking account or by automatic charge to your credit card.

The Faithful Friends program supports the Women of the ELCA general fund, which makes it possible for your churchwide organization to act quickly and flexibly in response to any need that may arise.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that God says, “I am about to do a new thing” (43:19a). And Faithful Friends is one way you can help Women of the ELCA be ready for whatever new thing God has in store.

All you need to do is visit womenoftheelca.org/FaithfulFriends, download the form that's linked on that page, print it out, fill it in and mail it to:

ELCA Gift Processing Supervisor
8765 W. Higgins Road, 5th floor
Chicago IL 60631

You can start your automatic monthly gift right away, and you can stop any time with just a phone call to Women of the ELCA, 773-380-2730, or by email at women.elca@elca.org.

Your generous support helps women act boldly on their faith—and so much more

OUR MISSION is to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ, and every expression of Women of the ELCA does that in many ways.

Congregational units gather to study Scripture, advocate against human trafficking, make quilts and shawls and layettes—and so much more.

At the same time, synodical women's organizations organize retreats and conventions and all kinds of exciting events—and so much more.



And even as all this is going on, the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA is busy too. Your elected churchwide board representatives travel to synodical and ecumenical events. Staff members dig into the details of publishing a wide array of resources for your use, organizing and offering workshops and trainings and planning and carrying out training events for your elected synodical and churchwide leaders. And so much more.

And it's all thanks to you and your generous support. You make it all possible. *Thank you!*

Here's how the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA used your generous gifts to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ in fiscal year 2014.

Annual revenue

Every year, individuals, units, conferences, clusters and synodical women's organizations forward their offerings and gifts to the churchwide organization. In fiscal 2014, you gave a total of \$1,383,970* to support the ongoing work of the churchwide organization—*thank you!*

Special Event: Ninth Triennial Convention and Gathering

IN JULY OF 2014, 283 voting members from active units throughout our organization, 59 synodical presidents, your 21 elected officers and board members, your 13 churchwide staff members, a dozen young women working as social media interns thanks to Katie's Fund, three summer interns, and a small army of videographers, photographers, real-time captioners, and event production experts (and more) gathered in Charlotte, N.C., to carry out the constitutionally mandated business of the organization at our Ninth Triennial Convention.

Then, as soon as that was done, more than 2,000 participants, including international guests, joined that group for "Of Many Generations," the largest gathering of adults in the ELCA. Speakers, workshop leaders, Bible study leaders, chaplains, artists, musicians (and more), along with hundreds of vendors and volunteers, worked together to present a program that no one will ever forget.

Your participation—in person, in prayer, in kind and in generosity—made these two events happen. The convention is funded by the churchwide organization, and your registrations support the gathering. Any shortfall is covered by a share of the earnings from our unrestricted endowments.

The convention cost just under \$1,040,000, of which the biggest expenditure was travel and lodging for the voting members, officers and board members. The gathering cost nearly \$962,000, which was offset by registrations and other revenue of \$795,000. The largest expenditure for the gathering was for audio-visual services.

Other revenue—including your purchases of subscriptions and identity items, estate gifts and the income from our endowments, among other sources—added another \$968,272 to our annual operating revenue.

Our total revenue from all sources in 2014 was \$2,401,239. And that is what makes it possible for the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA to carry out our mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. *Thank you!*

Annual expenditures

In fiscal 2014, your churchwide organization spent \$2,380,913 to carry out our mission, leaving a small surplus of \$20,326.

Communications

Our many communications ministries—*Gather*, *Gather Bible studies*, *Daily Grace*, *Café*, *Bold Connections*, *Interchange* and *Intercambio*, *Monthly Message* for presidents, *A Second for Stewardship* for treasurers, the many free resources available for you on our website, womenoftheelca.org, and more—account for almost half of our annual expenditures, or \$1,224,906. By far the biggest single item in this piece of the pie is postage: \$362,043.

Programs

About an eighth of our annual expenditures goes to our evangelism, global education, cross-cultural and intergenerational programs, adding up to \$354,866.

Our grants and scholarships are supported by your gifts and the income from endowments established for these purposes. In 2014, we distributed \$34,000 to 21 scholarship recipients. Our grants program was on hold in fiscal 2014, but has already picked up again for 2015.



Governance

Your 21 elected churchwide board members and officers crisscross the country every year, attending training events and synodical events, leading workshops, developing local leaders and much more, all on a volunteer basis. Your elected synodical presidents and treasurers also travel to Chicago for an annual conference and for training. (Please thank your volunteer leaders next time you see them.) In fiscal 2014, governance accounted for about \$341,222 of our annual expenditures.

Operations and administration

This slice of the pie is about another quarter of our annual expenditures, or \$591,655. Included here are such things as the cost of our annual audit, liability insurance and ordinary office expenses. The biggest single item in this slice is our annual payment to the ELCA for our office rent, which includes technical services and other business expenses: \$165,000.

* all figures are rounded to nearest dollar

How did we come up with these figures? They're based on our line-item financial reports, an estimate of our average daily costs and the approximate amount of staff time dedicated to each ministry category. Updated line-item reports are made available to board members and synodical presidents monthly.

You give in many ways

Thankofferings

For more than 100 years, Lutheran women have carried out the tradition of collecting Thankofferings at home and in community to give thanks for blessings in the ordinary and extraordinary moments of life. Your Thankofferings, which support the ongoing work of the churchwide expression of our organization, have long been the backbone of our ministry together.

In fiscal 2014, your Thankofferings added up to \$839,438. *Thank you!* That was a decrease from 2013, when Thankofferings totaled \$903,374.

Regular offerings

When do the women of your Women of the ELCA group get together? For coffee? Quilting? Prayer? Bible study? Most groups gather an offering each time they meet. Whether the amount is five dollars or 50 dollars, these regular offerings help connect every local activity to the larger community of Women of the ELCA. How?

Your congregational unit keeps a portion for its local activities and shares at least half with the synodical women's organization.

Your synodical organization keeps a portion for its ministries and shares at least half with the churchwide women's organization.

In 2014, the churchwide organization received \$380,735 in regular offerings. *Thank you!* In 2013, regular offerings added up to \$488,210.

Event offerings

When offerings are gathered at synodical conventions and cluster or conference events, at least half is shared with the churchwide organization.

In 2014, the churchwide organization received \$92,224 in event offerings. *Thank you!* In 2013, that amount was \$120,360.

Undesignated gifts

Undesignated gifts—that is, those marked “Where needed most”—make it possible for the churchwide organization to respond quickly when unexpected needs arise.

In 2014, you forwarded \$56,967 as undesignated gifts, marked “Where needed most.” *Thank you!* In 2013, that figure was \$23,317.

How units can give

1. Make your check out to “Women of the ELCA.” Use the memo line to name the type of offering; that is, Regular Offering, Thankoffering, Where Needed Most, Katie’s Fund, Women of the ELCA Grants, or ELCA ministries such as ELCA World Hunger, the ELCA Malaria Campaign and so on.
2. Fill out and attach either Form A or Form B, according to whether your offering is going to your synodical treasurer (A) or directly to the churchwide office (B).

Thankofferings at womenoftheelca.org

- Learn about the rich history of Thankofferings as a daily practice and community event in *All About Thankofferings*, a free program resource.
- Thankoffering Service available online
- Order optional Thankoffering envelopes
- Create your own Thankoffering container



Use Form A for regular offerings and other offerings that go to your synodical treasurer.

Use Form B for Thankofferings and other offerings that support churchwide ministries of Women of the ELCA or the ELCA.

Follow directions on Form A and send to your synodical treasurer. If you don't know the address of your synodical treasurer, contact the churchwide office at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2730.

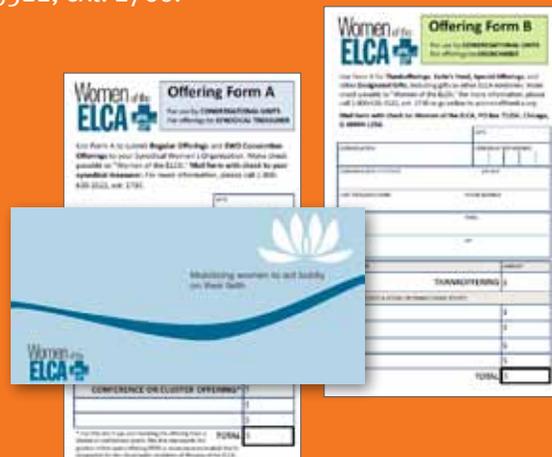
Follow directions on Form B and mail to: Women of the ELCA, ELCA Gift Processing Center, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

How individuals can give

You can give online anytime at womenoftheelca.org. Click on "donate now" in the upper right-hand corner of the home page. Or give by mail: Make your check out to "Women of the ELCA" and write "Where needed most" or the name of a particular ministry or program in the memo line. Mail to: Women of the ELCA, ELCA Gift Processing Center, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

Find forms, envelopes and more online

The stewardship resources page at womenoftheelca.org has links where you can download Form A, Form B, the Faithful Friends form and more. Optional offering envelopes can also be ordered by mail for the cost of shipping. Go to womenoftheelca.org and search "stewardship resources," or call 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2700.



Calendar

For information on any of these events, contact Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or email Women.ELCA@elca.org. Executive board members (EBM), if known, are listed with events.

OCTOBER 2015

2-4 Eastern Washington/Idaho SWO convention, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Spokane, Wash. (EMB Karen Voris)

Arkansas-Oklahoma SWO convention, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, Ark. (EMB Lisa Plorin)

3 Northwest Washington SWO convention, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Mercer Island, Wash. (EMB Ely Smith)

Greater Milwaukee SWO convention, Norway Lutheran Church, Wind Lake, Wis. (EMB Cindy Arnett)

9-10 Southwestern Washington SWO convention, Trinity Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Wash. (EBM Becky Shurson)

Minneapolis Area SWO convention, Zion Lutheran Church, Anoka, Minn. (EMB Anna Sarver)

9-11 Southwestern Texas SWO convention, Holiday Inn, Corpus Christi, Texas (EMB Sandra Grier)

Sierra Pacific SWO convention, Evergreen Conference Center, Oakhurst, Calif. (EBM Ely Smith)

10 Northeastern Ohio SWO convention, Grace Lutheran Church, Wadsworth, Ohio (EBM Jackie Wilson)

16-18 1E - Oregon SWO convention, Samaritan Center, Lebanon, Ore. (EBM Lisa Plorin)

17 Metro Chicago SWO convention, Trinity United Lutheran Church, Waukegan, Ill. (EBM Sandra Grier)

22-25 Women of the ELCA executive board meeting

31 East-Central Wisconsin SWO convention, St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wis. (EBM Patti Austin)

NOVEMBER 2015

6-8 Pacifica SWO convention, Ayers Hotel, Ontario, Calif. (EBM Dinah Dutta)

13-15 Florida-Bahamas SWO convention, Lake Yale Baptist Conference, Leesburg, Fla. (EBM Gwen Edwards)

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immediate delivery

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Please route to:

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

*Thankoffering Service included
with this issue of Interchange!*

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

*Do your loved ones expect a
gift at Christmas? Give Hope*



Women of the ELCA 

Your gifts of jewelry, aprons, shawls, T-shirts, mugs and 25th anniversary Christmas ornaments support the mission of Women of the ELCA.

Visit womenoftheelca.org and click on Shop Now at the top of the page or call 800-638-3522.