



Shawls make prayers tangible

by Katie Scarvey

A WOOLLY AVALANCHE of 1,508 prayer shawls poured into the Ninth Triennial Gathering of the Women of the ELCA last summer in Charlotte as women from around the country answered the call to knit prayer shawls. The shawls were distributed among the various ministries of Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC).

The shawls, of course, are more than the sum of their stitches. Prayers and hope went into the making of the shawls and accompanied them as they made their way to recipients.

For warmth

Adults with severe and persistent mental illness in LSC's Assertive Community Treatment Team program (ACTT) in Raleigh, N.C., were thrilled to receive the shawls.

"Many of our clients don't have funds to purchase winter wear," said Brie Teer, who works in the ACTT office. "They use the shawls to keep warm."

For welcome

LSC's Refugee Resettlement program also made good use of the shawls, distributing them to newly arrived refugee families as a welcoming gift.

"They're all very grateful and excited," said program director Bedrija Jazic, who adds that the shawls are sometimes used as blankets for young children. Hundreds of the shawls went to LSC's nursing homes in North Carolina, including Trinity Place in Albemarle. Residents there, including 103-year-old Jennie Whitley (above, left), were excited to receive an unexpected blessing, a gift made by unknown hands.

For comfort and peace

At Trinity Village in Hickory, N.C., the shawls are used as prayer quilts when a resident is nearing the end of life with a ceremony for those families who desire it, said Sharon Benfield, life enrichment director at Trinity Village.

"We place the quilt over the loved one, covering them with love and prayers," Benfield said. "Many family members are incredibly moved and so appreciate the act of kindness, the tangible gift and the dignity associated with it all, to the very end."

In addition to the ceremonial function, the shawls are also shared with Trinity Village residents who want to stay warm.

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

Support our anti-trafficking exhibit at the ELCA Youth Gathering

WOMEN OF THE ELCA is helping young Lutherans advocate against human trafficking in our exhibit space at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit, July 15–19. Our goal is to inform 25,000-plus participants about our advocacy efforts to end human trafficking and about ways they can become agents of change in eliminating human trafficking in their communities.



We will assist organizations in Detroit and beyond that help victims of trafficking by sharing in-kind support assembled by youth in our exhibit space.

Why trafficking?

Women from more than 7,000 ELCA congregations came together at Women of the ELCA's Ninth Triennial convention in 2014 to commit to raising awareness and preventing human trafficking.

Your gift of \$28 (in honor of our 28th year) will help us empower young Lutherans to become agents of change against human trafficking by:

- helping purchase items for survivors of trafficking.
- creating an interactive environment that raises awareness of commercial sexual exploitation.
- creating space for participants to learn how to create awareness in their own communities.

You can help support us by visiting our [First Giving](http://bit.ly/ELCAYGFirstGiving) page (<http://bit.ly/ELCAYGFirstGiving>). Thank you!

Nominations are open for 2017 promoters

Women of the ELCA is seeking a few women who are passionate about the work of our organization to become triennial gathering promoters (TGPs) for our 2017 event. Work would begin in 2016 for the Tenth Triennial Gathering, July 13-16, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minn.

See requirements at womenoftheelca.org and click on the News & Events tab at the top of the page.

Submit your own name or someone you know to women.elca@elca.org with TGP in the subject line. Include name, address, email address, phone number and church membership of the candidate. The deadline for receiving nominations is July 31.

Board challenged to reflect on legacy

by Terri Lackey

THE WOMEN OF THE ELCA EXECUTIVE BOARD met in April in suburban Chicago where they brainstormed the 2017 triennial gathering theme, acted on referrals from the 2014 triennial convention and heard a challenge from the executive director.

“What will be our legacy?” Linda Post Bushkofsky, Women of the ELCA’s executive director, asked the executive board. “What will future historians write about Women of the ELCA? It’s a rhetorical question, but one I challenge you to reflect on as we are called to live out the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA.”

In legislative action, the executive board chose not to propose a change to the model constitution for synodical women’s organizations to allow two women from the same congregational unit to serve simultaneously on a synodical board. The issue had been raised in a memorial to the Ninth Triennial Convention from the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synodical Women’s Organization, and the memorial had been referred to the executive board by the convention for further study and action.

The board adopted action aligning the Churchwide Women’s Organization Constitution with the Synodical Women’s Organization Model Constitution regarding presenting a synodical budget to churchwide within 30 days of its adoption. The recommendation will be forwarded to the Tenth Triennial Convention, July 11–13, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minn., for consideration.



Gwen Edwards, left, and Patti Austin, president

In an exercise to create a theme for the 2017 triennial gathering, Women of the ELCA staff elicited input from the board for ideas. A triennial gathering theme will be announced later this year.

The board learned that as of April 1, the Katie’s Fund endowment had grown to \$1,089,674. Through staff reports, it also learned that the grants program is going on a one-year hiatus to review the process, the Bible study is being reformatted and that Katie’s Fund income would support the participation of 12 young adult women in the Peace Not Walls Young Adult Trips to the Holy Land.

The next board meeting is October 22–25, 2015, in Minneapolis, Minn. For additional board news, visit womenoftheelca.org and click on the News & Events tab at the top of the page.



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

Shawls make prayers tangible

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For birthday cheer

At Trinity Glen, a skilled-care nursing home in Winston-Salem, residents look forward to getting a prayer shawl on their birthdays.

Cleo Douthet, 102, recently received one with jaunty stripes in bold colors. “Thank you kindly!” he exclaimed.

Resident Anne Vandiver loves hers, which features three soothing shades of grayish blue. “It’s the best gift I’ve gotten,”

she said. She uses it sparingly—for special occasions such as church—because she wants to “keep it nice.”



Formerly a newspaper features editor, Katie Scarvey is a communications specialist for Lutheran Services Carolinas and lives in Salisbury, N.C.

Read a longer version of this story in the July/August issue of *Gather* magazine (www.gathermagazine.org).

Take these four steps to become an active unit

by Eva Yeo

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN STARTING or reorganizing an active congregational unit or know a group that is? If the answer is yes, and you believe in the mission and purpose of the organization, you can become an active Women of the ELCA unit. Begin by asking other women to join you in this organization that is redefining women's ministry.

Your unit must take four steps to be recognized as a fully participating active unit.

- **Meet together for study, support and mission.** Get started by using *Café* and *Gather. Café* (boldcafe.org) is a web-based magazine for young adult women who want to build community, participate in advocacy, and strengthen their faith. *Gather* (gathermagazine.org) is the official magazine for the organization and offers faith-in-life articles and Bible study.
- **Participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond your congregation.** For example, attend a synodical women's convention in your region or a triennial convention and gathering.
- **Support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA.** We offer you many ways to give boldly. Your unit's offerings support resources and ministries that educate, inspire and mobilize women around the world.
- **Designate leadership to communicate with synodical and churchwide women's organization.** When you become an active unit, you are an important part of the organization, and we want you to stay connected with your synodical and churchwide organization. Designating leadership is the easiest way to do that.

Types of units

If you feel you don't have enough women at your church to start a unit, consider an **inter-congregational** unit made up of two or more congregations. You can also start a **special unit**, which is formed outside congregations. Examples include college campuses, retirement homes and mission congregations.



Types of groups within units

Congregations can have only one active unit; however a unit can have many groups. Examples include a moms' group, a book club, a quilting, knitting, yoga or girls' group. Be creative. Be flexible. Make room for all who want to participate.

Once you become an active unit, another step for recognized membership is to simply complete a model constitution and bylaws form and send it to your synodical president. Remember to keep a copy for your files. The forms for congregational/intercongregational and special units can be found at womenoftheelca.org. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click "Tools for Leaders."

For questions or to find out how to contact your synodical president, send an email to eva.yeo@elca.org or call 773-380-2450.



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

Six ways to connect with women in college

by Elizabeth McBride

IT WAS 7 P.M. IN CHICAGO and snowing when I “met” with six members of the Clemson University (S.C.) women’s Bible study group at their local coffee shop. Even though I would have enjoyed their 72 degree weather, we met virtually via FaceTime. I had asked them to help me plan upcoming *Café* issues.

These women—from first-year students to near graduates—meet every week to pray together and to read and discuss *Café* articles.

They said they would like to see more articles about balance, and that they appreciated topics on doubt and uncertainty. Our virtual get-together reminded me how important it is to meet as a community of women.

They told me about their other moms—women from University Lutheran Church who connect with them regularly. The women support them emotionally and occasionally with food. The students called the women “college-student friendly”—which I suppose means they offer emotional and spiritual support with no questions asked.



Clemson students share Café ideas

I asked the students how local Women of the ELCA groups could work with college-aged groups, and in unison the six shouted: “Food!”

So there you have it. Six ways to connect with college students: Food! Food! Food! Food! Food! Food! What ways do you share with younger women in your community?



Elizabeth McBride (elizabeth.mcbride@elca.org) is director for intergenerational programming for Women of the ELCA and editor of *Café* (boldcafe.org).

Give your offering regularly, rain or shine

by Audrey Novak Riley

HOW MANY OF YOU MAKE AN OFFERING at church every Sunday, rain or shine? How many of you make that faithful, regular gift electronically? I know that many people have their bank accounts set up to make those gifts automatically.

Did you know that you can have your bank send your gifts to Women of the ELCA the same way? That’s how Nancy Giddings gives. Nancy, a member of the churchwide board of Women of the ELCA, recently made arrangements with her bank, and now, every month, like clockwork, the bank sends her gift to Women of the ELCA.

What made Nancy decide to do that?

“A couple of months ago,” she wrote, “I got a letter from [another organization] asking for a monthly donation. . . . After much prayer and consideration, I decided that I could handle a small monthly amount. However, one thing bothered me. If I were giving to [that organization] on a monthly basis, I should do the same for Women of the ELCA. . . . Long story short, I have set up a monthly payment amount for Women of the ELCA. . . . It’s not a large sum of money, but it comes because I feel it’s important that I do this.”

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RAISING UP HEALTHY WOMEN AND GIRLS

Sow seeds of good health in your community

by Valora K Starr

*“Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.”
Psalm 126:6*

GOD’S PRACTICE OF SEEDTIME AND HARVEST is at work among six Women of the ELCA units who took advantage of the Raising up Healthy Women and Girls health initiative seed grant program.

These six new health initiatives make a total of 57 units who have used Women of the ELCA Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants since 2010 to better their communities. The initiative was created in 2004.

The six units took on a challenge to make a difference in the emotional, spiritual and physical health of women and girls in their congregations and communities.

They will plant seeds of healthy living that include retreats, new clothes closets, self-awareness sessions, walking tracks and ongoing exercise, lifestyle-change classes and support-group activities. The harvest of these efforts will touch more than 2,000 women and girls.

They will plant seeds of healthy living that include retreats, new clothes closets, self-awareness sessions, walking tracks and on-going exercise, lifestyle-change classes and support-group activities.

Applicants said the three-question seed grant application process “called them to think, do research, build relationships with people outside their congregation and act boldly.”

The requirements are simple. The program must:

- bring together women and in the congregational unit and community;
- meet the goals of the health initiative;
- be able to be replicated in other settings;
- agree to re-seed by making a financial contribution to the seed grant program; and
- agree to provide a final report.

The seed grant program is restricted to Women of the ELCA units who hope to expand their ministry in the community.



Money for seed grants is raised through Run, Walk & Roll events held at triennial gatherings.

The six congregational units that won 2015-2016 Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants included: Saint John’s, Jacksonville, Fla.; Mount Calvary, Johnstown, Pa.; Zion, Appleton, Wis.; Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville, S.C.; Trinity, Fresno, Calif.; and Saint Luke, Silver Spring, Md.

The 2016–2017 seed grant cycle will begin in the fall. Applications are available at womenoftheelca.org. Click Our Work/Special Initiatives/Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls. All applications must be postmarked by Dec. 15, 2015, and must be submitted by active units of Women of the ELCA that are familiar with the Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls initiative and the criteria of this program.

What can your unit can do to make a difference in the lives of women around you?



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

Give your offering regularly, rain or shine

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Nancy's right. It is important. What she calls a "small monthly amount" really makes a big difference for the ministry she loves.

You can do the same thing Nancy did—most large banks and credit unions make it easy for you to set up automatic payment plans, withdrawing the amount you choose from your checking or savings account each month and forwarding it to Women of the ELCA.

Your unit or synodical women's organization can do that, too! Talk it over at your next meeting and see what

the group thinks. Even the smallest regular monthly gift will make a big difference—not least because it's a regular, repeated, tangible sign of your dedication to the ministry we all love.



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

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.

JULY 2015

- 24–26 Central States SWO convention, Ramada Inn, Topeka, Kan.** (EBM Patti Austin)
- 25 Upper Susquehanna SWO convention, Camp Mount Luther, Mifflinburg, Pa.** (EBM Nancy Giddings)
- 30–Aug. 1 West Virginia-Western Maryland SWO convention, Priestfield Pastoral Care Center, Kearneysville, W.Va.** (EBM Deborah Banks Williams)

AUGUST 2015

- 7–8 Indiana-Kentucky SWO convention, Marriott Hotel Hebron, Ky.** (EBM Gwen King)
- 14–15 Lower Susquehanna SWO convention, Memorial Lutheran Church, Shippensburg, Pa.,** (EBM Lydia Davila)
- Virginia SWO convention, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Yorktown, Va.,** (EBM Jackie Wilson)

SEPTEMBER 2015

- 11–12 Northwestern Minnesota SWO convention, Trinity Lutheran Church, Moorhead, Minn.** (EBM Ely Smith)
- 18–20 Nebraska SWO convention, First Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Neb.** (EBM Nancy Giddings)
- Southeastern SWO convention, Epworth by the Sea, St. Simon Island, Ga.** (EBM Gwen Edwards)
- 18 Northern Great Lakes SWO convention, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, Crystal Falls, Mich.** (EMB Jackie Wilson)
- 19 Southeastern Minnesota SWO convention, Christ Lutheran Church, Preston, Minn.** (EBM Lydia Davila)
- Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast SWO convention, St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, LaGrange, Texas** (EBM Lois Bylund)
- Central/Southern Illinois SWO convention, St. John's Lutheran Church, Springfield, Ill.** (EBM Joan Iverson)
- Metropolitan New York SWO convention, Wartburg, Mount Vernon, N.Y.** (EBM Deborah Banks Williams)

- 25–27 Alaska SWO convention, Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, Anchorage, Alaska** (EBM Patti Austin)
- Montana SWO convention, Holiday Inn, Great Falls, Mont.** (EBM Barbara Miller)
- Upstate New York SWO convention, Millennium Hotel, Buffalo, N.Y.** (EBM Joyce Gibson)
- 25–26 North/West Lower Michigan SWO convention, Kettunen Center, Tustin, Mich.** (EBM Gwen Edwards)
- Southern Ohio SWO convention, Abiding Christ Lutheran Church, Fairborn, Ohio** (EBM Gwen King)
- 26 Eastern North Dakota SWO convention, First Lutheran Church, New Rockford, N.D.** (EBM Ely Smith)
- Northern Illinois SWO convention, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Rockford, Ill.** (EBM Lois Bylund)
- New Jersey SWO convention, St Paul Lutheran Church, Beachwood, N.J.** (EBM Anna Sarver)

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Dated material for
 immediate delivery

Summer 2015

Please route to:

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

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

Taking it to the streets
Welcome Church offers Philadelphia immersion experience

by Inez Torres Davis

THE WELCOME CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA serves and is made up of a community of the city’s homeless and hungry.

I spent Holy Week with the Welcome congregation and came away forever enriched! And Welcome Church Pastor Violet Little and I hope you can be enriched as well.

Pastor Violet and I talked about a plan to hold an immersion experience for Women of ELCA participants in 2016 in the streets of Philadelphia. On the immersion, you would learn the story of the Welcome Church and its people. The congregation has no members because to have members would mean some people do not belong.

You will meet the people of the Welcome congregation through their regular activities, which begin with worship on Sunday, teatime on Monday, and conclude with Bible study Tuesday. We would look at how people in Philadelphia who are homeless live and create community.

Pastor Violet is a WELCA anti-racism co-trainer. Your own understanding of inclusion will inform your decision to attend. The dates will be announced online and on our Facebook page this winter.

We will look for women who really want to immerse, learn and participate in the Welcome community. It will be a rare blessing, and I hope enough of you will want to come so that we can hold this immersion experience. Let me know.



Inez Torres Davis (ineztorres.davis@elca.org) is director for justice for Women of the ELCA.