

# interchange

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Photo by John Ruvelsin

## Phebe Hospital's new solar power project sees light of day

**FOR WOMEN GIVING BIRTH AT THE PHEBE HOSPITAL** and School of Nursing near Monrovia, Liberia, the worry that the electricity may shut down just as the baby's head is crowning has long been a reality.

Thanks to the Northeastern Minnesota's Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) that worry will soon be a thing of the past.

An initiative of the Northeastern Minnesota SWO called "PV for Phebe" (PV stands for "photovoltaic," the process by which light is turned into electricity) has raised nearly 65 percent of its \$624,000 goal to provide solar energy to the hospital. And in March 2017, the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL)—a Minnesota-based not-for-profit that helps provide solar energy to people of all income levels—began installing solar panels at Phebe Hospital.

The project has been a "faith walk from the very beginning; indeed, an army of believers brought it here to this point," said BJ Allen, RREAL's project manager for Phebe. "Over \$400,000 from more than 600 individuals came in so far."

More than 400 ELCA congregations, conferences and synods, ELCA Global Mission, Global Health Ministries, Wheat Ridge Ministries and the National Geographic Society have donated to the cause, Allen wrote in a recent report.

"Countless additional supporters helped bring about the dream" of providing solar power to Phebe, Allen said. "This project is a living manifestation of the unstoppable, caring, powerful, bold women of the ELCA."

Founded in 1921 by the Lutheran church, in partnership with Methodist and Episcopalian churches, Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing sits 112 miles from Monrovia and serves approximately 450,000 patients a year.

People living near the hospital recently stood in line to earn \$5 a day to help install the system. Monrovia has no concrete trucks, so laborers mixed the concrete by hand, said former Northeastern Minnesota SWO board member Mary Jo Mettler.

Mettler came up with the idea for PV for Phebe after she took part in a Women of the ELCA-sponsored "Women Building Global Community" 25th anniversary trip to Liberia in 2012.

*Read more at [welca.org](http://welca.org)*

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## At last! Leaders can update congregational unit information

by *Eva Yeo*

**THE ONLINE ACTIVE UNIT ASSESSMENT TOOL** is now available for Women of the ELCA synodical presidents to use, making faster and more accurate communication among all expressions of our organization possible. This has been in the works for quite some time, and it's finally here.

Each synodical president will be sent instructions for checking and updating primary contact information for the active congregational units in her area.

In the meantime, here's how to get ready to update the online list.

### Getting ready

First get out the printed list of active congregational and special units that you received from the churchwide office. This list may or may not be accurate and up to date—which is why we're counting on you.

Then recruit board members and cluster or conference leaders to help you. Divide up the list and get in touch with every unit on the list to confirm their information and correct it, if needed. Then get in touch with every unit that isn't on the list and update their information, including the name, mailing and email addresses, and phone number of a contact person—as well as the end of her term, if she's an officer in her unit.

Once you and your leaders have checked and corrected all the information, you will be able to update the online database.

### Why should we do this?

Every three years, the churchwide executive board sets the count of voting members from each synodical women's organization for the next triennial convention—one voting member per 25 active units. That's why it's so important to have an accurate, up-to-date count of all the active units in every synod and region. An accurate list of active units with up-to-date contact information means that your synodical organization's nominating committee can begin its important work, knowing how many voting members are needed to ensure proper representation.

### When should we start?

Your churchwide staff must have an accurate and complete list by March of 2018 so that the board can call for the right number of voting members from each SWO. Updating the list is how you can ensure your SWO will have proper representation at the Eleventh Triennial Convention in 2020. So please, start checking the lists as soon as you get home from the Tenth Triennial Gathering!



***Eva James Yeo (Eva.Yeo@elca.org) is director for membership.***

# Run, Walk and Roll at the Tenth Triennial Gathering to support next round of health initiative grants

by Valora K Starr

**THREE WOMEN OF THE ELCA UNITS** received a 2016–2017 Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grant for replicable health initiatives.

These three new groups bring the total to 60 units that have used Women of the ELCA Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants since 2010. The initiative was created in 2004 to make a difference in the emotional, spiritual and physical health of women and girls.

The seed grant program is restricted to Women of the ELCA units who hope to expand their ministry in the community. The three congregational units that received 2016-2017 Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls seed grants include: Grace Lutheran Church, Phoenix, Ariz.; Saint John's Lutheran Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; and Bethel Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill.

The 2017–2018 seed grant cycle will begin in the fall. Applications will be available at [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org). All

applications must be postmarked by Dec. 15, 2017.

How can your unit make a difference in the lives of women around you? You can participate in the fifth 5K Run, Walk and Roll fundraiser at the Tenth Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis, Minn., July 15, 2017. Make an individual donation, sponsor an on-site participant or plan a 5K Run, Walk and Roll at your church at the same time to help raise money for more seed grants and the initiative. Learn more by contacting me or visiting [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org).



**Valora K Starr ([valora.starr@elca.org](mailto:valora.starr@elca.org)) is director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA.**

## News briefs

### Donating blood to save a life

The American Red Cross will be available at the Minneapolis Convention Center during the Tenth Triennial Gathering 2017 for women who would like to donate blood. If you registered for the triennial gathering and checked the box for more information on the blood drive, details will be e-mailed to you soon. You can also sign up to give blood at the gathering. The blood drive will be held on Friday, July 14, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

### Tickets available for National Lutheran Choir

Tickets for the 64-member National Lutheran Choir on Saturday evening, July 15, 2017, are available to the public. Friends, family and Minneapolis/Saint Paul area residents are welcome to purchase tickets to the event which is being held at the historic downtown Central Lutheran Church, adjacent to the Minneapolis Convention Center. Seating is limited. Tickets are \$25 plus a \$5 registration fee and can be purchased online. (<http://bit.ly/2nJsHpP>)

### Gathering in-kind gifts

Our Tenth Triennial Gathering theme, All Anew, calls us to look at life in a new way. Our Women of the ELCA purpose statement calls us to be there for each other. God calls us to make a difference in the world. Through in-kind gifts, we can do it all: We can see into the lives of our gift recipients in Minneapolis and around the world. We can be there for them in relationship and in partnership, and we can make a difference in the world. Learn more about collecting in-kind gifts for the gathering at [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org) under about/getinvolved.

### Director for justice retires

Inez Torres Davis, director for justice for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America since 1997, announced her retirement effective March 15, 2017. Before joining the Women of the ELCA, Torres Davis worked for nine years in parish ministry and directed a non-profit organization in Chicago. She is a deacon of the ELCA.

# Funding triennial convention is a challenge

by Elizabeth Hunter

**IF EVERY WOMAN GAVE 33 CENTS A DAY** or about \$120 a year to the organization, Women of the ELCA could more than meet its budget for conventions, regular ministries and resources that women love, Ely Smith, treasurer, told the Women of the ELCA churchwide executive board at its spring meeting. The board met at the Doubletree Hilton in Arlington Heights, Illinois, April 20–22.

Smith said that offerings to the churchwide organization continue to show a decrease, although the organization's goal for regular offerings has not changed. Regular offerings and Thankofferings have been declining for at least the last 15 years. Regular offerings are those collected in congregational units that benefit the unit, the synodical organization and the churchwide organization.

Coping with challenges around decreased giving was a constant theme during the meeting, with much time spent discussing how best to continue funding the constitutionally required triennial convention, which costs the churchwide organization nearly \$900,000 every three years. Although triennial gathering costs are covered by registration fees, exhibits and sponsors, triennial convention expenses come out of the churchwide organization budget.

When Dinah Dutta, board member from Lawrence,

Kansas, asked for a breakdown of those costs, staff listed expenses of housing, travel, food, production, video, printing and postage.

“Every year, the organization has tried to budget [to put aside] an additional \$300,000 to hold the triennial event, but sufficient offerings have not come in,” executive director Linda Post Bushkofsky said. “Notwithstanding the financial challenges, everything else is in good order for the triennial convention.”

Bylaws of the churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA require the churchwide organization cover the cost of the convention, Post Bushkofsky said. Any change to that obligation would need to be made consistent with the constitution's provisions for amending bylaws.

To cover the costs of the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017), the board voted to approve the use of \$571,410 from the New Ministries Fund, which has a balance of \$1,090,000. Although this allocation was first recommended by the budget and finance committee in October 2016, the action was tabled until 2016 financials were complete. The balance needed to cover the costs of the triennial convention will come from the Eshleman Fund, an action taken by the executive board at its October 2016 meeting.

Board members also discussed alternate ways to pay for the convention. Reporting on the work of the budget and finance committee, Deborah Banks-Williams, board member from Chicago, Illinois, said: “We talked about moving the convention to a college campus to save money there. We talked about proposing a change to the constitution where synodical women's organizations are required to either contribute to the expense of triennial conventions or pick up the travel costs for their voting members.”

“We need to take care of this now,” said Dawn Smith, board member from Midland, Michigan, underscoring the urgency.

“When you're talking money, there are always two options: to increase income or to decrease expenses,” said Post Bushkofsky. A primary way of decreasing



*Deborah Banks-Williams, Chicago, Ill., left, and Anissa Canova, Gouldsboro, Pa.*

## Funding triennial convention is a challenge

continued from previous page



Lisa Plorin, Upham, N.D

expenses in the annual budget of the organization, she said, would come by reducing staff. The organization had staff reductions in 2003 and 2009.

### Triennial gathering update

So far 2,398 participants have registered for the Tenth Triennial Gathering (2017), including 914 first-time attendees. By comparison, there were 700 first-time attendees at the 2014 triennial gathering in Charlotte, N.C.

Gabriela Contreras, director for meeting planning, told the board that registration had surpassed the goal of 1,650 full-paying participants and hotels are nearly sold out.

Highlights include mid-day organ recitals on Friday and Saturday, as well as evening and morning prayer at nearby Central Lutheran Church. Food trucks will be present in the parking lot at Central over the lunch hour on Friday and Saturday. Two documentaries will be screened, *The Beauty of Our Dreams* by Diva Communications, examining education of girls, and *Dream Catchers*, a documentary about a Chicago anti-trafficking effort. Women of the ELCA is also working with a full-communion partner, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, to run a bookstore at the gathering. Featured speakers and worship leaders were previously announced.

In other action, the board voted to:

Ask the executive director to investigate ways to lower costs for future board meetings, including holding board meetings at retreat centers, rather than hotels.

Authorize the executive director to pursue

negotiations with Equal Exchange with the goal of bringing a formal agreement between the two organizations to the October 2017 board meeting. Equal Exchange asked Women of the ELCA to continue the fair-trade relationship with Equal Exchange, although Lutheran World Relief is amicably ending its relationship with Equal Exchange at the end of May. Relationships should continue with both organizations, Post Bushkofsky said. "I can't envision a day when the women of our organization aren't making quilts to send to Lutheran World Relief," she added. "We'll continue to do fair trade work with LWR as well. There's no reason we can't work with both organizations."

Board members also heard reports about:

- The 2017 Conference of Synodical Presidents.
- The 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering to be held June 27–July 1, 2018, in Houston.
- ELCA Slovak Zion Synod Bishop Wilma Kucharek gave a report from the ELCA Conference of Bishops, on topics of concern across the church, including interreligious and ecumenical cooperation, the Centurions (from the story of the centurion in the Bible) work with federal chaplains.
- Lutheran Men in Mission.
- The fiscal year 2017 budget of \$3,246,995, and the proposed budget for fiscal year 2018 to be sent to the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017).
- *Gather*, the magazine of Women of the ELCA, which is seeing increased subscriptions, as well as generous donations from subscribers—a previously untapped source.

The executive board's next regular meeting is October 21–21, 2017, in Chicago, preceded by a day of orientation for the board that will be elected at the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017).



Elizabeth Hunter is editor for *Gather* magazine.

# Bible study: Creeds take us through doubt, joy, sorrow

**THIS FALL 2017**, take part in a three-session *Gather* Bible study on the Apostles' Creed and what we together say we believe. *Gather* is the magazine of Women of the ELCA.

In "The Apostles' Creed," Bible study author Julia Seymour, pastor at Lutheran Church of Hope, Anchorage, Alaska, writes: "For our life of faith together, creeds are more than just words. They are vessels for carrying one another through doubt, joy and sorrow."

Session titles are:

## Session 1: I believe in God...

The Apostles' Creed is one of the oldest unifying symbols of Christianity. Groups of early Christians needed a tool for teaching and evangelism that explained the basics of the faith. The Apostles' Creed shaped their baptismal training, blessing in dying and how communities of faith defined themselves in faithful union. The creed has three parts or articles. The first article talks about God, the Holy Creator and Parent of all things. We'll explore what the Apostles' Creed says about God—and what it leaves undefined—as well as how this stirs our holy imagination.

## Session 2: I believe in Jesus Christ...

In Scripture, Jesus is called the Messiah, the Son of God, a teacher, a healer, the pioneer of our faith, the rock of our salvation, Son of Man and other titles. In the Apostles' Creed, Jesus' life and ministry is briefly summed up. Jesus is described as God's only Son and our Lord—one who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born by the Virgin, who suffered under Pilate, who was crucified, died and was buried. The creed is a definition of the work of the Father,



Julia Seymour

Son and Spirit, yet there is also fullness to being followers in the way of Christ that is not described in the creed. How does the creed encompass faithful living in imitation of Christ? In other words, what does it mean to believe even more about Jesus and following Jesus than we say in the words of the creed?

## Session 3: I believe in the Holy Spirit....

In the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is revealed not through characterization, but through the power of the Spirit in action. How do we understand the communion of saints, forgiveness, resurrection, the church and all that will be, as the revelatory work of the Holy Spirit? As part of the Trinity, the Spirit carries the same weight as the Father and the Son, yet many of us are drawn to one part of the Trinity more than others. How can we use the creed to perceive and honor the Spirit and the Spirit's work?

Learn more about *Gather* Bible studies and subscribe at: [www.gathermagazine.org](http://www.gathermagazine.org).



**Use the envelope in this issue to make a gift of any kind to the organization.**

**Thank you!**

# 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](mailto:Women.ELCA@elca.org).

## JUNE

- 16–17 **Southeastern Iowa SWO convention**, Grace Lutheran Church, Davenport, Iowa
- 17 **Northeastern Iowa SWO convention**, Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa
- 16–18 **Western North Dakota SWO convention**, Grand International Hotel, Minot, N.D.
- 23–24 **South Dakota SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Yankton, S.D.
- 23–25 **North Carolina SWO convention**, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, N.C.
- 24 **Western Iowa SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Webster City, Iowa

## JULY

- 29 **Northwestern Ohio SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Findlay, Ohio
- 29 **Upper Susquehanna SWO convention**, Camp Mount Luther, Mifflinburg, Penn.

## AUGUST

- 11–12 **West Virginia/Western Maryland SWO convention**, Hodges Pastoral Center, Huttonsville, W.V.
- 18–19 **Virginia SWO convention**, Christ Lutheran Church, Roanoke, Va.
- 18–19 **Lower Susquehanna SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Camp Hill, Pa.
- 25–26 **Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast SWO convention**, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Brenham, Texas

## SEPTEMBER

- 8–10 **Sierra Pacific SWO convention**, Episcopal Camp (ECCO), Oakhurst, Calif.
- 9 **Southern Ohio SWO convention**, TBD, Columbus, Ohio
- 14–15 **Northwestern Minnesota SWO convention**, Fair Hills Resort, Detroit Lake, Mich.
- 15–16 **Montana SWO convention**, Hilton Gardens, Billings, Mt.
- 15–16 **Indiana/Kentucky SWO convention**, Doubletree, South Bend, Ind.
- 16 **Eastern North Dakota SWO convention**, Faith Lutheran Church, Valley City, N.D.
- 16 **Southeastern Minnesota SWO convention**, St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Austin, Minn.
- 16 **Northern Illinois SWO convention**, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Yorkville, Ill.
- 16 **Metro New York SWO convention**, Wartburg College, Mt. Vernon, N.Y.
- 15–17 **Northern Great Lakes SWO convention**, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, Crystal Fall, Mich.
- 15–18 **Southeastern SWO convention**, Inn at Opryland, Nashville, Tenn.

- 22–23 **South-Central Wisconsin SWO convention**, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Verona, Wis.
- 22–24 **Upstate New York SWO convention**, Utica Hotel, Utica, N.Y.
- 22–24 **Alaska SWO convention**, Fairbanks Lutheran Church, Fairbanks, Ala.
- 23 **New Jersey SWO convention**, location TBD, N.J.
- 28–30 **Nebraska SWO convention**, Carol Joy Holling Camp, Ashland, Neb.
- 29–30 **Central States SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, McPherson, Kan.
- 29–30 **North/West Lower Michigan SWO convention**, The Shack, White Cloud, Mich.
- 29–30 **Northeastern Ohio SWO convention**, Camp Mowana, Mansfield, Ohio
- 29–Oct. 1 **Arkansas/Oklahoma SWO convention**, United Lutheran Church, Bella Vista, Ark.
- 29–Oct. 1 **Southwestern Texas SWO convention**, Y.O. Ranch Convention Center, Kerrville, Texas

**Will you and the women of your congregational unit prayerfully consider making a generous triennial convention offering today?**

Simply make out your unit's check to Women of the ELCA, download and fill in a Form B (found at [welca.org](http://welca.org)) and send the form and the check to:

Women of the ELCA  
c/o ELCA Gift Processing Center  
P.O. Box 1809  
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

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Dated material for immediate delivery

Summer 2017

Please route to:

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

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

## Tenth Triennial Convention offerings express joy, hope

**THE TENTH TRIENNIAL CONVENTION** of Women of the ELCA is coming up: July 11–13, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minn. More than 300 voting members—nominated and elected by women in congregational and special units like yours—will come together in our organization's highest legislative gathering to discuss, deliberate and decide on issues that will shape our future.

Our Tenth Triennial Convention—our 30th anniversary—is an occasion to celebrate. We've come this far by faith, remembering the good things God has done—with us and through us—in the past. Who can begin to imagine what wonderful things God has in mind for us for the future? What will the Tenth Triennial Convention raise up for us to help promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world?

Convention offerings are a way to express our joyful hope and confidence in what God has in mind for us. Your generous offering will be divided equally between the ongoing ministries of our churchwide organization and the PV for Phebe project that is bringing dependable solar power to Phebe Hospital in Liberia. The PV for Phebe project was begun by the Northeastern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization and was lifted up as a churchwide movement by the Ninth Triennial Convention. Your convention offering will make a real difference in people's lives!

Will you and the women of your congregational unit prayerfully consider making a generous triennial convention offering today? Simply make out your unit's check to Women of the ELCA, download and fill in a Form B (found at [welca.org](http://welca.org)) and send the form and the check to:

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