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Triennial Times

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800-638-3522, ext. 2737

Women Work Miracles with In-Kind Gifts

What a difference three days can make.

Since arriving at the Gathering, participants transformed boxes of fabric and yarn, piles of toothpaste, toothbrushes, and shampoo bottles, and mounds of pencils and notebooks into quilts, baby hats, and school and health kits that will help people in need.

Gift and grocery cards, phone cards, and other items were presented to agency representatives during Saturday morning's session.

"The outpouring of giving is extraordinary," said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA. She said of the time, talent, and money that participants have provided for the in-kind gifts and servant events, "You've been incredible."

Local agencies who collected gift, grocery, and phone cards; health and school kits; knitted hats; and heart pillows included Back Pack Buddies, a program that serves children in the city's lowest-income populations; Crossroads Urban Center, a multi-faith community center assisting low-income, disabled, and minority Utah residents; The Road Home, a community center that provides support and shelter for overcoming homelessness; Family Promise, an interfaith alliance helping homeless families; Navajo Santa, a non-profit organization that provides




Women hard at work making fleece blankets for LIRS.

necessities to Navajos in need living on reservations; the Primary Children's Hospital; the YWCA; and Utah Food Bank Services.

Fleece blankets made at the Gathering are going to the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) Welcome the Stranger program, and the quilts will go to Lutheran World Relief (LWR).

Brenda Meier, director for parish and community engagement for LWR and "all-around fan of Women of the ELCA," said she is asked if the quilts actually make it to those in need.

"I can tell you they do," Meier said. "I've been overseas and handed them to people myself. These quilts are often cherished and loved as the most valuable possession they have."

Dorothy Gesme, a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Hayfield, Minn., said she loved working in the Sewing Cottage. "I know whoever gets this quilt is going to be warm. And I'm doing something that makes me feel good." 

In-Kind Gift Totals

Health kits: 241

School kits: 364

Knitted/Preemie caps: 899

Phone cards: 55,470 minutes

Gift, grocery cards: \$13,284.84

Fleece blankets: 89

Heart pillows: 90

Quilts: 84

Keynote Speaker Joan Chittister Inspires and Challenges Women

Joan Chittister, OSB, addressed the Seventh Triennial Gathering of Women of the ELCA on Friday morning, speaking on “Women,



Power, and Peace.” Warmly welcomed by the nearly 2,000 in attendance, Chittister called women of faith to claim their special calling to restore religion’s principles of nonviolence.

Chittister challenged the audience to reclaim religion from those who would misuse and distort it “to justify a world at war.”

She described how United Nations research shows that the percentage of civilians killed during war has increased to the point where more than 90 percent of the casualties in Iraq have been civilians.

Chittister said, “Most of those civilians on whom war falls most mercilessly, most defenselessly, are

women and children,” she said. Many in the audience were moved to tears.

Although war has a more devastating effect on women than on men, women are not involved in the decision-making that leads to war or in the negotiations after war ends, Chittister said. “The issues of women and the children they’re left to support in the midst of war, as a result of war, are never addressed by peace treaties, never considered by male mediators, never factored into the costs of war, never considered in the determination to go

to war,” she said.

Religion is often considered a factor in going to war, Chittister said. “Religion itself is meant to be only a means to sanctity not an end in itself,” she said. When religion is viewed only as a human institution of rituals and denominations, it is easily manipulated to serve the purposes of dictators, according to Chittister.


“It is time for women to take responsibility for making real the religions they believe in. It is time for women to be an organized, international voice for peace, a religious critic of national policies that threaten the life of the world,” she said.

Reminding the group of the subversiveness of Moses’ mother and Pharaoh’s daughter, who together overturned Pharaoh’s law and brought up the liberator Moses, she said, “It is time for women to reach across the borders that men will not breach to take the hands of the other—not to bind them but to bond them.”

“Clearly it is time for women—the other half of the human race, the other face of God—to save both their religions and their nations. Women, the life-bearers, must now give to the world the spiritual life the world lacks,” Chittister said.

After Chittister’s address the audience heard from a panel consisting of Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson; the Rev. Judith VanOsdol-Hanson, former missionary and co-president of the World Council of Religions for Peace; and Shannon Ligon, board member of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synodical Women’s Organization. They and Chittister answered questions from the audience.

Chittister closed by reminding her listeners that it’s never too late to start advocating for peace. Quoting the Talmud, she said, “If you wonder whether your life’s work is done, and you’re still alive—it’s not.”

Chittister writes a weekly Web column, “From Where I Stand,” that may be read at www.ncrcafe.org. Her Benedictine community’s Web site, www.benetvission.org, offers weekly excerpts of her writings. 

Resolution 1325

When Sister Joan Chittister asked the women in her audience who had heard of United Nations Resolution 1325 to raise their hands, few did.

On October 31, 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Resolution 1325 marks the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building, and stressed the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. Visit www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/wps/ to learn more.

More than \$25,000 Raised in Second Run, Walk, 'n' Roll

Nearly 400 women, girls, and men participated in the second Run, Walk, 'n' Roll Saturday at Liberty Park in Salt Lake City. Their track wound through wooded areas, past historic buildings, and near an aviary housing more than 100 species of birds. The first runner, Beth Burkholz, crossed the finish line in 28.4108 minutes.

To date, this year's event has raised more than \$25,000 to support Women of the ELCA's ongoing health commitment to women and girls. Pledges are still coming in—the final amount will be announced in *Interchange*, the newsletter of Women of the ELCA.

The ELCA Board of Pensions sponsored the run with a gift of \$8,500.

Zoe Zieter, 11, of Green Bay, Wisconsin, raised \$500 in pledges to



Zoe Zieter




(Left to right) The Rev. Beth Burkholz, Mytch Dorvilier, Marge Fiedler, and Wendy Eideson

participate in the Run, Walk, 'n' Roll. A member of St. John's Lutheran Church, Zoe had heard about the event that helps the Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls initiative from her grandmother, Julie Johnson, also a member of St. John's.

Zoe said that on several Sundays she made announcements asking for pledges in church and set up a booth with a poster explaining the initiative. "I just like helping people," she said when asked why she wanted to raise money for the initiative. Zoe nodded enthusiastically when asked if she considers herself a participant of Women of the ELCA. She nodded again when asked if she plans to continue the relationship with the organization as an adult.

Susan Drane, president of the Grand Canyon Synodical Women's Organization, raised more than \$5,200 for the Run, Walk, 'n' Roll.

The first Run, Walk, 'n' Roll, held at the 2005 Triennial Gathering in San Antonio, Texas, raised more than \$27,000.

Portions of the money raised through the Run, Walk, 'n' Roll have helped produce resources such as the Healthy Heart Fair: Stations of the Healthy Heart, *Our Journey to Wellness*, and *Living from the Heart of God—A Journal for Life's Stages*. Women of the ELCA also endorsed the HEART for Women Act, a bipartisan bill introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives promoting women's heart health. 


Pass On the Legacy to your Loved Ones

A new way to become part of Women of the ELCA was unveiled during Saturday evening's worship service. Women who have no congregational unit (CU), no easy access to a CU, or no strong affiliation to a congregation can take part in Women of the ELCA by becoming an individual partner. Many women will become individual

partners because you care enough to share the organization you cherish.

For only \$20 a year, you can pass the organization along to your daughter, granddaughter, niece, sister, or friend. Individual partners will receive one-year subscriptions to *Lutheran Woman Today* and *Café*. They will have access to Bible studies, global networks,

and advocacy efforts as well as the fellowship, friendship, and support that has meant so much to you.

Take the brochure you received at Saturday evening's worship service and sign up the women you love to become individual partners. To learn more about individual partners, call 800-638-3522, ext. 2730 today. 

Workshops Cover Everything from Prayer to Politics



Diane Jacobson leads a workshop on reading the Bible.

Workshops on topics of prayer, Bible study, balancing an over-scheduled life, discipleship, money and spirituality, and the ELCA social statements were offered on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

At a “B.Y.O. Bible” workshop, Diane Jacobson, professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, told participants that questions about the Bible are often more important than the answers. “I’ll take a good question over a lousy answer any day,” she said.

The questions people ask about the Bible offer a greater understanding of Scripture because they lead to ideas and then more questions, said Jacobson, who is serving as director of the ELCA’s Book of Faith initiative, which calls for Lutherans to become “more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture.”

“If what you want from Bible study is for an expert to tell you what Scripture means, that’s no fun. But if you come together with commentaries, and discuss Scripture, that leads to deeper faith.”

Jacobson said Women of the ELCA is at the heart of why the Lutheran Church is still involved in Bible study. “You are it. You are the

folks that helped the rest of the church figure out what this is about.”

The Bible is the Word of God, the most important way God is revealed to us, she said. “It can’t be the Word of God if it is sitting on a shelf because there is no communication” between God and

you until the Bible is read.

In the workshop “Boldly Growing Your Organization Where It Has Not Gone Before,” Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA, said those who want grow their group, should start by asking women of all ages to join.

“But that might require change, and most of us agree change is hard.”

Using her recent kitchen remodeling project to illustrate how hard change is, Post Bushkofsky said the process was rough, but the result brought a 1950s kitchen into the 21st century.

“We had to remain flexible, keep a good sense of humor, resign ourselves to the fact that it was going to take twice as long as planned, embrace the inevitable messiness, change plans when one plan didn’t work, get rid of plenty of junk, and focus on what was essential.”

Women’s groups who embrace change will encounter some of the same issues, she said. “But change is good—and we have this great kitchen now.”

Post Bushkofsky said she asked young women attending the 2006 Youth Gathering in San Antonio what would inspire them to participate in Women of the ELCA.

Their written responses included: information on what it is because I don’t know, older generations need to include younger generations and accept their changes, no required baking, and to know more about what they’ve done for others.

One young woman wrote “an invitation,” Post Bushkofsky said. “What that said to me is that a whole




Linda Post Bushkofsky talks about growing the organization.



Participants discuss “The Balancing Act” at a workshop led by Deborah Leoni-Willhite.

lot of women in the church are not making an invitation” to younger women because it would upset their 1950s kitchen.

Some of the other workshops offered Friday and Saturday discussed sacred spaces, global community, *Lutheran Woman Today* Bible studies, bold girls, growing into spiritual maturity, ministry with young adults, anti-racism, and political advocacy. 

“ Overheard ”

“It’s wonderful to be at this event—with women, by women, for women.”

Margaret Obage, Luther Seminary student, St. Paul, Minnesota

“I’m enjoying myself but I’m getting tired! I’ve joined up with people I traveled with to Germany last year. We met on the Women of the ELCA trip and it’s good to be with them again.”

Margaret Swanson, Colton, California

“Sister Joan [Chittister] told the truth. She told it like it is. When I get home the first thing I’ll do is an Internet search, and then I’m going to write my two senators.” *Victoria Neill*, Columbia, Missouri

“The Healthy Hearts Fair was very good. It was interactive and the presenter got everyone involved.” *Margaret King*, Salt Lake City, Utah

“I highly recommend the “Sacred Space” workshop led by Inez Torres

Davis. You can create a sacred space anywhere with things you already have at home—water, bowls, candles—it helps you to feel close to God.” *Susan Rutledge*, Long Island, New York

“I’m connecting with all these people from Lutheran World Relief who are here. I think God is leading me here with the Women of the ELCA and back in San Antonio, with people from many different congregations.”

Harlye Schurutz, San Antonio, Texas

“The worship, it’s something you want to bring back to all the people back at home.” *Kelly Frohner*, San Clemente, California

“I joined Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Ypsilanti, Michigan, after my friend Christine invited me to worship. Now here we are, the first two women from Emmanuel to come to the women’s Gathering. In fact, our Women of the ELCA unit hosted a Lenten dinner and donated the proceeds to help pay



Sandy Ollhoff (left) and Kathy Burhop from Dekorra Lutheran in Poynette, Wisconsin.

for this trip.” *Ann Shelton*, Ypsilanti, Michigan

“The Bible study introduction workshop is awesome. The presenters put a human face on people in the Bible. They made them come alive.” *Evelyn Hershberger*, Owatonna, Minnesota

“To be able to hear so many speakers of this caliber is so inspiring. It makes me so proud to be a Lutheran.” *Marilyn Dyer*, Rensselaer, New York

Caught on camera



Gatherings within the Gathering Bring Women Together

During the long weekend in Salt Lake City, participants met, connected, and celebrated in several small gatherings within the Gathering.

On Thursday night, young women enjoyed a time of conversation and laughter in the Chocolate Lounge. Also that night, there was a reception for international guests. On Friday

night, the Today's Dream, Tomorrow's Reality (TDTR) network came together for a time to connect, catch up, and look ahead.

ELCA Multicultural Ministries hosted two receptions—a High Tea



International guests introduce themselves at their reception.



Enjoying refreshments at the Lutherans Concerned mix-and-mingle.

evening, some 50 participants dropped by the Lutheran Concerned Mix and Mingle to learn about the organization's work. On Saturday

the ELCA MIF Challenge with an ice cream social on Saturday afternoon.

Many Synodical Women's Organizations (SWOs) held social

for Women of Color and a Mix and Mingle for all participants. The ELCA Mission Investment Fund (MIF) celebrated the success of the

Women of

gatherings—some planned months in advance, some organized on site—that offered opportunities for women to support, encourage, and enjoy one another as they came together as sisters in Christ. ~



Women party at the Chocolate Lounge.

New DVD Shows Women of the ELCA Purpose and Mission

“Created in the Image of God: A Community of Women,” a new DVD that showcases the ministries of Women of the ELCA groups across the country, was premiered at the Gathering's Saturday evening plenary session. The DVD details the mission and activities of several synodical women's organizations and features women living out their faith.

It shows women responding to God's call by providing quilts and health kits to Lutheran World Relief, supporting Fair Trade coffee

and chocolate, participating in Bible study, advocating for safe streets for the children of their congregation and community, and practicing stewardship that allows Women of the ELCA to flourish and grow.

All participants of the “Come to the Waters” Seventh Triennial



Gathering in Salt Lake City will receive a copy of the DVD by mail after the Gathering. A discussion guide and poster will be included. Women are encouraged to show the DVD in their congregations and communities. Additional

copies of the DVD can be obtained by calling Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2737. ~

Thankoffering—A Tradition of Gratitude

At the Friday evening Thankoffering service, the women attending the Seventh Triennial Gathering of Women of the ELCA swayed and clapped to the joyful singing of the Gathering musicians. The Rev. Marysol Diaz of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, preached movingly about the building blocks of God's good creation: water, Spirit, and word.

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson presided over the service of Holy Communion, assisted by Shannon Ligon of the Today's Dream, Tomorrow's Reality network.

Fed by the word and the sacrament, the women responded with gratitude, filling the baskets with Thankofferings from their congregational units back home.

The Thankoffering gathered at the Friday night service totaled \$31,617.

Your Thankofferings support the ministries of the churchwide women's organization, including the many resources and programs that congregational units, synodical women's organizations, and individual participants have found so valuable. Your Thankofferings also contribute to our annual gift to the church, which supports global mission, hunger ministries, disaster relief, and so much more. The churchwide women's organization receives no financial support from the ELCA, although the church generously assists us with office space, technical support, and the like. The many churchwide



The Rev. Marysol Diaz preached.

ministries of Women of the ELCA depend solely on your generosity, on your Thankofferings.

To send a Thankoffering, make your check payable to Women of the ELCA and write "Thankoffering" on the memo line. Give your check to your unit's treasurer, or mail it to Women of the ELCA, P.O. Box 71256, Chicago, IL 60694-1256.

Women Can Make a Difference says Pastor Heidi Neumark



Women owe a debt of gratitude to the bold, courageous women who have fought against injustice and paved the way for others to join the fight, the Rev. Heidi Neumark said during Saturday morning's service.

"We are all here thanks to many women who listened to us, guided us, and prayed for us," said Neumark, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan and author of *Breathing Space: A Spiritual Journey in the South Bronx*.

One of those women was Neumark's own mother, "a bold actor for groundbreaking change in

the church who voted in a national assembly for the ordination of women."

Preaching on the book of Numbers, chapter 27, Neumark recounted the story of Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, five sisters who were not able to inherit land when the people entered the Promised Land because they were women. At that time, only men were permitted to own land. In Numbers, the names of tribe leaders are given, and all are male.

"But then you hit verse 33," Neumark said. "Zelophehad, son of Hephher, had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah."


"I was amazed because only six people are named who are not clan heads, and five of them are women," Neumark said.

According to Neumark, the sisters were "were invisible, like immigrants

washing dishes in the back, like prisoners tortured away from the media, like genocide that scarcely raises an international eyebrow."

Though women had no forum to petition against injustices, these five sisters approached Moses.

"Because the sisters presented their petition to Moses in public, to challenge a law that denied females' land rights," Moses was inspired to take their case before God. And God told Moses that the daughters of Zelophehad were right. "Not only did they change the Israelite inheritance law to include women," Neumark said, the case has been named as the oldest legal decision regarding women's property rights.

When women get together, they can make a difference in the world, Neumark said. "Look around, sisters. If God can change the world with five women, let's not underestimate what that same God can do in, with, and through all of us." 

Thank You! Thank You Very Much!

Thank you to the presidents of the Synodical Women's Organizations for coordinating the generous donations of supplies for servant opportunities.

Thank you to all the exhibitors and vendors in "Gather at the River" in Hall C and to all the groups that hosted receptions and other events.

Thank you to all the volunteers—this couldn't happen without you!

Thank you to all the speakers and leaders, workshop presenters, and all those involved with worship.

Thank you to the in-kind gift and servant opportunity dock leaders.

Thank you to all the individuals, congregational units, and synodical women's organizations who gave to the Women of the ELCA 20th Anniversary Offering.

Thank you to the many talented and hard-working women and men behind the scenes who made the impossible possible.

A special thank you to the participants—those who gave of their time and talent and treasure in servant events, in-kind gifts, and offerings; and those who gave of their hearts as they talked and prayed and sang



and laughed (and maybe cried) with their sisters in Christ at this Seventh Triennial Gathering. ~~~~~

Triennial Gathering Promoters Meet the Challenge

Many thanks go out to the Triennial Gathering Promoters, volunteers who promoted the Gathering in their synods. Their hard work is much appreciated. Special recognition goes to the following five promoters:

Debra Compton

1B - Northwest Washington Synodical Women's Organization

Tamara (Tamie) J. Evers

1D - Eastern Washington-Idaho Synodical Women's Organization

Susan Drane

2D - Grand Canyon Synodical Women's Organization

Kay Hodge

3I - Southeastern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization

Robin Fatla

5J - Greater Milwaukee Synodical Women's Organization

In the synods of these five promoters, the number of women attending the Gathering equaled at least 50 percent of the number of active congregational units in their synod.

Congratulations to Robin Fatla, who achieved an impressive 82 percent!

When you see these promoters,

ask them how they did it and think about how their methods might work for your own unit's events. ~~~~~

The next issue of *Triennial Times* will be mailed to all Gathering participants later this summer in the Women of the ELCA *Interchange* newsletter. You can find additional photos from the Convention and Gathering at the Women of the ELCA Web site. Go to www.womenoftheelca.org for more pictures and stories.

Come to Spokane in 2011

The next Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering is scheduled to take place July 14–17, 2011, in Spokane, Washington.

You can still pre-register for the 2011 Gathering at a special registration price of \$225.

Everyone who pre-registers will be eligible for a chance to win an airline and lodging package: round-trip airfare on Delta and a single or double room at either the Doubletree Hotel or

Red Lion for the official nights of the Gathering.

Payment in full is required at the time of registration. Registration is not refundable, but it is fully transferable. The Spokane booth is outside in the registration area and will be open until 1 p.m. today.

You have experienced inspiration and renewal with your sisters in Christ this weekend—make plans to meet again in Spokane! ~~~~~

