

interchange

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The executive board of the Women's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1931. Photo courtesy ELCA Archives.

Offerings go through Chicago, to the world

By Emma Crossen

FOR WOMEN OF THE ELCA, Chicago is a center of activity. It is where the small staff of the churchwide women's organization works year-round. It is where synodical presidents gather each year to connect, learn and plan for their ministries. It is where the churchwide executive board gathers twice annually to carry out the visioning and leadership to which they are called.

Chicago is also a center of financial stewardship. Last year, nearly three million dollars arrived at the Women of the ELCA donations address — Women of the ELCA, PO Box 71256, Chicago, IL 60694-1256. These offerings came from individuals, congregational units and synodical women's organizations.

Most of these dollars went to support ministries run by Women of the ELCA. The annual budget of the churchwide women's organization (\$2,959,615 in 2014) reflects what can be spent each year on programs, resources and ministries. Read more on pages 4–5.

Raising money for ministries is how Lutheran women's organizations came into being. In the mid-1800s, women began organizing beyond their congregations to support women missionaries who were denied funding by men in the church. Women studied the countries where missionaries served and connected with missionaries through prayer, correspondence and at conventions. By supporting missionaries, women were introduced to possibilities beyond their own ethnic communities and beyond traditional roles for women.

In the early 1900s, Lutheran women's organizations continued to give large annual sums to the church, but increasingly used offerings to develop their own ministries, including education for women.

By supporting missionaries, women were introduced to possibilities beyond their own ethnic communities and beyond traditional roles for women.

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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

SPECIAL EDITION

The Stewardship Issue

THIS IS A BIG YEAR FOR *Interchange*. The once monthly publication is now issued six times a year and each issue is mailed to every ELCA congregation. *Interchange* not only reaches the 6,000 active units of Women of the ELCA; it also reaches the nearly 4,000 congregations that do not have an active unit of Women of the ELCA. In this way, *Interchange* is helping to spread the good news about the mission and ministry of Women of the ELCA.

Additionally, the current and most recent issues of *Interchange* are always available online at womenoftheelca.org. Individuals can also subscribe to receive *Interchange* at a home address. (See subscription contact in side-bar).

This current issue is a special edition of *Interchange* devoted to stewardship. Inside, you'll find articles, explanations and resources to encourage bold stewardship among Women of the ELCA in your own community. This special stewardship edition is a new way of distributing the stewardship guide that was previously printed separately.

For Women of the ELCA, stewardship is about the bigger picture. It is how we use our God-given gifts to support the ministries that God has entrusted to our care. Stewardship is how we live out our mission and purpose together as a churchwide community of women. We do more together than we could ever do apart.

This stewardship edition focuses especially on financial gifts. Connecting money to ministry is at the core of our identity as a Lutheran women's organization. Since its beginning, Women of the ELCA has been a self-funded organization. To put it simply, women like you are the stewards—the caretakers—of its mission and ministry. When thousands of women in thousands of congregations give boldly, those gifts turn into life changing ministries.

Stewardship is voluntary

The constitution of Women of the ELCA uses words like "gifts" and "offerings" to describe financial support. This is important. All giving in Women of the ELCA should be voluntary. There are no dues or required amounts. Units are called to provide some kind of financial support for the larger organization (synodical and churchwide). However, there is no requirement about the size of that contribution.

On two occasions, the organization has recommended that 50 percent of certain offerings go to support synodical and churchwide ministries (see pages 4-5). Even so, these are recommendations, not requirements. The Constitution also says that financial giving shall reflect the "interdependent" relationship between units, synodical women's organizations and the churchwide women's organization. This focus on interdependence and voluntary giving reflects Women of the ELCA's commitment to stewardship of its shared mission and ministry.

Katie's Fund to keep growing

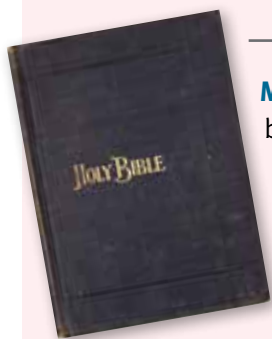
NEARLY 18 MONTHS AGO, Women of the ELCA set a goal: grow Katie's Fund to \$1 million by July 24, 2014, the start of the Ninth Triennial Gathering. In May, *Interchange* announced that Katie's Fund had already grown to \$1,014,000. The same article posed a question, what if \$1 million is just the beginning?



As Katie's Fund grows, it generates more interest each year. Every dollar is available to the churchwide women's organization to support ministry in three areas: leadership development, global sharing and living theology. Learn more about these ministries on the Katie's Fund page at womenoftheelca.org.

Units are encouraged to celebrate Katie's Fund this year by making it a focus of your learning and giving. "Katie's Fund: A Skit" features a funny and informative interview with Katie Luther, herself. The program resource *A Bold Life of Faith* makes for an engaging small group program about Katharina von Bora Luther. These resources, brochures and more can be found online at womenoftheelca.org.

Stewardship Devotion brings monthly inspiration



MANY WOMEN OF THE ELCA GROUPS begin their offerings each month with the stewardship devotion published by Women of the ELCA. These devotions use scripture, stories, and theological reflection to inspire bold stewardship. Find the devotion online at womenoftheelca.org.

Resource helps families talk about giving

DOES YOUR FAMILY TALK about why and how you give? Have you asked your spouse, your siblings or your children if there are places or causes they would like the family to support? *Kitchen Table Philanthropy* is a short resource to help you start talking about giving with your family. It includes conversation starters, questions for personal reflection and activities for all ages. More free program resources are available at womenoftheelca.org.



Thrivent Choice giving set to double

AS OF JUNE 1, Thrivent Choice donors had already given \$2,508 to Women of the ELCA in 2014. This is an unprecedented level of giving. Last year, Thrivent Choice giving to Women of the ELCA totaled \$2,905 for the entire year. If the current pace keeps up, Thrivent Choice giving will double in 2014.

The Thrivent Choice program allows qualifying Thrivent Financial members to decide where Thrivent Financial gives a portion of its charitable funds. Each qualifying member accrues a certain number of Choice Dollars each month, and can choose one or more organizations to receive these dollars. Women of the ELCA became eligible to receive Thrivent Choice donations in 2012. When Choice Dollars are given to Women of the ELCA, they go to support the ongoing ministries of the churchwide women's organization.

So far this year, 22 people have given their Thrivent Choice Dollars to Women of the ELCA, with significant impact, totaling \$2,508. There is great potential to increase participation in this giving opportunity. Thousands of Women of the ELCA supporters are part of Thrivent. Does your congregational unit know about this additional way to support Women of the ELCA? To learn more, contact Emma Crossen, director for stewardship and development, at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2736, or emma.crossen@elca.org.

Thankofferings, Regular Offerings support annual ministries of Women of the ELCA

WHEN YOU GIVE to the churchwide women's organization, your offerings help Women of the ELCA provide resources, programming and ministries to thousands of women and congregations, every day. Your offerings provide for:

- Leadership training
- *Gather* magazine and Bible Study
- Support for new units
- Spiritual gifts and discipleship programming
- Program resources on women's health, spiritual practices, church history, human trafficking and more.
- *Café* e-zine and podcast
- Racial justice network and trainings
- Advocacy for women and children
- Outreach through social media
- Partnering with other Christian women's organizations

These annual ministries are supported by:

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. Units can send Thankofferings with Form B. Individuals can send a Thankoffering directly to the churchwide women's organization or give online at womenoftheelca.org. Last year, Thankofferings totalled \$903,374. That was a \$45,926 increase over 2012.

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.
- New Thankoffering Service liturgy available August 1.
- Order optional Thankoffering envelopes
- Create your own Thankoffering container

Regular Offerings

When does your Women of the ELCA group get together? For coffee? quilting? prayer? Bible study? Units are encouraged to collect an offering each time they meet. Whether the amount is 50 cents or 50 dollars, regular offerings help to connect every local activity to the larger community of Women of the ELCA. Your unit keeps a portion for local activities and is encouraged to send 50 percent or more to the synodical women's organization (with Form A). The synodical organization keeps a portion for its ministries and is encouraged to send 50 percent or more to the churchwide women's organization. In 2013, the portion of regular offerings supporting churchwide ministries totaled \$488,210. This was \$22,508 less than in 2012.

Offerings at events

When offerings are collected at synodical conventions and cluster or conference events, it is recommended that 50% or more of the total offering be designated to support the annual ministries of the churchwide women's organization. In 2013, the portion of these offerings given to churchwide ministries was \$120,359. That was an increase of \$8,821 over 2012.

Gifts to Women of the ELCA General Fund

Donations can be made online at womenoftheelca.org or by mail (see page 6).



Grants and Scholarships need your support

IN 2013, WOMEN OF THE ELCA GRANTS gave \$68,000 to 27 projects that help women and children, 20 domestic and seven international. Even so, the need is far greater. An additional 56 organizations applied for a grant but did not receive funding. Your donation will equip Women of the ELCA with more resources to support more projects in the U.S. and around the world. Donate online at womenoftheelca.org or by mail. Write “Women of the ELCA Grants” in the memo line (see page 6). If the donation is from a unit, attach Form B.

Also in 2013, Women of the ELCA gave \$25,575 in scholarships to 21 women pursuing careers ranging from nursing and ordained ministry to law and technology. Your donation will equip Women of the ELCA to increase the size of scholarships for Lutheran women to pursue their God-given vocations. Donate online at womenoftheelca.org or by mail. Write “Women of the ELCA Scholarships” in the memo line (see page 6). If donation is from a unit, attach Form B.

SafePlace, in Olympia, Wash., is a shelter and advocacy agency for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. SafePlace received a grant from Women of the ELCA in 2013. Here, one of the children in the shelter plays with Kaitlyn, a SafePlace advocate.



Gift planning makes for good stewardship, learning

WOULD WOMEN IN YOUR UNIT like to include Women of the ELCA, Katie’s Fund, or another ELCA ministry in their estate plan? It can be as simple as adding language to a will. Planned giving can also support ministry during life, through charitable gift annuities, giving from retirement accounts, or donations of property and other assets. Learn more about planned giving options and planned giving education for your Women of the ELCA group at womenoftheelca.org (search “gift planning”) or call 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2736.



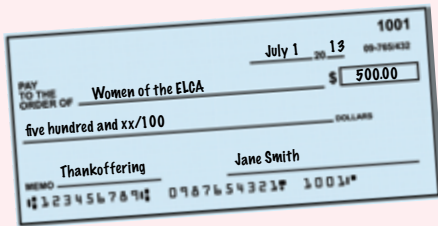
“Planting for the Future” tells about how gift planning can make a lasting impact on Women of the ELCA ministries. Order copies at womenoftheelca.org or call 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2580.

Call to share your stewardship story

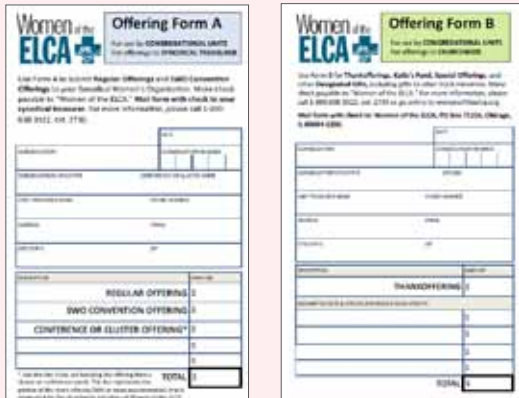
HOW DOES YOUR WOMEN OF THE ELCA UNIT provide for the ministries entrusted to your care? How do you support local activities, the synodical organization, and the churchwide women’s organization? Send in one of your stewardship stories in 300 words or less. Email to women.elca@elca.org (write “stewardship story” in the subject line); or, mail to Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631, Attn: Stewardship Story. Selected stories will be featured on womenoftheelca.org.

Follow these steps to send offerings from a unit

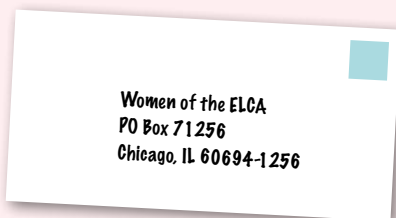
- 1. MAKE THE CHECK OUT TO WOMEN OF THE ELCA.** Use the memo line to specify the type of offering, i.e. Regular Offering, Thankoffering, Katie's Fund, Women of the ELCA Grants, ELCA World Hunger, etc.



- 2. ATTACH FORM A OR B.** Use Form A for regular offerings and other offerings that go to your synodical treasurer. Use Form B for Thankofferings, Katie's Fund and all other offerings to support churchwide ministries of Women of the ELCA or the ELCA (i.e. World Hunger, ELCA Malaria Campaign, Lutheran Disaster Response).



- 3. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS ON FORM B AND MAIL TO:** Women of the ELCA, PO Box 71256, Chicago, IL 60694-1256. 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.



Give as an individual

Donate online anytime at womenoftheelca.org. Click on "donate now" in the upper right-hand corner. Or, donate by mail without a form. Make the check out to "Women of the ELCA" and write the designation in the memo line. Mail to: Women of the ELCA, PO Box 71256, Chicago, IL 60694-1256.

Find forms, envelopes, Thankoffering service online.

The Stewardship Resources page at womenoftheelca.org has links to download Form A, Form B and the Thankoffering Service. 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. 2580.



Offerings go through Chicago, to the world

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Today, Women of the ELCA continues to develop ministries and resources for women while giving to the larger church. In 2013, Women of the ELCA donors gave \$512,869 to ELCA programs, including World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, Global Church Sponsorship (formerly Missionary Sponsorship) and the ELCA Malaria Campaign.

Additionally, Women of the ELCA annually awards grants to non-profit organizations serving women and children, and gives scholarships to Lutheran women studying for diverse vocations (more on page 5).

Through Women of the ELCA and a single PO Box in Chicago, millions of dollars support mission and ministry every year.



Emma Crossen is director for stewardship and development.

Calendar

For information on any of these events, contact Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or e-mail Women.ELCA@elca.org.

JULY 2014

- 17 **Gather Bible study intro event, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.**
- 22–24 **Ninth Triennial Convention, Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, N.C.**
- 24–27 **Ninth Triennial Gathering, Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, N.C.**

AUGUST 2014

- 2 **Upper Susquehanna SWO convention, Camp Mount Luther, Mifflinburg, Pa.**
- 9 **West Virginia-Western Maryland SWO convention, St. Paul Lutheran, Morgantown, W.Va.**
- 15–16 **Virginia SWO convention, Muhlenberg Lutheran, Harrisburg, Va.**
- 16 **Gather Bible study intro event, Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa**
- Lower Susquehanna SWO convention, St. Bartholomew United, Hanover, Pa.**
- 23 **Gather Bible study intro event, Trinity Lutheran, Tacoma, Wash.**
- 24 **Gather Bible study intro event, Peace Lutheran, Portland, Ore.**

- 12–13 **Northwestern Minn. SWO convention, Trinity Lutheran, Crookston, Minn.**
- 13 **Eastern N.D. SWO convention, Hope Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.**
- 19–21 **Central States SWO convention, Resort at Port Arrowhead, Lake Ozards, Mo.**
- Northern Great Lakes SWO convention, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, Crystal Falls, Mich.**
- Southeastern SWO convention, Sheraton Read House, Chattanooga, Tenn.**
- 20 **Metro NY SWO convention, Wartburg, Mount Vernon, N.Y.**
- 26–28 **Eastern Washington-Idaho SWO convention, Red Lion Hotel, Lewiston, Idaho**
- Arkansas-Oklahoma SWO convention, St. John Lutheran, Shawnee, Okla.**
- 27 **Gather Bible study intro event, Our Savior's Lutheran, San Clemente, Calif.**

SEPTEMBER 2014

- 6 **Gather Bible study intro event, Immanuel Lutheran, Saint Paul, Minn.**
- Gather Bible study intro event, Grace Lutheran, Phoenix, Ariz.**



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

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