

interchange

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Stewardship and support: All Anew

by Audrey Riley

IN JULY OF THIS YEAR, thousands of women gathered in Minneapolis under the theme, “All Anew.” For many—more than 1,300—the event was their first triennial; for others, it was their second or third; for some, it was their tenth triennial gathering of Women of the ELCA.

Together, all these women (and a few men) sang and prayed and learned and played—and they gave in an All Anew way. They gave blood for the Red Cross blood drive, sweat in the Run, Walk and Roll 5K, and handiwork in quilts, finger labyrinths and more, as well as in-kind gifts and offerings of money, all poured out and overflowing in loving service and generosity.

The opening worship service of the Tenth Triennial Gathering was a Thankoffering service, following the outline included in this issue of *Interchange*. What an offering of thankfulness and praise! The women who took part in that service gave a total of nearly \$50,000 in joyful gratitude for blessings received. That’s a lot of gratitude—but then again, there’s a lot to be grateful for, isn’t there? Amen and amen.

Thankofferings support the ongoing ministries of the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA. Some of the activities supported by our Thankofferings include the work of our elected churchwide board, the publishing ministries of Women of the ELCA, our scholarships committee, and much more. Turn to pages 4 and 5 inside to learn more about the financial state of our churchwide expression.

Your faithful generosity makes all the work of Women of the ELCA possible. *Thank you.*



Audrey Riley is director for stewardship and development for Women of the ELCA.

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Women of the ELCA 
interchange

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

'Church lady' invitation creates Women of the ELCA leader

LISA FLORIN, NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT of the Women of the ELCA executive board, said she spent several years avoiding invitations to the organization.

But one invitation finally caught. A phone call in 1999 changed her life, she said.

"I was a mother of two young daughters, ages 1 and 4, when a phone call came in from Joyce Ann Espeseth (a participant from her Synodical Women's Organization, Western North Dakota). She asked if I would be interested in going to the triennial gathering of the Women of the ELCA in St. Louis that year."

Plorin said she had been invited to several local synodical conventions, which she had politely declined, saying she was busy "when, in all actuality, I had no interest in spending a perfectly good weekend with a bunch of church ladies."

But this invitation was an all-expense-paid trip, so she agreed to go.

"I'll be honest with you. I was planning on taking total advantage of those four days in St. Louis."

Plorin thought, however, she should at least make an appearance at opening worship to show she was there.

"That's when it happened," she said. "That's when my life changed. That's when I heard the song 'We are Called.' That's when Jesus entered my heart and he told me: 'You belong here.'"

Plorin, on the executive board since 2014, said she has watched relationships grow and sisterhoods develop during her 20 years in the organization.

"And I have witnessed a trend," she said. "A trend that makes me a little sad, but it has also ignited a fire in my soul. Yes, our numbers are down, giving is down, but I am here to tell you I see potential."

Invitation is key, she said. "That's why I am here. Invite those people. When you see that young mom with some fire and determination, but is unsure where to go, invite her."



Jody Smiley, former executive board vice president, and Lisa Plorin, newly elected executive board president, run the Run, Walk and Roll.

Voting members elect leaders, conduct business

Just over 300 voting members gathered in Minneapolis for the Women of the ELCA Tenth Triennial Convention, July 11–13, 2017, to do the business of the churchwide women’s organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

EXECUTIVE BOARD, OFFICERS ELECTED FOR THE 2017–2020 TRIENNIAL

President: Lisa Plorin

Upham, North Dakota; Western North Dakota Synod (3A)

Vice President: Becky Shurson

Eugene, Oregon; Oregon Synod (1E)

Secretary: Freddie Jordan

Columbus, Ohio; Southern Ohio Synod (6F)

Treasurer: Anna Sarver

Greensburg, Pennsylvania; Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod (8B)

Angela Bell, Bellville, Texas; Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod (4F)

Tina Bigelow, Poulsbo, Washington; Southwestern Washington Synod (1C)

Elizabeth Burgess, Augusta, Maine; New England Synod (7B)

Lois Bylund, Moorhead, Minnesota; Northwestern Minnesota Synod (3D)

Anissa Canova, Gouldsboro, Pennsylvania; Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7E)

Lydia Davila, Bayamon, Puerto Rico; Caribbean Synod (9F)

Dina Dutta, Lawrence, Kansas; Central States (4B)

Sandra Grier, Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Upper Susquehanna Synod (8E)

Laura Krueger, Avondale, Arizona; Grand Canyon Synod (2D)

Sara Larson, Balaton, Minnesota; Southwestern Minnesota Synod (3F)

Joy Michalicek, Duluth, Minnesota; Northeastern Minnesota Synod (3E)

Kandy Pflaster, Cozad, Nebraska; Nebraska Synod (4A)

Keala Simoes, Honolulu, Hawaii; Pacifica Synod (2C)

Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld, Brookfield, Wisconsin; Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J)

Lynette Todd, Baltimore, Maryland; Delaware/Maryland Synod (8F)

Barbara Tormondsen, Greenwich, Connecticut; Metropolitan New York Synod (7C)

Karen Voris, Eagle River, Alaska; Alaska Synod (1A)

- Acted to affirm the ELCA’s repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery and encourage education and relationship building.
- Referred to the 2017–2020 Executive Board consideration of budgetary support for Today’s Dream: Tomorrow’s Reality (TDTR) anti-racism programming.
- Resolved to raise awareness of the tainted water in Flint, Michigan, and/or offer tangible support to the people in Flint.
- Rejected the memorial to lower the number of Synodical Women’s Organization (SWO) elected board members to three.
- Resolved to support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child and clearly condemn all forms of corporal punishment of children.
- Resolved to educate and act to reduce domestic abuse and violence and help survivors recover.
- Resolved to encourage all participants to hold in prayer the Bible Women of India.
- Resolved to establish July 11–February 4, 2018, as a time of prayer in ELCA congregations to end human trafficking and to work in cooperation with other agencies,

ACTION, MEMORIALS AND RESOLUTIONS

In business sessions, the voting members of the Tenth Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA:



New board members

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Bringing our mission and purpose to life – together

by Audrey Riley

WOMEN OF THE ELCA BRINGS OUR MISSION and purpose to life through three expressions—our congregational units, our synodical women’s organizations and our churchwide organization. Together, we mobilize women to act boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ—to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

Churchwide women’s organization

When we say *churchwide*, we mean our organization in its entirety. *Churchwide* includes all the women who participate in Women of the ELCA in our congregational and special units, and in our synodical organizations, as well as the work of the 21 elected members of the churchwide board and the 11 staff members at the office in Chicago. All the ministry carried out by all the expressions of Women of the ELCA is *entirely* made possible by our generous support of one another in our callings. Together, we accomplish *so much more* than any one of us could do alone—*thank you!*

All thanks to you

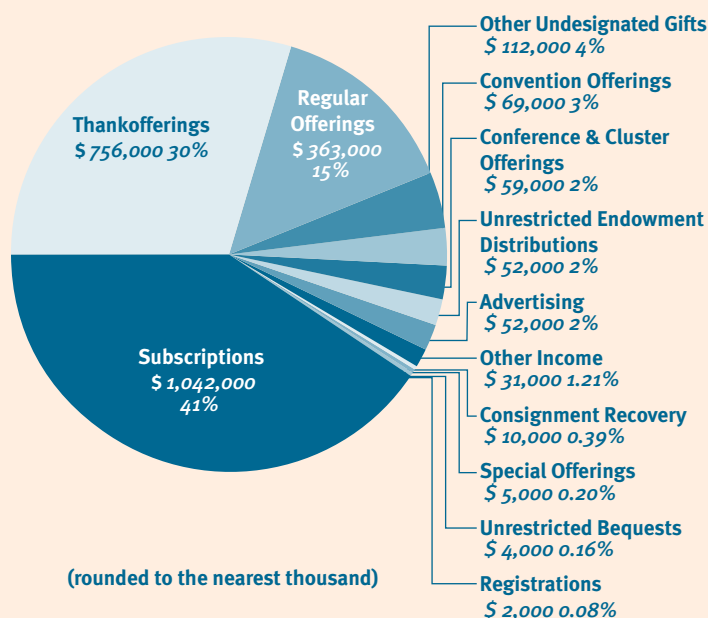
Every year, individuals, units, conferences, clusters and synodical women’s organizations forward their offerings and gifts to the churchwide organization. In fiscal 2016, we gave a total of about \$1,364,000 to support the operations of our churchwide organization—*thank you!*

Other income—including purchases of subscriptions and identity items, registrations, bequests and the income from our unrestricted endowments, among other sources—added about another \$1,094,000 to the annual operating revenue of the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA.

Total operating revenue from all sources in 2016 was just a little less than \$2,558,000. This is what makes it possible for the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA to carry out our mission. *Thank you!*

We also sent about \$180,000 in designated gifts through Women of the ELCA to support other Lutheran

FY16 TOTAL REVENUE \$2,558,000



ministries as well as about \$60,000 in designated gifts to support our Katie’s Funds, along with about \$12,000 in designated gifts to our scholarship and grants funds.

Our scholarships and grants (under review) are primarily funded by special endowment funds. We will discuss all our scholarships and grants, as well as Katie’s Fund and our reserve funds, in future issues of *Interchange*.

The ministries we support

The ongoing ministries of the churchwide expression of our organization can be described in five categories: Communications, Programs, Operations, Governance and Executive and Membership.

Communications

Communications account for the biggest part of the operating expenditures of the churchwide expression—almost half. That includes *Gather* and its Bible study, *Daily Grace*, *Café*, *Bold Connections*, *Interchange* and *Intercambio*, the *Monthly Message* for synodical leaders,

our social media presence, the many free resources available on our website, welca.org, and so much more. All these things help us strengthen our connections across the miles.

Programs

Our Evangelism, Global Education, Cross-Cultural, Racial Justice and Advocacy, Stewardship and Intergenerational programs together take up about a sixth of our annual operating expenditures, and they change lives. No one can put a dollar figure on that.

Behind the scenes

Our communications and programs are the most visible parts of our ministry together, but there’s a lot that goes on behind the scenes, too.

Operations

This slice of the pie is just about a sixth of our annual expenditures. Included here are such things as the annual audit, liability insurance and ordinary office expenses. The biggest single item in this slice is our annual \$139,000 payment to the ELCA, which covers our office rent as well as technical services and other business expenses.

Governance

Our 21 elected churchwide board members and officers crisscross the country, attending training events and synodical events, leading workshops, developing local leaders and so much more, all on a volunteer basis. Did you know that in fiscal year 2016, every one of our elected board members was also a generous donor? That’s good stewardship and good leadership.

In 2016, governance accounted for about 13 percent of our annual expenditures. Travel costs are a big part of this piece of the pie, as we’d expect for a national organization like ours.

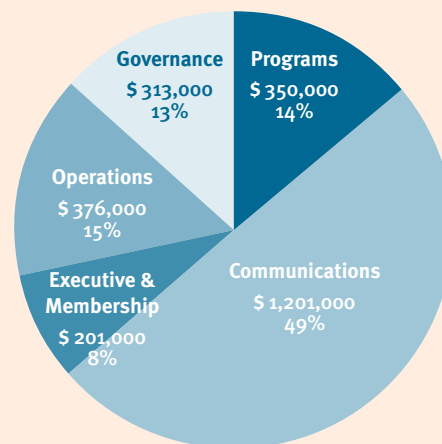
Executive and Membership

This part of our churchwide ministry adds up to a little less than 8 percent of our annual operating expenditures. Travel is the biggest expense in this piece of the pie, too.

Let’s grow—together!

In fiscal 2016, our churchwide organization exceeded our revenue budget, going over by about 4 percent. And

FY16 EXPENDITURES \$2,429,000



(rounded to the nearest thousand)

because our expenditures came in under budget by about 12 percent, we had a surplus this year, about \$129,000.

Even so, over the last few years, we’ve had to tap into our reserves to take care of our constitutionally mandated activities, including the triennial convention. Let’s keep up the good work so that we can take care of business and replenish our reserves!

How shall we do that? Let’s all pledge to make at least one generous Thankoffering this year, to make generous Regular Offerings every time we gather and to put together a Thankoffering service in our congregations. Let’s invite and inspire even more women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. We can do it—*together!*

Thank you!



Audrey Riley is director for stewardship and development for Women of the ELCA.

We’ve included an offering envelope in this issue of Interchange. Please use it today! You can also give online at welca.org/give or better yet, sign up to give automatically at welca.org/FaithfulFriends. Thank you!

News briefs

Triennial Gathering numbers

NEARLY 3,400 PARTICIPANTS attended the gathering, and more than 1,300 were first-timers.

\$49,094.60 was given in the Thursday evening Thankoffering service.

404 participants ran in the Run, Walk and Roll, and \$19,116 was raised at the event for seed grants to support Women of the ELCA's health initiative, Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls.

In-kind gifts included more than \$19,000 in gift cards and more than 27,000 items of hygiene products, clothing, quilt kits, and Days for Girls kits.

5,850 labyrinths were crafted, gathered and given to gathering and convention participants. The rest were distributed to various ministries in the Twin Cities.

Nearly \$64,000 was given during Sunday's service of Holy Communion. The offering is being shared among PV for Phebe (25 percent); Cherish All Children (25 percent); and Women of the ELCA (50 percent).

97 people gave blood for a total of 81 units. Each unit

is separated into red cells, platelets and plasma, which could help as many as 243 people.

Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls

Application materials for the 2018–2019 Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls' seed grants must be postmarked or emailed by December 15, 2017. All applications must be submitted by active units of Women of the ELCA who are familiar with the Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls initiative and the criteria of this program.

The requirements are simple. The program must:

- bring together women and girls 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.

Learn more on welca.org under Ministry and Action/Special Initiatives.

New board members, new business

continued from page 3

task forces and groups to end human trafficking and support its victims.

- Resolved to “go green” at the Eleventh Triennial Convention and Gathering in 2020, encouraging voting members and participants to reduce waste by using their personal electronic devices instead of paper and by bringing reusable cups and refillable water bottles. (Visit welca.org/shop to purchase an All Anew tumbler.)
- Resolved to support the leadership needs in the ELCA by encouraging women to seek rostered leadership and to promote support for the ELCA Fund for Leaders.
- Requested the executive board constitutional committee consider a constitutional change to allow up to two SWO board members to be from the same congregational unit.

CONVENTION OFFERINGS

Of the \$48,092 given in the Tenth Triennial Convention offering, half will support the “PV for Phebe” project providing solar energy to Phebe Hospital in rural Liberia, and half will be used for Women of the ELCA ongoing ministries. Of the total, \$10,539.47 was given at opening worship and \$37,553 was sent by congregational units and individuals.

2018 BUDGET

Voting members unanimously approved the 2018 budget of \$3,123,231.

Go to photos.womenoftheelca.org and click on the folder “10th Triennial Convention and Gathering” to see photos from the two events.

What do Bible stories mean to you?

WHAT DO BIBLE STORIES MEAN TO YOU? How do other people understand the Bible—people who are of a different gender, ethnicity or nationality? Here's your chance to take part in a different kind of Bible study—and have fun exploring how and why Bible stories mean different things to different people.



“If you have a Bible study group that doesn't like to talk to each other, this is the time we break through that,” says Mark Allan Powell, author of “Multiple Meanings: Learning from Other Interpretations,” the Winter 2018 *Gather* Bible study. “[This *Gather* Bible study] is going to engender a lot of discussion.”

Powell, a professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, has taught at seminaries in Estonia, Russia and Tanzania. He edited the *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* and has written more than 100 articles and 25 books on the Bible and religion. If you would like Powell to speak at your gathering, email him at mapowell@tlsohio.edu.

Subscribe now to *Gather* (www.gathermagazine.org) to get on board for Powell's four-session Bible study, appearing in the January 2018 through April 2018 issues. It is intended for use by groups and individuals.

If you're not familiar with *Gather*, this newly redesigned, award-winning magazine offers a mix of articles, theological reflections, devotions and stories of comfort and challenge. *Gather* is published 10 times a year with combined issues in January/February and July/August. A print subscription is \$19.95 a year, and includes digital access (computer, iPad, Android).

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.

OCTOBER

- 6–7 **Minneapolis Area SWO convention**, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Hopkins, Minn.
- 6–8 **Eastern Washington/Idaho SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Nampa, Idaho
- 7–9 **Northwest Washington SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Lynwood, Wash.
- 13–14 **Oregon SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Dallas, Ore.
- 14 **Metro Chicago SWO convention**, Bethel New Life Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill.

- 14 **Greater Milwaukee SWO convention**, Ascension Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wis.
- 20–21 **Central/Southern Illinois SWO convention**, Lake Williamson Retreat Center, Carlinville, Ill.
- 21–22 **Southwestern Washington SWO convention**, Lutheran Church of the Good Shephard, Olympia, Wash.

NOVEMBER

- 3–4 **Pacifica SWO convention**, Calvary Lutheran Church, Lana Beach, Calif.
- 4 **Central Wisconsin SWO convention**, Trinity Lutheran Church, New London, Wis.
- 10–12 **Florida/Bahamas SWO convention**, Lake Yale Baptist Center, Leesburg, Fla.

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Dated material for immediate delivery

Fall 2017

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!

