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By Leymah Gbowee

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Thank you. Whoo! Whoo! This is great.

I feel like I've grown with the Women of the ELCA Triennial. Someone asked me is this your second, and I am like nope. Maybe fourth. I don't know. But I was a very young girl without gray hair when I started coming here.

I had no knee pains. And no need for cholesterol pills.

Now I need all of those things. But it's a great honor to be back with the wonderful Women of the ELCA.

I would like to say thank you to Bishop Eaton for being the wonderful leader of this great church, for being an example for every young woman to look at and say I, too, can be. Thank you.

You know, when you've been to this for a long time, you've seen many people, you've interacted, and I remember in the years when I started coming to the conference, I would fly into one place, and then I would drive, my trip would be by Sandra, who used to be at the ELCA, or Valora Starr, who became a big sister and friend. I would drive and sleep in different homes. One time one of the homes I slept in was the home of Lucille Lund, and they told her she has to rest, I must not leave this house. You have to make sure she is well rested. And she said they say you should rest. I say I need to find a K-mart or a Wal-Mart to buy stuff for my kids.

And she said I am going to take you. So we went on that journey, we talked about stuff. The kids were maybe 10, 12, 13, 14 at the time. And I went, came back to do grad school in 2006. My first winter coat without any knowledge came. She just wrote me and said send me your address, and this warm, fluffy coat, she sent it for me, and for many years we have had a mother-daughter relationship. And this person who I step and see, Lucille Lund. It warms your heart to see that

people who love Jesus, continually loving him despite all of the storms of their life and everything, and today I just want to honor her for being one of my American moms who have been praying for me, thinking for me, even in the midst of all of this craziness called the Nobel Peace Prize. Thank you.

So Linda, Val, and the rest of the team, I want to say thank you for always counting me in, remembering me as one of the women, not just of ELCA, not just of the LCL, but as a daughter who finds comfort in fellowshipping with women in the Lord. I thank you.

And someone asked me yesterday, so why do you keep coming? Why do we ask you and you come? And I said there's no way I can write my life story, there's no way we can talk about this woman who everyone thinks has done great things, without talking about people in this room, outside of this room, but connected to this church who invested in my life.

When I went to do my undergrad, it was Jo Henrich, a Lutheran woman from Chicago, Illinois, first who started telling me, after four children, a failed relationship, abused and battered, that I could be somebody. And eventually I went to social work school, without thinking where my school fees would come from. It was \$200 per year to go to college, and Jo and three of her other friends contributed \$50 each. And saw me through.

So when you say come, there is an obligation to do so. Because your family never asks you to come and you say no. There is also an obligation to continue to show them the growth and progress that their mentorship has afforded you.

So today I am asked to talk about All Anew. With whom is God asking you to align yourself today? But I will give you an update of my life because I am sure people are wanting to know what is it that I do, and we talked about it the last time, but it's all in line with whose corner are we being called to stand.

After I won the Prize, I decided I am going to start a foundation, and the only thing that I had in my head was that I wanted to send girls to school. So you know how those of us who never think about the temperature of the water will just dive in head first, do we have a lot of those women in here?

You never do your analysis? Say Lord Jesus, I am depending on you, and we are walking this walk together. And you just plunge in. And then once you dive in, you look underneath and say, oh, Jesus! I didn't know that these things were under here.

That was me five years ago. The euphoria of the Prize, the excitement, girls' education, send them to school, mentor them. And then we started this journey five years ago. This year was exactly five years. We've made some huge gains. Two students with Master's Degree, four with graduate certificate, nine with Bachelor's Degree, three high school graduates. And this is from 2012 to 2016. Over 160 children in our camps every year.

We now fund a specialized program at the local IT college for five deaf students to go to school and do something. We have a reproductive health and rights program for our girls. Now we give them internship and pay them during the summer so that they go and give back to their communities. So we have been doing all of these fantastic things, and every time I see it, I am like yes. But then there are moments that you don't plan for. There are moments that you

never see coming. There are moments that things will just take you off.

This past May, all of a sudden, I am in Monrovia, and there's all these problems. One child has been sodomized by a neighbor repeatedly. So you have this issue of justice. Children who have lost their parents in ebola that we said, okay, we'll send to school. Now they have nowhere to stay. You have the issue of one child whose mother is a sex worker, and that child doesn't want to live with the mother again. Then you have students who come and say I made the grades but I don't know why I got a D or F. Then you have failing institutions where you think I am sending my girls to school, and then someone calls you and says there is a situation of abuse going on.

So on one day, everything came crashing down, and then I sat down, typical of me, and I go Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, what the hell was I thinking?

And then this one child is trying, so you call the school and said she's running away, they will bring her back, she is running away, and they bring her back. I said Lord, I didn't sign up for this. You know how you just have all of these problems, where one problem will be bigger than every other problem. I did not, I did not, I did not, this is not what I signed up for. You know what? I am going to shut this thing down and send everybody packing.

Then I have this mother that she and I can never really make it, but she will call me and then I will rant and rant and rant, and she said -- rant and rant and rant, and the only thing she will say on her normal day, when all is good with her, blessed are the peacemakers.

This day I made up my mind after the tenth call from this

one little girl's school I am kicking her out of the program. I go to the school and I get there, I have eight students in this one institution, so all of them come, all of them under 20, so they are high schoolers. They sit next to me, in the typical African way of conference is the adults on one side, the children on one side, and we fire words at them like missiles. And as we were giving it to these kids, I could see this little girl just crying and crying and crying and crying.

Something in me said "stop." Pause for a moment. But when I paused, she got up and put a piece of paper in my hand, folded my hand, sat next to me. So I was like okay. I opened it up. And she had written me a note, Madam Gbowee, I understand the sacrifices you make. I want to keep going to school, but I have problems. This is not her. I think it's God. So all of a sudden I asked all of the adults in the room to please leave because you know when you are a Nobel Laureate, you can do that in Africa and anywhere else.

So all of the students left the room, and then we sat down. Her question to me was: I don't run away from school; I run away when we are leaving school. That's true. We hire a bus to take these kids every time when school is up, and she's the first on the drop-off route. Everyone in her neighborhood knows her mother to be a sex worker. At school, she is the vice president of the entire school council. Very smart. So she commands respect and authority. That is a different world from her reality. So when it's time to leave school, she runs away. And her rationale is that I don't want them to drop me one day and someone makes a nasty comment about my life.

I was disarmed. And I was just sitting there looking and thinking and thinking and thinking.

And then I was like Jesus, does this mean that I have to build a hostel? Do we now have to think about housing? Then there were many other things. I now decided I will go around to all of these institutions, ask questions, engage with these young people. And so over time, I've realized that these are the people that God is asking me to align with, not the rich, not the powerful, not the politicians, not those who can give me something. But these children who will have 10,000 problems are the ones that he is asking me. Those women in different parts of the world who have been raped and abused and violated, the ones, the young men who have no outlook of a future, I realize that these are the people that God is asking me to align with.

But there's something about the theme of this conference that has taken me on a prayer journey. And thank you, Linda. Because it's been weeks of praying, praying that I need to understand anew. What is it? All anew. What does that mean?

Lord, what are you trying to tell me? Because you tell me first before you tell my sisters in that conference room.

And I realized that first thing, anew is not an event. It's a process. That every morning when we wake up and say Jesus, sweet Jesus, how wonderful you are. You are the bright and morning star, you are the lily of the valley, you are precious. As we are giving up those praise to him, he is renewing us daily. But we have to understand that every day we are anew. But it's not just for our selfish purpose. So Bishop, it is for all of those hunger issues that you have on your desk. We don't have money. Where do we find donors for the women's program? Someone just died. Someone is incompetent. Those are the realities of your days and these are the things you have to deal with. And so he gives you that grace because you have a group of people that he has asked you to stand in their corner.

So my experience in May, what at one point had me frustrated and angry and crying, then I got all of these new ideas because then it dawned on me that first things first, some of the students who have health issues. Their parents cannot afford to send them to the doctor. So I call the director and say you know what? There is this local hospital who the doctor is a good friend of mine, the owner of the hospital. Go to her, let's sign a memorandum of understanding. This is a huge leap of faith. I am putting all of my students on medical insurance. Madam, we don't have the budget. I say have you ever heard of Jehovah Jireh? Okay. I was doing that, then you have one situation of a child who doesn't have anywhere to go because she has been repeatedly sodomized. Then I asked one of my staff: Can you take her home? Can you nurture her? And this staff is like yes, I am going to do that.

Then you have the issues of those who have families who need medical attention, and they come to you and say: My mom is sick. And you say I have to do that. Because you see, when God has called you to be in someone's corner, you can't be there partially. It is all the way. When he said come, I want you to be in this corner, you have to willingly say I am going to do whatever it takes. Because you know what? Regardless of how we see things in the turn of events, at the end of the day, he is God.

The second thing that, as I reflected on all anew that came to mind, was that anew is your personal refreshing thing happening on a daily basis. But the theme "all" means that as you are refreshed and you are doing all of these things, you cannot be effective if you are doing it in silo. So "all anew" means linking together, collectively putting all that fire and refreshment together to change the world. And this is where I want to spend my time.

We are at a place in the world where Lord God, you go to places, you see things, you hear things, and you ask yourself: Is this a civil war, or is this a civil world?

In South Sudan, last September, August/September, the mainstream media will never carry these things, there was a war that went on, and it took those people almost three months to clear the dead bodies off the street. The abuse of women, the rape and the abduction of women. There's a website, and I always talk about the cold wars of the world. If you go on that website, you see all of the things that are happening on a daily basis. But there's another website called terror attacks, and every day they upload that website of people that die and things that happen, and a lot -- 98% of those things never make the mainstream media that we listen to. This is far away, far away from your reality.

I read a book called Evicted. And this book is a real-life research that was done by the writer about the housing crisis in the U.S. As I read that book, I couldn't believe it. Mothers with children moving from one homeless shelter to the other until, at the end of the day, some gave up. Recently in New York, a young girl at the top of the subway just let the stroller go, and the baby came tumbling down. And the guy who was next to her said the only thing he heard "I can't do this no more." We live in a world where we are at a moment where we need to decide whose corner we are in. Who are we going to align ourselves with?

Some people call me a troublemaker for peace. Other people call me just a plain troublemaker.

On a bad day they call me a loose cannon. Some days they call me a bullet that has just been fired without anyone using it. On a very bad day, they call me a loose woman. Sometimes I get dressed up and walk into spaces and people remark "Here comes the troublemaker." When you have decided to stand in these corners, and to align yourself with the unattractive and not beautiful, you get called all of those things. You don't get invited to the rich people's parties. You don't get invited to the fancy places. You don't get invited to be a part of the establishment because you know something? People like to say we like change, but when you decide I am going to try to bring change, people are resistant to change. Bishop, am I speaking your language?

Change is very difficult to accept, and those of us who have heeded the call of being aligned with people or standing in other people's corner are the ones who will never really

get accepted. But you see, the thing about the world that we live in today is that no one is waiting for us. There are people out there who are answering the call, Christians and Muslims and Jewish and Hindu and Buddhists, because they realize that for our world to be changed, we need to decide who we are going to align ourselves with.

So when all of us decide that we are anew, all anew, it's calling all of us to come together, bring whatever we have to the table to create the change that we need to create.

You see, in Africa they have the parable where they say if you take the broom that we use to sweep and you take one straw out of the broom, it's easy to be broken. But if you take all of the straws of the broom and put it together, you have a tough time breaking it. All anew is the moment now in our time when racism is at its peak, when domestic violence has increased in this world and other worlds, when wars and rumors of wars are happening everywhere.

Your theme is right because all of us on a daily basis are anew, but all of us need to bring that renewal together to be the troublemakers of the world, to be the firebomb of the world, to change the things that need to be changed. None of us are immune to the crisis our world is facing today. No nation today can say, oh, we are safe. I tell people I fly like a crazy person, so right off this stage, I am going to put on jeans, T-shirt, wrap my head, and I will not look like I am looking right now. You pass by me in the corridors and you would not make me up. Then I am off to the airport, get on a flight, go to New York, from New York to Amsterdam, Amsterdam to Ghana, Ghana to Liberia, and then in another SUV, five hours up north. But the luxury of flying first, business, whatever class is gone from our world. Because when you get on that flight, as soon as you see someone coming with a turban, your head will somersault because of all the negativity we have been fed in our minds. If you see someone with a long beard, you are going to shake. And if that flight is in the air and someone gets up, walks towards the door, and just pretends like they are touching it, those who can say Jesus, you will hear Jesus. Those who say Allah will hear Allah. Those in there will be in fear. None of us in this room can say we are immune to crisis.

Sometimes when I am in New York, when I am crossing the street, I will run, and my kids will be walking. Mommy, when it's that white thing in there, you can just walk. I said babies, I have seen places where people just mow people down with cars. So even crossing the street is no longer a luxury.

So none of us, no one in this room can sit down and say we go to church today, some churches that are so big, I went to a church somewhere where they gave me an award last year.

The head of the church walks around with armed body guards. He says yes, Jesus, I know you, but I need to try because when you have a church leader where there have been so many attempts on his life, I was amazed. You know, when you live through war, you know a gun, even if it is sticking out of someone's jacket. I am walking in, holding my husband's hand. He say yes, that is a gun. Why? He said because no one is safe anymore. But why? I was like a three-year-old. Because my idea of faith is that when I am doing the Lord's work, he is going to protect me. But I bet that's not the way it is for that man.

So no one in this room can say we are immune. Our children go to school now, and we are praying that they will come back safely. The difference between here and Africa, a lot of the mothers that I have talked to say, when my daughters go to school, I pray that they come home without being violated by a teacher or some male in authority. The mothers here, I pray that another little child doesn't bring a gun to school and open fire on the kids. So none of us -- this is not a moment for sitting down and being renewed every morning by God and just saying to yourself "I am fine." It is a moment that life is calling all of us with our refreshed selves to stand up for justice! To stand up for peace! (Applause). To stand up for minorities. And let me tell you something, every time people will ask the question how do I do it, he is not asking for intellectual ability; he is asking for availability. God is not saying come because you have a PhD or a master's or you can do this or you can do that. He is saying I just need you to say I am firmly in this corner, and whatever it takes, I am not going to get out of here.

But you cannot be new, God cannot renew you on a daily basis and you say this is not my call. He cannot say to you come and you say I am not going to do it. Because sisters and a few brothers in the room and fathers and mothers, we are at a place where it is terrible. I found myself in Libya in a room with 100 young men, and I asked them to tell me how they projected their future. Where do you see yourself five years from now? Because I am one of those five-years goal people. Where do you see yourself five years from now? And everyone is just looking at me in the room like you are silent. Okay. Two? One? And then a little boy raised his hand, and he started laughing. He said you need to ask me one hour from now. I don't see myself anywhere. I don't see myself doing anything. I don't see any vision for my life. I live by day. It resonated with me because in 1990, as a 17-year-old girl going through the war in Liberia, it was grateful to be alive and worry to go to bed. Grateful to sleep and worry to wake up. You can't plan for five minutes. And this is the reality of many people.

Then you have those who decide I am leaving my country to migrate to another place. Because you know, immigration issues have become the biggest topic in our world today, but there are two things that I want to say about that shortly. I saw another documentary of women who have dared to cross the sea, and they got caught in this one country. They put them in a container enclosed fence, so they live in containers, and those who were pregnant are having babies in those containers, and the babies are dying. They have been there for six months, three months, two months, and no one is telling their stories. They are treated like animals. And no one is telling their stories, and no one is in their corner, and no one wants to be aligned with them.

Then you have all of the ruckus in this country when they banned the Iranians, the Iraqis, and every other thing that they had on the government ban. I went to one school, and the students were protesting. Remove the ban, remove the ban! And then afterwards, I had the opportunity to have a conversation with some of them. I said I see you are enthusiastic about protest. Yes, Madam Gbowee, we have to change the world. I spent two days on this campus, and I observed. How many mummies do we have in the room? You can raise your hands. We are all pineapples. Do you know what that means? We have eyes all over our bodies.

So this pineapple was in that school space for two days, and I saw everything. I saw Iranian boys sitting by themselves eating. I saw Indian kids, African kids only interacting with each other, not the other. So I asked them, you all went to protest at the airport? Yes. And you feel good about yourself? Yes. So let me ask each of you questions. Do you have Iranians, Iraqis, Pakistanis on your campus? Yes. Let me see the hands of all those who are buddies with them. Let me see the hands of all those who have invited them to their dorm to have a meal with them. I am not talking about you in this room, I am talking about those students when I was at that school. And no one could raise their hand. So you see, when God is calling you to stand in the corner, to be aligned with something, he is calling you to be far away from double standards. You can't be helping people in Africa and not helping people in your backyard.

Because you see, the problem with our world today is because we have all aligned ourselves with everything to sugarcoat and make everyone feel good, you know in your community you have never shaken a black person, Hispanic person, white person's hand. How dare you write a check and send it to Africa, Israel, Pakistan, wherever.

Please! Anew means doing away with. Anew, even as you are firmly planted in that corner, you

are saying to yourself as I am aligned, as I am standing with, I don't have to speak it. People will see it. And they will feel it.

But it's so easy for us to criticize the establishment. It's so easy for us to say, oh, this is what is wrong with the U.S. And this is what is wrong with Africa. And this is what is wrong with our political leaders. But guess what. These people take cue, and they feed off everything that we project. And so it's about time, this time in the world is calling all of us to stand up. Trust me, until you have been on my side of the aisle, where you've been a single mother with four children, traveled three days on a bus with no food to eat, until you've been battered and abused, until you have lived through war and seen dead bodies strewn all over the place, please don't judge me.

Because for us to be in someone's corner, it has to be true apathy. I had an article on MSNBC website recently. And it's a speech that I gave at Dartmouth's graduation called the Open Mind Challenge. And in New York, the school my daughter goes to used to have something called a Bias Awareness Day. And they have changed it to the Open Mind Challenge Day. Basically, my theory is that we need to cross invisible borders. So the way I talk about it is when we are growing up, we spent a lot of time with my grandmother. I have been to ELCA. If you have been long enough, you heard me talking about my mother, my grandmother, and she is still kicking at over 100 plus.

Since we don't know her birthday, we baptized her that she and Jesus was born the same day, so Christmas we had a birthday party for her.

But when we are growing up, my sister Josephine, who lives in France, and I used to spend a lot of time with Ma. We are about a year apart. So Ma used to go across the street where an old lady lived, and this old lady was someone who was like a societal reject. She lived in a virtual forest. She was align. She had a sick daughter in bed reading. Since no one had gone, in that forest, they had a lot of stories about her. One morning we woke up, Josephine and I, kids in the neighborhood were telling us she is a friend of a witch. We

go to ma and said ma, they say the old lady is witch, she eats children. We were talking to her as it was a matter of fact. She was tying her hair tie. Tying her hair tie. She finished, and she said eh, okay. Let's go. Where? She said I am taking you all to the old lady across the street. Oh, ma, please, please, ma, she's going to eat us. Oh, ma, she will eat our flesh. And ma said if you don't pass in front of me, I will whoop your mind, it will take you days to sit down.

So we crossed the street. And we get there, we meet the old lady. And she greets our grandmother. We went back, and we never stopped going until she died. As a matter of fact, there were days that they would whip us for going across the street without an adult.

What did we learn? She was the kindest person. She lived in that virtual forest as a protest against her husband's people who had taken all of her land. Her one daughter had some physical disability, and she stayed in there to take care of her. That she would share her last meal with strangers, and she looked forward to people coming to visit her. But the other lesson we learned is that she was a no-nonsense person. What it took was our grandmother putting us across the street to learn that.

When you are in people's corners, when you decided you are aligned with someone, you need to tear down the walls. You see, you can't help me if you still see me as an object. Then your help to me is hypocritical. You can't be aligned with me if you think you are superior human. You cannot say you are renewed or we are all anew when you still have some way that is not the human way to think about me.

You see, you cannot call me sister because that's what I am to each and every one, my age mate in this room, and daughter to each and every one who is older and my mother's age, and granddaughter to those who are in the category of my grandmother but not so close.

Because this is what standing in one's corner, being aligned, is all about. Humanizing one another. And not seeing black, white, orange, or blue. Yellow, green, and every other thing. But looking at the way God has created us one people, one common humanity, and saying that we will stand in each other's corner.

I love babies. So latest update, I have a five-year-old. So now there are eight children. Yeah, I did it again.

So we adopted a five-year-old. He was three. Now he is five. My kids are like please, can you not give anymore home? Our siblings have exhausted their fingers and are about to go to their toes. But when I am flying or going around the world, I would reach out for babies and go to mothers and say can I help you? You know? And my daughter and I were going to France in March, and we saw a little boy. He was in his mom's arm. As soon as I went and stood, we were about to board the flight, he did a fist bump -- white -- and I fist bumped him. And then he showed it to my daughter. She is a bit shy. And I nudge her and she fist bumped him. And then he started asking questions -- about four, you know that age. Are you traveling with us? Yes. Are we going to Spain? Yes. Are we doing this? Yes. And his mom was like oh, my God. We are on it again. And then as the line -- because there were a lot of people, so the line was slow, and he kept looking at my daughter, and I said come on, guys. You don't want to get left behind. Come on, guys. We are going together. Come on, guys. But every other person he would see that would look at him he would go hi, how are you? Are you traveling too? I am excited! Are you excited? But the one that just tug at my heart was at the door of the plane, this guy who was doing the bags, he looked at him and said hi with the biggest, brightest smile, and he put a fist bump out. And his mom turned to me and said you know my problem?

I am worried that he is too nice. I did not sleep on that flight. Eventually, they went away, she is going to be so disappointed we are not sitting together. I kept thinking what is going to happen to change him? Can he just remain that way? Can I just put him in some kind of wax to keep him happy and alive? You know, you can smile and laugh about it, but it's a genuine wish that I have because people, the racism that I see in airports as I travel, the way people will talk to you. When kids want to be nice to you, the way parents will yank them away. Have you seen that? Even in supermarkets. And for you to find one baby who is like I don't see color. I just see people who are in my corner. I see humans that I am supposed to be aligned with. I prayed for him and said Lord, let his journey be that of never, ever allowing anyone to take that spirit that you've put in him.

Whose corner are you in today? Whose corner is God calling you to be in? Who is he asking you to align yourselves with, your business with? Who is he telling you that it's time. You've

dodged this for ten years, sister. It's time for you to be aligned with this group. Where do you find yourself? Because you know what? God is calling us to link arms. This morning we all woke up, we prayed. Those of us who wake up and try the Pentecostal prayers and those who try the Lutheran

prayer on their knees and those who try the Episcopalian prayer, whatever prayer you prayed, you got your dose of renewal. And we are all sitting here refreshed, basking in the Holy Spirit. But God is saying that is not enough because one, I have given you that refreshment, and I need you to raise -- that's an individual decision to say I am going in this corner.

Two, as I am in this corner, I am looking for allies, black, white, yellow, or green, to be in the corner with me. You see, when we link arms -- because first things first, what our world is teaching us is we are supposed to work in silos. But the parable of the broom is difficult to break when it's together. But when you are working by yourself and trying to be up against the status quo, they can easily break you. There are many days I feel like I am going to not be able to carry on. And then I have to find allies, people that I can hang on, crawl on, lean on, crawl to because I know that with those young people, whether it is my staff in my office or whether it's someone in the street, trust me, sometimes I am just on the airplane, if you say hi, I have downloaded all my problems, left it with you, I am gone.

But we need to. Because if you operate in that way, whether it's emotional, spiritual, you get defeat. We all need prayer buddies to help us stay firmly in our corner. We all need people to share. You see, our world is teaching us more and more each day that it's okay to live an individual life and not know your neighbors and not do anything and go to church in your fancy clothes and get in your car and leave without engaging with anyone. But I can tell you one thing the journey of my life would not have been possible if I had not done it collectively.

I remember going to the Eastern Mennonite University to go to school, I had gone to school three months after I buried my sister, and I would sit on the sidewalk and just cry. I would walk around and just be despondent. I would be depressed, and then I would go to my room and drink like six packs or sometimes twelve. And then I would be knocked out. I would wake up again and still be depressed. I remember one day I had run out of money completely, and I had this paper to write. Imagine being in America and being hungry, and then you have to write a paper. My brain could not function. As I was sitting in there, this old lady called Mary Bob Holmes, she is a member of the Lutheran church in Virginia, come walking around with a brown paper bag and walked straight up to me and said hi, young lady. I said hi. My name is Mary Bob Holmes. Are you a new student here? I said yes. She sat next to me. Are you writing a paper? Yes. Can I see it? Well, my thoughts are not together. It's okay. I can help you edit your paper. One thing after the other, she said I don't know why, but I was praying, the Lord told me to make a sandwich and bring it. Do you want a sandwich? Jesus, do I want a sandwich? Every African training my mother gave me to refuse food from a stranger went through the window. I grabbed that sandwich.

Ate it. But it became the moment of a budding friendship between a 30-something-year-old woman and an 80-something-year-old woman. Every Sunday she looked forward to me sitting next to her in church. When I had to teach Sunday school, she would find a reason to come up there. But she, from a nursing home, heeded a call to say I am going to find someone to be aligned with.

How many times do we go out and you have been nudged to do something, and some folks

say I don't believe in God talking to me anymore, but you have this strong sense of you just need to reach out and touch this person's hand, and you hold back? And you go home and you are restless and you are sleepless. Trust me, even if they shun you, you've done your bit. But the question that has been asked to all of us is whose corner? I am in everyone who is down and out's corner. I am standing with those girls and boys in Liberia, Ghana, and other places that I send to school. I am firmly aligned with them, unashamedly proclaiming that these are my allies. I am not afraid to tell the world that these are the people that I will go out there to raise money for, to send to school. Because you know what? Even on those mornings that I will kneel down and pray and don't feel renewed or refreshed, I will walk and something somehow will speak to me.

I am going to Brussels, a few years ago, to give a speech at Parliament. You know how you have this speech to write and nothing comes? For those of you who write speeches, you can't find the right word, you can't find anything to say, and it's about -- I was supposed to be talking about girls education. I kept saying God, I should know this. I play with this material every day. Why can't I find the words? Nothing. I said okay, by the time we enter the Parliament hall, the spirit of God will speak to me. Something will happen. Nothing. I sat down in Parliament, and they are going through all of the proceedings before inviting me up to speak. Nothing. And then I hear a beep on my phone. Oh, Lord. So you know when you have young children, if it's a beep, sometimes even when I am in Parliament about to speak, someone is calling me to ask me did you see my new pair of shoes?

Or did you go online to order that book for me? Or I am going out with my friends this weekend. Is it okay? Lord, is this all I have to do? And so I am sitting there, it beeps, and I say okay, let me see one more thing to make my life health morning. (Laughter). And I open the text, it's from one of my students. I woke up this morning with you on my mind. I want to thank you for standing up for us. I thank you for your support because it's people like you that give people like me hope to carry on.

I started crying.

I was a total mess. And then they called my name.

The only thing I did at that moment was to stop and read that text to the members of Parliament. And they were all a mess like me. (Laughter). And then we went to questions and answers.

But the essence of this story is that when you are determined to be in someone's corner, God will be with you. People say I'm famous for the mass action we did in Liberia. I won the Nobel Peace Prize because of the work that we did. I don't doubt that. But I think most importantly, what God wants me to tell each and every sister in this room is that he has put me where I am because I decided to align myself with the undesirable at the time. He is planted me where he's planted me because I decided to work with those who were not a part of the establishment. He planted me where he has planted me because those women were nobodies, and he wanted me to align with them. They were Muslims, they were Christians, they were educated and uneducated, and he just thrust me in there and said this is the corner that I want you to be in. These are the people that I want you to be aligned with. Renewal I can do. But you have to say yes.

I will give you an analogy. Each of us in this room has a call on our lives. And the call God has

given, it's like you are sitting in a vehicle. He will send you all of the signs to show you that you are sitting in the right vehicle. Someone may come and turn the key. Your answer to that call is putting your foot on the accelerator and driving off. And once you drive off, you will find that there are many other women out there driving in the same direction as you. And as you are going, maybe you will go out of petrol and God will say to one person stop and help your sister. That's why, as he has renewed us, as we are all anew, God is calling you and I, black, white, blue, green, yellow, orange, to stand up. And to link arms. Link all the way across all over. Let's link arms. If you can't reach across, that's okay but he is calling us today to say link. I have renewed you individually, but for the call for all of us anew to be a right thing in ELCA with the Women of the ELCA, he is calling us to collectivity. Not individuality. He is calling us to walk in our individual calls but to link to make it fruitful. He is giving each of us a light, and as we link, we make it a cannonball. He is giving each of us peace, and as we link, it is global peace. He is giving each of us humanity, and as we link across color and creed and ethnicity in this room, it is the humanity of the world. God is calling each of us today to be in a corner, to be aligned, but most importantly, he is saying be aligned with one another because it is the only way that you can change this troubled world.