

LEADERSHIP NEWS FROM Women of the ELCA

interchange

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Celebrate the bold women in your life.
Sunday, February 25

BOLD
WOMEN'S
DAY 2018

Visit welca.org/bwd
for ideas for observing in
your congregation.



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Let's get our bold on! **Bold Women's Day is Feb. 25**

BOLD WOMEN'S DAY—observed annually on the fourth Sunday of February—celebrates all Lutheran women who have acted or are acting boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. In 2018, the day set aside to observe Bold Women's Day is Sunday, Feb. 25, but you can plan it on any day that works best for you and your congregation.

How are you celebrating Bold Women's Day? You can start by visiting welca.org/bwd and downloading our updated resources. The “Celebrate Bold Women’s Day” resource, available in English and Spanish, offers a starting point for planning your special day.

It is important to realize that women are bold in different ways. Some women are bold in their unceasing prayers. Other women are bold in their service to those in need. Still other women are bold in their advocacy or through their hospitality.

If you want to celebrate the day in your congregation, start with the section, “When you gather in community,” which offers several ideas for observing Bold Women's Day. If you want to celebrate the day in quiet contemplation and study, look at the section, “Ways to celebrate on your own.”

We offer several resources on our website suitable for observing Bold Women's Day. Some of those include, “Finding Your Bold: An Icebreaker,” “A Bold Life of Faith: Katharina von Bora Luther,” and two three-session Bible studies, “Act Boldly for Mission” and “Act Boldly for Health.”

The website also offers free downloadable certificates, promotional posters, bulletin ads and a Facebook cover photo.

Whether we live out our bold story of faith in the workplace, family home or community, our faith compels us to make a difference in the lives of others. It's all about living out our baptismal call, about being a disciple of Christ.

Let's get our bold on!

**Download our
updated Bold
Women's Day
resources:
welca.org/bwd**

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 ELCA congregations and select Women of the ELCA leaders. Both the Spanish and English versions are posted on our website under the publications link and are available for download.

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Download *Interchange* with clickable links by visiting the “Publications” tab at womenoftheelca.org.

Upstate New York SWO triples goal of 500 blankets, honors Katie Luther

by Eva James Yeo

THE UPSTATE NEW YORK synodical women's organization tripled its goal to sew or tie 500 blankets and quilts to honor the 500th anniversary of the reformation and Katharina von Bora Luther.

At their synodical women's convention this past September, they celebrated the completion of their 500 Quilt Challenge for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation with 1,538 blankets and quilts.

Synodical president Susan Fox, Grace Lutheran Church, Oswego, N.Y., said that women from more than 30 congregations participated in the challenge.

"We had at least seven churches participate that do not have a Women of the ELCA group," Fox said. "We felt this was a great way to reach out and show our church where women are doing wonderful work."

The challenge honored the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in October 2017.

The women in Upstate New York look to Katie as a role model, especially for the care she took of the family home and business when her husband, Martin, was teaching and preaching, she said.

The SWO honored Katie through the quilt challenge because of her contributions to the Reformation movement, Fox said. After the quilts were counted and blessed, the SWO donated many of them to Lutheran World Relief.

Quilting brings women together, said Judy Holmes of Atonement Lutheran Church, Syracuse, N.Y., one of the churches that participated in the challenge. Many hands were needed to reach the goal. Even if they couldn't sew, they were welcomed, she said.

"What a fun challenge for our quilting groups," Holmes said. "It's also an opportunity to help women, children and families receive a warm quilt for a cold evening."

To learn more about Katie Luther, download our free resource, "A Bold Life of Faith: Katharina Von Bora Luther," at welca.org/resources.



Eva James Yeo is director for membership for Women of the ELCA.

No community safe from human trafficking, activist says

by Terri Lackey

WAYNETTE BRIDWELL LOVES HER FOUR GRANDCHILDREN and the “ton” of nieces and nephews in her family.

And she feels it’s her responsibility as a former nurse to alert them to the perils of human trafficking—and not only the young people of her family, but everyone who lives near her “backwoods” area of Zanesville, Ohio.

As one of six members of the Southern Ohio Synodical Women’s Organization anti-sex trafficking committee, she speaks in classrooms, seminars and churches about human trafficking.

“I want people to be aware of the issue,” Bridwell said. “People need to start to know what the signs and symptoms are. And then they need to call the anti-trafficking hotline number if they see something. You don’t have to be right—just suspicious.”

Human trafficking a priority

At its 2014 and 2017 triennial conventions, Women of the ELCA voting members vowed to make fighting human trafficking a priority. In 2014, a memorial requested that each synodical women’s organization assemble a task force to address human sex trafficking, an issue that has been a focus at every Women of the ELCA triennial convention since 2002. A resolution adopted at the 2017 convention established Jan. 11–Feb. 4, 2018, as a time of prayer to end human trafficking because it is believed trafficking increases in the region where the Super Bowl takes place.

In the rural area of Ohio where she lives, Bridwell said, many people have never heard of sex trafficking.

“But I tell people, ‘It happens here. Even in rural areas.’”

Human trafficking happens here too

“Human Trafficking Happens Here Too” is the message of three billboards the task force erected in rural Ohio: one each in Guernsey and Belmont counties, and one on the boundary between Monroe and Noble counties.



Photo by Waynette Bridwell of one of the billboards erected in her area.

The money for the billboards came from a grant from the Deaconess Community, thanks to Sr. Sally Burk, who chairs the Southern Ohio SWO’s anti-trafficking committee, said Bridwell, a member of St. John’s Lutheran Church, Zanesville.

The grant from the Deaconesses paid for one month of advertising, she said. But after seeing the billboards, people came forward with gifts to keep them up longer.

“Right now, for us, it’s all about awareness,” Bridwell said. “Some people I talk to don’t think it exists here. But it happens everywhere.”

The National Human Trafficking Hotline number is 1-888-373-7888. Learn more at welca.org/humantrafficking.



Terri Lackey is director for communication for Women of the ELCA.

Board cuts budget, extends executive director term

THE 2017–2020 WOMEN OF THE ELCA executive board adopted a revised 2018 budget that increased funds for programming and eliminated two staff positions. The board also offered Linda Post Bushkofsky her fifth four-year term as executive director.

In an October 19–21, 2017, meeting in Chicago, the board, in executive session, adopted a revised budget of \$3,120,231.

The 2018 budget allows for a full-time staff of 11, a reduction of two; sets aside adequate funds for the 2020 triennial convention (one-third of the total cost); adds \$35,705 to the program budget, making it \$67,705; and allows for staff salary adjustments and raises, which had been deferred. The new annual budget also funds a staff position for director for justice, which has been vacant since May.

Program areas of the churchwide organization include discipleship, stewardship, intergenerational, justice and accompanying resources.

In her report to the executive board, Bushkofsky said, “It’s an exciting, heady time to be Women of the ELCA. We’re coming off a very successful triennial convention and gathering.”

She said the triennial gathering had higher than expected registration numbers (about 3,300), with more than 500 already signed up to attend the Eleventh Triennial Gathering 2020 in Phoenix, Ariz. The result of better-than-expected registration numbers at the gathering, Bushkofsky said, resulted in “the first time in a long time that income has exceeded our expenses.”

However, she said, the final budget numbers from the triennial gathering have not yet been tallied.

“There is much to celebrate, but we have the capacity to do so much more,” she said. “As we move into year 31, we can sit back and congratulate ourselves for what has been. Or we can challenge ourselves to live into the fullness of our foremothers’ visions of this organization as a radical change agent in the church.”



Left to right: Freddie Jordan, secretary; Becky Shurson, vice president

Revenues and expenses

With Thankofferings and regular offerings down, Bushkofsky said the organization must look at additional ways to raise money.

“I think the time has come that we have to be more strategic and intentional about how to grow,” she said.

Regular offerings are those collected in congregational units that benefit the unit, the synodical organization and the churchwide organization. Thankofferings are gifts forwarded to the churchwide organization in gratitude for all that God has done.

At the end of September, with the new budget year beginning February 1, 2018, revenue is at \$1,275,085 (\$1,222,014 below fiscal year projections), according to Executive Board Treasurer Anna Sarver. Expenses at \$1,778,374 were at 57 percent of the budget (\$3,093,318) with four months left in the fiscal year.

Other board actions

The board elected three members to serve on the executive committee. They are Elizabeth (Liz) Burgess of Augusta, Maine; Joy Michalicek of Duluth, Minn.; and Karen Voris of Anchorage, Alaska. They join the four officers to make

Board report

continued

up the executive committee. The officers are Lisa Plorin, president, Upham, N.D.; Becky Shurson, vice president, Eugene, Ore.; Freddie Jordan, secretary, Columbus, Ohio; and Anna Sarver, treasurer, Greensburg, Penn.

The board also

- voted to extend the executive committee term from one year to three, allowing the at-large members to serve the entire triennium.
- voted to remain committed to anti-racism training, allowing for no fewer than two hours training in its April 2018 meeting with additional reading and study beforehand.
- approved a request from the Virginia Synodical Women's (SWO) organization to reduce the size of its board from eight members to six.
- approved requests from the Southwestern Pennsylvania SWO to reduce the size of its board from nine to seven, and the Florida-Bahamas SWO to reduce the size of its board from eight to six provided they make consistent the language in their constitutions and advise the board of those revisions.
- denied a resolution forwarded from the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017) that would allow two



Left to right: Vice President Becky Shurson, President Lisa Plorin, Treasurer Anna Sarver and Parliamentarian Laura Krueger confer at the board meeting.

members of one congregational unit to serve on a synodical women's board.

- heard a report about a proposed partnership with Equal Exchange, a fair-trade non-profit organization, that could include workshops, training and trips.
- heard reports from the president, treasurer, executive director, staff and advisors.

The next board meeting is April 20–21, 2018.

Two staff positions ended October 30

AN EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION to revise the 2018 Women of the ELCA fiscal year budget resulted in the elimination of two staff positions on Oct. 30.

The staff positions eliminated were those of associate executive director, held by Deborah Calvert, and administrative assistant, held by Vanessa Davis-Bragg, reported Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky.

"These are budget-driven decisions and do not reflect on performance," Bushkofsky said. "We thank Deborah and Vanessa for their many years of service to this organization."

Bushkofsky said with the remaining 11 positions, including hers as executive director, "staff will be able to adequately support women across the church as they live out the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA."

A search is beginning for candidates to fill the position of director for justice.

Conference of Presidents is February 23–25 in Chicago

EVERY YEAR ON THE THIRD WEEKEND IN FEBRUARY, Women of the ELCA invites the 64 synodical presidents to participate in the Conference of Presidents. The date for the 2018 event is February 23–25.

The theme of the conference, which will be held in Chicago at the Lutheran Center, is “Here I Am Lord” (Isaiah 6:8).

The Churchwide Constitution of Women of the ELCA, in Article XV, Section 2, Items 1–4, sets out the goals of the annual Conference of Synodical Presidents:

1. To provide and receive information related to emphases, priorities and projected programs of Women of the ELCA.
2. To make recommendations to the executive board.
3. To develop leadership skills.
4. To foster community and renewal.

Two ELCA staff members will be present: the Rev. Wyetta Bullock, assistant to the presiding bishop, and Sr. Noreen Stevens of the Deaconess Community.

The in-kind gift recipient is Sarah’s Inn, an organization that supports victims of domestic violence. For a list of gift suggestions, visit their website at sarahrhsinn.org.



In February 2017, Roxanne Montague, president of the North/West Lower Michigan SWO, sews labyrinths for the Tenth Triennial Gathering.

You’ll find their in-kind gift donation wish list under “Get Involved.” Gift cards in denominations of \$15–\$25 will also be accepted. Congregational units are invited to support Sarah’s Inn with gift cards. Send them to your synodical president so she can deliver them.

Please cover our 64 synodical presidents with traveling mercies and grace as they journey to Chicago for leadership development, spiritual revival and community renewal.

Call 773-380-2730 with questions.

When is New Year's Day *really*?

DID YOU KNOW THAT 2018 doesn’t *really* start until February 1?

It’s true! For Women of the ELCA, the fiscal year starts on February 1 every year. Our treasurers and bookkeepers care about fiscal years, but what does that mean to the rest of us?

It means we can send our year-end gifts and offerings to Women of the ELCA after Christmas and they will still count toward 2017. But don’t wait too long! Please mail your gifts and offerings so that they arrive well before January 31—a wise mail date would be January 15. You may use the envelope enclosed.

Mail gifts and offerings to:

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

Or give online at welca.org/donate.
Thank you for your good stewardship!



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

Deadline for 2018–2019 scholarship application is Feb. 15

by Valora K Starr

MALLORY MATTHEWS OF NEWBERRY, S.C., called Women of the ELCA offices recently to see if the letter she received awarding her a scholarship was authentic. When I answered yes, she and her colleagues listening in the background screamed and cheered.

Jennifer Cartensen of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, wrote us a note when she learned she was a scholarship recipient. “Thank you for your confidence in me! This scholarship will help with my financial and educational goals.”

Mallory and Jennifer were among eight women who received a total of \$20,500 for the 2017–18 academic year from Women of the ELCA. All eight were recipients of scholarships for Lutheran laywomen.

Others who received scholarships were: Mackenzie Alexander, Eastampton, N.J.; Cindy Arnett, Santa Clara, Calif.; Sarah Desjarlais, Dilworth, Minn.; Rudy Kelly,

Traverse City, Mich.; Yvonne Offill, Claremont, Calif.; and Teri Watkins, Anchorage, Alaska.

The 2018–19 scholarship application opened last December and will close Feb. 15. Scholarships are offered to laywomen and those entering the ministry. Check online at welca.org/scholarships for more information or email Valora.Starr@elca.org for information.

To donate to the Women of the ELCA scholarship fund, visit welca.org/donate.



Valora K Starr is director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA.

We'll be in Houston working to support victims of human trafficking. You can help us.

welca.org/humantrafficking

of the **WomenELCA**

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING.
2018 ELCA WOMEN'S GATHERING

Women of the ELCA interchange

8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4101

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

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

Life of Faith initiative calls us to action

by Valora K Starr

THE SAYING “PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT” might work for piano lessons, but when it comes to faith, it’s not that easy. But, practice makes permanent. And we are called to live out our baptismal vocation daily.

Women ELCA’s purpose statement names us as women created in the image of God, called to discipleship. One way we can live out that discipleship is by learning more about the ELCA’s new Life of Faith Initiative.

The grassroots effort builds on the ELCA’s Book of Faith initiative (elca.org/bookoffaith) and advocates equipping all God’s saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12). The Life of Faith website describes it as a “grassroots initiative to stir up a culture change that frees us to make the service by the baptized in the arenas of daily life the central focus in the church’s mission.”

Women ELCA will join this effort and encourage women to engage the Life of Faith Initiative by:

- Reflecting on how you live out your baptismal vocation in daily life.
- Starting a conversation with people in your life or in your congregation.
- Incorporating ministry in daily life discussion in your Bible conversations.
- Praying for all who will be all anew through this process.

For more about the Life of Faith visit lifeoffaith.info for action steps and downloadable resources.



Valora K Starr is director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA.