

interchange

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SUMMER 2018



From left, Flor Hernandez, her mother, Linda McElroy Thomas, Jone Stout and her daughter, Jessica Morgan

in this issue

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Do you want to engage more women in your organization or group?

by Eva James Yeo

IT'S TIME TO PLAN FOR THE NEW PROGRAM YEAR! Take the opportunity to evaluate your model for mission as you help women live out our 2017 triennial gathering theme of All Anew.

Consider the questions: How do we get started? What can we do to inspire more women to become involved in the organization we love? How can we make a difference together?

You can get started by evaluating your ministries. Discuss how you can build on the strengths of your congregational unit and synodical women's organization. Survey women who are involved in the organization and find out why they continue to come. Ask women who are not involved in your women's ministry what interests them and what it would take for them to participate.

Our speakers and preachers from the Tenth Triennial Gathering gave us more than enough inspiration to live out the All Anew theme (<http://bit.ly/zuMxlg>). They challenged us to be holy troublemakers. Our purpose statement and mission are a testament to how we live out our call to be bold women. Let's continue to embrace the process of being All Anew.

As you plan, share information on our work to end human trafficking and other actions taken at the Tenth Triennial Convention (<http://bit.ly/2lhVtE5>). Include several of these actions in your planning and stay connected to Women of the ELCA's latest news through our website and social media. Sign up for Bold Connections e-newsletter to get monthly news. (See how in Eva's bio on page 3.)

Here are four ways you can plan for the new program year:

Start with prayer

Remember we are a community that prays and takes action.

Evaluate your model for mission

Download and read *Six Models for Mission* to evaluate your model for ministry. Involve women in your group using *Gather's* Bible studies and articles and by reading *Café*, our online magazine for young adult women who want to grow

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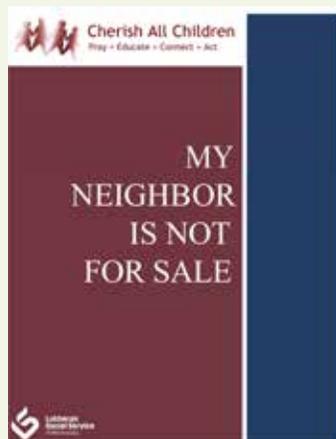
Download *Interchange* with clickable links by visiting the "Publications" tab at womenoftheelca.org.

Cherish All Children resource addresses trafficking, exploitation

DESIGNED TO HELP YOUR CONGREGATION understand the issue of child sexual exploitation and trafficking, "My Neighbor Is Not for Sale" is a four-part guide for adult education sessions, youth groups and more.

"The resource brings congregations the facts, figures and stories of the insidious world of sex trafficking of children and youth in our country," said Jodi Harpstead, CEO of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. "It also represents our first collaboration with Cherish All Children, a 10-year-old Lutheran social ministry, which has recently become a service of LSS of Minnesota."

Cherish All Children came under the umbrella of LSS in late 2017 and continues its mission in partnership with LSS, an organization engaged in significant work serving youth at risk of exploitation. The partnership allows Cherish All Children to come alongside many of these existing programs, opening the door for more resources and collaboration.



"My Neighbor is Not for Sale" can be used in congregations nationwide to learn about sexual exploitation and trafficking, about ending the demand and about prevention. Education and awareness are key prevention measures in keeping children safe from harm.

"This is a unique opportunity to shed light on a darkness in our world that many in our communities of faith have not dealt with," said Joy McElroy, executive director of Cherish All Children. "Our organization has been working with congregations in the prevention of child sexual exploitation for more than 10 years.

"Now as we join Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, we are providing this resource for more congregations to join in this effort to protect all of God's children," she added.

Each session introduces you to a key topic to prevent child sexual exploitation and offers a biblical response and questions to discuss in your group.

Download the study at www.cherishallchildren.org and make copies for your group, or you can request printed copies for \$4 (booklet) and \$6 (plastic binder). Contact Joy McElroy (joy.mcelroy@lssmn.org) to order copies.

As disciples, we are called to use our words for good

by Valora K Starr

STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES, BUT WORDS WILL NEVER HURT ME.

My first memory of hearing this untrue statement came after my classmates saw I had lost my two front teeth. I watched my teacher's mouth move as she delivered this jingle, gave me a hug and wiped my tears. I believed my teacher, but my classmates' words were painful: "You are a Snagglepuss!"

I wondered why my teacher would tell me something so untrue. Her face didn't look like she believed it, even as words of encouragement. And, though I enjoyed the Snagglepuss cartoon character—a pink mountain lion with a lisp—my classmates meant to hurt my feelings with their words.

Words are the best invention since the napkin when they are used in a good way. Words can encourage, lift up and offer confidence. The right words spoken at the right time can give the listener just what is needed to move forward.

God used words to create everything, including us. We are created in God's image, and we have the ability to create using words.

As disciples, we are called to follow and practice

the teacher. Do your words encourage, lift up or give confidence for ourselves and others?

Words are life-changing

Examine your words by looking at God's words.

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

So shall my word that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it will accomplish that purpose and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple. (Psalm 119:130)



Valora K Starr (valora.starr@elca.org) is director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA.

Do you want to engage more women in your organization?

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in faith. Select and download our free program resources (welca.org/resources), many of which are offered in Spanish as well as English.

Invitation

Start by inviting all women in your church and community. Reach out to women you have not previously contacted or who you have not seen at your meetings lately. Make space for new voices and ideas at the planning session and at your events.

Plan a WELCA open house and share how you have been supported on your faith journey by your community of women. Give away Women of the ELCA identity items or subscriptions to *Gather* magazine (gathermagazine.org).

Check our online e-store or call me, Eva, at 773-380-2450 to find out how to order our identity boxes.

Build new relationships

Reach out to women who need prayer or fellowship. Form prayer or quilting circles. Start a book group. Find ways to connect and support one another.

What other ideas do you have?



Eva James Yeo (eva.yeo@elca.org) is director for membership for Women of the ELCA. Visit our website (womenoftheelca.org) under the Ministry and Action/Membership tab for resources mentioned in this article.

Board, staff look for new ways to carry out mission

THE WOMEN OF THE ELCA EXECUTIVE BOARD concluded its spring meeting, April 20-21, 2018, with a commitment to planning strategically and examining the organization's business model.

Board members also voted to support our sisters in the Caribbean Synodical Women's Organization in the aftermath of hurricanes in 2017.

"While we have some issues to iron out related to setting and balancing budgets, we're hopeful as we look for alternative ways to successfully carry out our mission and move into the future," said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA.

Staff reductions in November 2017 created "a slight reconfiguration in some staffing," Bushkofsky said. "We are without administrative support now, and, in fact, we are our own support. We are learning and doing fine."

Ann Hightower, former executive assistant to Bushkofsky, assumed responsibility as director for budget and finance, a newly created position.

And, Jennifer DeLeon, an educator, grassroots organizer and consultant with faith-based organizations, joined Women of the ELCA as director for justice April 9. (See page 6.)

Income and expenses

The executive board received a detailed report on fiscal year 2017, learning that expenses for the Tenth Triennial Convention came in under budget; that revenue from the 2017 Triennial Gathering fell short of expectations by approximately \$122,000; and that annual operating expenses exceeded income in fiscal 2017.

The shortfalls were met by the board authorizing the use of money from two funds held by the organization, explained board treasurer Anna Sarver. "Some of these challenges can be attributed to a multi-year trend of fewer dollars coming to the churchwide organization in Thankofferings and Regular Offerings," reported Sarver.

Exploratory committee

The board approved a budget and finance committee recommendation to create an exploratory committee to

investigate Women of the ELCA's current business model along with its mission and purpose, suggesting how best to fulfill that mission and purpose in a changing world. The New Ministries Fund will cover committee costs; it's anticipated that the committee should be in place by October 2018 and offer its findings by October 2019.

"We are very aware our business model is not meeting our [financial] needs, and so we are recommending we have an exploratory committee to look at how we need to move forward as an organization," said Sara Larson, chair of the budget and finance committee.

A time of grace

The board voted to extend "a time of grace" to the Caribbean Synodical Women's Organization (CSWO) as it recovers from the 2017 hurricane season. The grace period relieves CSWO of its responsibilities and gives the churchwide organization leadership until the grace period ends.

Efforts will also be made to coordinate support through the partner synods of South Central Synod of Wisconsin and the Slovak Zion Synod. Spiritual support will be offered to those remaining on the islands and those who have relocated to the mainland.

Additionally, half of the offering taken at the board meeting was given to Lutheran Disaster Response and designated for disaster relief in the Caribbean Synod.



Lynette Todd, left, and Karen Voris, laugh during a break

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Board, staff look for new ways to carry out mission

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Strategic plan

The board viewed a Women of the ELCA strategic plan outlined in 2010, participated in a nonprofit snapshot quiz that assessed the health and function of the organization and agreed to move forward in updating the plan in future meetings.

“This will be an ongoing, disciplined process involving the board, staff and participants in Women of the ELCA,” Bushkofsky said.

Quoting a French writer and aviator, Bushkofsky said, “A goal without a plan is just a wish,” adding, “And we’re going to do more than just wish.”

In other matters, the board:

- Set the voting member count for the Eleventh Triennial Convention (2020) at 311 (excluding at-large members).
- Collected a total of \$1,600 in offerings, \$800 of which will go to Lutheran Disaster Response to be designated for disaster relief in the Caribbean Synod.
- Heard reports from representatives of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, the ELCA Conference of Bishops and Lutheran Men in Mission.
- Heard a report from ELCA Disaster Response.

- Held and participated in a Women and Justice Social Statement hearing.
- Received racial justice training from Jennifer DeLeon, Women of the ELCA’s new director for justice.
- Received stewardship training from Audrey Riley, director for stewardship and development.
- Referred to the executive director a request from the 2017 Conference of Presidents to more quickly address current and developing events that face the nation, one example being the fatal shooting of 17 school children in Parkland, Fla.
- Delayed action on a Conference of Presidents recommendation seeking a constitutional change to Article VII, Section 4, Item 1 “to state that in order to be a member of a synodical Women of the ELCA board, you must be a member of an ELCA congregation rather than a member of a Women of the ELCA unit.” The board is seeking further clarification on the recommendation and will report back in the October meeting.

The next board meeting is October 19–21, 2018, in Scottsdale, Ariz.



From left: Becky Shurson, vice president, l-r, Lisa Plorin, president, and Laura Krueger, parliamentarian, look over business



Board members iron out active unit details with Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director, sitting at computer

Director for justice joins Women of the ELCA staff

JENNIFER DELEON, an educator, grassroots organizer and consultant with faith-based organizations, joined Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as director for justice April 9.

“I’m excited about the breadth of experience Jen brings to the position of director for justice,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA. “While the organization continues its longstanding commitment to racial justice, Jen will also be able to lead participants in justice areas that haven’t seen as much emphasis in recent years. I am especially excited about a re-emphasis on advocacy and renewed partnerships with the ministries of the ELCA Washington office and state public policy offices.”

DeLeon served at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) for 12 years as director of government relations and advocacy.

In that role she identified and tracked legislation important to LSSI and the ELCA; led advocacy events and strengthened coalitions; developed relationships that led to a new fundraising event and annual holiday appeal; and



testified at legislative hearings, among other duties.

Prior to serving with LSSI, she was a community organizer for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago.

“Jen brings to the position direct experience with a wide range of social issues including hunger, immigration, housing, child welfare, human services, health care and faith-based responses to injustice,” Bushkofsky said.

A member of Trinidad Lutheran Church (Chicago), DeLeon completed a master of arts degree in theological studies at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago this spring. She is a graduate of DePaul University with a bachelor of liberal arts degree in nonprofit management.

She has been involved with Women of the ELCA, serving as vice president of the Metro Chicago synodical women’s organization from 2007-2008. She’s also worked with ELCA Global Mission Gatherings as a musician and keynote speaker.

DeLeon is bilingual and bicultural, fluent in English and Spanish and proficient in Portuguese.

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.

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| <p>JULY</p> <p>13–15 Central States (4B) SWO convention, Windermere Baptist Conference Center, Roach, Mo.</p> <p>28 Upper Susquehanna (8E) SWO convention, Camp Mt. Luther, Mifflinburg, Pa.</p> <p>AUGUST</p> <p>3–4 Virginia (9A) SWO convention, Bethel Lutheran Church, Winchester, Va.</p> <p>10–11 West Virginia-Western Maryland (8H) SWO convention, Bishop Hodges Pastoral Center, Huttonsville, Va.</p> <p>18 Lower Susquehanna (8D) SWO convention, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Carlisle, Pa.</p> | <p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>14–15 Northwestern Minnesota (3D) SWO convention, Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes, Minn.</p> <p>14–15 Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast (4F) SWO convention, House of Prayer, Houston, Texas</p> <p>15 Metro New York (7C) SWO convention, The Wartburg, Mt. Vernon, N.Y.</p> <p>14–16 Northern Great Lakes (5G) SWO convention, Fortune Lake Camp, Crystal Falls, Mich.</p> <p>14–16 Southeastern (9D) SWO convention, Lake Point State Park, Eufaula, Ala.</p> | <p>22 Eastern North Dakota (3B) SWO convention, Red Willow Bible Camp, Binford, N.D.</p> <p>22 Northern Illinois (5B) SWO convention, Trinity Lutheran Church, Harvard, Ill.</p> <p>28–30 Arkansas-Oklahoma (4C) SWO convention, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Yukon, Okla.</p> <p>28–30 Southwestern Texas (4E) SWO convention, Pearl Resort, South Padre Island, Texas</p> <p>29 New Jersey (7A) SWO convention, TBD</p> |
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Women of the ELCA takes home 17 communications awards

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's communications staff received a total of 17 awards in April at two professional association conferences. The awards were given for work published in 2017.

The Associated Church Press (ACP) honored Women of the ELCA publications with seven awards at its annual Best of the Christian Press Awards banquet in Chicago on April 20. *Gather* earned five awards, and *Café* received two.

Also, Women of the ELCA staff took home a total of 10 DeRose-Hinkouse Memorial awards from the Religion Communicators Council (RCC) in Atlanta, April 5. Among those was a Best in Class award in the Public Relations/Advertising Campaign for *Gather* magazine's fundraising appeal: the All Anew devotional coloring book.

"The publishing ministries of Women of the ELCA aim to help women of all ages and walks of life to act boldly

on their faith in Jesus Christ," said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA. "These honors are a testament to the dedication of the staff, writers and artists who work hard every day to create content that helps women do just that."

The awards were in the categories of periodicals, both e-magazine and print, graphic design, public relations materials, public relations/advertising campaign and digital media.

All Women of the ELCA publications, including *Gather*, *Café* and *Interchange* won awards. The websites for Women of the ELCA and *Café* took awards as did *Café's* podcast, the twice-weekly Women of the ELCA blogs and Women of the ELCA's new membership flyer.

To see a list of the awards, visit womenoftheelca.org for the two articles found under the blog/news category.

News Briefs

Executive board member elected as bishop

The Rev. Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld, Beloit, Wis., was elected May 6 to serve a six-year term as bishop of the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin of the ELCA. Thomas-Breitfeld is the second African American woman to be a bishop in the ELCA. She will be installed August 18.

The election was held during the Synod Assembly May 5-6 at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

Thomas-Breitfeld was elected at the Tenth Triennial Convention in Minneapolis last July to serve on the Women of the ELCA executive board. (ELCA news release)

Support our ministry with identity boxes

If you are planning your synodical women's convention, a synod assembly, or a special event, why not order some Women of the ELCA identity boxes to take along? Choose among three boxes: \$100 (worth \$220), \$250 (worth \$558) and \$400 (worth \$883). Best of all, shipping is free! For additional items not on the order form, visit our online store (welca.org/shop). (Download the form to order identity boxes here: <http://bit.ly/identityboxes>.)

We're tops! Or we'd like to be!

We want you to see what Women of the ELCA is up to so we ask you to "see us first" in your Facebook news feed.

It's easy. Here's how:

1. Go to our main Facebook page (facebook.com/womenoftheelca).
2. Under the cover image, click on the "following" drop-down menu and choose "See first" under your News Feed. Stay on top (get it?) of what we're doing!
3. When you see a post you like, please share it!

Sign up for Daily Grace

Daily Grace is an on-the-go companion for your journey, offering a faith reflection every day. Encounter God's extravagant, boundless and often surprising grace by signing up for a daily email message. You can also download the newly updated app for your IOS and Android devices. Learn how at welca.org/dailygrace.

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Dated material for immediate delivery

Summer 2018

Please route to:

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

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

Repentance is theme of *Gather's* fall Bible study

REPENTANCE is one of the most powerful acts of a person or a church, making possible not only forgiveness but also reconciliation. This fall, *Gather* magazine (www.gathermagazine.org) will explore what repentance means for Lutheran Christians in a three-part Bible study. Written by the Rev. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni, this Bible study focuses on the role of repentance in our faith, our relationships and the church.

Here's a preview:

September

Time after time: Turning to God

“Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.” With these words, the prophet Joel reminds us that repentance is nothing to be afraid of—for when we turn to God, we find grace. What does it mean to (re)turn to God with all our hearts, and how do we do it?

October

If I could turn back time: Turning to others

When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he was moved to give half of his wealth to the poor and to make amends with those he had defrauded. Why? In the Gospels, Jesus' call to repentance is a call to turn back to the ways of God's reign on earth: justice, peace, and mercy for the neighbor and the community. What does repentance look like in our relationships?

November

Turning points: Turning as the church to the world

The word repentance often refers to an invitation that brings people into the church. But what happens when the church turns outward to the world? When the church has been complicit in abuse, racism, anti-Semitism and other attitudes and practices that lead away from God's reign, what happens when the church repents?

Subscribe now to get all three sessions of the study! Call 844-409-0576 or visit gathermagazine.org