

# interchange

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 4 FALL 2019



VIOLENCE IS NOT THE SOLUTION  
IT'S THE PROBLEM

HELP STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
WELCA.ORG/DOMESTICVIOLENCE

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## Losing your soul to domestic abuse

*October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence is a crime that includes both physical and emotional abuse. It is frequently hidden from public view, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Many victims suffer in silence, afraid to seek help or not knowing where to turn. If you need assistance or know someone who needs help, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Read one woman's story about her experience with domestic violence.*

*By Sara Larson*

**I DON'T LIKE TO ADMIT THAT I HAVE SUFFERED ABUSE** because I am a strong, independent, and accomplished woman. It was not the kind of abuse you can see. It was subtle, twisted, and relentless.

I spent a year in therapy recognizing and acknowledging it because this type of abuse eats you from the inside out. The damage made me distant, ugly, mean, and unapproachable to anyone who I thought might suspect the truth and expose my marriage for what it really was.

Everything was always my fault: the affairs, the drinking, the accidents. My husband withheld affection and sincere conversation, threatened he would kick me out if I got fat, irritable, or didn't keep the house clean.

### Too much to bear

The weight of trying to hold everything together, cover up all the lies, and be the only responsible person in the marriage was almost too much to bear. The obligation I had accepted in marrying my husband kept me in this cycle. I would get upset with his actions, and that would offend him. Then I would have to beg for his forgiveness, wait, and manage the criticism and threats. Until next time.

At the end, my husband's behavior toward me was hateful and mean. I was not allowed to have any contact with his family or our church. He tried to turn all of our friends against me and blamed his alcoholism and indiscretions on me, calling me a controlling wife.

The most significant abuse that I suffered was the loss of my soul. Trying to conform and be who he wanted me to be or who I thought I should be was a never-ending and vertical hike that almost killed me.

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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.

Linda Post Bushkofsky, *executive director*  
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**Download *Interchange* with clickable links by visiting the "Publications" tab at [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org).**

## Losing your soul to domestic abuse

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My loyalty to him and the fear and shame associated with this loss brought me to the breaking point. Though I was shattered and destroyed, God picked me up and carried me. As my husband continued to get sicker, I got stronger and eventually I knew I could no longer have any contact with him. The love of Christ and the fellowship of my sisters helped me mend. Today I know my cracks and flaws make me beautiful.

God gave me the greatest gift: redemption and the ability to be who I am. Away from the unhealthy man I had loved for most of my life, I am able to heal and become whole. I am able to rediscover myself and process what led me to that point. I am able to accept the person God made.

Women of the ELCA has always been there for me. The women have accepted me with open arms even when I couldn't raise my own. This organization is a beacon of light in the darkness to many. The stories we share and encouragement we offer one another is timeless and priceless.

Domestic violence comes in many forms, and all forms can damage a person until she is unrecognizable.

Healing takes time and energy. But God is there cheering you on, holding your hand and carrying you to the point where you can become healthy again.



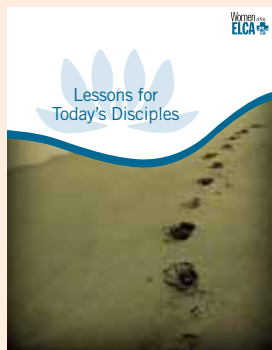
***Sara Larson is chair of the budget and finance committee for the churchwide executive board, 2017–2020. She is a lay minister at First Lutheran Church, Marshall, Minn. Learn more at [welca.org/domesticviolence](http://welca.org/domesticviolence).***

# Worshiping God is the third mark of discipleship

**WORSHIPING GOD** strengthens and builds a disciple's connection to and relationship with God and the community of faith. This lesson will reflect on the importance of true worship.

Sometimes true worship is confused with the habit of "going to church." There is also the popular belief that an individual can worship sufficiently alone. However, Jesus, the Son of God, made worship central in his life and ministry (Luke 4:16). Jesus' example makes any rationale or excuse for not coming to worship meaningless or self-serving. Worshiping God in community was a regular practice in the lives of Jesus' disciples.

**Read John 4:19–26.** This story picks up in the middle of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. After a rousing round of riddles about water, the conversation shifts to an even deeper subject—worship. The Samaritan woman brings it up in an attempt to change the subject and move the spotlight away from her, but



Jesus tells her that "the hour is coming" when worshiping God will not be focused on a particular location but centered in the way in which we worship God, in spirit and truth. Worshiping God with a genuine and sincere heart is what is most important.

**Reflect** on how the Holy Spirit inspires you to worship.

**Next, review verses 17–20.** Think about the phrase "in spirit and truth." What happens when your deepest hurts or needs connect with worship? Just like the Samaritan woman, you may have strong beliefs about worship. What are some common worship practices in your congregation that may cause tension or bring healing?

**Practice** worshiping God in spirit and truth. It will help you to discern the meaning of worship in your daily life.

**Read again** John 4:19–26 and Hebrews 12:28b.

**Remember** that through worship we experience God's love and grow in appreciating the amazing gifts that God has given to us.

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*"Lessons for Today's Disciples" was written by Valora K Starr, director for discipleship for Women of the ELCA. You can find the resource by visiting [welca.org/resources](http://welca.org/resources) and searching for its title.*

## Notice of the Eleventh Triennial Convention

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the Eleventh Triennial Convention of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, at the Phoenix Convention Center, July 14–16, 2020.

Voting member credentialing will begin at 7 p.m. on Monday, July 13, 2020.

Voting member orientation will be held at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, July 14, 2020.

The convention will open at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 14, 2020, preceded by worship at 9 a.m.

All are encouraged to attend triennial convention

plenary sessions where the business of the organization will be conducted.

All are also encouraged to attend "Just Love," the Women of the ELCA gathering that will follow the convention. Opening worship for the gathering is on Thursday, July 16, 2020, at 4 p.m. Closing worship for the gathering is scheduled for Sunday, July 16, 2020, at 9 a.m.

**Freddie L. Jordan**, secretary

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide executive board

# Staffing transitions offer new opportunities

**TWO WOMEN OF THE ELCA STAFF** have transitioned into new positions within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. And Deana Velandra began work on July 29 in a newly created administrative assistant position.



***“Ann and Gaby have been creative and supportive colleagues, committed to the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA.”***

***— Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director***

Gabriela Contreras, formerly director for meeting planning for Women of the ELCA, has moved to the Mission Investment Fund to serve as office manager.

Ann Hightower, formerly director for budget and finance, is serving ELCA Global Mission as coordinator for mission formation and the international leaders program.

“Ann and Gaby have been creative and supportive colleagues, committed to the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA. While I and the remaining staff wish them well in their new endeavors, we hate to see them go. Since our offices are all in the same building, they won’t be too far away and we can continue to call them colleagues,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director.

## **Gabriela Contreras**

Contreras has worked with Women of the ELCA since December 1999, first as administrative assistant to the scholarship, grants and global education programs. In March 2003 she was named assistant to the executive director, a role she filled until taking the meeting planner position in 2009.

She has spent her career working for the church and says she remembers fondly her beginnings as a volunteer in the ELCA at age 18.

She worked with the ELCA in the Information

Technology Department as helpdesk coordinator from 1992 to 1996.

“It’s been 19 years since I first became staff of Women of the ELCA. I’ve had so many great experiences, traveled to many places, and met terrific people during my time in this organization,” said Contreras. “To the women of this organization who have invited me into their lives by sharing their stories, thank you! To my colleagues and friends who have been on this journey with me, thank you!”

## **Ann Hightower**

Hightower had been with Women of the ELCA since 2008. Although she began as a temporary administrative assistant, “she quickly became invaluable and soon became a full-time member of the staff,” Bushkofsky said. She also served as assistant to the executive director and to the associate director. She took on the role of budget director in 2017.

“I learned a lot in my work with Women of the ELCA, and I look forward to taking what I’ve learned and using it in my current role,” Hightower said. “I’m excited about the challenges ahead and am better able to meet them thanks to my work with Women of the ELCA. I’ll miss the women I’ve met through the organization, and I hope to see them again in my new work.”

## **Deana Velandra**



Deana Velandra is a 2018 graduate of Hope College, Holland, Mich., having majored in theater (performance) and women’s and gender studies. She was a servant companion for the 2015 ELCA Youth Gathering and a summer camp counselor at Living Waters Ministries, an

ELCA outdoor ministry in Fairview, Mich. As administrative assistant, Velandra will provide administrative support to the executive director and staff, assisting in planning, coordinating and implementing services, projects and events. She will also support the executive director’s work related to the governance of the organization and assist with clerical work.

# Staffing transitions offer new opportunities

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## How the work is being handled

“The transitions of Gaby and Ann provided an opportunity to revisit how particular pieces of work are accomplished,” Post Bushkofsky said. “Because Women of the ELCA is already purchasing certain accounting services from the ELCA Office of the Treasurer, the treasurer, Lori Fedyk, and I were able to consider expanding those services.”

The Office of the Treasurer has hired an accountant for the specific purpose of supporting Women of the ELCA’s financial needs.

“I am very hopeful as we live into this new arrangement,” Post Bushkofsky said.

And, as for our meeting planning needs, Women of the ELCA has contracted with a third-party planner, Framework Meetings and Destinations, a group the organization has worked with in the past.

“Framework will see the organization through the gathering next summer,” Post Bushkofsky said. “It seemed prudent to go this route, rather than filling the vacant director for meeting planning position as the organization awaits the recommendations of the exploratory committee.

“Smaller meetings, such as meetings of the churchwide executive board and the annual conference

of presidents will be handled by existing staff.”

The need for an administrative assistant became apparent following the departure of Hightower and Contreras, Post Bushkofsky said “because both Ann and Gaby had done some administrative work.”

“Financial savings realized by the way we are handling our accounting and meeting planning needs allowed the organization to hire an administrative assistant,” she added.

## Executive board changes

Meanwhile, two churchwide executive board members have resigned for personal reasons.

At its April 2019 meeting, the executive board installed Raeann Purcell of New Smyrna Beach, Fla. (Florida-Bahamas Synod), to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Anissa Canova of Gouldsboro, Pa.

In late May 2019, Dawn Wicklund of Superior, Wis., (Northwest Synod of Wisconsin) was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Keala Simoes of Honolulu, Hawaii.

**Women of the ELCA staff Linda Post Bushkofsky and Terri Lackey contributed to this story.**

## Calendar

For information on any of these events, contact Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, email [Women.ELCA@elca.org](mailto:Women.ELCA@elca.org) or check the online calendar at [welca.org](http://welca.org) under Events.

### OCTOBER

- 4–5 **Northeastern Ohio SWO convention**, Holiday Inn, Akron, Ohio
- 4–5 **Minneapolis Area SWO convention**, Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.
- 5 **Northwest Washington SWO convention**, Peace Lutheran Church, Silvana, Wash.
- 4–6 **Upstate New York SWO convention**, Notre Dame Retreat Center, Canandaigua, N.Y.
- 11–12 **Central/Southern Illinois SWO convention**, Lake Williamson Christian Retreat Center, Carlinville, Ill.

- 11–13 **Nebraska SWO convention**, Carol Joy Holling Camp, Ashland, Neb.
- 12 **Southwestern Washington SWO convention**, Christ Lutheran Church, Lakewood, Wash.
- 12 **Metro Chicago SWO convention**, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Libertyville, Ill.
- 12 **Greater Milwaukee SWO convention**, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Menomonee Falls, Wis.
- 18–20 **Executive Board Meeting**, Chicago, Ill.

### NOVEMBER

- 1–2 **Pacifica SWO convention**, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Fountain Valley, Calif.
- 2 **East-Central Synod of Wisconsin SWO convention**, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Green Bay, Wis.
- 9–10 **Florida-Bahamas SWO convention**, Lake Yale Baptist Camp, Leesburg, Fla.

# News Briefs

## Registration opens Sept. 30!

Registration opens Sept. 30 for the Eleventh Triennial Gathering in Phoenix, Ariz., July 16–19, 2020. Phoenix will be hot in more than just the temperature. The Holy Spirit will be sizzling. Learn more and register at [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org). The early bird price of \$325 is through January 6, 2020. After that, registration is \$375. Day registration is \$200. We can't wait to see you!



## Budget report delayed until winter 2020

The fiscal year 2018 revenues and expenses report will come in the winter 2020 issue of *Interchange*.

## Thankoffering service online

The 2019 Thankoffering service in English and Spanish is available for download on the website at [welca.org/thankoffering](http://welca.org/thankoffering). Your generous Thankofferings help support the ongoing ministries of the churchwide women's organization, including our triennial conventions, the work of your elected churchwide board, the annual conference of synodical presidents, our communications ministries, justice and advocacy work, and so much more.

## Executive board nominations close Nov. 30

Nominations for the Women of the ELCA executive board close Nov. 30. Voting members to the Eleventh Triennial Convention, July 14–16, 2020, will elect four officers and 17 women to serve on the churchwide executive board. Learn more about how to nominate someone at [welca.org/nominations](http://welca.org/nominations). Nominations must be made online, and only nomination forms submitted online will be accepted.

## Interchange is going all digital in 2020

In January 2020, *Interchange* is going digital. The cost of printing and mailing requires the change. As always, you can download *Interchange* and *Intercambio* (the Spanish edition) online at [welca.org/publications](http://welca.org/publications). To sign up to receive a copy by email, complete the Stay in Touch form on the website. For more up-to-date news, please sign up for *Bold Connections*.

For convention news and information, visit [welca.org/convention](http://welca.org/convention).

## Artist Vonda Drees to write Christmas devotional

This December, *Gather* will present a unique twist on its annual Advent/Christmas devotional. Visual artist Vonda Drees will invite us to contemplate the prophecies of Isaiah through artistic practices. In meditation, prayer, and creative journaling geared toward all ability levels, we will learn to see art as meditation, intercession, devotion and inspiration. Learn more at [gathermagazine.org/bible-study](http://gathermagazine.org/bible-study).

## Looking for a unique devotional gift?

*Gather's* "Advent words" devotional coloring booklet makes a great gift for a friend—or for yourself! Featuring 25 daily devotionals—one for each day of Advent—each page contains an image for coloring, a passage from Scripture, a brief reflection and a prayer. This devotional booklet is a perfect way to spend some time in devotion each day of the Advent season. Get your copy for just \$10 at [welca.org/shop](http://welca.org/shop).

## Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls



Application materials for the 2020–2021 Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls' seed grants must be postmarked or emailed by December 15, 2019. 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](http://welca.org) under Ministry and Action/Special Initiatives.

## News Briefs

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### Stop gender-based violence

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from November 25 (International Day for the Violence against Women) through December 10 (Human Rights Day). Learn more at [welca.org/domesticviolence](http://welca.org/domesticviolence).

### World AIDS Day

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately 23 percent of people living with HIV in the United States are women. Mark your calendars for World AIDS Day, Sunday, Dec. 1, and learn how you can act: [worldaidsday.org](http://worldaidsday.org).

### Executive board meets in October

Please pray for members of the Women of the ELCA executive board and staff who meet October 19–20 at the Wyndham in Des Plaines, Ill., near the churchwide center. Watch for a news story about action taken during the meeting at [welca.org/news](http://welca.org/news).

### Try our Advent resources

Download for free Women of the ELCA's Advent resources in English and Spanish. Visit [welca.org/resources](http://welca.org/resources) and search for Advent.

## Gather's winter 2020 Bible study: "We are called!"

**REFORMER MARTIN LUTHER** used the word "vocation" or "calling" to refer to all aspects of human life. We are called to respond to God not just in our personal relationship with God but in our relationships with family and friends, in our work, and in our communities. This four-part Bible study written by the Rev. Kathryn A. Kleinhans will explore stories from both the Old and New Testament. As we reflect on how our biblical forebears heard and responded to God's call, we will gain insight into how God is calling us.



### Session 1: Hearing God's Call

This session focuses on men and women in the Old Testament. Some of them heard and recognized God's call clearly. Others struggled to realize that it was God who was calling them or exactly what God was calling them to do. What can we learn from their stories?

### Session 2: The Call of Jesus

This session focuses on Jesus' calling of the disciples, on Jesus' call to Saul (Paul) on the road to Damascus, and on Jesus' call to all Christians to take up the cross and follow. As Christians, how do we see ourselves in these stories today? How do we respond to the call of Jesus?

### Session 3: Called to Serve

Jesus is clear that one of the central ways we respond to God's call is by serving others. When we serve others, we are recognizing Christ present in their need. When we serve others, they see Christ visible in our loving service. This session engages scriptural texts that help us focus on the questions, "Who is my neighbor, and what does my neighbor need?"

### Session 4: Calling Networks

The title of this Bible study "We Are Called!" reminds us that calling is not something private or individualistic. Our callings are always interwoven with our relationships and our communities. This session focuses on how we support others in hearing and responding to God's call.

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Dated material for immediate delivery

**Fall 2019**

**Please route to:**

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

**Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!**



We invite you to this life-changing event. Come. Be inspired. Then begin living out your faith in new and invigorating ways.

**July 16-19, 2020  
 Phoenix, Arizona**



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING

**Registration opens September 30. Visit [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org).**