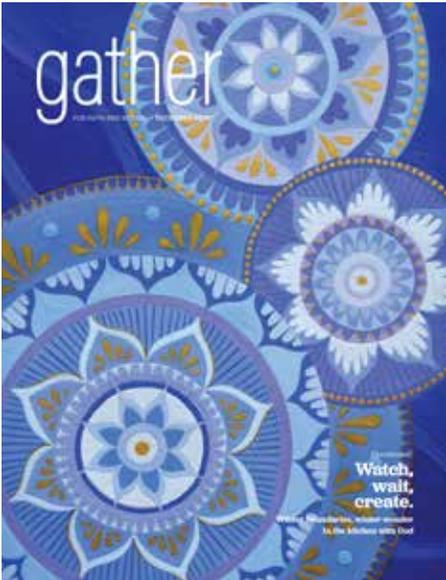


interchange

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2020



Subscriptions to Gather add to Women of the ELCA's annual operating revenue. Subscribe at gathermagazine.org/subscribe.

in this issue

- Bringing our mission and purpose to life—together** 1
- Invitation is the fourth mark of discipleship** 2
- When we listen, a community grows** 3
- To move into the future, we must look 'radically different'** 4
- What Day is New Year's** 7
- News Briefs** 8

Bringing our mission and purpose to life—together

by Audrey Novak Riley

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

The biggest pocket in our purse

Every year, individuals, units, conferences, clusters and synodical women's organizations forward Thankofferings, Regular Offerings, "Where Needed Most" gifts, and other undesignated offerings to the churchwide expression of our organization. These undesignated gifts make it possible for the churchwide expression to carry on its regular ministries of communications, programs, and governance, along with the ordinary administrative work that any organization has to do. Thank you!

This report discusses the churchwide expression's regular annual revenue and expenditures. Think of that as the biggest pocket in our purse.

Other pockets in our purse take care of our triennial convention (the business meeting, with all the voting members you have elected) and the gathering (the event with the speakers and workshops).

Women of the ELCA also has another completely separate purse of endowed funds. One pocket in that purse holds funds whose main body (the original sum) may never be touched, but the fund's income—the interest and investment income—is available to be used, but only as their founders directed. Katie's Fund is in that pocket. Another pocket holds endowed funds whose income is unrestricted; that is, the original sum must remain untouched but the income may be used as the elected churchwide board determines. Our legacy General Endowment is in that pocket. And then we have another pocket of funds—not many—whose main body and income may be used as the board directs.

We'll discuss all those pockets another time—this article is about the biggest pocket in our purse. That's our annual operating revenue and expenditures. The figures discussed here are preliminary and unaudited.

continued on page 6

Interchange is a quarterly e-newsletter of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The e-newsletter equips and empowers leaders and participants to carry out the organization's mission and purpose. *Interchange* and *Intercambio*, the Spanish translation, are available for free download at welca.org under the Publications tab. You may also sign up to receive *Interchange*, *Intercambio*, and *Bold Connections*, the organization's monthly e-newsletter, by email at welca.org. Scroll to the bottom of the page and fill in the "Stay in Touch" field.

Linda Post Bushkofsky, *executive director*
Terri Lackey, *director for communication*
Union Design, layout/design
Copyright © 2020 Women of the ELCA

Editorial Office

Women of the ELCA
8765 W. Higgins Rd.
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
Phone: 773-380-2730 or
800-638-3522, ext. 2730

Women.ELCA@elca.org
womenoftheelca.org
facebook.com/womenoftheELCA
twitter.com/womenoftheELCA
instagram.com/womenoftheELCA

Permission to Reproduce

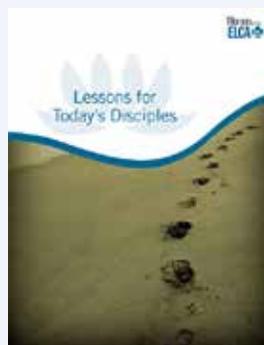
Articles may be reproduced by Women of the ELCA units and synodical organizations provided each copy carries the notice "Reprinted with permission from *Interchange*, the churchwide newsletter of Women of the ELCA, Copyright © 2020 Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." When applicable, permission to reprint external cited sources in this publication should be obtained before reprinting.

Women of the ELCA
interchange

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

Invitation is the fourth mark of discipleship

Editor's note: Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey of living out and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ so that others may believe. Over several issues, we have and will describe the seven marks of discipleship found in "Lessons for Today's Disciples" written by Valora K Starr. You can find the resource by visiting welca.org/resources and searching for its title.



INVITATION, THE FOURTH OF THE SEVEN MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP, is essential to accomplishing the mission of a disciple.

For months, you have been planning an elegant gala fit for royalty. Then the day of the party arrives, but no one shows up. You pace the floor and check your watch, but no one is coming.

Jesus commands that we make more disciples. But unlike other teachers, Jesus simply invited others to follow him: No previous experience or other qualifications required or needed. Jesus

demonstrates that through a genuine invitation, the reign of God is open to everyone. Although the practice of inviting others to God's feast is often not included as a mark of discipleship, it is vital to the mission of all disciples to make more disciples.

READ Luke 14:7–24. All have been invited to God's feast. We must be ready to invite others and to accept and follow through on the invitations we receive. Somewhere along our journey as disciples, we have forgotten the purpose for making such a radical invitation. Disciples are to be ready to both receive and offer an invitation. Because as we invite others, we meet Jesus, who leads us as disciples to get our work done!

REFLECT on the custom of that day to issue two invitations, the first to announce the party and the second to announce "Come, for everything is now ready." Next, look at verses 15–20. How do you handle rejections and regrets?

RESPOND: Describe how you are inviting.

Personal Reflection

This reflection will help you assess your practice of inviting. Be as honest and open as you can so that you get an accurate picture of where you are and where you want to go with this practice.

Assess the basics. What is your practice of invitation?

- When do I invite others?
- What do I invite others to do?
- Whom do I invite?
- How do I invite others?

When we listen, a community grows

by Myrna Wells-Ulland

JESUS SAYS in Luke 14:35b, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Let me share what happened when we [Women of the ELCA Grand Canyon Synod] heard and acted on an idea from our Latina sisters and Women of the ELCA.

Retired ELCA pastor and former Grand Canyon Synod board member Maria Valenzuela had prodded our board to make a stronger connection with our Latina sisters.

Then last spring, women from San Juan Bautista in Tucson, Ariz., the oldest Spanish-speaking congregation in our Grand Canyon Synod, approached our synodical women’s leaders at the conference spring gathering. They said they had dreamed of an event designed for Latina women that would be presented in Spanish.

And when we learned from Jen DeLeon, Women of the ELCA’s director for justice, that she conducts Latina Leaders’ Retreats for the organization, our idea took shape.

Rossy Guzman, a Grand Canyon board member from La Sagrada Familia, a new ELCA Latino congregation in Phoenix, helped with planning. We identified perceived obstacles for those wanting to attend the event. Those included childcare, affordability, and housing. We prayed for the Holy Spirit’s presence in planning and conducting the event.

A successful event

And now the first leadership event for Latina women in our Grand Canyon Synod is history. We hoped for 25 women to attend the September event. But we got 38 from five congregations in the Phoenix/Tucson area. That’s thanks in part to Diana Miranda of San Juan Bautista, who designed the event flyer and registration form in Spanish.

Jen and Pastor Maria led the event, held at Faith Lutheran Church in Phoenix. From the Latino culture, they explored leadership characteristics with a biblical perspective. Jen encouraged every attendee to identify their individual spiritual gifts. She said she wanted them to see themselves as the leaders they already are. Jen also talked about how all women are connected through Women of the ELCA.

To get more women in the area to attend, we arranged hotel accommodations for those attending from Tucson. We also offered on-site and in-home childcare.



The youngest of our attendees were in high school. Faith Lutheran provided the meeting space, childcare, its Latino choir, communion (thanks to Pastor Lara Forbes and Pastor Maria), and extraordinary hospitality.

When can we do this again?

Women sang, ate, laughed, and shared. Most who attended committed to building relationships in their community. They left the event empowered and inspired, asking, “When can we do this again?”

The event was financially supported by a gift from our Grand Canyon Synod’s Latino ministry fund, grants from the West Valley Lutheran Thrift Store and Thrivent Action Team, funding from our Grand Canyon Synod Women and the InFaith Community Foundation.

We’re grateful for the generosity of so many, allowing an opportunity for our Latina sisters to experience being women of the church, together.



Myrna Wells-Ulland is president of the Grand Canyon Synod Women. Photo from the Grand Canyon Synod Women.

If you’re interested in learning how to organize a Latina Leaders’ Retreat, contact Jen DeLeon at 773-380-2455, jennifer.deleon@elca.org.

To move into the future, we must look ‘radically different’

FOR WOMEN OF THE ELCA TO SURVIVE and thrive into the future, it must look “radically different,” said the organization’s Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky.

“The structural model that we are using goes back to the 1860s and ’70s. It doesn’t fit today’s time,” she said in her report to the executive board that met in Chicago, Oct. 17–19. “If there is going to be a women’s organization of the church into the future, it needs to look radically different than it does now.”

At its October meeting, the executive board heard a report from the exploratory committee and adopted an agenda for the Eleventh Triennial Convention (2020). It also heard a Gathering 2020 progress report and installed a new member, Dawn Wicklund of Superior, Wis., who replaced a resigning member.

Exploratory committee

An 11-member exploratory committee examining potential organizational and constitutional changes convened in early 2019 “to investigate Women of the ELCA’s current business model” and mission and purpose. Formation of the committee was adopted at the board’s April 2018 meeting to address dwindling participants and fewer gifts to the organization.

The exploratory committee offered several possible constitutional changes that will go before the triennial convention. Those include streamlining the organization’s governance process by reducing the number of voting members attending conventions beginning in 2023. A recommendation to reduce the size of the executive board from was also discussed.

Other recommendations from the exploratory committee include:

- combining the 2023 triennial convention with the 2023 Conference of Presidents’ meeting;
- an addition of a young adult advisor to the executive board;
- the possibility of using video messages rather than executive board members to address SWO conventions beginning in 2021;
- surveying targeted groups, such as clergy, young adults, and younger women; and



For Women of the ELCA to survive and thrive into the future, it must look “radically different,” said the organization’s Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky.

- extending the work of the exploratory committee for another year.

Several of these measures were discussed in a Dec. 7 executive board conference call. They will be forwarded to the Eleventh Triennial Convention in Phoenix, July 14–16, 2020. Look for an additional news story about the decisions at welca.org/news.

Giving trends

In reporting on current giving trends, Executive Board Treasurer Anna Sarver said that “giving continues to lag behind 2018.”

Through August 2019, Thankofferings at \$95,761 are \$8,140 below what they were this time last year. Likewise, Regular Offerings at \$122,662 are \$41,312 below this time last year. SWO convention and Conference/Cluster offerings show a similar pattern, she said.

“So, in these four key categories of offerings, giving in 2019 is lagging behind 2018,” she said. “This could be just a timing issue, or it could signal the continuing decline in giving to the churchwide organization, which has been our trend for the last 20 years.”

Looking at the overall picture, she said, expenses through the end of August are just over \$1 million, and revenue is about \$627,000. The difference is approximately \$373,000. In this same period in fiscal

continued on next page

To move into the future, we must look ‘radically different’

continued from previous page

2018, expenses were approximately \$1.36 million, and revenue was just over \$1 million. The gap then was about \$360,000, she said.

Budget and finance committee

Laura Krueger, acting chair of the budget and finance committee, expressed “deep concerns” about the financial trends of the organization. Chair Sara Larson was unable to attend the meeting.

“The committee has a serious, and I mean desperate concern, that [the organization] has not yet set aside any money for the triennial convention,” Krueger said. “And it doesn’t look like we are going to have any this year.” The convention price tag is usually about \$750,000. That includes travel, room and board, and convention facilities for 311 voting members, she said.

The board adopted a committee recommendation to move a total of \$461,791.56 from the New Ministries Fund to cover money owed to the ELCA for 2018 expenses not covered by revenue.

Krueger said the move would reduce the New Ministries Fund by more than half. “And we might have to use the rest of it to cover expenses in the fiscal year 2019. So, there won’t be a lot going forward to do new ministries.”

The budget and finance committee was granted an extension for the preparation of budgets for FY2020 and FY2021. The committee met November 15 to receive additional research and strategic analysis by staff. It presented draft budgets to the full board during a December 7 conference call. Look for a story at welca.org/news.

Development Committee

In the Development Committee report, board members learned that:

All 21 executive board members have made at least one gift of record in the current 2017-2020 triennium for a total of \$22,753;

Of 21 executive board members, 18 give automatically via Faithful Friends. Learn more about Faithful Friends and how to give automatically to the organization at welca.org/faithfulfriends.

In other action, the board:

- Presented Wyvetta Bullock, assistant to the ELCA presiding bishop and executive for administration, with a photo collage and resolution of thanks. The resolution offers Bullock, who retires Jan. 31, 2020, appreciation for her “untiring service to Women of the ELCA.”
- Approved the Eleventh Triennial Convention (2020) memorials committee and reference and counsel committee members and elected a nominating committee.
- Approved a recommendation to forward to the Eleventh Triennial Convention an endorsement of Thursdays in Black as approved by the Churchwide Assembly in 2019.
- Approved a recommendation to forward to the Eleventh Triennial Convention an affirmation of the apology at the Churchwide Assembly in 2019 of the ELCA to people of African descent for historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism.
- Approved a recommendation that Women of the ELCA participants be encouraged to study the Explanation of the ELCA to People of African descent.
- Approved a plan to continue to reach out to presidents of synodical women’s organizations to strengthen relationships.
- Approved a recommendation to add a conversation about gender to the April 2020 executive board plenary agenda.
- Approved requested changes to the Florida-Bahama SWO constitution.
- Received racial justice training and participated in a stewardship education workshop.
- Heard reports from the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Lutheran Men in Mission, and staff.



Terri Lackey is director for communication for Women of the ELCA. Photos by Elizabeth McBride and Terri Lackey.

Bringing our mission and purpose to life—together

continued from page 1

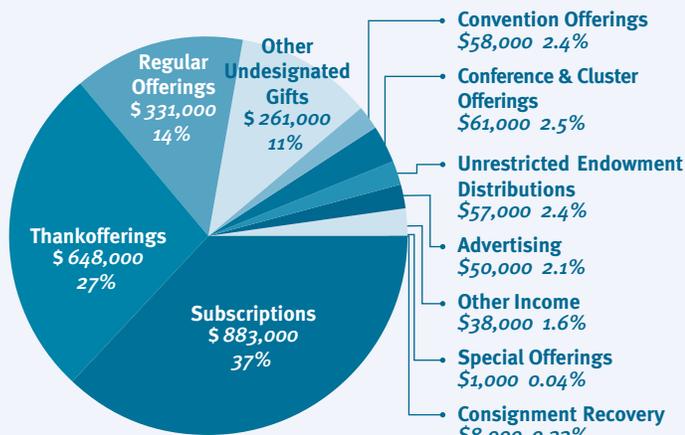
Fiscal 2018

In fiscal 2018, women gave a total of about \$1,360,000 in undesignated gifts—Thankofferings, Regular Offerings, Convention and Cluster or Conference Offerings, as well as “Where Needed Most” gifts—to support the ongoing ministries of our churchwide organization. Thank you!

Other income—including subscriptions to *Gather*, designated gifts to WELCA ministries, purchases of our identity items and the income from our unrestricted endowments, among other sources—added about another \$1,036,000 to the annual operating revenue of the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA.

Total operating revenue from all sources in 2018 was a little over \$2,396,000. This is what makes it possible for the churchwide expression of Women of the ELCA to carry out our ministries. Thank you!

FY18 TOTAL REVENUE \$2,396,000
(rounded to the nearest thousand)



The churchwide organization’s ministries

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

Communications

Communications account for the biggest part of the operating expenditures of the churchwide expression—nearly half. That includes *Gather* and its Bible study, Daily Grace, *Café*, *Bold Connections*, *Interchange* and *Intercambio*, our social media presence, the many free resources available on our website, welca.org, and so much more. All these things help us strengthen our connections across the miles.

Programs

Our Discipleship, Global Education, Justice, Stewardship, Membership, and Intergenerational programs together take up about a quarter of our annual operating expenditures, but they change lives—and no one can put a dollar figure on that.

Behind the scenes

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

Governance

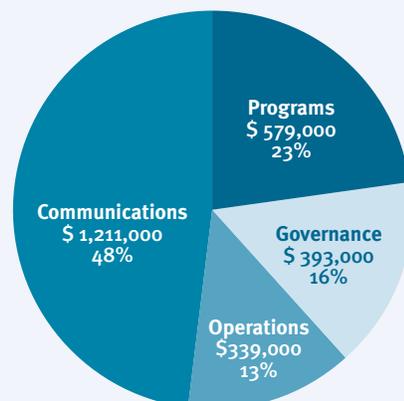
Our 21 elected churchwide board members and officers crisscross the country, attending training events and synodical events, leading workshops, developing local leaders, and so much more, all on a volunteer basis. Did you know that every one of our elected board members is also a generous donor? That’s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

In 2018, governance accounted for about a sixth of our annual expenditures. Travel costs are the biggest part of this piece of the pie, as we’d expect for a national organization like ours.

Operations

This slice of the pie is just about an eighth of our annual expenditures. Included here are such things as the annual audit, liability insurance, and ordinary office expenses. The biggest single item in this slice is our annual \$186,000 payment to the ELCA for our office rent, which also covers technical services and other business expenses.

FY18 TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$2,523,000
(rounded to the nearest thousand)



continued on next page

Bringing our mission and purpose to life— together

continued from page 6

Our total operating expenditures in fiscal 2018 added up to about \$2,523,000, and this is before accounting for the requirements of the triennial convention (the business meeting).

Triennial convention

Not included in this annual operations budget is the cost of the triennial convention (the business meeting). In years gone by, the costs for the convention were amply covered by undesignated giving. But times have changed. Revenues simply don't cover that constitutionally required meeting anymore. For the past several years, our churchwide board has directed that the costs for the convention be covered by dipping into our unrestricted endowments—which is clearly not sustainable. This is why every synodical women's organization has been asked to consider making an extra gift to cover the cost of at least one voting member—about \$2,400.

Let's grow together!

Our churchwide board is hard at work determining better ways of doing things so that we can keep doing the things we love, and we can all help. Here's how: Let's all pledge to make at least one generous Thankoffering this year, to make generous Regular Offerings every time we gather, and to put together at least one Thankoffering service in our congregations. Let's invite and inspire even more women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. We can do it—together!

Thank you!



Audrey Novak Riley is director for stewardship for Women of the ELCA.

What Day is New Year's

When is New Year's Day really?

Did you know that 2020 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 2019. 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.

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!



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING
JULY 16-19, 2020 | PHOENIX
WELCATG.ORG

**Early bird registration ends Jan. 6.
See welcatg.org.**

News Briefs

Bold Women's Day is Feb. 23

Within Women of the ELCA we celebrate bold women the fourth Sunday of February every year, on Bold Women's Day, this year on Feb. 23.

On this day, congregational units honor or remember bold women from their community. These women may be members of the congregation, notable for acting boldly on their faith in some way. They may also be part of the larger community, notable for their boldness in helping to bring about healing and wholeness for the church, the society or the world.

Celebrations can take many forms, limited only by the creativity of the women in your congregational unit. To help you with your Bold Women's Day planning, turn to our resource, "Celebrate Bold Women's Day," available for free download at welca.org/bwd. Certificates to use in recognizing these women can be found there too, along with a downloadable poster to promote the day. We even have a Bold Women's Day cover photo you can use on Facebook!

Gather presents "We are called!" for winter 2020

Reformer Martin Luther believed we are called not just in our personal relationships with God but in our relationships with family and friends, in our work, and in our communities. For winter 2020, *Gather* will feature a four-part Bible study by the Rev. Kit Kleinhans that explores stories of vocation 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—and how God may be calling others through us.

Conference of Presidents meet in February

Presidents of the 64 synodical women's organization will gather in Chicago February 21–23, 2020, for the annual Conference of Synodical Presidents with the theme, "The Power of Community." The theme verse is Hebrews 10:24–25.

Called for in the churchwide constitution, the conference seeks to foster community and renewal and aids the presidents in developing their leadership skills. In addition, the presidents will be considering matters coming before the Eleventh Triennial Convention (2020) so they can best lead their synodical delegations.

World Day of Prayer is March 6

"Rise! Take your mat and walk." This invitation written by our sisters in Zimbabwe is the foundation for the 2020 World Day of Prayer (WDP) on Friday, March 6. Held on the first Friday in March, WDP is "a worldwide ecumenical movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year."

Celebrated by thousands of women and women's groups, including Women of the ELCA, in more than 170 countries, the World Day of Prayer seeks to facilitate "informed prayer and prayerful action" by gathering "women of different races, cultures and traditions together in fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year."

Learn more about World Day of Prayer, officially celebrated since 1927, at wdp-usa.org.

Celebrate National Quilting Day

National Quilting Day (NQD) is observed annually on the third Saturday in March. This year, it's on March 21. NQD is celebrated around the country with special quilting shows, classes, open museums and much more. Spend this day recognizing and appreciating quilt makers, along with their long labor, love and skill that goes into the making of each quilt.

"For nearly 70 years, compassionate people just like you have put their faith into action and made quilts for people in need around the world," said Melanie Gibbons of Lutheran World Relief. Visit lwr.org/nqd for more.

Scholarship applications process is open

Women of the ELCA's scholarship application process for the 2020–21 academic year opened Dec. 15. Scholarships are offered in two categories: Lutheran laywomen and ordained ministry.

Applications and supporting documents must be emailed or mailed (with postmark) to Women of the ELCA no later than Feb. 15, 2020.

Visit welca.org/scholarships for criteria and descriptions of the scholarships available. Scholarships winners will be notified in late June.