

# interchange

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## Executive board postpones Eleventh Triennial Convention, Gathering until August 2021

WITH NO COVID-19 VACCINE ON THE HORIZON, Women of the ELCA's executive board voted to postpone the organization's convention and gathering until August 2021. The executive board met by video on April 25.

"We are postponing not canceling," said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA.

The Eleventh Triennial Convention scheduled for July 14–16, 2020, in Phoenix, Arizona, is being rescheduled for August 3–5, 2021. And the 2020 "Just Love" Gathering, scheduled for July 16–19, 2020, is being rescheduled for August 5–8, 2021.

"We hope that everyone who is currently registered will come next year," Bushkofsky said. "And if they aren't able to come, they could gift their registration to someone else."

Staff will be working out final arrangements with the Phoenix businesses and communicating directly with all who are voting members-elect for the convention and who have registered for the gathering. (See page 6 for more information.)

**"We are postponing not canceling," said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA.**

### Eleventh Triennial Convention

Postponing the convention means that the current executive board will serve another year until "replacements are elected and installed," Bushkofsky said. Then, the board elected in 2021 will serve a two-year term.

For the 2023 convention, "we would be back to our three-year cycle. That works best with the churchwide assembly, the youth gathering, and the rostered leaders' event."

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**interchange**

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clickable links by visiting  
the "Publications" tab at  
[womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org).

## Serving our neighbors is the sixth 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 this and other resources at [welca.org/resources](http://welca.org/resources).*

**SERVING IS AT THE HEART OF JESUS' MINISTRY.** A disciple's goal is to do as the teacher does. This lesson will focus on serving as Jesus serves.

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear "serve" and "to serve as Jesus served?" Making the connection between Jesus feeding five thousand and setting up food pantries and soup kitchens is easy. But Jesus calls us to be more than good waitstaff. Jesus wants us to move beyond projects and charitable activities to relationships.

**Read** Matthew 20:20–28. Jesus and his disciples had been in ministry together for a long time. Jesus was a walking example of committing one's life to serving God's people—healing the sick, raising the dead, teaching, feeding, showing compassion, and praying for all he came in contact with. Even with all that, his disciples James and John missed the point. It wasn't about positions of leadership, notoriety, and power. You are a disciple when you do what you never thought you could do. Jesus calls us to think differently about how and why we serve others. Serving as Jesus serves brings us closer to Jesus.

**Reflect** on positions of authority and power in your congregation, women's groups, and community organizations.

Jesus had an odd way of describing leadership and authority. Instead of the people serving the leader, the leader will serve them. What does it mean today to be a servant leader? What does this kind of serving look like today?

**Response:** Describe your practice of serving.

This reflection will help you assess your practice of serving others. Be as honest and open as you can.

Assess the basics. Take a quick read of your practice of serving.

- When do I serve others and what leads me to serve others?
- Whom do I serve and how do I serve others?

When it comes to serving, I need to work on:

- getting out of my comfort zone.
- being open to opportunities.
- learning new ways to serve.
- confidence in serving.
- service that is focused on God.
- seeking opportunities to serve.
- frequency of service.
- consistency in serving.
- discerning my service niche.

**Practice** exploring your motives for serving and learning to serve as Jesus served. It will help you stay focused on the purpose of serving.

**Remember** that serving not only puts our love into action but also inspires and motivates other disciples to do the same.

# Sustain community with unique letter-exchange project

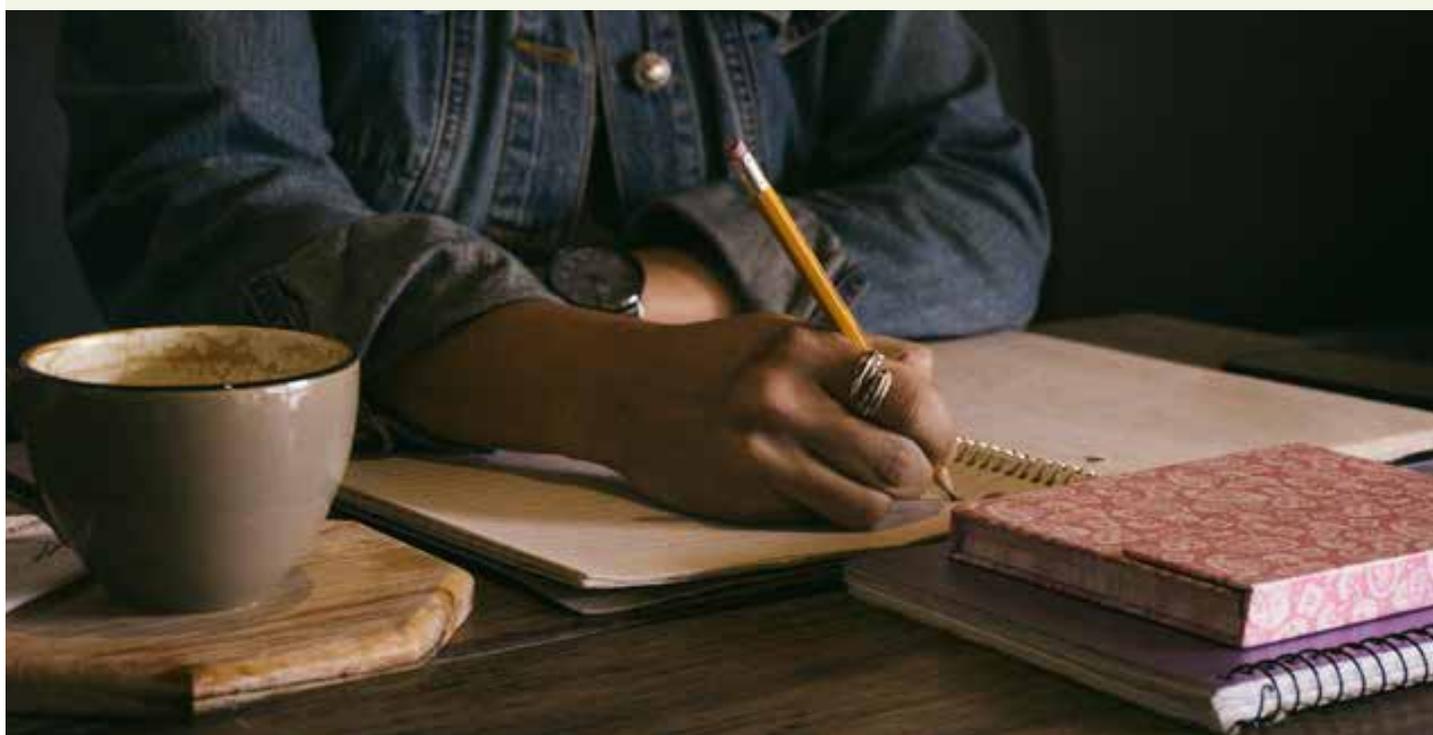
**WANT TO SUSTAIN THE COMMUNITY** that is a hallmark of Women of the ELCA? Then join **Dear Friend in Christ**, a unique letter-exchange project to which all participants are invited. (Learn more at [welca.org/dearfriend](http://welca.org/dearfriend))

## How does it work?

1. Write a letter. Use the “Dear Friend in Christ” salutation. Fill a page or two, however you are inspired. Among other things, please share your thoughts on these questions: How is your faith in Jesus Christ sustaining you during the global pandemic? What words of encouragement can you offer the person who receives your letter?
2. You can handwrite or type the letter.
3. You could include a drawing, a photo, or a recipe, anything that fits into an envelope.
4. Offer up a prayer for the recipient.
5. You may include your mailing address in the letter if you do not wish to remain anonymous.
6. Print and sign the Dear Friend in Christ release form. If you don’t have access to a printer, please use this online form. We cannot exchange letters without a release.
7. Mail your letter and signed release form to Dear Friend in Christ, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W Higgins Road, Chicago IL 60631, by October 15, 2020.

## What else do I need to know?

- When you write to Dear Friend in Christ, your letter will be swapped with a letter from another writer. They will get your letter; you will get their letter. The exchange is anonymous (unless you provide your contact information), so you can share as little or as much information about yourself as you like.
- Dear Friend in Christ is open to all participants, although writers under 18 must have parental consent. Visit the link above to download the consent form.
- Letters are paired at random, and we will try to match participants with someone in a different geographical part of the ELCA. Women of the ELCA staff read all letters before the exchange happens.
- Letters will be mailed to participants on a rolling basis, beginning in June 2020. We will continue exchanging letters received through All Saints Day, November 1, 2020.



## Executive board postpones Eleventh Triennial Convention, Gathering until August 2021

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### Budgets and finances

“In an April 1, 2020, year-end fiscal monitoring memo from our executive director,” Anna Sarver, executive board treasurer, said “we learned revenue underperformed in fiscal year 2019.”

Nine synodical organizations did not send any regular offerings, she said.

“While expenses were significantly under budget, expenses exceeded income,” she added.

Total revenue received in fiscal year 2019 was \$2,055,194 or 71.3 percent of what was projected. The board-approved budget anticipated a total revenue of \$2,881,531. Thus, the budget underperformed by \$826,337.

Sarver said the organization cannot yet determine how the coronavirus pandemic will impact giving, but that if women are not meeting in units, clusters, conferences, and at SWO events, it is unlikely that offerings will be collected.

“That means less money will be sent to the churchwide organization,” she said. “So, we’ll need to closely monitor revenue and expenses as we move further into 2020 to determine what mid-course changes to the budget will be needed.”

The executive board voted to re-designate four funds into general use and use interest from 13 funds to cover the 2019 balance.

Sara Larson, chair of the budget and finance committee, said the committee will present a 2021 budget at the October executive board meeting “because we can’t get our hands on hard figures to make any type of decision for now.

“We are very aware that the financial status will continue to be fluid,” she said. “We will continue to stay in touch with the numbers and the revenue coming in and will manage the situation.”

There are two items of good news about the budget, Bushkofsky said. One is

that Women of the ELCA is receiving two months of salary and retirement contributions for staff under the federal government’s Paycheck Protection Program. The other is that the organization recently learned it is beneficiary of a \$206,885 trust.

In a development committee report, Audrey Novak Riley, director of stewardship, reported that in the 2017-2020 triennium, “every one of our 21 board members has made at least one gift of record.” The total given by our 21 executive board members and officers during the 2017-2020 triennium is \$30,090.00.

A majority give through Faithful Friends, a way to give automatically through a credit card or checking account. Learn more about Faithful Friends at [welca.org/faithfulfriends](http://welca.org/faithfulfriends).

In other actions, the executive board:

- Approved changes to the Southern Ohio Synodical Women’s Organization’s and Upstate New York Synodical Women’s Organization’s constitutions.
- Heard reports from the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Lutheran Men in Mission, and staff.

The next executive board meeting is scheduled for October 23–25.



*Clockwise from left, Sarah Carson, Lisa Plorin, Elizabeth Hunter, Linda Post Bushkofsky*

## Regular offerings in irregular circumstances

**EVEN IF MANY OF US CAN'T GATHER** in person right now as we've always loved to do, we can still support Women of the ELCA as we've always loved to do. Here's how!

Regular offerings are the lifeblood of our community of women created in the image of God. Regular offerings gathered locally locally—in your congregation or group—support not only the ministries of your congregational unit, but also those of your synodical women's organization and the churchwide organization. That's powerful!

Women who ordinarily gather in circles or groups can mail their checks to their congregational unit treasurer,

made out to Women of the ELCA with "Regular Offering" on the memo line.

Then the congregational unit treasurer can handle them just as she always has—by depositing the individual offerings and mailing one check with a copy of Form A to the treasurer of her synodical women's organization. Download [Form A in English](#) or [Form A en Español](#).

Congregational unit treasurers can find much more information about Regular Offerings (and more!) by downloading the [Guide for Unit Treasurers](#) (click the link).

Thank you for your generous support of Women of the ELCA!

## Women of the ELCA staff receives 22 communicator awards

**WOMEN OF THE ELCA STAFF** is honored to have received a total of 22 awards from two religion communicator organizations, including two Best in Class awards.

Staff received 11 DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards from the Religion Communicators Council (RCC), and 11 Best of Church Press awards from Associated Church Press (ACP). Because of COVID-19, a joint convention of the two religion organizations—to be held in Washington, D.C., March 18–21—was canceled. ACP held its awards ceremony online.

The awards were for work completed in 2019.

### Best in Class

RCC awarded *Gather* magazine a prestigious Best in Class award in the Periodicals, Single Issue category for its January/February 2019 issue. Elizabeth Hunter, editor, and Sarah Carson, managing editor, produce the magazine.

In the Public Relations or Marketing Campaign category, ACP gave Women of the ELCA an Overall Excellence/



Best in Class Honorable Mention for Gathering 2020's "Just Love" logo, marketing materials (pins, screen wipes, coasters), and invitational video. The video was shown at the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Milwaukee and is online at [welcatg.org](#). Elizabeth McBride, editor of *Café* and director of intergenerational programming, designed the logo, and

Terri Lackey, director for communication, wrote the video script. Will Nunnally of the ELCA's mission advancement unit, produced the video.

### Awards of excellence, merit and honorable mention

From RCC, in addition to the Best in Class award, Women of the ELCA received four awards of excellence and six awards of merit.

From ACP, also in addition to the Best in Class award, Women of the ELCA collected two awards of excellence, six awards of merit and two honorable mentions.

To see the list of awards, visit our website at [welca.org/news](#).

# If you've registered for the Gathering, follow these tips

**THE "JUST LOVE" GATHERING**, initially scheduled for this July, has been postponed to August 5–8, 2021, due to the global coronavirus pandemic. Here we offer tips for those who had already registered for the gathering.

What do you need to do about your event registration? If you plan to join your Lutheran sisters at the "Just Love" Gathering at its rescheduled dates, August 5–8, 2021, you are not required to take any action. All tours and options will also be automatically transferred to the 2021 dates.

## Actions to take

To make one of the following actions, email [info@frameworkmeetings.com](mailto:info@frameworkmeetings.com) or leave a detailed message at 208-502-1150, and our registration provider will assist you.

If you can't make the 2021 event, you can transfer your registration to a friend.

If you can't make the 2021 event, you can donate your registration fee and any purchases you made, providing a gift to Women of the ELCA.

You can request a refund, less a \$20 processing for fixed costs. The deadline to ask for this refund is June 30, 2020.

What do you need to do about your hotel reservations? Our two gathering hotels, the Sheraton and

Hyatt Regency, have canceled all 2020 room reservations and will be refunding deposits. The hotels will provide new online reservation links for the August 2021 dates before the end of May. We will send an email with the new links and the reservation phone numbers to registrants, as everyone will need to make new hotel reservations. We'll add these new links and contact numbers to our Gathering 2021 website.

What do you do about your airline reservation? Because of the coronavirus, most airlines are offering travel credits for future flights. Visit [welca.org/news](http://welca.org/news) to find out how each airline is handling changes and refunds. If needed, contact your airline directly for assistance with flight changes or refunds.

## How to sustain community

While we've postponed the gathering, our ministry continues. We're still mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. At [welca.org](http://welca.org), you'll find suggestions on how you can sustain community.

Visit [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org) for gathering updates. Stay tuned for a virtual gathering experience this July; more details to follow.

**Tiaras, t-shirts, and toddlers: Women of the ELCA staff meets online each Tuesday to touch base and talk about the work each person is doing. When the meeting ends, we pray Tuesday prayers at noon. You can find the service on our website, [welca.org](http://welca.org).**



# WE'VE MOVED



***(DATES, NOT LOCATION)***

We are moving this life-changing event to **August 5-8, 2021!** Join your sisters of faith in Phoenix for the Gathering 2021. Then begin living out your faith in new and invigorating ways.

**August 5-8, 2021**  
**Phoenix, Arizona**

Visit [welcatg.org](http://welcatg.org) for details and registration.



# Holy time is theme of Gather's fall 2020 Bible study

**IN THIS THREE-SESSION BIBLE STUDY**, the Rev. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni invites us to remember the past, recognize the present and reimagine the future.

## Session 1: Holy time: Remembering the past

**Scriptures:** Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19, Luke 22:18–20, 1 Corinthians 11:23–25

**Themes/Questions:** What is faithful memory? How do we remember the past—good and bad? How do we embody memory in our worship through Word and Sacrament, and why is this important? How does faithful memory put us back together (re-member us) as faithful people?

## Session 2: Holy time: Recognizing the now

**Scriptures:** Mark 14:3–9, Luke 4:16–21, Luke 12:54–56, 2 Corinthians 6:1–10



**Themes/Questions:** How do we grasp the times we are living in? How did Jesus, the woman who anointed him, and Paul all recognize “kairos” time—and what is it? What does it mean to recognize our calling to “be present”?

## Session 3: Holy time: Reimagining the future

**Scriptures:** Isaiah 55, Revelation 21–22

**Themes/Questions:** How do we faithfully look to the future? What does it mean to reimagine the future in light of the promises of God’s reign? How do we live now in hope and active expectation, and how does this open us (individuals, churches, communities) to transformation?

Subscribe now ([www.gathermagazine.org/subscribe](http://www.gathermagazine.org/subscribe)) to receive the magazine and Bible study.

## 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](mailto:Women.ELCA@elca.org).

As of mid-May, these conventions through September are being held until further notice. All others through September have been canceled or postponed. Please check with your Synodical Women’s Organization for updated information.

### AUGUST

- 7–9 **Central States (4B) SWO convention**, TBD, Kansas City, Mo.
- 29 **Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast (4F) SWO convention**, Holy Comforter Lutheran Church, Kingwood, Texas

### SEPTEMBER

- 19 **Eastern North Dakota (3B) SWO convention**, Park River Bible Camp, Park River, N.D.
- 19 **Metro New York (7C) SWO convention**, TBD
- 25–27 **Arkansas-Oklahoma (4C) SWO convention**, TBD, Tulsa, Okla.
- 25–27 **Southwestern Texas (4E) SWO convention**, Zion Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas