



The Communicator

33rd SWO Synod Convention
May 2, 2020
Redwood Area Community Center
Redwood Falls, MN

Just Celebrate!

Guest Speaker: Dr. Rev. Robin Steinke, President of Luther Seminary



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Special points of interest

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Watch for our publicity packet in early March with full convention information and how to register!

A Word from Your President

As you read this I pray that you all are enjoying a wonderful New Year and thanking God each day for all the blessings you receive!

The last Synod Women's Board Meeting was held back in November 2019 and a start to the 2020 Synod Women's Convention has begun. Here are a few highlights of what I can share with you at this point. We know that the schedule is always subject to change, but this will give you a feel for what the one-day convention will be like. The board hopes that many of you will be able to join us for the convention so that your hearts can be filled with joy and gladness!

Saturday, May 2, 2020

Redwood Falls Area Community Center, 901 E. Cook Street, Redwood Falls MN

Theme: Just Celebrate!

Theme Verse: Luke 4: 18-19

Theme Hymn: "God of the Women"

Goal: To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Ordination of Women in the ELCA

Speaker: Rev. Robin Steinke, President of Luther Seminary

Offering Objectives: 50% to Churchwide Women of the ELCA (the other objectives are still being worked on)

In-Kind Offerings: LWR Personal Care Kits with all LWR kits and quilts accepted; Walker Bags; Christian Literature & Katie's Fund Cans (on tables)

Registration Fee: \$50.00

Tentative Schedule (*subject to change*):

7:30 am – 10:00 am In-Kind Offering Collection (trailer in parking lot)

8:00 am Registration/Coffee/Displays

9:00 am Voting Member Orientation

9:15 am Gathering Music

Opening Devotions

Plenary Session I

Greetings/Introductions

Churchwide Rep

Stretch Break

10:45 am Processional – SW MN Ordained Women Pastors (robed)

Worship Service w/Holy Communion and Offering

Plenary Session II

Table Prayer

12:00 noon Luncheon

1:00 pm Gathering Music

Speaker: Rev. Robin Steinke

2:00 pm Panel Discussion (Rev. Steinke & some synod pastors)

2:30 pm Stretch Break

2:45 pm Plenary Session III (if needed)

Reports/Installation (Board & Triennial)/

Announcements

Closing

3:15 pm Entertainment

4:00 pm "On Our Way Rejoicing"

There are many details to plan yet on this schedule, but we

hope this gives you an idea of what to expect. Invitations will be sent to all Ordained Women Pastors in our synod (including retired women pastors) so that we can make it a day of honoring these wonderful women in our lives!

So are you all busy making the Walker Bags? Be sure to bring the completed bags with you to the SWO Convention on May 2nd in Redwood Falls. The synod women's board will pass the bags onto the Synod Assembly (June 12 & 13, 2020 at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter). The bags will be filled with items at synod assembly and then distributed to local care centers where there is a need.

The election this time will consist of electing a synod president; synod treasurer and five board members at large. Please keep the synod nominating committee in your prayers as they faithfully seek out women to fill the ballot to be elected in May. The newly elected and present synod board will be installed at convention as well as the triennial voting members that are attending Triennial at Phoenix in July of this year.

Speaking of Triennial – an e-mail went out to those who have signed up to receive information on the 2020 Triennial. It would be nice for the synod board to know who is actually attending the Gathering. We know the ten voting members that are attending the Convention, but we are not sure of those who are actually attending the Gathering. So if you could let me know if you plan to attend the Gathering in Phoenix that would be very helpful. Just because you signed up to receive information doesn't mean you are planning to attend. We have had a couple ladies back out of their plans to attend, so please let me know ASAP if you are attending the Gathering. NOTE: Even if you did not sign up on the triennial interest list and you are attending the Gathering – we still need to know this. As of December 1, 2019 we have 46 signed up.

The hotel reservation information was e-mailed out in October 2019. If you have not already registered for your Gathering hotel room, please let me know that as well. If you are rooming with someone during the Gathering only ONE of the roommates needs to register the hotel room. If you have questions on this process – please feel free to get ahold of me or Pat Stevermer soon!

The synod board is working on the SW MN ID items for Triennial as well as the Give-Away items we'll take with to Phoenix. You'll be informed as to the decision on these items and any cost involved.

With time limitations at our convention in May, the board has decided that our promoter, Pat Stevermer, will be at the Triennial Display Table and will have information to hand out to those attending Triennial. If there is still a need of some or all the Triennial attendees to meet at the end of the convention day that can be arranged, but there is no other Triennial Meeting planned. We are hoping to do most of this informative process through e-mail.

There will be a **Scholarship Program** offered once again at

A Word from Your President—Cont'd

our synod convention in May. This is open to first time attendees of our convention, so watch for that form to be available in the Convention Publicity Packet that will be ON-LINE at our website in February of 2020. www.swmnwelca.org is the website and will include all the information, forms, etc., for the 2020 SW MN SWO Convention.

The 2019 Leadership Event was successful and we enjoyed having the 81 Conference Officers and Synod Board in attendance. **FYI: The 2020 Leadership Event will be held Saturday, August 22, 2020 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Redwood Falls, so mark your calendars!**

The 2019 Conference Falls Gatherings were well attended. The variety of programs and speakers were enjoyed by all who attended! Thank you to the conference boards for planning and preparing the events! A couple of changes were decided on by a couple conferences. Watonwan River Conference voted to hold just ONE Gathering – the Spring Gathering starting in 2020. Due to lower numbers of active women in the units and hosting churches it was decided to drop the Fall Gatherings and go with just one event. Scenic Valley has always met in the evenings on a Thursday for years – they decided to try something new starting in 2020. Their Spring Gatherings will still be held in

the evenings, but they are going to try their Fall Gatherings on a Saturday morning.

I've received word that St. Paul's Lutheran of Arlington (Minnesota Valley Conference) has disbanded their local WELCA unit. Two other Units have been dropped due to votes by their congregations to leave the ELCA. We've lost Bethany Lutheran WELCA at Storden and Trinity Lutheran WELCA at Jeffers (both of these were in the Shetek Conference).

The Speaker's List for our synod women's organization will be updated at our January 18th board meeting, so if you have some ideas of possible speakers please get all the information to Christina Nelson ASAP! Once the updates are done the complete Speakers List will be posted on the synod women's website.

I ask for your prayers for synod board member at large, Louise Ferry and her family. Louise's significant other, Dale Geske (74), passed away at his Benson MN home Oct. 23, 2019. Blessed be the memory of Dale.

See you at the SW MN SWO Convention May 2nd!!

Joan Iverson, President
SW MN SWO Women of the ELCA

Mission Action/Stewardship

The Parable of the Rich Fool in Luke, chapter 12, tells the story of a wealthy farmer who was blessed with an abundant crop. The man thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' He then decided to tear down his old barns and build larger ones to store all his grain and his goods. Verse 19 – 21 continues the parable, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Being from an agricultural family and area, this parable has always bothered me a little from the practical standpoint. You have a huge crop; you have to store it somewhere; you can't just leave it out in the elements to spoil. You have to take care of what you have and prepare for the future, right? That's just good stewardship.

Recently, I heard a sermon on this text that put things in a context I hadn't thought of before; the Rich Fool's problem is that he made his decisions and plans alone; the whole parable is framed in the context of the Rich Fool talking to himself; he is not including his family or his neighbors. Presumably, it was a good year and everyone had a good crop. Maybe the man, his family, and the community could have worked together to build resources for the future, to preserve and build upon their good fortune and to share with those who had less.

In this story, the Rich Fool's self-absorbed plans came to

nothing, and he didn't have the forethought to make a plan on what would happen to assets. He thought only of himself, not in terms of generosity toward God and his neighbors. How different the story could have been if, upon harvesting the bumper crop, the community would have joined together to come up with a plan to best grow and share their bounty.

Our Women of the ELCA Purpose Statement begins, "As a community of women..." Working together, we can achieve amazing results. One of the ways this is most visible is in our Mission Action projects. Together, the quilts and kits from Southwest Minnesota can fill the back of a semi. Our labors of love can provide comfort and health to hurting people.

This year, our Mission Action focus is Personal Care Kits. To those of us living in abundance, it may be just a bar of soap, a towel, a toothbrush. To the survivor of a disaster or to a refugee, a Personal Care kit is acknowledgement of the recipient's humanity, as well as a potentially health or life-saving gift. Go to lwr.org/personalcarekits for Personal Care Kit information and instructions.

Closer to home, another mission this year is creating Walker/Wheelchair bags. We ask that you bring the bags to Spring Convention, and they will be filled with goodies and useful items at the Synod Assembly and distributed. You may have received a pattern for making the Walker/Wheelchair bags at your Fall Gathering or other WELCA event, or you can find patterns on Pinterest.

Thank you for all you do to put your faith in action!

Karla Conrad, Barb Wurtzberger, Christina Nelson

How to Support Breaking Free

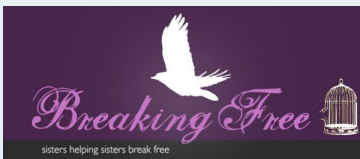
From Breaking Free's
website:

"Breaking Free forefronts a movement of freedom for victims of sex-trafficking, releasing them from a life of bondage and oppression into one of safety, restoration and the ability to fly with wings of dignity, truth and strength. That kind of transformation comes by real-life action. We walk along side her to get her where she wants to be with careful approach and survivor understanding."

Click on the link here to
donate to Breaking Free:
breakingfree.net/donate

Click on the link here to
request a speaker to learn
even more: [breakingfree.net/
request-a-speaker](http://breakingfree.net/request-a-speaker)

Most importantly, if you know
someone in need of help,
please use this link:
breakingfree.net/get-help



Living in a college town, there is often the opportunity to hear speakers coming to campus to shed light on controversial topics. Last November, guest speaker, Lori Paul from the organization **Breaking Free** gave a presentation, *"The Dark Side Of Sex Industry"* to students and community members in Marshall at Southwest Minnesota State University.

Breaking Free is an organization in St. Paul, Minnesota that helps women escape prostitution and sexual exploitation. They also help end the demand, by helping men who have been caught purchasing women. **Breaking Free** is a non-profit organization, working for justice and social change, founded by Vednita Carter in 1996.

Ms. Paul spoke to the students at SMSU about ways to help people who are hurting and ways to combat a growing problem in today's society. Pornography is a big driver of the sex trafficking industry. She talked about the pornography industry growing by \$85 billion in a recent five-year study (2012-2017). In the past, a typical buyer of a prostitute was a "a 40 year-old-white guy, married with kids, no more--now it is an 18-19 year old." There is easy access to pornography on phones now a days and it provides a rush to the brain—dopamine, which is like heroin and cocaine and can become an addiction. Resulting in an obsession to seek more, next time purchasing sex.

In last month's edition of Women of the ELCA- **BOLD Connections**, an article was written about Recognizing Gender Violence. The article stated we can only make a difference by talking about this issue and doing our best to let women and girls know that we will not accept abuse. The UN-sponsored International Day to End Violence Against Women was held this

past November 25th. The day kicked off the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, an international campaign that ran until Dec. 10 (Human Rights Day), inviting individuals and groups to mobilize and call for the elimination of violence against women and girls. A worldwide goal for 2030 is to end violence against women and is a calling for all of us to take our boldest stand yet against rape. How can we help on a local level in our communities? Small actions can make big impacts to stamp out rape culture. Find stories, infographics and action ideas that you can share to make a difference wherever you are. Visit www.unwomen.org. Use the color orange and join the conversation on social media using #orangetheworld and #generationequality. Visit www.breakingfree.net to see how you can help with outreach opportunities. There are speakers available to come to your next gathering to share a faith-based perspective.

Spend some time researching this area of injustice, to learn more about specific ways you can personally help right the wrongs involved, from volunteering with or donating to an advocate like **Breaking Free**. Humble yourself before God, interceding in prayer for women and girls suffering from sexual violence. Asking Him to keep teaching you more about other people's needs and strengthening your ability to see them from the right perspective.

Best advice that Lori Paul shared with the SMSU students, "Be loving, caring and kind to each other."

Fight injustice with LOVE.

Kim Christianson, Jane Tongen,
Louise Ferry

WELCA IN THE NEWS!

Sara Larson, a member of the executive board of Women of the ELCA and former Southwestern Minnesota Synod Board Member was recently awarded a \$54,000 scholarship through the ELCA! Read the full story here: www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/news/we-are-women-who-support-each-other-in-our-callings

Mission Growth/Discipleship

What does **Mission Growth** and **Discipleship** mean to me?

As a newly elected member of the SW MN Synod Board, my assignment is with Mission Growth and Discipleship. As I begin to write this article for the Communicator, I wonder to myself . . . what does that mean? I shall attempt to relay what it means to me, in particular.

"I pray . . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Ephesians 1:17

How does one get to know someone better? I believe it's by putting oneself forward to say . . . hello, I'm Dianne, what is your name, is a good way to begin and then; how about sharing in a cup of coffee. A time of coffee and conversation is always good. It involves a sense of really wanting to know that other person – to instill a concerned and loving friendship. A time of coffee and conversation means that there are no distractions, we actually have eye contact and we are totally engrossed with conversation and making oneself comfortable in sharing my feelings and wanting to develop a meaningful relationship. This newly found friendship may develop into a lasting friendship that will continue to grow. There are times when one can sense first hand . . . it's a good thing.

It is the same with God, wanting Him to share in my life. I want to Read His Word, Celebrate His Name and Rejoice that I am able. It's all about taking the time to have a quiet time and reading a piece of scripture each day. It's opening my heart and allowing Him to guide my thoughts and actions. It's inviting Him to enter my life each day and asking Him for strength and courage for each day; and at the end of each day a heart that is filled with gratitude for his presence in my heart and in my life.

When I share His name with others, there's a sense of satisfaction knowing that my friends talk with God too. A special friend of mine leads a Bible study in her church women's group and they are studying Max Lucado's "Women of the Bible". We recently shared the story of Abigail which is found in I Samuel 25 where it describes Abigail as a courageous and resourceful woman and an effective counselor. There is a unique experience sharing God's Word with another person of faith. It is truly a Mission Growth and Discipleship experience. Being together with other women is a blessing and especially being able to share God's Word and experiences.

A Call to Spiritual Growth and Discipleship Bible Passages:

"Grow in grace and understanding of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts." Colossians 3:16

"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow Him. Let your roots grow down into Him, and let

your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness."

Colossians 2:6-7

"Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

"For I am your God. You must consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy." Leviticus 11:44

"Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive." Titus 3:14

"Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." Psalm 34:14

"And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. . . Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did." 1 John 2:3

"Anyone who loves another brother or sister is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble." 1 John 2:10

LifeWay Christian Resources:

Recognizing Spiritual Growth is . . .

- 1) Bible Engagement – studying the scriptures
- 2) Obeying God & denying self – prioritizing God's desires over self-will
- 3) Serving God & others – helping to serve the needs we see in others
- 4) Sharing Christ – speaking to others about Christ
- 5) Exercising Faith – putting our faith into action
- 6) Seeking God – to know God more deeply by continuous study and experience His work
- 7) Building Relationships - by our actions we demonstrate to others so they may recognize our Christ following life.

Pray unceasingly, **Rejoice** and **Live** our lives with **God's Guidance** and **Direction!**

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE, LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT! Psalm 13:1

Dianne Doscher, Janet Hagen, Betty Brandt

2020 Triennial Registration is
OPEN!!

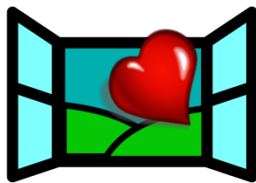
It's time to register for the
2020 Triennial Gathering for
Women of the ELCA. Early
registration ends on January
6th, so make sure to register
today! Click on the link here
to learn more and register:
[www.womenoftheelca.org/
new-triennial-event-page](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/new-triennial-event-page)

Looking for more triennial
news and information? Sign
up for our triennial email list!
Just contact our promoter, Pat
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Looking Out My Window by Joan



As I stood at the kitchen sink one morning and noticed the 'effects' of a strong wind overnight it made me ponder on the *WIND!* Unless it's whipped up into a frenzy, we hardly notice the wind. Yet without it, the world would be a very different, and many kinds of life would struggle to survive. After all, the wind moves weather systems, and breezes carry seeds, pollen, water, and a constant supply of oxygen. Wind is a force that we do not see; we only see and feel its effects. Similarly, we do not see the great force of our great God as we walk through our days, but everywhere we look we see and feel the effects of His presence with us. His goodness, His generosity, His love, and His grace.

What do you think? Rather than only checking in with God about big issues in our day, how about we live with our eyes and heart wide open to seeing and celebrating evidence of His goodness and love?

Here are some ideas to help you start seeing more clearly evidence of God in your world:

- If you are reading this, you woke up this morning. That means you are breathing!
- If you can read this, that means someone taught you to read. That means you received an education!
- If you are reading this at the dinner table, you have food to eat. And a home!
- If you are reading this at your work space, you have income!
- If you found time to read this, you had at least a few minutes to yourself!

Even when we don't see God, we can see evidence of His presence and experience the blessed effects of that presence. May we never overlook the Provider of these blessings, big and small.

I ask you today to take just a moment to notice the wind – or at least evidence of its presence. Pause and take a spiritual breath of the Holy Spirit. Thank Him for the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control He brings into your life!

"We live by faith, not by sight." 2nd Corinthians 5:7

Lord, forgive me for taking for granted Your presence in my heart and in my life. Help me have eyes that see You in all I do today. And thank You for Your faithfulness to me even when I've not been mindful of You!

Upcoming Announcements!!

Unit Officer Listings

- All Conference Secretaries are asked to submit an updated listing of officers for all WELCA units in your conference. Please send these lists to the WELCA President Joan Iverson (jackjoan73@gmail.com), Secretary Jill Duncan (jillyd58@hotmail.com) and Communicator Editor Christina Nelson (swmnwelca@gmail.com)

Speaker List Update

- This spring, the Synod Board will do a round of updates to the Speaker List. If you heard a new speaker or musician recently to be added to this list, please send information to Christina Nelson (swmnwelca@gmail.com)

2020 Spring Conference Gatherings

Conference	Date/Time	Location	Attending	Program
Crow River	April 25, 2020	Beckville Lutheran Church Litchfield, MN	Betty Brandt	"Who's Controlling Your Life?" Connie Lounsbury
Glacial Ridge	April 20, 2020	Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church Benson, MN	Louise Ferry	"Angel Among Us" Pastor Wayne & Donna Kopitzke
Great River	April 4, 2020 8:30 am	Salem Lutheran Church St. Cloud, MN	Dianne Doscher	
Lac Qui Parle	April 21, 2020	Big Bend Lutheran Church Milan, MN	Kim Christianson	
Lakeland	March 28, 2020 9:00 am	Grace Lutheran Church Belgrade, MN	Christina Nelson	
Minnesota Valley			Jane Tongen	
Prairie	April 18, 2020	Christ Lutheran Church Cottonwood, MN	Linda Magnuson	"Sharing for Creation" Katie Chapman Shetek Ministries
Scenic Valley	April 16, 2020	First Lutheran Church Renville, MN	Janet Hagen	
Shetek	April 18, 2020 (<i>snowdate: April 25</i>)	Bethlehem Lutheran Church Lakefield, MN	Karla Conrad	
Watonwan River	April 25, 2020		Barb Wurtzberger	

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