



Women of the ELCA

The Communicator

Triennial Update

WE'VE MOVED



(DATES, NOT LOCATION)

We are moving this life-changing event to **August 5-8, 2021!**
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August 5-8, 2021
Phoenix, Arizona

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A Word from Your President

As I write this report (the end of May), our state is slowly opening up but still so many restrictions and regulations to follow. By the time you are reading this in July, hopefully more of the state's economy will have opened up, but we all know the answers are so unknown. If you are anything like me – I just live for each day and pray that God will help us all to deal with the issues placed before us and make the best of this troubling time and help us to move forward!

The Synod Board has been holding our ZOOM meetings this spring and summer and that seems to be working out well. Here are a few highlights from our meetings:

SWO BOARD NEWS: Being the Synod SWO Convention was cancelled, we were told by churchwide that we need to carry over the same synod board officers/board members until our next election. Two of our board members chose to resign from their board positions at our April 4th ZOOM board meeting. Christina Nelson and Barbara Wurtzberger resigned. Christina's term was up May 2020 and she had plans of being finished by now and did not care to continue on until May 2021. Barbara was not running again and also felt she could not continue. Two ladies were contacted and accepted by the board to fill out these two board positions until May 2021.

We welcome Noreen Beranek from Gibbon. Noreen is from the Minnesota Valley Conference. We also welcome Katherine Claussen from Montevideo. Katherine is from the Lakeland Conference. Noreen will serve as the Watonwan River Conference Liaison and also serve on the Mission Action committee. Katherine will serve as the Lakeland Conference Liaison and serve on the Mission Action committee.

For your information, the other officers and board members that were either up for re-election or finishing their terms on the board and consented to continue serving on the board until our next election are: Joan Iverson (President); Maria Lokensgard (Treasurer) and Board Members: Betty Brandt, Kim Christianson and Louise Ferry.

Christina Nelson will continue to serve as our COMMUNICATOR EDITOR and will also help the board out with printing of other publications. We thank Christina for her dedication to this position! You are very much appreciated, Christina for the wonderful job you do!!

We have 14 Faith Stories from our women pastors that were submitted as part of our plans to celebrate our Women Pastor's at our May 2020 convention. Christina will be posting these stories on our synod website for all to read and be inspired by, so watch the website for that collection!

I know many of you so faithfully sewed many, many **WALKER BAGS** for the project our synod had going this past year! I thank you so much for all your time and effort put into this project! By now you have most likely heard that this project collection didn't happen due to the cancellation of Synod Assembly in June. You are now free to distribute

the walker bags individually or by a Unit to local health care facilities in your own communities. You have the option of filling the bags with needed items if you wish, but you are not expected to do so. It has been suggested that it is important that a card or note be included in each bag – with a prayer for the resident and/or a name of an individual or the Unit's name as to where the bag comes from. It might be best to call the health care facility first and explain your distribution of the Walker Bags and follow their guidelines to get them into the hands of those residents that could use a bag to put on their walker or wheel chair.

TRIENNIAL is postponed! It will still be held in Phoenix AZ with the convention portion set for August 3-5, 2021 and the gathering portion set for August 5-8, 2021. There are lots of new things posted on the website, so please check that out from time to time to keep updated. www.wewlcatg.org

We cannot alter our voting member/alternate list. If there is a voting member or alternate that cannot attend in 2021 – we just go with the number that can attend.

Instructions have been publicized on registration questions and hotel reservations and can be found on the website. If you cannot attend the 2021 triennial gathering you have options for your registrations. 1. You can **transfer** your registration to a friend or someone in your synod. 2. You can **donate** your registration fee and any purchases you made providing it as a gift to Women of the ELCA. 3. You can request a **refund**, less a \$20.00 processing fee to help cover fixed costs.

What to do about your hotel reservations? The two gathering hotels (Sheraton & Hyatt Regency), have cancelled all 2020 room reservations and will be refunding deposits. These two hotels will be providing new online reservation links and churchwide will also provide links to those online sites and phone numbers and you will have to make new hotel reservations for the gathering. If you have already made airline reservations for the gathering, **you** will need to check with that airline directly to find out how each airline is handling charges and or refunds.

For the voting members – you will be receiving that e-mail from churchwide at least two months before the 2021 Triennial convention with instructions on how to make your airline reservations.

As of right now we have one gathering attendee from our synod that cannot attend in 2021 and she'd sure like to be able to transfer her registration before August of 2021. If you or someone you know can now attend the Triennial Gathering in 2021, please get ahold of Rebecca Puchta of Cleveland MN (Minnesota Valley Conference) at 507-931-3132. If you cannot reach her, feel free to get ahold of me – Joan Iverson at jackjoan73@gmail.com or 507-227-8670.

If there is anyone else in our synod that has already paid for a gathering registration and you are now finding out you

A Word from Your President—Cont'd

cannot attend, please get a hold of me and we will do what we can to get those registrations transferred.

The SW MN SWO triennial give-a-ways (small 3M sticky pads with our logo on the back) are ready to go and will be distributed at some point before August 2021. The SW MN SWO ID's are also ready to go. We had new pins made with our synod logo on them and they will also be distributed at some point.

Even though you are not meeting for your Unit meetings these days, please prayerfully consider giving your offerings to your Unit Treasurer. It is so easy to forget about giving those offerings when we are not meeting in person. Your offerings are still needed to keep the organization functioning!

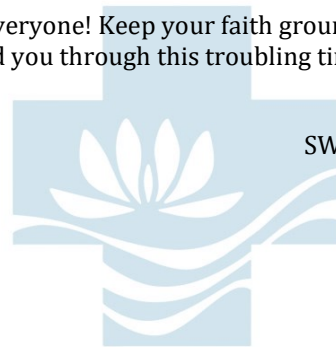
The Leadership Event is still on the calendar as I write this report, but please keep your eyes and ears open for any changes that could happen with that event. The synod board is planning to meet again via ZOOM on July 16th and we will be making the decision at that time if the leadership event will happen or not.

CONFERENCE FALL GATHERINGS: Once again there is no easy answer to the question, "Should we hold our Fall

Conference Gatherings?" This choice will have to be up to each conference board after you have weighed all the options available. It would be wise to visit with the church you have been planning to meet at to become aware of their rules/regulations. All I am going by right now is the word we received from the Churchwide Office – that ALL events of the women's organization should be cancelled or postponed for the rest of 2020. Don't be afraid to get a hold of me or a synod board member if you as a conference board is struggling with your decision!

Keep Saturday, May 1, 2021 open for the SW MN Synodical Women's Convention to be held at Celebration Lutheran in Sartell, MN.

Stay safe everyone! Keep your faith grounded in Jesus Christ to help lead you through this troubling time!



Joan Iverson
SWMN Board President

Mission Action/Stewardship

For such a time as this

This is not the article I thought I would be writing. Typically, the summer Mission Action article gives an overview of the LWR Quilt and Kit collection from our Spring Convention. It is a time to give thanks for all of the women and churches who gave so freely of their time and talents. It is a time to offer prayers of blessing and hope to those who will receive our gifts of love. In this year's article, I planned to throw in some information about collection of bandages for Global Health Ministries and Christian Literature donations, and to give a tally of the walker bags the Synod asked us to make for area care centers.

But that is not the article I am writing. "For such a time as this," a theme in the *Gather* magazine Bible study on the book of Esther last summer, and echoed again in the *Gather* study, "We are called!" (March 2020), keeps running through my mind. Who would have ever thought a few short months ago that we would have "such a time as this"? And what can our response be, as women of faith who boldly continue to love and serve our neighbors?

First of all, we can pray for our neighbors across the street and across the globe. If we are able, we can give monetary gifts to COVID-19 relief efforts: through Lutheran World Relief, through the ELCA, or to carefully selected local organizations. Many communities also have a website or help line to link volunteers with organizations that need assistance.

We can continue our quilt and kit making efforts individually at home. Many of us may have fabric and materials for piecing and/or sewing quilt tops, or there may be a way to obtain materials from your quilting group to bring home. You may be able to use your creative energy to make school bags or items for Baby Care Kits. Lutheran World Relief has a Facebook page for quilts and kits where you can get ideas, ask questions, and become inspired: www.facebook.com/groups/lwrquilters/.

In direct response to the pandemic, Lutheran World Relief is also calling for cloth face masks in their 75,000 Face Mask Challenge. The goal is to collect 75,000 face masks to send with shipments of Personal Care kits to communities in need around the world. To take part in the challenge, visit lwr.org/masks to pledge face masks to add to the overall goal of 75,000. On that page, you'll also find step-by-step instructions on how to make a face mask (although I'm sure many of you already know how), as well as instructions on how to package and ship masks to the LWR warehouses.

Several years ago, a pastor from the Synod staff met with our congregation. As part of his message, he stated, "God places us where we are." God has placed each of us in "such a time as this." I pray that each of us can continue to support one another and find purpose and ways to help others during this challenging time.

Karla Conrad, Noreen Beranek, Katherine Claussen

Mission Community/Justice

As I started to write this article a couple of weeks ago, my plan was to discuss the COVID-19 crisis and what we as a community might do to manage through this time and help those in need. Then one week ago, the topic of justice came to the forefront, not due to the pandemic, but related to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

My plan was to address the pandemic and how it has created stress and uncertainty in our communities and left so many without income or availability to access school and other resources. Now we have even more uncertainty as well as anger and fear. With the pandemic, many of the governmental rules include protection against eviction, and we are promised that both businesses and individuals will be funded in some way until this crisis passes. The universal access to health care as well as free testing is extremely important and is meant for all, no matter where they live or what their appearance might be.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health and mental health crisis, but it is also a crisis of social injustice, inequitably affecting vulnerable and marginalized populations that include, among others, individuals who earn low incomes, are incarcerated, homeless, in foster care, over 65 (especially those in long-term care facilities), people of color, or undocumented. We know that many are working to address this but there is so much unpredictability of the virus's impact on our various systems. Social distancing has not kept our church members separated from each other as we find live streaming and recording of church services, daily prayer efforts, and weekly checking in with other members in our community. I am so touched by all the various situations that we see on the news regarding the incredibly positive things that are happening to keep us all together even though separated. Another possibility is to [Pray with Lutheran Women Across the Church](#) every Tuesday at noon, with the link on the WELCA website.

It is suggested that we can contribute to the [ELCA COVID-19 Response Fund](#) and [Daily Bread grants](#). These provide critical support to struggling yet vital ministries in our church. Through [Lutheran Disaster Response International](#), the ELCA has intensified the accompaniment of global partners.

This pandemic has exacerbated racism and racial inequities in society and across the church. The ELCA is launching a special series on [LivingLutheran.org](#) to lift up the voices of others for all of us to hear. As a church together, we must work to ensure that our response to COVID-19 more effectively tends to the realities of racism and racial inequality.

Recently, in cities across this country, we have seen horrifying anti-Semitic and white supremacist messages displayed during public protests against government orders that are intended to protect lives. This has reached an emergency crisis in the past week. No matter our politics or

opinions about our elected leaders and their policies, all of us must come together on the basis of our church's commitments to condemn racism. Whether our churches and communities are racially diverse or predominantly white, our work for racial and economic justice for all people is work for all of us. "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath, do not fret-it only leads to evil" (Psalm 37:8). The peaceful protestors should not be targeted as this is the accepted process in our country. Unfortunately, there are other groups who take advantage of this difficult time as we grieve over the loss of another life in this manner and observe the continual issues related to racism.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reaffirms its commitment to combating racism and white supremacy following the recent murders of Black Americans. Ahmaud Arbery was a recent incident with the murder of a black man who was jogging in Georgia. George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis while begging for his life on May 25, 2020. We as members of WELCA are saddened by these situations, pray for, and stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all whose loved ones have been and continue to be victims of injustices and racist violence. These are just two of the many instances of racism and unjust law enforcement and social justice issues in our country.

The ELCA's social policy resolution, "Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric," adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, states: "As persons called to love one another as God has loved us, we therefore proclaim our commitment to speak with one voice against racism and white supremacy. We stand with those who are targets of racist ideologies and actions."

Several of these ideas were presented on the ELCA website by our bishop, Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton.

Prayer is essential in addressing how we can better work together for social justice in our Lutheran communities as well as for those who are not part of our church. Please keep in mind that in our rural area, we may be separated geographically from some of these issues, but there are similar situations also in each of our own communities. I ask that we open our hearts and minds to all in our communities and world, even if not a member of our own church. Awareness is the first step in making systemic change in our society. After awareness comes education and prayer. There are financial processes that can also help to address these issues and we should remember our duty to vote. "Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right" (Psalms 106:3). What is your way to maintain justice and what are you doing that is right?

Louise Ferry, Kim Christianson, Jane Tongen

Mission Growth/Discipleship

*"When doubts fill my mind and my heart is in turmoil; Quiet me and give me a renewed **HOPE** and **STRENGTH**." PSALM 94:19*

HOPE, a word described in Webster's Dictionary is a desire of some good, accompanied with an expectation of obtaining it or a belief that it is obtainable; one who, or that which gives **HOPE**.

In today's world, it's easy to see all the negativity but have you ever counted your blessings? Surely there are many blessings to count each day so let's concentrate on counting our blessings. In James 1:2 - it is written . . . "when trouble comes your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy." For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. Let it grow! For when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

It is my **HOPE** and daily prayer that when the community leaders of our state meet together seeking social justice for all humankind, they will remember these words from Matthew 22: 37-40 . . . "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.

I find it interesting that two of the words in verse 39 are **equally** and **important**: . . . which are fantastic words and I really hadn't paid attention until I read this verse over and over again. Those words are especially important now and they must be abided by.

It is a tragedy that a man died as a result of not being treated equally, and my heart goes out to the family of George Floyd. It seems only when tragedy strikes, changes are made and become real. There are times when sense gives way to chaos.

My **HOPE** is in you Lord, and it is my expectation and belief that it is obtainable.

Another tragedy that has been imposed upon us is the coronavirus and its disease COVID-19. My heart is filled with feelings of sympathy for those who have lost loved ones to this pandemic. It too is a calamity. My **HOPE** is in you Lord, that scientists and medical personnel will find a vaccine for the coronavirus. It is through the knowledge and the minds of these special people that a vaccine will become available and obtainable.

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39

The Women of the ELCA, on its website, has "**A call to prayer in the time of a pandemic.**" This is a call to prayer, to be practiced every Tuesday at noon, in your time zone. It describes reading Romans 8:38-39 first and then to follow each petition by naming specific individuals or needs. One may be inspired to journal daily with your own reflections.

Please take the time to check this item out on the website.

Pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances.

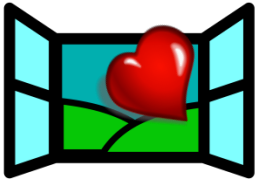
HOPE, BLESSINGS and STRENGTH

Dianne Doscher, Janet Hagen, Betty Brandt



Looking Out My Window by Joan

MOVING FORWARD



Stretch your hand out and make a fist. Chances are, your fist is in one of three positions:

1. Your thumb is on the outside of your fingers, kind of facing up.
2. Your thumb is on the outside of your fingers laying across your fingers.
3. Your thumb is inside your fingers.

I recently read an article which described how you make a fist says something about your personality:

1. If your thumb is on the outside looking up, you are strong, driven and protective.
2. If your thumb is on the outside, you are outgoing and honest.
3. If your thumb is underneath your fingers, you are kind, emotional and introspective.

So....everything you need to know about yourself is found by just looking at your fist!!! Don't we wish life was that easy?? Just like that, make a fist and you'll have all the answers! You'll know how to solve the problems of life and you'll know how to find the solutions! There are so many important things on our minds that have an impact on our emotions.

With all the COVID-19 pandemic these days, don't we all wish at times that we had all the answers????!! Just remember, we don't get to choose our trials in life, but we do get to choose how we respond to pressured filled circumstances.

How do you think the things on our hearts compare with the things that were on the hearts of Moses and the Israelites as they were leaving Egypt? In Exodus 14, the Israelite nation was not far from the land that God had promised them. Coming after them were a whole lot of fists belonging to Egyptian soldiers who were very determined to show how they felt about Pharaoh's momentary lapse in judgment for letting them go. In front of them was a body of water that they were unable to cross on their own. They did not see a way forward in life.

Just like we often don't see a way forward in life when we feel like we don't have all the answers. So what did Moses do? He stretched out his hand. Not because he wanted to show his personality but because he wanted to remind everyone what kind of God our hope is in! When the Israelites were running away from Egypt with the Egyptian army behind them and a body of water in front of them and they could not see a way forward, God made one for them.

"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left." Exodus 14:21-22

Just because you can't see a way forward in life doesn't mean God can't make one. As Jesus hung on the cross, it didn't seem like much good could happen from that. But then on Easter morning, God gave us the right to walk through life fully expecting there is nothing in all creation that is going to stop God from moving us forward!

The trial of life, COVID-19, has arrived on our doorstep. Will we waste it, or will we rejoice in it, grow through it, and rely on God above all else to help us move forward?

How can we grow as Christians during this time?
How can we be a light for Jesus during this trial?
How can we extend grace to people around us through this?

GOD BLESS as we all find ways to move forward!

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