



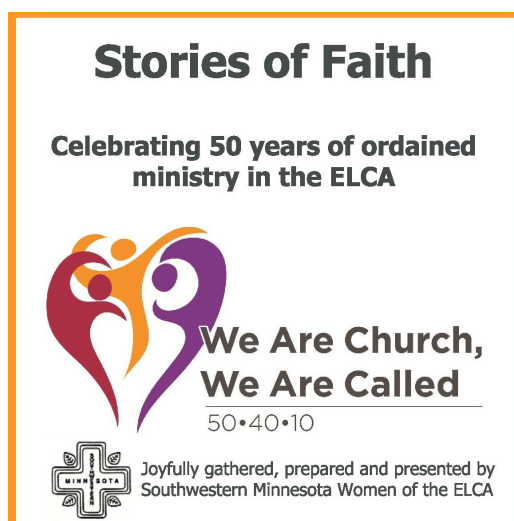
The Communicator

Stories of Faith

In Honor of the 50th Anniversary of Women's Ordination

At the 2020 Synodical Convention, our theme of “Just Celebrate” was intended to honor our female identifying clergy in Southwestern Minnesota over the past 50 years.

While the convention needed to cancel due to COVID 19, we received so many beautiful stories and reflections from our clergy that we had to share them! Therefore, we are pleased to present these “Stories of Faith.” Please click the image below or type in the url to download a copy today! Enjoy and God Bless!



<http://www.swmnwelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/StoriesofFaith.pdf>



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A Word from Your President

Greetings to all women of SW MN Synodical Women's Organization! Knowing how our lives have been changed in so many aspects due to COVID-19, I do pray that you all have had productive and positive days throughout this summer of 2020! It is so important to keep God in our daily lives as we face the challenges!

There is not a lot of "news" to report this time around. A lot of the information needed to reach you on the synod, conference and unit levels has been put out there in some form from time to time throughout the past few months. I did not hear from all conferences, but several of the conference boards did cancel the Fall Gatherings due to COVID-19.

If you ever have a question on something, feel free to contact me or your conference liaison from synod board. We are all here to help you the best we can.

So what are some of your units up to these days? I've heard a few are meeting in some form or fashion and others just haven't reached that comfort level of gathering yet. Churchwide really impresses upon us that even if your unit is not meeting – somehow keep those offerings coming in. I totally understand it's hard for some, but see what you can all do about giving those offerings yet. That leads me to the Fall Thankofferings that many units do.....Even if you can't meet in person – figure out a way to still collect those Thankofferings that are sent onto Churchwide. Put your creative minds to work to find a way to do so!

I was able to join in on a ZOOM Region 3 meeting back in July with the other Region 3 Synod Presidents and some of the churchwide staff. Some ideas shared from the meeting were a few things we can all be doing amidst the challenging days we are living. 1. Have women in your conferences or units write what COVID has been to them and put all the writings into a booklet to share with your women. 2. With churchwide revenue declining, keep the offerings coming in. 3. Read Lisa Plorin's letter (in this publication)....Lisa is the

Churchwide Ex. Board President. She brings out many good ideas of resources to refer to and ways to give those offerings.

The 2021 Convention of our synod women's organization is still on the calendar for May 1, 2021 at Celebration Lutheran Church in Sartell. The synod board will be repeating a lot of what was planned for the 2020 Convention that was cancelled. As of right now, Rev. Robin Steinke, Luther Seminary President is on the books to join us in Sartell as our main speaker. Keep your eyes open as to the happenings of the 2021 convention in the next few months.

Triennial news for August 2021 in Phoenix, AZ is posted on the website. www.welcatg.org is the website to check things out! Again, if any of you have questions regarding Triennial feel free to contact me or a fellow synod board member.

Unfortunately, none of us know how long the COVID-19 challenges will affect us. Your synod board is doing what they can to stay on top of things and let you know if any changes come about for upcoming events.

So for now just remember we are in this challenging time together and we need to keep the communication open between all women. Stay positive and be creative and keep God close to your heart!

Joan Iverson
SW MN SWO President



PRAYER REQUEST

Friends, we ask that you hold the Schipansky family in your prayers. Gail and Nancy, former owners of Sky Printing in Marshall, MN both passed away this summer. They have been a friend to WELCA, printing our Communicator editions in the early 2000's. They are survived by two children, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren

A Message From Churchwide

2020 has certainly been a trying year. Isolation and uncertainty, two words that describe what everyone is feeling due to COVID 19. This summer was to be the 11th Triennial Convention and Gathering of the Women of the ELCA in sunny Phoenix, AZ, but due to the circumstances this event was postponed until August of 2021. Many other events were also cancelled or postponed, events that we, as women of the ELCA look forward to. Retreats, conventions, bible studies, regular worship just to name a few. We are all in the same boat!

Over the past several weeks, myself and Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky have been meeting with the regional Synodical presidents over ZOOM. We use this time to connect and brainstorm ideas on how to thrive as a community of women. Yes, there is some lamenting, but the common denominator is shared through the words of our purpose statement "As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves 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."

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that this amazing organization is there for YOU! Yes, we still need to practice social distancing and conduct much of our business virtually – but it can be done. Whether you need ideas to revitalize your group or simply inspiration on how to live out our ministry as individuals, we're here for YOU!

Please take some time today to remember your calling. Go to womenoftheelca.org and re-familiarize yourself with the many resources available. Take advantage of simple things like Tuesday prayers at noon. This is an opportunity to pray with Lutheran women across the church every Tuesday at noon (in your time zone) in prayer. Design a Thankoffering container and make a conscious decision to look for things to be grateful for each and every day. Drop a few coins in the container and forward these Thankofferings on to churchwide. Reach out to the Region 3 liaison Eva Yeo (800-638-3522, ext. 2450) for support. These small gestures will help you feel connected to your siblings in Christ across the entire churchwide expression.

Hang in there, my Friends, for soon we will be celebrating together in fellowship and praise in Phoenix in August of 2021!

Lisa Plorin
Women of the ELCA President



"Just Love" A Virtual Preview



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING
AUGUST 5-8, 2021 | PHOENIX
WELCATG.ORG

Just in case you missed it, check out this virtual preview of "Just Love," the 11th Triennial Gathering for the Women of the ELCA rescheduled for August 5-8, 2021.

Click the image below or type in the url to watch:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg7o3Q1IYk4>

Looking for more Triennial 2021 resources? Check out the official website welcatg.org

Update on Beirut Blast

On September 9, Janel Johnsonmomanyi, administrator for the Facebook site, LWR Quilters & Kit Makers Community, provided the information below:

“There is an update about the explosion last month at the port in Beirut, Lebanon. It appears that the three LWR containers were in a place at the port that provided some protection from the blast. The containers were damaged – but not completely destroyed, as initially believed.

This incredible news is still evolving. As we learn more, we will continue to keep our quilt and kit community updated. We will also continue to pray for the families who lost loved ones in the explosion....Our hearts are overjoyed by your dedication and generosity in the face of tragedy. THANK YOU so much for all you do.”

To read the full announcement, check on updated information, and for inspiration and quilt and kit making tips, please visit the site at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lwrquilters/?ref=bookmarks>



Mission Action/Stewardship

“When the disciples face a great storm on the sea, they cry out with fear. Jesus says: ‘Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.’ Amid the storms of life, we gather to seek the calm presence of Christ that soothes our fears. In comforting words of scripture and in the refreshing bread and cup of the eucharist, God grants us peace and sends us forth to be a sign of God’s presence to others.”

—Sundays and Seasons

Storms of life come in many ways, sickness, loss of a loved one, fires, floods, explosions, earthquakes, you can name many more. Yet Jesus says, “Do not be afraid, I am with you.” We turn our hearts and eyes to Jesus for help and guidance. He will calm our fears and give us peace.

I was checking out the Lutheran World Relief website, lwr.org, the article on Beirut Blast: Help Families In Crisis came up. The City of Beirut, Lebanon is in crisis after an explosion on Aug 4th took many lives and destroyed entire portions of the city. Thousands of our neighbors are injured, hundreds of thousands have lost their homes and hospitals are so overwhelmed, they are turning people away. Unfortunately, the blast destroyed three of LWR’s 40 foot shipping containers which were stored in port and held more than 22,000 LWR Mission quilts, 100 cartons of School Kits, 300 cartons of Personal Care Kits, and 125 cartons of Baby Care Kits that were being prepared for distribution to an estimated 24,500 men, women, and children who were already in great need.

On August 31, I went online to check for updates on Beirut.

“Our hearts are breaking as we grieve and pray with our brothers and sisters in Beirut. We are committed to replace the aid that was lost and we are working on an emergency response to provide assistance as the city recovers and rebuilds.”

—Daniel Speckhard, president & CEO, LWR

Your gift to the World of Good emergency response fund will help get Quilts and Kits into the hands that need them in Lebanon. Monetary donations can be sent to Lutheran World Relief, thru our Synod, labeled Beirut Blast, and/or World of Good emergency response. Please check out the Lutheran World Relief website (lwr.org) to stay updated on Beirut.

Stewardship embraces the gifts of time and talents and money. We all have been given the gifts of time and talents. You are a gifted Child of God. Please use your time and talents as a sign of God’s presence to others. Let God’s light shine through you!

Noreen Beranek, Karla Conrad, Katherine Claussen

Mission Growth/Discipleship

To say this year is not what was expected would be a huge understatement. The pandemic is the topic on everyone's minds. Everyone was hoping it would be captured and was a thing of the past. Everyone has been praying that no one we knew would be adversely affected by this virus. The article that would be written in this case, would be of the joy of capturing and killing the virus, so we could move on to a more normal lifestyle. Now I am wondering if we will ever get back to "normal."

The year 2020, started out promising, with establishing New Year's resolutions. Resolutions included continuing an exercise program, losing some weight, and searching for new opportunities to assist others.

January and February went according to plan. Yes, we had snow and cold but not so much that it interfered with normal activities. In March, my daughter and son-in-law invited me to travel to Texas with them to see their newly purchased retirement home. During the stay in Texas, I enjoyed the sun, swimming, and shopping. One day led into the next. Rumblings of the flu virus were beginning to be heard. This virus was recorded in a Washington state nursing home and it was quite severe. A short time later, cases were reported in New York as well. We read that this virus was extremely contagious, and that we should avoid any close contact with others beyond our own group, family or associates.

As we traveled back to Minnesota, the news reports gave more details of this virus; including its spread within the country where people were being hospitalized and even dying. Then came the horrifying news that unless you were employed in an essential job capacity, you were instructed to "shelter at home." Businesses were closing, and if it was necessary to leave your home for any reason, masks or face coverings were recommended. Panic was starting to set in.

What's happening? *But Jesus said to them: "Take courage! It is I, don't be afraid"* Matthew 14:27

In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. John 16:33



Settling in at home, I was starting to think of others who may also be feeling isolated, lonely, depressed, or wondering what is happening. Just as I was wondering what to do, my phone rang. It was a friend calling just to check on me and to see if I needed anything. We agreed there are many others that would appreciate

hearing the sound of a friendly voice. Plans were made to call neighbors or family with an offer to pick up some groceries, medicines or maybe even a ride to the doctor. We made a commitment to call each other every Monday, to share experiences of other phone calls during the past week. We would also look ahead for additional opportunities. We found some note cards to send out to others. Ruby's Pantry, a distributor of food, needs volunteers. People are needed to sort, stage and distribute items of food to "anyone in need," on the first Thursday of every month in Marshall. Masks are worn and distances are monitored. Anyone is welcome to help in this wonderful project.

Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Matthew: 18:20



Gradually, the shutdown was lifted in phases, and officials called for partial reopening of some businesses and churches. Rock Valle Lutheran had the first "in church" service on June 21. There were two in attendance, plus Pastor Dan and his wife, Karen. There was no trouble social distancing. Attendance has grown during the weeks that followed, and more people are now comfortable. Several persons do not feel comfortable attending until the full reopening when the danger has passed. During a recent WELCA meeting the ladies assembled Personal Care Kits for our mission project. Six members and a granddaughter of one of the members put together 60 Personal Care kits which included a towel, two bars of soap, a comb, nail clippers and a toothbrush. Thanks to Thrivent for supporting this project. WELCA Synod officers and board members are continuing networking. The utilization of online tools, including new protocols and shared ideas are discussed during regular Zoom meetings.

One day, I decided to remind myself of the absolute beauty of God's creation that is unchanging and everlasting. I have made a commitment of a daily routine of riding my trike early in the morning to reflect on my blessings and renewal of my faith. I encourage others to also reflect on your blessings and faith.

One day, I hope to write: *He took our sickness and removed our disease.* Matthew 8:17

God of Peace be with you all. Romans 15:33

Dianna Doscher, Betty Brandt, Janet Hagen



We are now into our seventh month of the Coronavirus pandemic. It's been a frightening and surreal time in history, where confusion and uncertainty has become a breeding ground of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. We are now dealing with the stigma of contracting COVID-19. Who is likely to be harmed by the stigma of the coronavirus? Those people who have tested positive for the virus or showing symptoms are the most obvious victims. We must be mindful of the stigma that may be placed on the person with the infection.

The harmful effects of testing positive, presents a public stigma in a form of discrimination. Some may be excluded or shunned in social situations, a target for verbal, emotional and physical abuse. Others may experience self-stigma, where they may suffer from a tainted identity. This is harmful to their overall emotional, and psychological well-being, "why me, what did I do to deserve this?" Because of a possible "infected" label, they may choose not to be tested or not to isolate, should their results be positive. This behavior is risky for them and for others, getting in the way of public health interventions.

How can we help to promote change in the stigma of COVID-19 infection? Education is the number one thing we can seek by visiting websites with the latest updated information. Important ones to check out would be the Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov>, the World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int>, or the Food and Drug Administration: <https://www.fda.gov>. We must share the facts with our family and friends. To help to decrease the stigma of COVID-19, encourage effective contact stories. This can help humanize the experience of contracting the virus and dealing with the recovery process. Our church communities can host discussions online or in our church newsletters, inviting those testing positive to tell their stories.

Reaching out to people who may feel stigmatized is a way to "love your neighbor as yourself," Mark 12:31. Ask them how you can help them. Listen to them and show them you understand and support them in ways that feel safe, as with a text, a phone call, and finding out what they need. Bring food to their doorstep or support them online. Be intentional about connecting with others, it is life-giving.

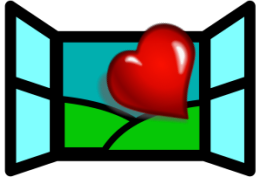
Is there any good that is coming out of this pandemic? Cortni Marrazzo, a contributing writer for Crosswalk.com, writes about 6 deep convictions COVID-19 can instill in us. Trusting God each day: Matthew 6:34; experiencing God's peace no matter the circumstances: John 16:33; blessing others in all circumstances: Mark 12:31; the importance of connecting with others: Galatians 5:13; needing rest and slowing down: Matthew 11:28; embracing thankfulness for our blessings: 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

Stigma can make it more difficult to control the spread of the pandemic. Everyone can help stop stigma relating to COVID-19 by knowing the facts. "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose," Romans 8:28. May this season build our trust and faith in Him and change us for the better. Let's not let the stigma of COVID-19 keep us from carrying out His plan to love and care for our neighbor.



Louise Ferry, Kim Christianson, Jane Tongen

Looking Out My Window by Joan



This bible verse keeps coming to me these past few weeks, *"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."* 1 Peter 5:7

Some of you know the devastation that came to our family back on August 8th. Our daughter, Jody Hintze, age 44, suffered a massive heart attack at her farm home in southern Minnesota. They were able to get her to Sanford Hospital, Sioux Falls, SD a few hours later and put 3 stents in. The doctor said her arteries were fairly clean – she had 3 areas that suffered from what they call a SCAD heart attack.- (Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection). She was of course hooked up to so many machines but 2 days later she was starting to show some progress already and we all had hopes that we'd have her home in no time, but that hope changed. On the 3rd day she started going backwards. Fever and high heart rate and other

complications. Being Sanford in Sioux Falls partners with U of M Hospital in St. Paul, the decision was made to airlift her to that hospital. She received good care at Sanford but all the medical people were more comfortable with her at the U of M as they had quicker access to equipment if needed.

The effects of COVID have joined in for our family. In Sioux Falls one adult family member at a time was with her in her room with no limit on how many family members could come in and her husband was able to be with her 24/7. With the move to Minnesota – that changed. Only one visitor per day is allowed and right now that needs to be her husband, Paul, and he can only be with her during visiting hours. So, we are all doing the best we can.

Jody has many good doctors working with her, but the waiting and wondering some days gets to be overwhelming. Paul is good to send us daily updates via text or phone. She had a couple good days showing some improvements after arriving at the U of M, but then the next week was a week of many setbacks and complications arising in her body. By the middle of August it was determined that her heart was so badly damaged it was not going to support her and she had an LVAD pump implanted to assist the blood flow of the heart. She had a tough week after surgery with more complications but then by Sept. 21st the ventilator came out and she was released from ICU by the 25th and now working hard at the rehab. She's slowly gaining strength and we are so encouraged. The road ahead is still long for her, so your continued prayers are so much appreciated!

So many have reached out with concerns, questions, lovely cards mailed – that all means so much to Glen & I at this time. It's going to be a long recovery. Jody and Paul have 4 children. Dawson (22) is married and farms with Glen & I so they live just down the road from us. [We received their happy news the week before Jody's heart attack – they are expecting their first baby in February! Indeed some happy news to hold on to through everything that has happened – gotta get used to the idea of being a great-grandma soon!!]. Their other children are Grace who is 18 and a Senior in High School this year. Henry is 10 and a 5th grader and Hattie is 9 and in 4th grade. So for now Glen & I are helping with the kids. They started school on August 24th and they do feel good to be able to be back with their friends those few hours each day.

We all definitely need your prayers. Some days I've found myself struggling to even know what to pray for anymore, so I find comfort in the words from that verse in 1 Peter.....handing over my concerns and care to the Lord, for I know He is in charge and does care and asking him to just hold Jody in his arms and care for her needs.

The Pumpkin Gospel

Being a Christian is like being a Pumpkin!

God picks you from the patch and brings you in (John 15:16)

Then washes all the dirt off of you (2 Corinthians 5:17)

He opens you up and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc. (Romans 6:6)

Then he carves you a new smiling face (Psalm 71:23)

And he puts His light inside you to shine for all the world to see (Matthew 5:16)

So, when we let God clean out our sin, by believing that Jesus died to pay for our sins, He turns us into new creations that can shine for Him! And when others see our light, then they might want to learn how to have a light of their own, too!



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