



The Communicator

Triennial Update!! Please read!



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Siblings in Christ,

Just yesterday, the Women of the ELCA National Executive Board announced the approval of big changes for the 11th Triennial Convention and Gathering. Please go to this site on the national WELCA website for the full story: <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/news/churchwide-executive-board-decides-about-convention-gathering-dates> Essentially, the board approved the following recommendations:

- That the Eleventh Triennial Convention, currently scheduled for August 3-5, 2021, be held virtually (or digitally) on those same dates.
- That the Just Love Gathering, currently scheduled for August 5-8, 2021, be postponed and registration refunds be offered. Staff will then find other ways to build community and bring women together virtually in 2021 and 2022.
- That the Twelfth Triennial Convention and a Gathering be held in Phoenix, Arizona, during the week of September 18, 2023.

There is much to sort out on how these changes will take place. Please keep your eye on the WELCA website (www.womenoftheelca.org) for the latest updates!

A Word from Your President

Greetings to all! I pray the New Year of 2021 has started out on a good note for you as we are still in that challenging time of dealing with COVID-19 all around us. May God be walking right there with each of you as we face the challenges together!

I feel like a broken record as I once again don't have a lot of news to pass on to you. As I write this it is still December 2020 and for all I know things might have changed between the time I write this and you read this – but rest assured IF anything new comes up – check the webpage at www.swmnwelca.org

There are many resources to check out on the churchwide webpage www.womenoftheelca.org. That is also where you can find the latest information on the 2021 Triennial Convention/Gathering. Keep the Executive Staff and the Executive Board in your prayers. They are really being faced with some great challenges ahead and the most challenging is the lack of surety about what the future looks like.

Remember to keep sending your offerings into your local units who then send on to the synodical level and finally they are sent on to churchwide. Hopefully your units found ways to collect a Thankoffering this past year? Being our Unit isn't meeting in person, I put together a letter and mailed to each of our members asking them to prayerfully send in what they could for a Thankoffering to our unit treasurer.

The annual Conference of Presidents meeting will have a new look this year. In the past this is when I traveled to Chicago at the end of February and met up with all the other synod presidents for an educational and fun filled weekend. This year this event will take on a new look. It will be a virtual event for all SWO leaders on Feb. 18-19, 2021, under the theme of "Pivot, Not Panic." Since it will be done via ZOOM, they are turning it into a leadership event so all synodical women's organization board members can be part

of this leadership training. Stay tuned – there will be more information coming on this event!

As of right now the 2021 SW MN SWO Convention is still on the calendar for May 1, 2021 at Celebration Lutheran Church in Sartell. More information will be coming out soon on this event and if anything changes – you will be notified!

Karen Gegner (70) of Belview, MN, passed away October 18, 2020. Karen was serving as the Scenic Valley Conference Secretary and active in her local unit. Prayers for the family of Karen Gegner.

Please keep the family of Shi Aamodt in your prayers. Shi passed away at Marshall MN on November 10, 2020 at age of 88. Shi served very faithfully to the women's organization through her active years. She served on the SW MN SWO Board from 1999 – 2002 and was an active member of Christ Lutheran Church in Cottonwood MN. Blessed be her memory.

I've been writing about our daughter, Jody, and the unfortunate SCAD heart attack she suffered August 8, 2020. After 3 months of many, many procedures and surgeries she arrived home November 11, 2020! What a glorious day that was for her family! She is doing well and I know I am daily thanking God for bringing her home to her family! Prayers are still welcome for her as she deals with the LVAD heart pump. The pump is working for her now and I pray God will grant her a few good years ahead. The future is in God's hands. We can't be sure of tomorrow, but we have today, so we need to try to live it the way God planned it!

Keep the communication open between all women – stay positive – be creative – keep God close to your heart!

Joan Iverson
SW MN SWO President

Send Us Your Stories!

Attention all Conferences, Units, and Women of the ELCA from all over Southwest Minnesota!

We all know that 2020 was not the year we thought it would be. Many of us have wrestled with grief, pain and overall loneliness as we all continue to keep our loved ones and neighbors safe from COVID 19. While there is much hope on the horizon with the coming vaccine, there are still many long days ahead before we are truly free from this pandemic.

While we wait, we cannot and HAVE not remained in complete isolation from one another. In many beautiful ways, we have sought connection and spiritual life together safely. **And, we want to hear about it!**

Send us your stories, videos, and images of the ways you and other women of the ELCA have stayed connected, prayerful and in service to a broken world this past year. We'll post them in the coming editions of the Communicator to bring a little joy and inspiration to others.

Please submit to swmnwelca@gmail.com

Mission Action/Stewardship

As I write this article, it is the first day of an Advent season that is starting out unlike any other, and the wrap-up to a Thanksgiving holiday weekend that turned out completely different than anything I could have ever imagined a year ago. Like most, if not all of you, I feel anxiety from the constant feed of reports about COVID-19 and grief at not being able to come together with loved ones during this special time of the year, interspersed with a sense of boredom and malaise. At times, I find myself wandering about the house, unable to concentrate or focus.

But in spite of the goings-on in the world, Advent came this year as it always does. Imagine other periods in the past 2000 years with similar darkness and unrest about the future – times of war, plague, famine, and persecution. Despite everything surrounding them, Christians then also waited in anticipation for the coming of Emmanuel, God with us, perhaps thinking of the words from Isaiah 41:10: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

By the time this article is published, we will have celebrated the birth of a savior, welcomed in a new year, and hopefully, will have witnessed the introduction of at least one COVID-19 vaccination. And still, we continue to wait, to anticipate the day when we can mingle freely with family and friends, travel, and experience life beyond our immediate surroundings.

Meanwhile, we can look for ways to love and support one another. “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11) I would like to encourage each of you to think of ways you can stay connected with friends, neighbors, those in care facilities, and members of your congregation even while distancing. If you know someone near you who is in quarantine drop off a meal or ask if you can pick up any groceries or other supplies for them. Write a thank you note to a teacher, a health care worker, or the staff in a nursing home or assisted living center. As a unit - designate funds for a gift basket for someone in need. And - clean that closet and donate to a local charity.

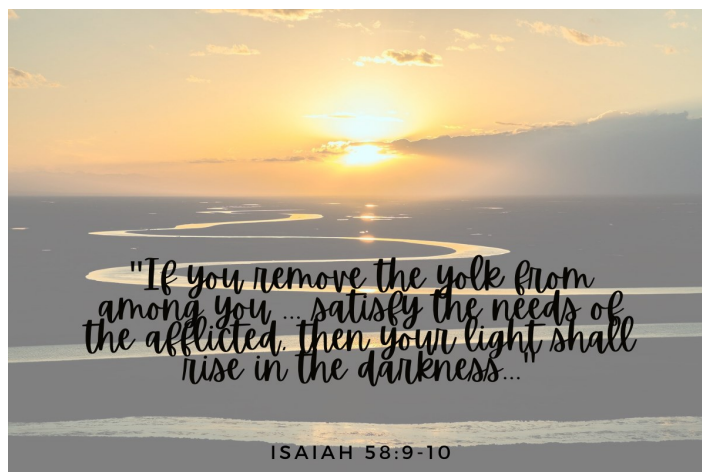
We can look for new ways to show comfort and care for those with the greatest need. There may be organizations to help the vulnerable in your community where your gifts and talents are vital.

Mission Action projects can continue, although they may look different than last year at this time. Individuals can work on quilts at home, and many of you are doing this. Another option is to roll bandages for Global Health Ministries. See <https://www.ghm.org/service-projects>. If your church has space and guidelines allow, you can keep tables and materials set up for quilt making and kit assembly so one person (or a very few if properly distanced), can drop in and work. The Lutheran World Relief Quilters and Kit Makers Community on Facebook at <https://m.facebook.com/groups/lwrquilters/> has some great ideas and tips, as well as inspiring photos and friendly dialogue.

We encourage each of you to set a personal goal of doing at least one thing each day for another person. Also, be sure to allow yourself the same care and grace you give to others. This is hard. It's important to take care of yourself and let others help you as well.

And please, if you have ideas or would like to share what your unit or congregation has done to connect with each other, we welcome your suggestions and would love to hear from you. Our email addresses and phone numbers are toward the back of the newsletter.

Karla Conrad, Katherine Claussen, Noreen Beranek
Mission Action



Mission Growth/Discipleship

Prayer... Power of Prayer... Facets of Prayer Where do I begin...



There is no wrong way to pray. Prayer is a conversation with God.

At times, when we talk with GOD, we may have a short prayer on a specific topic like pray for a certain person, an event that has happened or will happen, or a prayer of thanksgiving.

Some of us have had a long prayer life and some of a shorter prayer life. Some of us only pray in private, others are willing to share their prayers in public. In 2020, there was a lot of time spent in the quiet of our own home, or connected by phone, sometimes by Voice and Picture as in Zoom or other online media, or even in person --now at a social distance.

How do I begin to pray? How about choosing a time and location for daily prayer. The following are ideas to help begin and or even add to your prayers.

1. Pick a focus word, short phrase, a Bible passage, or even a prayer you know.
2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position. (I never know how long I may sit in that position).
3. Close your eyes.
4. Relax muscles progressively from feet, legs, thighs, abdomen, shoulders, back, arms neck and finally head.
5. Breathe slowly and begin to pray saying your words slowly, quietly, continuing to breathe naturally.
6. Assume a passive attitude, don't worry about how well you are doing.
7. Continue the prayer for 5, 10 to 20 minutes or whatever time you have available to finish your prayer.
8. When you finish, Sit quietly, open your eyes, and slowly stand up. How do you feel now?

What are some facets of prayer?

I see "facets of prayer" as a communion with God. It can be conservation of thankfulness, a conversation of asking for healing for someone, a conversation of meditation . . . it's also a source of support supplying a spiritual structure to my life and which we depend on in our daily functioning. Faith enters in and through our pattern of praying which is a constant consciousness of God working in us and through us thinking and working for others.

Our prayers are special means of talking with God and asking for his help in making decisions that we encounter in life . . . sometimes the answers are not necessarily what we desire, but knowing also that God in his due time will answer our prayers. We ask God for His Will to be done.

God gives each of us gifts for us to use . . . let's learn how to use them by praying and asking for guidance in using those gifts and talents.

In all we do, prayer helps us to achieve a goal . . . to feel secure . . . to feel a sense of usefulness to others . . . to know that with prayer all things are possible.

Join me in a prayer for the day?

Dear Lord,

Help my sisters and I remember what a difference it makes when we make time with You a priority in my morning. Awaken me in body and spirit each day with a desire to meet with You and to hear You speak words of affirmation, assurance, and wisdom over my heart as I prepare to go into my day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Your sisters in Christ,

Betty Brandt, Janet Hagen, Dianna Doscher
Mission Growth

Mission Community/Justice

Justice over Time

This Article is a joint project. I was so drawn in by a sermon given by my Pastor, Angela Denker, that I asked if I could use parts of it in this article. I thank her for her permission.

Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD!

Why do you want the day of the LORD?

It is darkness, not light; as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear;

Or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake.

Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? Amos 5:18-20

In this time we are not only dealing with all that the pandemic brings us, which is a dark time, but may also seem like an injustice put upon us. But always remember God is GOOD! But each of us does not hold the answer to the pandemic in our own hands. There are injustices in this world that each and every one of us can do something about by being an extremist, as Martin Luther King Jr. describes Jesus and many others.

Excerpt from the April 16th 1963 Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King Jr:

So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my

conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

(* to read Letter from a Birmingham Jail in its entirety, please visit the following website: https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)

This is unaltered and surprisingly it still applies the same today.

What extreme act is God calling you into? How do you love God in an extreme way? What is the injustice around you that you can be a part of addressing? Whatever your answers are to these questions, or even if you have no answers.

God is for everyone's God! God is not defeated. God is on the move in times of turmoil and change. God dwells in the darkest places. God is here with us. God is at work among us.

God I pray that You will watch over us all, In the days ahead through the ups and downs of this time of so many changes that are affecting the entire world. Please bring Health to those in need, and Comfort to those grieving. Help us to be extremist for Truth, Justice, our Faith and LOVE.

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:24

Jane Tongen, Louise Ferry, Kim Christianson
Mission Community

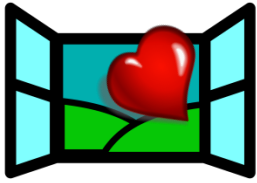
Staff Changes for National Women of the ELCA

On December 23, the National Executive Board approved the budget for the coming year. In light of a substantial decrease in giving in 2020, the board need to make drastic staffing changes. Eight of the ten staff members for Women of the ELCA have been bumped to part time employment until August 2021. At that time, the status of those jobs will be reevaluated.

- Please visit the WELCA website to read the full story: <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/news/with-giving-down-women-of-the-elca-forced-to-make-staff-changes>
- If you are convicted and wish to see these good jobs restored, please consider a donation to the National Women of the ELCA: <https://community.elca.org/welca> Better yet, please encourage your local units to check their budgets and make sure their usual donations have been sent.

Looking Out My Window by Joan

Happy New Year!



Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? Ecclesiastes 8:7

As the new year is upon us, many of us are busy switching calendars in our homes! We take down the 2020 calendar and put up the 2021 calendar. I always like to use the calendar that has plenty of space by each day to write the events that will happen because sometimes there can be more than one event going on the same day!

As I review the 2020 year I see my calendar is all marked up with the things I did this past year. This is the first year I remember crossing off so many planned events due to COVID-19 – how about you??? This 2020 calendar is really of no use to me now except to help me remember what I did last year!

As I look at the 2021 calendar it is all nice and clean and this calendar is ready for me to start planning for this coming year. As the events come up I'll be writing them in on the calendar and pretty soon the new calendar will begin to look like last year's calendar as I make plans for the future!

There is nothing wrong with planning for the future – we all do it, but we need to remember that no matter what our plans may be, we can't know for sure what is in the future. The Bible says, "Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come?" We can put appointments on this calendar from now to next December, but the only day that we can be sure of is today!

Some of us become worried and scared because we can't be sure of the future, but we don't need to worry, because even though we don't know what the future holds, we know who holds the future. The future is in God's hands, so we can rest easy in the plans that He has made for us. We cannot be sure of tomorrow, but we have today, so we need to try to live it the way God planned it! ENJOY TODAY!

Coming Soon....

33rd SWO Synod Convention
May 1, 2021
Celebration Lutheran Church
Sartell, MN

Just Celebrate!

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



While we know much is still unknown about whether we can gather safely in the coming year, we are hopeful that our annual convention may resume this May. Watch for more information in the coming months and Save the Date in the meantime!

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