

WHAT'S NEWS

Women ^{of the} ELCA 

Southwest California Synodical Women's Organization • Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2021



It's that time of the year when we oftentimes think about seasons: winter season, turkey season, football season, and of course... Christmas season which includes the giving season. Wow, I don't know about you, but venturing out into the stores has been a very daunting experience. The stores are a mess, carts are sparse, checkout lines are long, and fellow shoppers don't seem to have much of that "Holly Jolly" spirit. The joy of giving can take on a whole new meaning, much of it commercialized or an unwelcome obligation: Who do you give to? How much do you spend? Are presents fairly distributed across your giving list? Should

you buy gifts for the dog? Your cat? Your neighbor's cat? Are homemade gifts enough? Does everyone like cookies? Gluten free? Vegan? Sugar substitutes? Some families make it easier by drawing names. But what about the postman? The UPS guy? Your hairdresser? And on and on.

But perhaps our giving season overload is one of abundance. We have so much to be grateful for and the fact that we CAN give to those we care about, is a blessing in itself.

As Lutherans we have many giving opportunities to share our blessings. The season of Christian charity is year-round. Those less fortunate than we, both in this country and around the world are in need and we can help our Lutheran social welfare organizations make a difference to those who suffer.

Detailed in this newsletter are some opportunities where you can help our ELCA organizations bring comfort and joy to those who are in difficult situations.

- Page 5: Lutheran Social Services of Southern California,

- Page 5: Equal Exchange Fair Trade coffee and other products
- Page 7: Lutheran World Federation
- Page 8: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services

Many of our individual congregations support international programs such as Samaritan's Purse with shoeboxes full of helpful supplies for children in Central America. Others collect money to buy cows, chickens, rabbits, even bees, for struggling farmers in Africa and other places in the world through the Heifer Project.

Churchwide ELCA has a wonderful online GOOD GIFTS CATALOGUE - ([click here](#)) to link to the site and purchase gifts that make a difference.

What does your church do during this season of giving? What does your cluster do? What does your unit do? We'd like to know so we can share information about your programs to inspire others?

Send an email to your cluster representative (page 6) and tell us all about it. ■



“Together We Are Strong”



If two similar plants are put together in the same pot, their roots intertwine and grow together, giving each one greater strength than either would have had alone. This same truth applies to people as well. Nature draws us to people of

like mind because what we can accomplish together exceeds what any of us can do alone. All successful partnerships are based on this principle.” *Spirit is Calling*, a daily journal p. 250

One of the reasons I have found such satisfaction in being involved in the women’s organization, is the opportunity to work with others to accomplish goals. I am continually amazed, when organizing events such as our convention, at how we work together to make it happen. Each of us on the Board and the support people outside the board bring our gifts to the task at hand. Beth Bunnell, our secretary, reached out to her extensive contacts, Mary Stewart became interested in researching and promoting the land acknowledgment routine, Janet Simmons is the support person who, at our last in person event, chose the thank you gifts, Dianne Tillman brings us her talents with music, Karil Drake brings her expertise in technology, Mary Ridenour calls our attention to details overlooked, Lillian Simons provides and promotes Fair

Trade products, Rosemary Lawson is our historian with accumulated wisdom over her years of participation in Women of the ELCA, while Pastor Tracy Williams helps us with worship and diversity issues. Thanks to Julie Jensen for her registration skills for our events, Joyce Opjorden brings her knowledge of Robert’s Rules of Order as parliamentarian, Sharon Heck shares her active interest in peace and justice

in her newsletter articles, as well as sharing her skills in music, and Maxine Stenstrom’s gifts of editing and graphics give us our excellent newsletters and fliers. We come together as a board and as a community of women from all over the synod with diverse ages, ethnicities, life experiences, gifts, personalities, but all connected to one faith and one God.

When we plan an event, we use everyone’s gifts to make it happen and the event reflects those who plan it. In our work life we may work in such a team, but as a teacher I was on my own in the classroom. Working as a team in the church brings me joy especially when we make a positive difference in the life of others.

As we add new members to our Board through elections, we are excited to see new possibilities ahead. May you too experience the joy of working together in your units and congregations joining the gifts of all to improve the world. ■



Loving Connections

Southwest California Synodical Women's Organization 20th Convention
October 15-16, 2021

CONVENTION RECAP

Our synodical convention for 2021 was held via Zoom on Friday evening, October 15, and all day Saturday, October 16, under the theme "Loving Connections." Sixty-five women registered for the convention. Pastor Tracy Williams led the opening worship introducing our scripture theme *Colossians 3:12-14*. This scripture reminds us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and love. Pastor Julie Morris from Mount Cross Lutheran in Camarillo expanded on the theme verse in two Bible study sessions on Saturday.

Our main business for the convention, in addition to approving the budget for 2022 was the election of the following officers and board members.

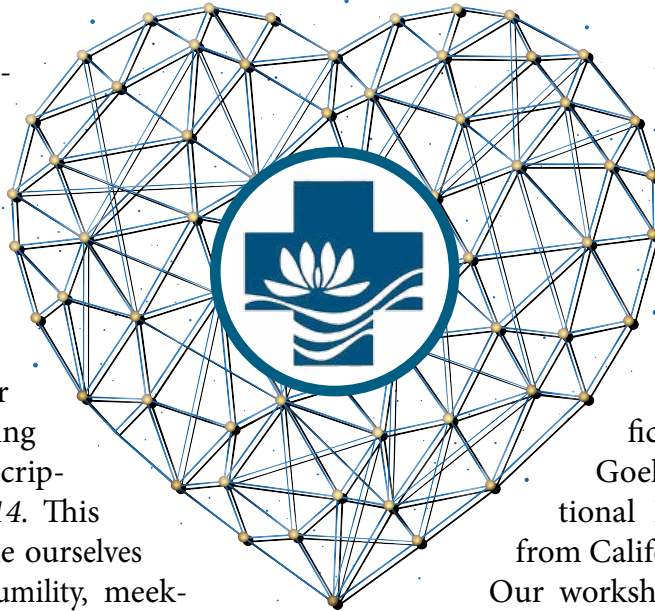
OFFICERS:

President: Dixie Hanson
Vice President: Karil Drake
Secretary: Beth Bunnell
Treasurer: Julie Jensen

BOARD MEMBERS:

Pastor Marta Moscoso, Karen Moyer,
Ana Nieva, Pastor Maria Paiva, Mary Shipp,
Lillian Simons, Janet Simmons

Laura Krueger from the Grand Canyon Synod was our churchwide representative at the convention, bringing us greetings from Churchwide and also leading a workshop on Women of the ELCA. She was very helpful as a consultant and guide, as she also attended a couple planning meetings, as well as being present at our convention. We also elected delegates



to the next Triennial Convention in 2023: Gwen Jackson and Allison Johnson, both first-time attendees.

In addition to Laura's greetings from Churchwide WELCA, Regina Banks, LOPP director, brought a greeting from Lutheran Office of Public Policy and Desta Goehner, Director of Congregational Relations, brought greetings from California Lutheran University.

Our workshops included Laura's on W/ELCA and the flexibility the constitution allows congregational units to organize. There are six possible models of organization for units.

Pastor Joseph Castaneda Carrera led a workshop on Anti-Racism, reminding us that we should not categorize people into opposing groups, but listen to each other, as we are all both saints and sinners. He also lifted up those who have disabilities as a group to which we need to pay more attention.

Our third workshop included people telling their stories including Bishop Brenda, Pastor Neil Virginia Greeley, Naomi Mbise, a CLU student from Tanzania and Martha Avila, telling her family's immigrant story. All the stories helped us appreciate the importance of listening to others' stories as we broaden our perspective.

Our offering totaled \$1,080 and after convention expenses were paid, was divided between Churchwide W/ELCA and AMMPARO. Thanks to the YouTube music, we were able to offer great arrangements of hymns, including our theme song, "We are Called." We were pleased to receive positive feedback for the event. ■

Our message for the Thanksgiving season comes from a blog first published by the Women of the ELCA in 2015 by Audrey Novak Riley. It seems to have relevance to today as we prepare our hearts for Christmas:

Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices; who, from our mothers' arms, has blessed us on our way, with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

What a beautiful hymn of thanksgiving for God's blessings! Have you ever wondered where it came from and what inspired the hymn writer? I have – so I looked it up. Here's how it came about.

In 1617, a young clergyman named Martin Rinkart came back to his home town of Eilenburg in the German state of Saxony, newly appointed to serve the church in that ancient walled city. But the very next year, war broke out - the war later named the Thirty Years' War. Wave after wave of hungry refugees crowded into the city as armies devastated the countryside over and over again.

Oh, may this bounteous God, through all our life be near us, With ever joyful hearts, and blessed peace to cheer us, And keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed; And free us from all harm, in this world and the next.

Martin and the three other pastors in town worked day and night to serve their suffering people - and then, two decades into the war, plague broke out

in the starving city. One pastor ran away, hoping to escape death. The other two died of the plague, leaving Martin the only minister in Eilenburg during the worst of the epidemic. He presided over nearly 4,500 funerals in 1637 - sometimes 50 in a day. Altogether,



NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD

A hymn written in the time of war and plague

8,000 townspeople died of plague that year, including Martin's beloved wife, Christina.

And yet, during that horrible time, Martin was able to write this beautiful hymn. Can you imagine writing this joyful hymn of praise and thanksgiving even as war, disease and starvation raged all around, with no end in sight?

Pastor Martin lived to see better times. His hymn was published as a table prayer and quickly became well-known. The war finally ended in 1648, and his hymn was sung at the signing of the peace treaty. Pastor Martin died in his hometown the next year at the ripe old age of 63, having survived famine, pestilence and war. Do you think they sang his hymn at his funeral?

Pastor Martin's beautiful hymn, translated into English by Catherine Winkworth, appears in our Lutheran hymnal as well as in those of many other denominations. And I know many of us sing it at our Thanksgiving tables.

All praise and thanks to God, the Father

now be given; the Son and Spirit blessed, who reign in highest heaven; The one eternal God, whom earth and heav'n adore; For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

—Evangelical Lutheran Worship 839, 840

Pastor Martin was able to see blessings and give thanks to God even during the darkest times of his family's life and his community's life. What blessings do we see today? How shall we give thanks? The connections formed among women of faith, not just within the congregation but across the synod and throughout the church, are among those blessings. We know this to be true! ■

Zoom Thankoffering Service

We held our first Zoom Thankoffering Worship on Monday evening, November 15 with about 25 attendees. Pastors Maria Paiva and Marta Moscoso led the worship with Pastor Maria and her sister and also new board member, Ana Nieva, singing together with Ana's guitar. The service was a mixture of English and Spanish in word and song and ended with the Women of the ELCA 2015 blog by Audrey Novak Riley which is detailed on this page.

Our Thankoffering supports the Women of the ELCA organization and all the resources available to us in our congregational units. If you would like to send a Thankoffering, make your check out to Women of the ELCA marking it for Thankoffering in the memo line and mail to Karil Drake at 3046 N. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91504. Karil, our outgoing treasurer, will send it on to the churchwide organization.

Have a blessed season of Thanksgiving as we prepare for the coming of the Christ child! ■

The Gifts of the Spirit

by the Rev. Sara Olson-Smith

BIBLE STUDY ON ZOOM

4th Monday of the Month
7:00 – 8:30pm

Dixie says... Our SWO Board has learned during the pandemic that Zoom can work! We hear that some congregations do not have a Bible study group because they do not have anyone who feels the call to lead it. So how about a monthly Zoom study group for those who would like to do the study from the *Gather* magazine with others. Or if you miss your in-person meeting and want a chance to discuss, come join us on Zoom. Dianne Tillman will begin leading the study, but we would love to turn it over to someone else in the synod or beyond who loves leading these studies.

TO RSVP FOR THE BIBLE STUDY:

Email Dianne at dianne.tillman08@gmail.com
so see can send you the Zoom link for the study.
Looking forward to seeing you on Zoom!



Join the Movement at Southern California Lutheran Social Services

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency — but it is far more. It is an economic crisis. A social crisis. And a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis.”

—Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a significant surge in the number of vulnerable clients who need emergency services. As other agencies closed, our essential team members remained on the front lines, walking alongside both at-risk and marginalized clients, many for the first time. The highest demand is for warm meals, emergency shelter, hygiene products, diapers, wipes, formula, and rental assistance. The need may seem insurmountable, but we know generosity has the power to unite and heal communities. Your gift can shift the narrative, check the list below to make a difference today.

Wearable and Warm (new or slightly used)

Coats / Jackets, Gloves, Scarves, Socks, Rain Boots

Canned Goods (pop tops please)

Chili, Ravioli/Spaghetti-O's, Tuna, Soup,
Chef Boyardee Pasta Meals

Hygienic Supplies

Wet Wipes (travel packs or singles), Disinfectant Cleaner,
Deodorant (Men's and Women's),
Blessing Bags

Anything to Keep Dry

Umbrellas, Sleeping bags, Blankets, Comforters, Tarps,
Tents, and other shelter materials

Paper Goods

Bowls, Paper Towels, Toilet Paper,
Plastic forks & spoons Napkins

Pre-Packaged To-Go Foods

For more info on how to give to LSSSC contact:
Corporate Office: 999 Town and Country Road
Suite 100, Orange, CA 92868
Toll Free: 877-577-7267
Email: info@LSSSC.org



EQUAL EXCHANGE Fair Trade Coffee, Tea & Chocolate

Are you interested in supporting coffee and tea growers getting a fair wage? Fair trade coffee and tea are available for purchase from Lillian Simons either by personally ordering from her, or by inviting her to your church gathering where she would display items for

purchase. Lillian is willing to visit your group along with her lovely chauffeur, Karil Starleaf, if you contact her with your request at homenow96@gmail.com or by phone at 323-254-6632.

Visit equalexchange.coop to see all the wonderful Equal Exchange products and find out more about the Equal Exchange program. ■

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**Searching for our websites?
Here's a few that might help you connect:**

SoCal SWO Facebook

www.facebook.com/swcawomenoftheelca

Southwest California Synod

www.socalsynod.org/ministries/swca-synod-women-of-the-elca

W/ELCA | Southwest California Synod

www.socalsynod.org/category/welca

W/ELCA Churchwide website

www.womenoftheelca.org

W/ELCA Churchwide Facebook

www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA



PEACE WITH JUSTICE

LWF HAS FIRST WOMAN GENERAL SECRETARY

by Sharon Heck

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global community of 148 churches in the Lutheran tradition representing over 75.5 million Christians in 99 countries. Our ELCA is a member. It was established in 1947 in Lund, Sweden and is now headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. LWF works in 25 countries carrying out emergency responses and long-term development that assists 2.7 million people. As of November 1, 2021 the LWF General Secretary is the first woman and the first person from Central Eastern Europe. Her name is The Rev. Anne Burghardt (pictured at right) and she is from the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Rev. Anne was born in 1975, during the era of Soviet occupation. She grew up in a secularized family environment because her father, aunt, and grandmother were deported to Siberia in 1949. Her grandparents had been active members of the Lutheran Church. A high-school friend invited her to attend a confirmation class and her high school was one of few in Estonia to allow religious education classes. Her discussions with classmates and friends sparked an interest in religious questions. “Everyone was looking for an identity, both on a national level and, in a certain sense, at a personal level too,” she recalled. Ten years later in 2004 she was ordained as a pastor at St. Mary’s Ca-



thedral in Tallinn, Estonia. “I sensed I wanted to serve the church with the gifts I’d been given,” she said. She studied theology in several European countries and worked on her PhD in Orthodox liturgics. She has had a very diverse career as a pastor including innovating a theological program called “Studies in Christian Culture.” Pastors and others were trained to think in differentiated ways, not just in black and white responses. She also worked in conflict resolution, HIV counseling, and community development in disadvantaged rural areas. For five years she worked at the Communion Office in Geneva as LWF’s Study Secretary for Ecumenical Relations. She has also been serving as a vicar at two parishes, one of which is a flourishing parish where her husband, Rev. Matthias Burghardt, serves as lead pastor. The other parish is in a small community on a former military base.

Rev. Anne hopes to include strengthening theological discussion around the Lutheran understanding of ordination in order to support churches that are moving towards including women in the ordained ministry and in leadership positions. As the first woman to lead the LWF, she believes many women will be encouraged by this example.

She and her husband have two children, aged 17 and 10. A third adopted child, Johannes, a former Palestinian refugee they welcomed into their family, now lives in Germany and has a six-year-old daughter. I believe it is a great blessing to LWF and to all of us that they chose such a gifted and spiritual person as their new General Secretary. ■

**WHAT'S
NEWS**

Women of the **ELCA** 

SWO • SoCal Synod

MISSION STATEMENT
To mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

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.

Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Avenue
Port Hueneme, CA 93041
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



Help Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services bring HOPE AND CHEER to families and children waiting in detention centers for their asylum cases to be processed.

All you need are Christmas cards (no envelopes)
Write a greeting* on a card and sign your first name and city.
Gather all the cards prepared by your congregation, add a cover sheet with the following information:

1. Congregation's name and address
2. Pastor's name and email address
3. Point of Contact name and email address
4. Number of cards sent

Mail in a manila envelope or a box to the church listed below that will send them to the centers.

**First English Evangelical Lutheran Church
Attention: Hope for the Holidays
3807 Charles Street, Baltimore MD 21218**

*Possible greetings (write in English and/or Spanish):
Dear friend/ *Querido amiga/o*
Greetings from (city/state) / *Saludos desde (city/state)*
My name is (first name only) / *Me llamo (first name only)*
Merry Christmas / *Feliz Navidad*
May God bless you! / *Que Dios se bendiga!*

For more information, please visit www.lirs.org