



# Reflections...

**A Newsletter of the Women of the ELCA + Northern Great Lakes Synod**

**MARCH 2020**

## **A message from...Synod Women's Organization President Melzee Jacobson**

Hello Ladies,

I know that this is longer than usual, but please take the time to read through it thoroughly. There is important information for all of us.

There is much happening in the world of the Synodical Women's Organization, as well as we know that many things are happening on the cluster and unit level. There are also things happening on the Churchwide level in preparation for the upcoming Triennial in July and yes in Phoenix, Arizona. Some clusters are preparing for their Spring Cluster gatherings. Some clusters will be visited by SWO Board Members this spring to explore how they may become more active. Some units will be having elections for officers (remember let Pam Chouinard, SWO Vice President, know about any changes). Our Synodical organization along with the Host group for the fall retreat will be working towards our Fall Convention and Retreat Event. Remember we will have a table at the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly in May. Come and see us if you are in attendance.

One of my goals as a member of the board was to increase communications between unit, conference and board members. We have come along rather slowly but I believe that we are working toward this goal as a team. Thank you.

- We have gone digital with our Newsletter, Reflections. We know that this does not reach anyone that is not on the internet, but we will still send out paper copies if you submit a subscription (which is located in this newsletter). It is still only \$5.00 a year for four copies.
- We have worked hard at keeping our section on the Northern Great Lakes Synodical Webpage ([nngls.org](http://nngls.org)) up-to-date. There should be a list of board members and how you can contact them. There should be past and recent Reflections. There should be information about the convention and retreat. We thank Betsy Koski, NGLS Staff Treasurer, for making sure that when we send in the information, she forwards it to the webmaster.
- We also have a group on Facebook, NGLSWO. Look up this group and request to join, one of the administrators will process the request. This is where you can share news that happens between Reflections distribution.
- Have you all taken the time to visit the Women of the ELCA site on the internet? ([womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org)) It has numerous resources and information available for your use in Bible Studies, Personal, Retreat, short sessions, liturgical year, multi session, racial justice advocacy, stewardship, they are also available in Spanish.
- You can shop for gifts, there is a blog. It has tools for leaders.
- They also have publications to include (which are free)
  - Bold Connections a monthly e-newsletters.
  - Bold Café – a monthly online magazine for young adult women.
  - Interchange – a quarterly e-newsletter for leaders.

Gather Magazine – the magazine of Women of the ELCA, offers a number of articles, theological reflections, devotions and stories of comfort and challenge that help readers grow in faith and engage in ministry and action. Gather is published 10 times a year with combined issues in January/February and July/August. **A print subscription is \$19.95 a year. Digital access (computer, iPad Android) is free to print subscribers. To subscribe by phone call 1-844-409-0576. I just received an e-mail inviting me to request 25 free (one time) copies to have sent to my church so that they can be shared with women of our congregation. If you are interested, call and see if the offer is still open. It has a card in it that will allow new subscribers to order Gather for the first year at the price of \$9.95.**

Below I am sharing information I received at the Conference of Presidents this month. This is the beginning of a new century and the beginning of a brand-new decade. Changes come with time (and I realize that change is hard), but hopefully, if accepted, the changes below will be welcomed in the small rural areas.

### **Triennial Convention Proposed Constitutional Changes**

Voting members at our 11<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention will be deciding on several important proposed changes to our constitutions. Many of these seek to make room for more flexibility in the way we live out our mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ, some streamline our leadership structures and some bring us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Here are some highlights

#### **Flexibility**

Instead of mandating that every woman in leadership must be a participant in a unit, proposed constitutional language **encourages** each leader to be a participant in a unit. (However, she still must be a voting member of an ELCA congregation.)

Likewise, instead of mandating that every Synodical women's organization must have clusters or conferences, proposed constitutional language **encourages** each Synodical women's organization to foster clusters or conferences.

The traditional titles for SWO leaders are sometimes intimidating to possible candidates for leadership. Proposed language offers the **option** of calling these leaders chairs, co-chairs, coordinators, or the like. The only SWO officer who must keep the traditional title is the treasurer, to facilitate her work with banks and other outside entities.

#### **Streamlining**

Our Churchwide constitution currently mandates that SWO boards must consist of a certain set number of people, and if the SWO wants to change that number, it must submit a formal request and wait for the Churchwide executive board to approve the request. Proposed language does away with that -- it merely says **"three or more" board members**, and each SWO board may make its own adjustments as circumstances require.

Our constitutions currently rule out electing two women to the SWO board from any one congregational unit; proposed language allows for the election of **one officer and one board member from the same unit.**

Proposed changes include streamlining the Churchwide board as well. Currently the board has four officers and 17 other elected members, for a total of 21: proposed language calls for **four officers and 11 other elected members, for a total of 15.** These 11 members would consist of one from each of

the 9 ELCA regions, plus two at-large members. Proposed language also expands and adjusts our recommendations for diversity and inclusion so that we don't recommend fractions of people.

Many Synodical women's organizations struggle with the process of electing voting members to the triennial convention. Proposed language simplifies that thoroughly, calling for **three voting members from each SWO**: the president and two others. The proposed language takes into account our updated goals for diversity and inclusion in nominating and electing the members of this three-person delegation.

### **Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

We recognize that our commitment to diversity and inclusion within our organization calls for updates to our constitutions from time to time. Proposed language now encourages the inclusion of women age **45 or younger** and the inclusion of **members of the LBGTQIA+ community** in leadership, including in the election of voting members to the triennial convention.

Proposed changes make clear that board meetings **need not involve travel**. Many of us are happy to use videoconferencing (for example, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, or the like) for meetings, and the proposed changes recognize that reality.

### **It took a lot of work**

These proposed changes grew out of the recommendations of the exploratory committee whose charge was to seek ways to help our community of women created in the image of God stay healthy and growing far into the future. Our elected Churchwide board pondered, considered and amended the committee's proposals over several meetings (some by videoconference). What you see here is the result of a lot of study, a lot of thought, and a lot of work. Our voting members in convention will have the final say on whether they go into effect.

This is my last year serving as your President. I have appreciated your support in this position, and I feel that we have continued to grow in so many ways together. Our numbers of voting members at conventions has grown (and yet we have some growing left to do) so please help me encourage your units in your clusters to consider sending a voting member. Even if a church does not have an active unit, our constitution states they are eligible to have a voting member at the convention.

This also means that at the Fall 2020 convention, voting members will be electing a new President. Along with a new Treasurer and at least one new board member (Those holding these positions have termed out and do not wish to opt for another position). I ask that you pray and discern if God may be calling you to any of these positions, and if so, you would submit your nomination papers at the appropriate time. If you have any questions about the positions, feel free to call any of us at any time to discuss it.

## **A message from...Synod Women's Organization Vice President Holly Guerin**

Lent is often seen as a time when people 'give things up.' This comes from the practice of fasting and careful preparation for baptism at Easter which once took place. It is associated with the period of 40 days which Jesus spent in the wilderness preparing himself for his ministry. We no longer endure fast of several days to help us in our spiritual journey, but it is no less important for us to be spiritually focused and obedient to God. It is only as we really determine to cut out the background noise and listen to God's voice that we can begin to turn our hearts and minds in the right direction and find true fulfillment in living. So use this Lent as a time to get yourself spiritually fit, you know you'll feel better for

it!

Lent is used in the church as a 40 day time of prayer and repentance in preparation for Easter. It is a good time for us to have some religious reflection and contemplation.

Holly Guerin Vice President ([http://www.thischurch.com/christian\\_teaching/lent.htm](http://www.thischurch.com/christian_teaching/lent.htm))  
(<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/resources>)

## A message from...Synod Women's Organization Secretary Pam Chouinard

"Good Morning *EASTER PEOPLE!*"

One of my favorite memories of Pastor Cy Warmanen, was when he visited our church in Gladstone one Sunday morning in July, many years ago. Standing behind the pulpit he looked around the congregation and smiled. Then in his booming voice he said "**Good Morning Easter People.**"

Now for anyone that knows me, I adore all holidays and my house displays the current holiday theme throughout, so you can imagine how shocked I was when Pastor was talking about Easter after my Easter decorations have been safely packed away for more than 2 months. Easter in July! Needless to say he did catch my full attention.

Pastor went on to explain that as Christians we are "Easter People." We walk in the sure and certain hope that just as Jesus rose from the dead to sit at the Father's right hand, we too have Jesus' promise that all who believe in him will have everlasting life. Our response to this promise—this gift—is to worship God with praise and thanks for what God has already done for us through Jesus Christ.

We are the Easter people who believe that the cross transformed all suffering and pain, and the Resurrection secured the promise of eternal life. This is Easter faith, that we are called to live each day.

*John 11:25-26: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

This Easter, amidst the joy and celebration of our new lives in Christ, let us also celebrate the joy of new life with others. Let us begin to set aside our pride and petty difference that not only separate us from each other, but also separate us from God. Let us strive to become "**Easter People**" who know and reflect God's love through our love for one another as equals—equally beloved children of God. Thank You Pastor CY for this wonderful memory and teaching us to be Easter People all year long!

~Please send any changes that occur in your Women of the ELCA at your home congregation. Concerning changes in leadership, address change, phone number change, or anything else you would like us to know about. God Bless all of you during this Lenten Season!

## A Message from...Synod Women's Organization Treasurer, Kris Carlson

Greetings Dear Sisters in Christ, Hard to believe that Lent is almost here. Traditionally Lent was giving up something: what about thinking of trying something new. A few years ago, I never imagined being on the SWO Board—let alone, becoming the treasurer. I've enjoyed it, it's been a great learning experience and I've so appreciated your prayers and support along the way.

By SWO Constitution, I will be termed out after this year. It takes a leap of faith to say yes to try something new. You can do it. Prayerfully consider taking an active role in Board leadership.

## A Message from... Synod Women's Organization Board Members

### **A message from: SWO Board Member: Sue Hill**

How easy it would be to say that God has abandoned us for the New Year rather than we have been granted another year to share the story of grace given to us by His Son?

I hope that we will all continue to pray and support our fellow humans in their time of need. After all one of the things Jesus has tried to teach is to care for all people, not just the ones we know or like.

One of the joys of being on the SWO council has been seeing the great joy that comes from the Women of the ELCA when they are doing the work of the Lord.

How special the worship services at our conventions have been when all of us praise the Lord together in one loud and happy voice.

These are just some of the thoughts I've had over my terms on the board. I needed to share them because this has helped me to deepen my faith and look with kinder eyes on others.

Sue Hill, Board Member

### **A message from: SWO Board Member: Karen Reitz**

Friends, families and church communities; what do you think of when I mention these three groups of people? I think of people who are in need of prayer!

There are so many needs we can be praying for in our everyday lives. Praying for physical healing, providing of basic needs and guidance for the future of our groups, just to name a few.

At this time of year we seem to be inside a great deal trying to stay warm. What warms my heart is to be praying for my family, friends and church communities. I have a special space where I can light a candle, sit quietly and listen to God's still voice as I pray for others. In this place I can pray while reading Scripture, write in prayer journals or color in sketch books. This place isn't always available to me such as when I'm out of town or just out of the house. In these times there are parks to walk in, benches to sit on and any numerous items in God's creation to look upon and praise God for.

Going for a snowshoe walk with a close friend or someone that you would like to get to know better, is a great time to share God's beauty and thank him in prayer together. So the next time that you are feeling tired of being cooped up in the house, give your prayer time a little refreshment, try praying in a new location or changing up what you are doing during your prayer time, such as coloring or drawing, painting or creating.

Karen Reitz, Board Member

## A message from: SWO Board Member: Mary Lou Stefanski

**A FEW QUOTES:** Often being accused of reading/listening to books too much let me give you an appetizer of a few of the books (light reading) that I have enjoyed. Hopefully, not only will they provide food for thought but wet your palette enough to try these on as a main course.

*Amanda , when younger, about to weed her vegetable garden asked her mom “why God created weeds. It had seemed like it was already an awful lot of work to maintain a garden that was free from pesky weeds trying to strangle the good plants that would provide the family with vegetables to eat. Her mom smiled at her and explained ‘It is God’s way of making certain we appreciate what we have. The harder we have to work for something, the better it often is. This is the same with us people dotter [daughter]; we have to weed our hearts and minds from ugly and ungodly thoughts in order to be welcome in his garden. Ain’t so?’”* from Plain Fame by Sarah Price

And one other you might find thought provoking:

*“How could he have considered taking Monday off? Monday was the diving board poised over the rest of the week. One walked out on the board, reviewed the situation, planned one’s strategy, bounced a few times to get the feel of things, and then made a clean dive. Without Monday one simply bombed into the water belly first and hoped for the best.”* From At Home in Metford by Jan Karon

Well, dear sisters, I hope you have found this somewhat stimulating. Again, if you need anything don’t hesitate to contact me at 346-4007 or [oulyarm@gmail.com](mailto:oulyarm@gmail.com). Leave SWO or WELCA or something in subject line as I don’t read all e-mails any longer.

God bless you, Mary Lou Stefanski

## A message from...Cluster Coordinator, Pam Chouinard

~ **Spring Clusters:** when you have set your date/place/time for your spring cluster, please let me know as soon as possible so I can mark our calendar! Our cluster meetings give us the opportunity to gather with others and share in fellowship, worship and prayer. You can email me at: [pam@chouinards.com](mailto:pam@chouinards.com)

## A Communications message from... Holly Guerin VP

The key is to become paperless and be inform quickly. I have set a plan for all board members to have a Gmail account and download the Google Drive App. All board members will email their papers to me, the idea is when some of us cannot make the meetings, but still want to be part of the meeting, - there are apps to be part of the meeting. Something for us to talk over at our next meeting. God Bless

## A Justice Committee Report from... Barb Rice

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander, New Press, 2010

“Jarvious Cotton’s great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great grandfather was beaten to death by the Klu Klux Klan for attempting to vote. His grandfather was prevented from voting by Klan intimidation; his father was barred by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole.” (The New Jim Crow)

I recently completed reading this book after picking it up and putting it down many, many times because it was, simply, hard to read; hard to read from the perspective of a white woman living in a white community, worshipping as a member of an almost all white religion (Lutheran), and proclaiming that I have been “color blind” since I grew up in the near south suburbs of Chicago in the 60’s. Hard to read because I began to feel and understand what it means to be a person of white privilege. I have said the words before, but this book really let me look into a mirror and realize how the life I have more or less taken for granted because I was born white is free from so many of the additional struggles that our American society puts upon African Americans and people of color. For example, that time I got pulled over for speeding and was gently slapped on the wrist probably would have not been that gentle were I not white. And there are probably a myriad of things that I got away with in school (my high school was 70% black) because I was white.

Do I as a white woman need to feel guilt for the biological accident of my whiteness? I do not believe so, but I do know that I need to keep reevaluating the things in life that I take for granted and that I need to respect, appreciate and try to take into account the additional struggles that color adds to the lives of the African Americans and people of color. I will no longer see myself as “color blind”, and will strive to increase awareness of this injustice that is causing our society to fight for equality for all people regardless of gender or race. I will keep having discussions in hope that someday, we will be able to truly follow the words of Jesus, to love one another in all ways and in all walks of life.

In closing, I share with you below the description of this book found in the **Goodreads** app. I could not summarize the actual book any better, and so I quote:

“As the United States celebrate[d] the nation’s “triumph over race” with the election of Barack Obama, the majority of young black men in major American cities [are] locked behind bars or have been labeled felons for life. Although Jim Crow laws have been wiped off the books, an astounding percentage of the African American community remains trapped in a subordinate status—much like their grandparent’s before them. In this incisive critique, former litigator-turned-legal scholar Michelle Alexander provocatively argues that we have not ended racial caste in America: we have simply redesigned it. Alexander shows that, by targeting black men and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, even as it formally adheres to the principals of color blindness. **The New Jim Crow** challenges the civil rights community - - and all of us - - to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America. “

Barb Rice

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## NGLSWO T-SHIRTS / SWEATSHIRTS

FOR SALE! You may purchase a T-shirt / Sweatshirt with the Northern Great Lakes Synodical Women's Organization logo. A local printing shop is happy to help us out! Orders may be placed by sending them to

**Kris Carlson, SWO Treasurer.**

### T-Shirts Quantity Long Sleeve T Quantity Sweatshirts Quantity

Small 10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ 14.00 \_\_\_\_\_ 16.00 \_\_\_\_\_

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You may order individually, as a small group, or as a WELCA group. Orders will be shipped to one address for each order.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell)

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note the Board Members will have shirts with Black Lettering (to designate they are Board Members). All other shirts for NGLSWO will have White Lettering. T-Shirts are available in teal or sapphire blue. Long Sleeve T-Shirts and Sweatshirts are available in Sapphire blue.

**Mail check and orders to: Kris Carlson, SWO Treasurer, 304 Lake St., Ironwood MI 49938**

**NGLSOW Record Only:** Check #: \_\_\_\_\_

Order received date: \_\_\_\_\_ Order Mailed: \_\_\_\_\_

## SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Northern Great Lakes Synodical Woman's Organization

You must be a member of an NGLS/ELCA Congregation. Complete this form, mail by deadline.

Event for which you are Requesting a Scholarship: (check only one)	Amount	Deadline
____ Fortune Lake Camp Women and Kids Week (Adult Only)	\$ 100 each	May 1, 2020
____ Fortune Lake Camp Grand (moms) parents-Kids Week (Adult Only)	\$ 80 each	May 1, 2020
____ Synodical Women's Organization Convention	\$ 25 each	July 31, 2020
____ Fortune Lake Camp Women's Fall Retreat	\$ 75 each	July 31, 2020
____ Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering	\$ 300 each	Jan 1, 2023

**Please remit the required \$25 with each application;** Made payable to SWO (Synodical Women's Organization). This will be refunded after you attend the event and may not be used as part of your registration monies. If you do not receive a scholarship, it will be refunded after the participants have been chosen.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work/Cell (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Church Name and City \_\_\_\_\_

Please state your involvement with Women of the ELCA as well as other church activities \_\_\_\_\_

What are your reasons for requesting scholarship support? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is attending this event important to you? \_\_\_\_\_

Your age group: 18-24 \_\_\_\_\_ 25-34 \_\_\_\_\_ 35-44 \_\_\_\_\_ 45-64 \_\_\_\_\_ 65+ \_\_\_\_\_

Are you participating in this event for the first time? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If no, have you ever received a SWO Scholarship for this event before? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_ How will you use this experience when you return home? \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mail completed application to: Kris Carlson, 304 Lake Street, Ironwood, MI 49938 [kriskarin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kriskarin@sbcglobal.net)

## Northern Great Lakes Synodical Women's Organization Board 2019-2020

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527 E. Margaret Street  
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(906) 282-0169  
[imlizrd@yahoo.com](mailto:imlizrd@yahoo.com)

Kristine Carlson (2016-2020)  
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Cluster 4 Four Rivers Board Liaison

Pam Chouinard (2016-2021)  
8530 Weswood 0.6 Dr  
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[pam@chouinards.com](mailto:pam@chouinards.com)  
Cluster 8 Superior Central Board Liaison

Holly Guerin (2018-2021)  
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Cluster 1 IGO Board Liaison

## Board Members

Sue Hill (2016-2020)  
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Cluster 7 Three lakes Board Liaison

Dawn Holmgren (2019-2020)  
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[Dmholmgren10@gmail.com](mailto:Dmholmgren10@gmail.com)  
Cluster Board Liaison

Mary Lou Stefanski (2019-2021)  
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Gwinn, MI 49841  
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Cluster Board Liaison

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(715) 245-4328  
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Cluster 2 Copper Country Board

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**REFLECTIONS** Newsletter – March 2020



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**Our Purpose**

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

**Our Mission**

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