



Reflections...

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

MAY 2020

Greetings to all,

Prayers that this finds you and your family members all healthy and safe in these days filled with fear, anger, uncertainty, concern along with peace, compassion, empathy, and God's grace.

Melzee Jacobson
SWO President



During these days of struggling with all this mixed bag of emotions, we need to continually ask the question, what is God calling us and wanting us to do? I believe that he calls us to walk our faith journey in discipleship, growing in our faith, continuing our ministry and action and continue in prayer to promote healing and wholeness of our church, our communities and the whole world. We are tasked with establishing new ways to continue our work in this time of change.

I believe that when we return to what we think is normal, that our normal will be changed as it is what happens when we experience changes in what we thought was our normal. The activities for 2020 for both Churchwide Women of the ELCA and the Northern Great Lakes Synodical Women's Organization have been either postponed or canceled. The following outlines the impact COVID-19 continues to have on the functioning of the Women of the ELCA.

Triennial convention and gathering.

- The Triennial has been postponed to August 2021 and will be held in Phoenix, Arizona. The convention will be August 3 -5, 2021 and the gathering will be August 5-8, 2021. Our Executive Director; Linda Post Bushkofsky wrote "We hope that everyone who is currently registered will come next year. If you cannot make it to the event options follow:
 - To make one of the following actions, email info@frameworkmeetings.com or leave a detailed message at 208-502-1150 and our registration provider will assist you.
 - If you can't make the 2021 event, you can **transfer** your registration to a friend.
 - If you can't make the 2021 event, you can **donate** your registration fee and any purchases you made, providing a gift to Women of the ELCA.
 - You can request a **refund**, less a \$20.00 processing to help cover fixed costs
- Staff are working out the final arrangements with the vendors in Phoenix and will communicate directly to the voting members-elect for the convention and those registered for the gathering.

Work of the synodical organizations:

Our executive board met via Zoom on April 30, 2020, consideration was taken of the recommendation of the Women of the ELCA Churchwide executive board and after a discussion we felt that for the safety of the community of women which are members of our community that we would cancel the 2020 Annual NGLS convention and retreat. Our next annual convention and retreat will be held the third weekend September 17-19, 2021. Since our current constitution does not permit voting via email, mail, or other means for a convention. The officers and board members currently serving will continue their service to the synodical organization until elections occur (as well as the churchwide executive board). This is true even if someone has tapped out the seven-year service rule in 2020.

Work of local units:

- Local leaders should follow the protocols set by their respective church councils. Once your church opens again, work with your council and/or pastor for any face-to-face gatherings (i.e. bible study, quilting, circles, mission work, etc.)
- Some of the actions we can take at this time to continue to support local, state and churchwide organizations when financial support is critical are:
 - Join Faithful Friends monthly giving program (www.womenoftheelca.org/faithfulfriends). If you do not have internet, then you will find an application later in this publication. The minimum monthly amount is \$10.00 taken directly from your bank account or credit card. To break that down, that comes out to 33 cents a day. At the end of the year you will receive a receipt of giving.
 - Continue to set aside the funds you would normally provide at your circle meetings along with your general meetings and submit them to your local units.
 - Units should transmit your Regular Offerings (along with a Form A) to Kris Carlson, NGLSWO Treasurer.
 - Spend additional time in prayer and reflection, this is the gift and the way God has given us to conquer the fear and anxiety that we all are feeling during this time.
 - Keep in phone contact with your sisters in Christ within your units, circles and congregations.
 - Send a Thinking of You Card once in a while to those you know closely and to those you would think of throughout your days. Send Get Well Cards when you hear that someone is ill, etcetera.

Some words of encouragement that came from Daily Grace these past days are ones that spoke to me and I would like to share them with you:

Let your light shine

May 08, 2020 01:00 am

In Matthew's Gospel, just before the charge to "let your light shine before others (5:16), Jesus proclaims, "You are the light of the world" (5:14).

In both verses, the "you" is plural. We are not alone. God gives us communities of support where we can shine together, drawing strength from one another. As the church, we are called to pray for one another, for the world and for all who are in need. In the meal of Holy Communion, as we receive the body of Christ, we are fed and nourished. We are recharged and renewed for our callings.

Letting our lights shine before others includes helping others' lights to shine. Sometimes we are called upon to share our lights so that others can shine brightly. Sometimes we need courage to admit when we need others to tend our dimly burning wicks.

This message is an excerpt from "The light bearers" by Julie Kanarr in the January/February 2020 issue of Gather magazine. Today we remember Julian of Norwich, renewer of the church, who died around 1416.

For such a time as this

May 12, 2020 01:00 am

Whether dramatic or subtle, whether gradual or immediate, life is changing and we are changing. We are called to places we would never choose. We suffer and wonder if we'll make it. We stretch and grow stronger.

Times of transition often present us with opportunities to step forward in ways that we would not have imagined before. When it seems that we are hard-pressed on every side, God makes us bolder. We find strength and courage that we didn't know were there.

Think of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was born of water and the Spirit, but it was the injustice of white supremacy that propelled him to bring his faith and convictions into the public arena.

In our day, what is God calling you to courageously face? You have been raised from death to life for just such a time as this.

This message is an excerpt from We are claimed in the wilderness by The Rev. Dr. Joy McDonald Coltvet in a Café faith reflection.

Be encouraging today

May 13, 2020 01:00 am

What kinds of encouragement can we offer one another? What kinds of encouragement can we give ourselves?

You've probably seen page-a-day calendars that offer a daily dose of encouragement. I know a friend who writes encouraging words in a journal to which she regularly returns. Sending words of encouragement—yes, using a card and postage stamp—is a sure sign of caring.

Encourage yourself by learning to say “no” and avoid overscheduling your days. Holding one another in prayer is a form of encouragement. I can't begin to describe the encouragement I receive when women in our organization tell me they are praying for me daily.

As Paul exhorted the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:11), “encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.”

This message is an excerpt from “Be encouraging today” by Linda Post Bushkofsky in the January/February 2020 issue of Gather magazine.

As we continue into unknown territory may I share one of my go to prayers:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessings to all my sisters in Christ
Melzee Jacobson, SWO President.

Overcoming Fear

Any fear you have will put you in bondage and torment your soul,
So don't let fear grip your heart and have over you, its control.

Fear is bondage and brings torment to those who let it, then overcome,
But trusting and believing in Jesus, puts all fears on the run.

Your life may seem to be tossed with the winds over your life's sea,
But fear not, for Jesus is in your life as He promised He would be.

Jesus is saying to you, I'm with you, be of good cheer and be not afraid,
For I will hear your cry, and I will meet the need that you have today.



Holly Geurin, SWO Vice President

Do not be of little faith, trust in Me and do not have any doubt,
For I will take away your fear, and I will replace it with a victories shout.

Just continue to worship Me, while giving Me your praise,
And I will pour out to you My many blessings, and your spirits I will raise.
by Raymond Sides

Pam Chouinard, SWO Secretary



WOW the world as we know it has certainly changed! I know many of us have concerns for the health and needs of our families, neighbors and friends. Unfortunately we can't change what is happening in our world but we can change how we are reacting to it. The internet is full of ideas to keep us occupied during this isolation. My favorites are: Face time with family & friends, puzzle challenges, writing letters to my grandchildren, sewing masks, catching up with my reading, walking outside, and enjoying as much sunshine as I can.

My dear friend, Pastor Diane Srutowski shared a YouTube series with us, which I think you will enjoy also. It's called "*A Series of Pandemic Practicums*" presented by Diane Strickland. Check it out!

We are so blessed to have each and every one of you in our synod! Your faith and dedication will continue to serve and give to others once again, when we can go back to socializing. Remember we are women who act boldly in our faith. Even though we can't be together physically we can still connect with each other in different means.

- The NGLS- SWO board met via zoom. What a pleasure it was to see those smiling faces as we work together sharing ideas to keep in touch with you.
- My bible study will meet via zoom. We will come together to study God's word and pray together.
- Share your blessings by continuing to support your congregational WELCA.
- Send a card to a shut-in.
- Send a card to a friend just letting her know you are thinking of her.
- Display rainbows in your windows.
- You are creative women! Find a way to make some else's day better.

” Even in tough times, we're thoroughly blessed. Let's live like we know how blessed we are!”

Inspirational Quotes

“Do what you can with all you have, wherever you are.”

~Theodore Roosevelt

“Don't let yesterday take up too much of today.”

~Will Rogers

“We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated.”

~May Angelou

Blessings during these unsettled times. Hope everyone is doing OK. Thank you for your generosity through the years with your Regular (Form A) offerings. I know we are not having any fellowship times together right now for circle meetings, cluster meetings, etc.; but I encourage you to still send your regular offerings to me. If you need extra copies of Form A or B, they are available on the Women of the ELCA website; or, I will be happy to send you additional copies.



Please feel free to call me at 906-932-0476 or e-mail me at kriskarin@sbcglobal.net
Treasurer

Kris Carlson, SWO

You can also join *Faithful Friends* and provide consistent, powerful, sustaining support for the churchwide ministries of Women of the ELCA, wherever it is needed most. It's convenient for you and makes a big difference for our beloved community of women created in the image of God. Your recurring gift of \$10 or more will be automatically charged to your credit card or deducted from your checking account every month; whichever is most convenient for you. There is a form included in this issue, or you can go to the Women of the ELCA website.

I know these are stressful times; even more so, when you are like me: a natural born “worry-wart”. I know God's in charge, and I have to keep trusting in Him; praying for peace of mind, body and soul.

Wishing everyone health and safety and *God's Peace*.



A Message from Mary Lou Stefanski

Romans 15:5-7, 13

⁵⁻⁷May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Most of us are from the U.P. and a few from Wisconsin. We see hearts on windows, drawings on sidewalks, moms and dads walking with their children (What a blessing!), videos of singers offering hope and others offering praise to our Lord, plus Zoom, Facebook video, etc. of families keeping in touch with one another (perhaps more than they normally do—again a blessing), cards being sent to those with or without computers, phone calls being made just to check (Some to those we never called before because they're alone or elderly), and many other touching scenarios. You see where I am going with this. God is using this time for us to think of others, to pray, to reach out and touch. Most of all he is bringing us back to the greatest commandments from Matthew 22:37-39—Jesus replied to the Pharisees who were testing Him. ³⁷*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.* ³⁸*This is the first and greatest commandment.* ³⁹*And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

We Yoopers and Wisconsinites (? Ahem 😊) have the strength given to us by our Lord to endure and most of all to LOVE and we are doing it! We are staying home and reaching out. YOU are stronger than you thought you were. Are things tough? Sure, for most of us we have spring fever. We want to get out visit and enjoy. For those of you who are not working at this point, thank the Lord for this time. We pray your income will be adequate. For all of us, let's pray for one another and if you haven't touched someone through a phone call or other media, take this opportunity to call or write that old friend, make new ones, call an elderly person, whatever is comfortable. Let us conquer this evil virus with good.

Romans 12:21 *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Be safe and God bless you all



Elaine Kuhlmann, SWO Board Member

Being a disciple of Christ can be hard at times. Doing the right thing when times are hard or you feel maybe someone else can step up and take control of the things you did in church, family and life. Taking charge of church space such as alter, kitchen, church school and being a committee chairperson. These are all part of being a disciple. These things can become like a burden if done to please our own ego. But if we do all this because we are called too by the Grace of God to be a good Christian and to do Christ work it will not be a burden. It is called being a disciple in all things we do. I ask for prayers for all volunteers doing church work.

Encouraging one another is the fifth mark of discipleship

Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey of living out the good news of Jesus Christ so that others may believe. Over several issues, we have and will describe the seven marks of discipleship found in “Lessons for Today’s Disciples” written by Valora K Starr. You can find the resource by visiting womenoftheelca.org/resources and searching for its title.

Encouraging others is work disciples can only do in community. This lesson will examine Jesus’ example of encouragement as a natural part of teamwork and motivation to get the job done.

Encouragement from others at just the right moment speaks volumes. It can mean the difference between giving up and knowing you’re okay. The receiver knows someone cares and feels that she matters. Just as Jesus encouraged Peter to walk on water, we also are called to encourage others to stretch beyond what they think they can do. Encouragement in the faith community is not just a pep talk; It is an affirmation and blessed assurance of what God can do in our lives.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5: 11-24. Jesus left a trail of “encouraging” accounts for the disciples and the early church. This mark of encouraging is meant to be practiced in community. The practice appears to be about how we treat others, but less to do with others than it does with the change that occurs in ourselves. The act of encouraging another places the encourager in the other’s shoes. A deep sensitivity for the other’s situation and circumstance is important, and you make a conscious decision to let your actions be guided by the Holy Spirit. Your words of encouragement have a two-fold effect - they are affirming for the other and faith-building for you.

Reflect on the ways we are called to encourage others. Make a list and explain how you would carry out each one. Hint: There are 11 more directives in verses 12-18.

Respond: Describe how you are encouraging others.

Personal Reflection

This reflection will help you assess your practice of encouraging others.

Be honest and open as you can so that you get an accurate picture of where you are and where you want to go with this practice.

Assess the basics. Take a quick read of your practice of encouraging others.

When do I encourage others?

What prompts me to encourage others?

Whom do I encourage?

How do I encourage others?

Remember that when we encourage others, we are ourselves encouraged. Our faith grows and the community benefits.

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**Karen Reitz,
SWO Board Member**



Hope in our Savior Jesus the Christ, where
Opportunities to stay positive in our lives and
Places we live can always be
Encouraging when we focus on God with hope.

Peace can also be found in God's family.
Each one of us have the gifts of the Holy Spirit to
Assure one another with
Care and assistance during our struggles and uncertainties
Each and every day.

Love will be shared when we go the extra mile and
Open our homes to those in need.
Volunteer opportunities for
Everyone, including you, are just around the corner.

Joy for tomorrow comes today in
Our Lord's provisions.
You are love

I'm on the Justice committee and would like to share some of the books we have accumulated. These are available to you.

1. The New Jim Crow
2. "And Don't Call me a Racist!"
3. Dismantling Racism The Continuing Challenge to White America
Holmgren
4. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"
Member
5. Battered Women
6. Nickel and Dimed
7. Small Great Things
8. Walk Tall
9. Crying Wind
10. Waking Up White



Dawn
SWO Board

Please let me know if you are interested in one and I will loan it to you!!! 906-280-2615

Also, I read a lot of devotions by Joyce Meyer and Max Lucado. I would like to share this from Joyce Meyer. Jeremiah 17:7 Most blessed is the man who believes in, trust in, and relies on the Lord, and whose hope and confidence the Lord is.

To succeed at being ourselves, we must be confident. It is not self-confidence we are to seek, but confidence in Christ. I like the Amplified Bible translation of Philippians 4:13, which says, "... I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency." It is actually a sin to be confident in ourselves-but to be confident in Christ should be the goal of every believer. Jesus said "... apart from Me you can do nothing" John 15:5 We keep attempting to do things in the strength of our own flesh, instead of placing all our confidence in Him,

Most of our internal agony, our struggling and frustration, comes from misplaced confidence.

Jesus is the Rock, the only true source of stability. Put your trust in Him

Sue Hill, SWO Board Member



I know that quoting the Bible with just a part of a chapter is not a wise idea, but I love Psalm 37: 3: Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness. It gives great comfort to me in this time of fear, isolation, and distrust.

I miss the times shared on Sunday mornings for service, Wednesday evening at Kids' Klub and when we gather as the Women of the Evangelical Church from our Great Northern Synod.

I rejoice in the fact that I know and am able to have all of you praying for us and the safety of the world. What a great joy to be able to feel a part of such a strong group.

I will share with you that I have been making face masks to share with local people that need them for work, to get to the grocery store and for the nursing staff at our local hospital. I'm not sure that everyone likes the material I use but it sure is a good way to go through my stash of quilting material. I have made a set for Pastor Bill and Melzee, one is red with trucks for a print and the other is blue with the same trucks. I have some donated material with the "Veggie Tales" tomato and cucumber for a pattern. The masks will go to our local super market and my sister that works in a restaurant. I think I can sew a mask in my sleep!

I encourage all of us to continue to be strong, continue to reach out to others and to remember to trust in the Lord

ELCA presiding bishop addresses concerns about COVID-19 (3.6.2020 4:55 pm)

In 1527 the plague returned to Wittenberg, Germany. Two hundred years earlier the plague had swept across Europe killing up to 40% of the population. Understandably, people were anxious and wondered what a safe and faithful response might be. In answer to this, Martin Luther wrote "Whether One May Flee From a Deadly Plague."

To provide care for the neighbor, Luther recommended that pastors, those in public office, doctors and public servants should remain in the city. Luther himself remained in Wittenberg to care for his people. He recommended that public hospitals be built to accommodate those with the plague. He condemned those who took unnecessary risks that put themselves and others in danger of contagion. Luther also encouraged the use of reason and medicine, writing, "God has created medicines and has provided us with intelligence to guard and take care of the body. . . .Use medicine; take potions which can help you; fumigate house, yard, and street; shun persons and places wherever your neighbor does not need your presence".

We are living in the time of the coronavirus. We are also living in the time of social media and constant, relentless news coverage. Many of our people have the same concerns as those in Luther's day. Many of our people are anxious. Luther's counsel, based on Scripture, is still sound. Respect the disease. Do not take unnecessary risks. Provide for the spiritual and physical needs of the neighbor. Make use of medical aid. Care for one another, especially the most vulnerable.

Luther also reminded his people and us that we should trust God's faithfulness and promises, particularly the promise eternal life. Paul writes: "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

In peace, The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton Presiding Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Connecting with Young Women by Terry Chongulia.

Borrowed from The Southeastern Weaver
Southeastern Synod of Women of the ELCA

“The good news is we simply need to extend out our hands to the younger generation. Define young. Granted, Bold Café is aimed at 20-30 something Millennial women. That’s fine. The challenge is are there other ways of being young other than just by virtue of your chronological age? Young at heart! There are more generation X women starting new hobbies and talents.”

The sharing of experiences is the “type of collaboration that we need between the more mature women in WELCA with the younger ones who also come to church and with those who don’t. Think about that for a minute.”

“So, take action. Age is overrated. How do we encourage women younger than us to be involved in WELCA? A funny thing happened as I typed. Auto spell inserted “wounded” in a sentence about younger and older generations. I think this was not a coincidence. Not in the sense of big corporations monitoring our searches online.... First you have to be involved with them. You have to change the pronoun of “them” to “part of us.” You have to find common ground and interests. You work to find common causes you are all passionate about.”

“The first step is the hardest, that is putting aside any perceived difference of opinion based on how we were raised and our experiences. Doing things differently doesn’t necessarily mean abandoning your values but can sometimes illuminate better ways to stay true to them. Extend a personal invitation. Bring the kids! Start a Café group to discuss articles published through boldcafe.org to discuss faith in the modern age in an informal setting. Plan projects to work on during the year that allow everyone to participate. Organize group social activities at church or outside of church. “

“God’s creation of humankind is kind of like making an infinite number of spinning tops that come and go, winding them up and letting them go and watching and marveling at the path they take as they spin. Not to say there isn’t any divine intervention from time to time when one wobbles or when another comes to a rest, which all of us will

eventually come to a rest, but I think the Love and Joy comes from seeing the tops interact with one another. God wants to see the spinning tops **stop** clumping in groups by age. We should launch off one another and be propelled forward as we interact with new groups. Everyone benefits and grows. So, remember the good news is you **ARE** the most important tool to engage with younger generations. This is literally medicine for the mind and soul. Now read this twice and call me in the morning”

WHAT IS WELCA?

It’s an easy way to say Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Our organization includes Lutheran women who gather in over 7,000 locations in the U.S. and the Caribbean, for service, study, advocacy, fellowship and more! WELCA embraces all kinds of ministries that support our mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. There is a place for you in Women of the ELCA

GATHER

A magazine for Women of the ELCA, offers a mix of articles, theological reflections, devotions, a bible study 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 for \$19.95; Digital access (computer, iPad, Android) is free to print subscribers. Visit GatherMagazine.org to subscribe online or call 844-409-0576.

BOLD CAFÉ

Cafe is a free monthly online magazine for women whether or not they identify as Lutheran. It explores topics that are relevant to women and how faith relates to these issues. Many use it to learn more about what the Lutheran Church has to say about issues and to start discussions with friends or classmates. Café, the monthly publication and podcast, are made possible through offerings donated by women from over 7,000 active WELCA units in congregations of the ELCA. See more at: www.boldcafe.org

E-NOTES

E-notes is a NGLS is full of synod information about events, resources, etcetera that is published twice a month. You can receive it by contacting the synod office by email at npls@nplsynod.org. Send them a note that you would like to be added to the mailing list.

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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.

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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: _____

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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

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REFLECTIONS Newsletter – May 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.