The Open Door

The Newsletter of the East Central Synod Wisconsin Women of the ELCA Synodical Women's Organization

December 2022



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... and more!

Message from the President

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Where has the year gone? We are already in Advent. I do love this season – all of it. I love the Christmas decorations, programs, music, Bible studies, evening worship services, and special food. What about you? My friends and I stopped exchanging gifts years ago because we were reducing our stuff. But spending time with friends and family is great.

I am thankful for you. Please continue to share your group's stories with us. Also, share your suggestions with the board. Are you gifting the *Gather* magazine to women in your congregation? And don't forget, you are always invited to all synod events whether you have a unit or not. May advent and the new year bring you peace and joy!

Blessings,

Deb Martin, ECSW WELCA Board President

Resources:

Find WELCA events at https://www.womenoftheelca.org/event

Advent 2022 Devotional

Join the Rev. Becca Ehrlich as we begin Advent 2022 with "Good Things Come in Small

Packages," a devotional she has written for *Gather* magazine. Advance registration required.

DOWNLOAD THE ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

https://www.womenoftheelca.org/resources?fwp_resource_search=advent

For some of us this is a sad season because we are missing friends or family or our ability to travel where and when we want. Consider the Women of the ELCA Blue Christmas service.

Our Blue Christmas Service offers a safe place to bring your grief, fear, and loss. Brief readings. Quiet and reflective music. Prayers. All are welcome. Spanish translation provided.

Register now to attend. The service takes place at 7 p.m. CST on Wednesday, December 21, 2022.

REGISTER https://www.womenoftheelca.org/event/blue-christmas-service-2

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Webinar.

2022 Review

The Spring events were well attended. We enjoyed our Allyship fall retreat.

Check out our Facebook posts: East Central Synodical Women of the ELCA

Looking ahead to 2023

Shawano Conference is holding their Spring Event on March 25. The board looks forward to hearing from you! Please allow women from other conferences to join you. One idea for a theme is a Baby Shower for Jesus to support local agencies.



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING
SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2023 | PHOENIX
WELCATG.ORG

Twelfth Triennial Gathering Women of the ELCA

September 21-24, 2023 Phoenix, Arizona

For additional information

go to

www.womenoftheelca.org

Visit Women of the ELCA for information and resources: https://www.womenoftheelca.org/

Katie's Fund: https://www.womenoftheelca.org/katiesfund

STAY IN TOUCH: https://www.boldcafe.org/

Sign up for Bold Connections, Women of the ELCA's monthly newsletter with news about events and more. Also, if you check the Bold cafe box, you'll receive a monthly newsletter in your inbox with links to news articles, upcoming events, dinners, and more.

Join the Boldcafe Monthly Dinner group on Facebook to stay in touch! The monthly zoom dinner group brings together women from around the country to discuss ideas with various *Gather* magazine authors. They are the first Thursdays of the month.

2022 Fall Retreat Delivers Inspiration, Fellowship, and Lots of Shoes!

More than fifty ladies attended "Sisters in Christ United for Allyship" the Women of the ELCA Fall Retreat on September 24. Many had attended before, and it was wonderful to welcome several first-time attendees. All enjoyed the hospitality of Crossways Imago Dei Village.

Participants arrived with bags and boxes of shoes for "Soles for Jesus." What an incredible and generous in-kind project. Thank you for the numerous contributions - over 600 pairs of shoes! The delivery vehicles were jam packed!

Women were welcomed by the inspiring music and uplifting devotions provided by Kathy Beestman and Pastor Phyllis Smoot. Songs from the new hymnal *All*



Creation Sings fit perfectly with the theme verse, Micah 6:8: "Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God."



Greetings were extended from the board members of the Synodical Women's Organization. There was a special invitation to enjoy the fantastic photo op created by Karen Tschurwald. Many smiles were seen during the day as passengers gathered on the "SS Allyship" to take photos.

Breaks during the day were a wonderful time for fellowship and browsing the information and book tables, as well as the silent auction. Donations for the silent auction were bountiful and appreciated. Proceeds went to Fall Retreat Scholarships and Katie's Fund. Thank you!

Conference meet and greets enabled participants to hear from others about activities in their congregations. All six conferences were represented at the retreat.

The keynote speaker for the retreat was Bill Van Lopik, a community organizer with Esther. His talk was entitled "Building Strong and Equitable Communities Through Allyship."

The worship service planned and led by Pastor Phyllis was a highlight of the day. The powerful and inspiring message by Bishop Anne Edison-Albright was captivating. Communing together was a delight. Listening to all the voices lifted in song was inspiring. The offering was distributed to Kairos of Wisconsin, synod women's organization, and the churchwide Women of the ELCA.



If you were able to attend the Fall Retreat, thank you for coming! Planning is progressing for the Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering in Phoenix, Arizona in September 2023. See you there!

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Shawano Conference Report

SAVE THE DATE! The Shawano Conference Spring Event will be Saturday, March 25, 2023 at Immanuel of Cicero in Black Creek. The theme will be "Be a Bold Woman!" with SWO President Deb Martin as the guest speaker. All are welcome!

Tomorrow River Conference Report

The Tomorrow River Conference held their 2022 Spring Event at Faith Lutheran in Rosholt. A full report appeared in the June Open Door. Our 2023 Spring Event will be held at Trinity Lutheran in Waupaca. Please watch for more information on that event which will appear in the March 2023 Open Door. Several women from our conference attended the Fall Retreat at Imago Dei in September, but participation by most of our conference units was missing.

Please let me or the SWO Board know if information for this event was not adequate or if the timing of the event is not convenient. The 2023 Fall Retreat may have to be rescheduled because of the Churchwide Triennial Gathering, so please watch for more information on the Fall Retreat in the new year.

Trinity in Waupaca was excited to host the November Advocacy Event, but unfortunately, that event was canceled due to low registration numbers. The SWO Board will go back to the drawing board for plans in 2023. Congregational units in the TRC that will be preparing their ThankOffering Services can always find ThankOffering Service resources at the Women of the ELCA website. If schedules are really full in these holiday months, try to plan a ThankOffering Service at another time of year. One congregation in our conference holds their ThankOffering Service in February, honoring Bold Women Month and being thankful for all foremothers who led the way for women of today. The upcoming year, 2023, has a lot in store for Women of the ELCA: Spring Events on the Conference level, the Triennial Convention and Gathering in Phoenix in September, and the Biennial Synodical Women's Convention in November. If your congregation has a unique event or idea to share with the SWO Board or with other congregations in our conference, please reach out to me at: phyllis.christie@sbcglobal.net to get the word out to all.

Blessings to you all for the Christmas Season. May the joy, peace and love of God lift your spirits in anticipation of the coming of our Lord.

Phyllis Christie, TRC representative

Wisconsin River Valley Conference Report

Greetings from Wisconsin River Valley Conference!

Winter weather has arrived! Ladies of the Wisconsin River Valley Conference are not hibernating. Many hands are busy with Thanksgiving meals, making quilts, planning Christmas visits and gifts for the elderly, stitching prayer shawls, hats and mittens plus so much more! All in addition to prepping for 2023.

Ladies at St. John Mosinee are looking forward to hosting the Wisconsin River Valley Conference Spring Event in late April. More information to come in the new year. All ladies from the conference and synod are welcome to attend.

Rep Lola Doll



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.

Katie's Fund 2122

by Gloria Jaeger, Green Bay Conference Rep

We have all heard of Katie's Fund, an extension of the Women of the ELCA. The money that is received is used to fund areas of ministry that go beyond usual expenditures to provide funds for women's leadership, global connection, and living theology.

A major campaign - Katie's Fund 2122- is underway to grow the fund for the next 100 years. Go to https://www.womenoftheelca.org/katiesfund for complete information.

Among the exciting news is that a \$1000 grant from the fund will be given to each synod organization of the Women of the ELCA. This is to be used in a way of their own choosing for a program of ministry (to keep God's money moving), planting seeds for more ministry that supports our mission and purpose.

The grants are to be used August 1, 2022 to July 31, 2023. A few ideas could be: 1. to help other women get to the 2023 Triennial Gathering where faith and vision can grow; 2. training sessions for board members; 3. rent garden spots for people to grow their own food and eat healthier diets for themselves. Another idea may be to create small loans to assist someone to start a business.

What ideas do you have to GROW GOD'S WORK with this money? Please email me (glorannie39@gmail.com) with any ideas of how to use the \$1000 grant. I will bring them to the board for consideration.

As you are preparing gifts for loved ones this Christmas, consider a contribution to Katie's Fund to honor that person.

If you would like to view a video about Katie's Fund, click here https://youtu.be/jeRpqu9PRN8.

Racial Equity Virtual Study, Lenten Devotionals Offered

The ECSW Racial Equity Team seeks to educate, equip, and empower individuals and congregations to work for racial justice. Two new resources will be offered soon. As always, we encourage you to start where you feel comfortable and do as Save Our Children suggests: *pray*, *educate*, *connect*, *act*.

Virtual Study of the ELCA's Declaration to People of African Descent

In 2019, the churchwide assembly of the ELCA adopted the Declaration to People of African Descent. A five-week virtual study of this declaration called "Now is the Time" will be offered in January and February. The study is open to anyone in the East Central Synod.

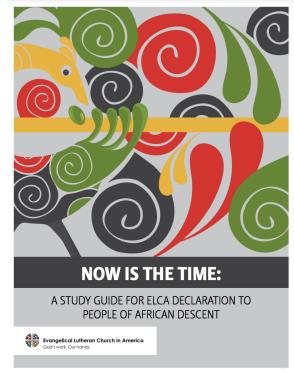
There is no cost to participate and the materials needed are available as free downloads on the ELCA website.

https://elca.org/Resources/Racial-Justice

Download Now is the Time: A Study Guide for ELCA Declaration to People of African Descent here.

Anyone high school age or above is welcome. The dates of the study are Thursdays, January 19 and 26 and February 2, 9, and 16. Participants may choose to attend either in the morning (9:30-11:00 am) or evening (6:00-7:30 pm).

To register, please send the following information to Randy Johnson (iairgi9@aol.com) by Jan. 10:



Your Name Email Address Phone Number Address

Your Church Name and Location Which time do you prefer: mornings or evenings?

The synod Racial Equity Team participated in this study last summer and found it to be very worthwhile. As Randy Johnson commented:

The "Now is the Time" study created an environment for me to reflect on my understanding of systemic racism and engage in difficult conversations to help me move forward in creating healing and justice.

If you'd like more information about the study, contact Shirley Paulson (spaulson1949@gmail.com).

Lenten Devotionals on the Theme of Racial Justice

Rev. Dr. Niveen Sarras will lead the creation of a series of devotionals to be used during Lent 2023. These materials will be posted on the ECSW website in February.

Racial Equity Workshops



Thank you to everyone who attended the Racial Equity Workshops in October and to ECSW Women of the ELCA for financial support. Sixty-three people attended and 15 of them agreed to be the contact person for their congregations. Four congregations identified themselves as being ready to work for racial justice: Bethel Green Bay, Good Shepherd Plover, St. John Ashwaubenon, and St. Mark's Neenah.

Workshop presenters (pictured left) were Rev. Marylin Miller and Dr. Joyce Caldwell.

Please let me know if your church or group is doing anything on these two issues or if you've read any books you'd recommend. spaulson1949@gmail.com

Ideas to Learn More about Racism:

- Watch a movie on racism such as *Twelve Years a Slave* or *Just Mercy* the story of Bryan Stevenson either as an individual or in a group.
- Read as an individual or in a group books such as Trouble I've Seen:
 Changing the Way the Church Views Racism by Drew G.I. Hart or White
 Fragility by Robin DeAngelo or, if you like historical fiction, The Invention
 of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd.

Human Trafficking Conference at UW-Green Bay January 12

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE

Help Us End Exploitation

UW-Green Bay will host a virtual Human Trafficking Conference on Thursday, January 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will feature speakers with medical, law enforcement, legal, and social services expertise. For more information and to register, visit www.uwgb.edu/human-trafficking-conference/ or click here.

Money Canvas by Thrivent

Sign up for this free online program that helps you build healthier budgeting, saving, and spending habits. Over the course of three 1:1 virtual sessions with your Money Guide, you will build confidence and learn to manage your money mindfully. Your guide will stick with you throughout the program and help you build new, personalized, money management skills at your own pace. Money Canvas enables you to turn foundational financial lessons into everyday actions. Beyond greater clarity, confidence, and control, you'll also walk away with:

- A simple way to create and follow a budget
- Practical steps you can take to trim expenses
- A realistic plan to tame overspending

Money Canvas offers day, evening, and weekend appointment times with both English and Spanish speaking guides. Get started today!

https://www.thrivent.com/generosity/money-canvas

Questions? Contact your Engagement Leader, Laura Gruender, at laura.gruender@thrivent.com or 920-850-0924



Minutes of the October 2022 SWO Board Meeting

Generations of Sisters in Christ - October 15, 2022
Trinity Lutheran Church at The Jordan Appleton, WI
Our Theme: "Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God." - Micah 6:8

Attendance: Sheri Bradshaw, Phyllis Christie, Carol Grom, Lois Hilger, Gloria Jeager, Deb Martin, Pam

Schulke, Wanda Fischer Excused: Lola Doll

- 1 Call to Order 9:18 by Deb. We read together 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.
- 2 Prayer Concerns and Thanksgivings Treats - Sheri
- 3 Approval of Agenda Motion made by Carol/Pam
- 4- Secretary's Report Motion made by Wanda/Pam
- 5 Treasurer's Report Continued on 11/5/22 via ZOOM. 1:00 2:00.
- 1. Audit status Deb reported that 2021 minutes are needed to answer questions from January and September, 2021. Sheri had the hard copies in her binder so Deb will get answers to the audit committee.
- 2. Mileage reimbursement: Motion made by Deb/Gloria that the rate be \$0.625/mile going forward. Carol will bring forms to future meetings so each participant can fill out their own form. Deb will put the form on the shared drive with the new amount on it.
- 3. Carol reported on switching the SWO Banking to ELCA Credit Union located in Chicago. There are no fees and profits can be redistributed to other ELCA ministries. Motion made by Gloria/Phyllis that SWO switch to the ELCA Credit Union, with cash received deposited into the treasurer's church or another congregation, effective 2/1/2023.
- 6 President's Report Deb attended the Becoming Conference for eight days in August. Held in Rosemont, near Chicago where they studied the root causes of hunger such as affordable, adequate housing. Deb will be attending a meeting in the future with other synod WELCA presidents.
- 7 Old Business
- 1. Fall Retreat review Lois will be storing the evaluations with other 2022 documents. Discussion followed Lola's thoughts that were sent out. All in agreement except for bolded issues.

- The Photo Op created by Karen Tschurwald (former board member) was great. On the stage in front of the fireplace seemed to be a good location.
- Wonderful message by Bishop Anne Edison-Albright. Invite her back again.
- Perhaps change the schedule for 2024. It was very distracting during Worship to have staff setting up lunch. Possibly put Conference Meet and Greets right before lunch. Since we serve breakfast, lunch could certainly wait until 12:15.
- Less female clergy than 2021. Why? Who knows. Busy? Did they not hear about the event? We
 only asked Jeanne at the synod office to send them a special email once in early June. No
 discount for clergy in 2022.
- Overall, attendance was about 60 which was down 40% from 2021. 2021 was unusually large attendance because Pastor Judy drew a huge following. We usually have 55-65 in attendance from previous years.
- Pre-retreat overnight option initially two participants expressed interest. Six ladies did stay over on Friday evening. There is a minimum fee on the contract for use of Johnson. In 2022 this minimum was waived, and each person charged \$58. Agreed that if the minimum number isn't reached, we would not stayover.
- Advocacy registration form was not ready in time for the retreat.
- By 7:45a everything should be ready for participants.
- Folders were not filled and at tables. Participants felt there were too many papers in the folders. Perhaps no folders next time?
- The registration area was not ready. Guests happily assisted. Fortunately, with the 45-minute registration time, the program was able to start on time. Crossways staff were late in having breakfast and beverages available. Coffee should be centrally located for guests to serve themselves easily.
- Songs selected were very fitting to our theme "Allyship". The musician was prepared and
 engaging. The worship service was very nice with appropriate lessons and gospel. Devotions
 were appropriate.
- In 2022, the registration fee was nonrefundable. I did not hear any complaints. The grandmother who had to cancel due to no Children's Programming, said to keep their registration fees as a donation. Silent Auction was more manageable. Nice to have a stretch break while people were being called to come pay. It would be nice to announce the total \$ at the closing.
- Try Eventbrite (or whichever registration company the synod utilizes) again. Tithely is the site the ELCA is using.
- If a speaker says they are bringing a powerpoint, remind them that it is a very large room. Slides should have easy to read large font.
- Try not to pack up the items on the participants tables too early especially if the program is on time or ahead of schedule. Distracting. It was encouraging to see two of the reusable bags that were distributed last year. It was nice to recognize first timers.
- Take a closer look at the map when it is created. Additional tables can be added. It was good to have a table for world hunger material. It was good to have a free book table. The info/book table on the map was used for world hunger materials. In the morning chaos another table was found for the information sheets but not everyone knew this. So, some info sheets ended up on the registration table. When Shirley arrived, another table was set up even though there was space for her items on the new info/book table. Since these items were now in separate areas there was not a person at the info table. Try to utilize the entire lodge to avoid congestion. Not everything has to be next to the Silent Auction. For many reasons, it is extremely important to have an accurate count of registrants in early September. Time and trees could be saved in making copies as well as money. Less tables would be set up. A cut-off date for registrations should be implemented. When only two people are at a table there is not a sense of community and the

ability to make lots of new friends. Plus, it is more challenging for those in the back to see and hear. Yes, the lodge rental is a set price regardless of number of participants. The food charge is per person. This year the food charge was \$19 per person. Anticipated participation was 80. Actual participation was approximately 57 adults. In the afternoon, I missed part of the second speaker. I do not know what the petition was about. I was asked three times to sign the petition. It was brought up that names on name tags needed to be a bigger font and bolder. Include name and church name only. Lots of chatter, they seemed to like being with and meeting each other. Soles for Jesus collection was very successful. More direction was needed as to where the donations were to be placed and which cars were transporting them. Lois delivered an estimated 650 pairs of shoes to Soles for Jesus. 8835 W. Heather Avenue. Milwaukee, WI 53224.

- Overall satisfaction of the retreat was high. Preference for a one day retreat by most. Deb will
 note the name of those interested in attending the 2023 Triennial Convention.
- 2. \$1,000 from WELCA Churchwide we have until August 31, 2023 to spend. Carol will call about the check so it can be deposited. Each Board Member should be thinking of where the money could be distributed. 3 areas of focus: leadership development, global connections, living theology
- 3. WELCA Triennial Gathering scholarship applications due December 1, 2022.

 Motion made: Pam/Lois A scholarship shall be awarded to Judy Natz for the registration fee for the 2023 Triennial Gathering. Deb will contact Judy with this news. Deb will be attending the convention in addition to three delegates. Those interested in attending the gathering include Sheri, Pam, Wanda, Lois, and Judy Natz.
- 4. Constitution changes: Deb led the discussion. Added the choice of cluster besides the current conference designation. Motion by Deb/Pam that the wording of the SWO constitution matches that of the churchwide constitution. Final vote will be at the SWO Biennial Convention in 2023. An article will be written for the Open Door when these changes are approved.
- 5. Coffee at Church of the Wilderness Carol introduced the Hunter's Lunch. November 19, 2022 1:00. We are invited to join in a Native American meal of soup in conjunction with Hunting Season. Phyllis suggested those attending bring bars to share.
- 6. November 12 Advocacy event updates Deb, Lois, Phyllis 8:30 3:00 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Waupaca. Cindy Crane will be the keynote speaker. She is from the Lutheran Office of Public Policy. A slideshow will be presented of the Holy Land. Claudette and Ron Herring from the Synod Advocacy Team will discuss Palestine. A Video will be shown about the Native Americans standing together for civil rights. At the end of the day participants will have the opportunity to write letters or participate in action on a cause they wish to advocate for. Lois has received a Thrivent Grant to cover box lunches. Board Members should advertise in their church's bulletin. Please use tithely to register.
- 7. Gift of Gather Magazine. We will keep gifting it at synod events. Women are glad for this gift.
- 8. Song books: Deb will continue to bring them to events to give them away.
- 9. Our synod quilt colors Carol completed the coloring of one woman. Phyllis will bring the banner to the Fall Advocacy Event.

- 10. Women of ELCA Katie's Fund Campaign in 2022 Gloria reminded us that memorials can be given to Katie's Fund. On Bold Women's Sunday, women may give to Katie's Fund. A Legacy IRA can be designated to Katie's Fund. No taxes are paid on it. Warm Hands is another avenue for giving.
- 11. Motion by Phyllis/Pam to grant a scholarship to Bishop Anne for her registration fee to the Triennial.
- 8 New Business
- 1. WI Council of Churches connection Carol will discuss next time.
- 2. A Baby Shower is in the formation stages, possibly held around Mother's Day or for a Spring Event. Money collected would go to No Bottoms Left Behind or a similar diaper drive.

Lord's Prayer

Adjournment at 1:00 - motion made by Pam

Next Meeting:

11/4/22 via ZOOM. 1:00 - 2:00 Carol will give us a treasurer's report.

January 13/14 at Pine Lake – bring 2023 calendar, snacks, and food for breakfast.

Respectfully submitted,

Lois Hilger October 26, 2022

***** In an effort to be better stewards, we have stopped sending paper copies to any person or church that did not pay for renewal. If you know anyone who wants to receive a paper copy, please share the information below with her. *****

Please Note: Paper Subscriptions to the Open Door expire each December.

If you would like to renew yours, send a check for \$6 made out to Women of the ELCA – ECSW with your name, address, and phone number to Carol Grom, 2124 Mahogany Court, DePere, WI 54115.

If you know someone who would like to receive the e version of the Open Door, please email Shirley Paulson with first and last name, phone number, and email address.

spaulson1949@gmail.com

Coming Events

March 25, 2023 - Shawano Conference Spring Event - Immanuel of Cicero in Black Creek March or April - Tomorrow River Conference Spring Event - Trinity Waupaca April - Wisconsin River Valley Conference Spring Event - St. John Mosinee September 21-24 - 12th Triennial in Phoenix, AZ

LEADERSHIP
NOVEMBER 2021 - NOVEMBER 2023
WOMEN OF THE ELCA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION (SWO)
EAST CENTRAL SYNOD WISCONSIN

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