



Expressions

VOL. 25, NO. 4, NOVEMBER 2011

Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization

Covered in the Spirit

In certain ways we are weak, but the Spirit is here to help us. For example, when we do not know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put in words. Romans 8:26 CEV

Later this month the church season will change to Advent, we will prepare our hearts for the birth of our Saviour. We also start the preparations for the holidays, including decorating our homes, our churches, our schools. We will attend Sunday school programs, Christmas programs at schools, churches, and in the community.

Many of us will travel or have guests traveling to our homes. Our hearts and souls are filled with love.

Continue the feeling of love and preparations by starting 2012 with giving yourself the gift of a day devoted to *Covered in the Spirit!*

Take a day to lift your spirit unto the Lord! Hear how God's Spirit covered the Burpo family through Colton's illness described in the book, *Heaven*

Is For Real.

Learn how God's Spirit covers with hope Joan Nabor, Ms. Wheelchair Nebraska 2010.

Walk a labyrinth and practice prayer and devotional techniques to deepen your walk with the Triune God. Grow in your ability to witness and share God's love and grace with others.

Rev. Todd Burpo and his wife, Sonja, will tell the amazing story of their son, Colton's trip to heaven and back. The Burpo family has a passion for ministry and evangelism.

Joan Nabor, Ms. Wheelchair Nebraska 2010, will share her story of hope as she relates experiences as a woman who uses a wheelchair for her daily mobility. She serves as an advocate and educator on behalf of the disabled community.



Joan Nabor

Photo credit:
yorknewtimes.com

Edwards Elected Executive Board Member

Gwendolynn Edwards, NSWO President 2009-2011, was elected to the Churchwide Women's Organization Executive

board serving this triennium, 2011-2014. Her term began July 14, when installed by Presiding Bishop Mark Hansen.

Edwards stated, "I am excited for this new opportunity for which God has called me to serve. I hope to continue to mobilize women to act boldly in their faith in Jesus Christ. This is a growing organization full of the Lord's daughters, where we gather for faith and action, to help each other grow in our spiritual journey, to serve the church in a variety of ways, and to foster community among our fellow brothers and sisters. Thank you for the support that you have given me these past six years serving on the NSWO board; it is with your prayers and encouragement that I am able to continue serving the Women of the ELCA in my new role. Many blessings to you and my prayers are with you. Thank you!"



Gwendolynn F. Edwards

Picture provided by
Women of the ELCA

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“Amazing Grace”

By MAE GREVE, Northeast Board Representative



Grace, what a beautiful word. When I was young, I only thought of the word Grace as not being graceful. That was me. I have scars to show how clumsy I was when I was growing up on the farm.

Now I hear the word Grace and I know God gives it to us freely. When times get tough and we are faced with tough trials and all hope disappears, God shows up in our lives. No matter what sins have marked our past, Grace is the eraser that wipes the slate clean. Sometimes we wonder how and why we receive His Grace without working for it. God gives it to us with no strings attached. There is no work or requirement necessary for us to receive this precious gift. No point system that qualifies us as a worthy recipient. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more than He already loves us right now. He will never love us any less either.

He said “I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with loving kindness.”
Jeremiah 31:3

God’s Grace will enable and equip us to do things we have thought impossible. Sometimes it takes a challenge to push beyond what we think we can do. God works through us in mysterious ways. We need to allow the spirit of exploration and compassion to flow through us, and we can set an example for other women. God meets us in our challenges and new adventures. We can embrace them and learn from them and let God work through us. By pushing our present abilities, we can explore a whole new world of opportunities and a whole new way of serving God, our church and our communities.

That is why God’s Grace is so amazing!

Dear Lord, Thank you for giving us your Son, who died for our sins. Thank you for the gift of Grace. Let our faith be strong and your love show through us in our daily lives. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen



**Women
of the
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
IN AMERICA**

GETTING READY TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS

The 25th anniversary of Women of the ELCA is in 2012 (the Constituting Convention was held June 1987). Observing our 25th anniversary will be a wonderful opportunity to lift up our mission and purpose as an organization. In doing so, we remind one another of our shared history and why we are still organized today as a community of faith-filled women. Our anniversary will both celebrate our past but also affirm our relevance for the future as a women’s organization committed to acting boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ. As part of our 25th celebration, we will have a special anniversary appeal, of which 50 percent of the offerings received will go directly to the ELCA Malaria Campaign toward three specific areas: medicine, clean water and advocacy. Our contribution as the women’s organization of the church to the malaria campaign will be recognized and celebrated at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2013. The remaining 50 percent of offerings received in honor of our anniversary will support the ongoing work of Women of the ELCA.

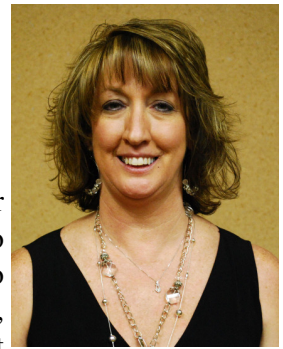
Look for anniversary materials beginning in February 2012 that will include anniversary stories in *Gather* and *Interchange*, a special anniversary section on the Women of the ELCA website, a printed anniversary resource with ideas for celebrating our anniversary as well as more detailed information about the anniversary appeal and our commitment to the ELCA Malaria Campaign.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to all my Sisters in Faith and God,

I am overwhelmed, joyous, and excited to greet all of you for the first time as your new president of the Nebraska Synodical Women Organization. I just want you to know up front that I will do the best job that I can, I by no means am an expert, so I ask for your patience, prayers, and lots of hugs. If there is ever concerns, fear, praise, or ideas that we as an organization can work on, I invite you to contact myself or the NSWOW board to voice what you have to say. I am confident that the good Lord will make us a wonderful team and will help us to realize that “faith without action is dead” as our good friend Leymah Gbowee stated at our recent Triennial in Spokane.



I believe that the recent convention of the NSWOW in Kearney was a great success and the theme “Open the Door of Your Heart – Ask.... Seek..... Knock....” was truly an inspiring theme. The individuals behind the scenes of the convention – the convention committee, past president-Gwen, the NSWOW board, board appointees, and conference coordinators were an absolute gift from our Heavenly Father. These key individuals did an awesome job of bringing every thing together from the keynote speakers, the wonderful entertainment, the business sessions, workshop presenters, meals, registration, and very meaningful Bible study and worships.

I would also like to take this time to thank a few key people in my life that have been instrumental in helping me arrive to this point:

- *Tony—my husband, my best friend, and my soul mate, who helped me in my Lutheran life journey
- *Denise—my sister, who has always been there, everyone should have a sister like her.
- *God—He’s heard me cry, laugh, beg, cuss, and praise him for most everything. I know He will be there always
- *Friends—Ardi, Beth, Kim, Gwen, Mary M, Donna A, and Carol who have always offered help, love, time, and companionship
- *Church family—who without having needed a unit president might not have traveled this journey
- *Family—my children, my parents, and my most wonderful grandchildren who always give great comfort in good and bad times, their love is unconditional like God’s

So I end this with the scripture that I heard at Spokane Triennial when our sister Leymah Gbowee from Liberia quoted from 2 Timothy 3:17 NIV “So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” So I, Kandy Pflaster, knows that He who called me will equip me, as will He for all the other leaders of this organization.

Peace be with you always,
Kandy Pflaster

Expressions is a publication of the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization, Women of the ELCA.

Expressions provides information concerning programs and projects of the Churchwide and Nebraska Synodical Women Organizations, Women of the ELCA; and helpful information for congregational units. It is distributed free to Nebraska congregational unit presidents/coordinators; Nebraska pastors, AIMs, and PMAs; Nebraska female seminarian students; and the other SOW Presidents.

The newsletter is published four times a year, in February, May, August, and November. Deadline is the first of the month preceding the issue date.

It is currently team designed, edited, and proofread. Contact the team at nswo.expressions@gmail.com, or by phone, 402-291-1087. Content information can be sent via e-mail.

November *Expressions* team members included Beth Meyer plus layout editor. Additional contributors included Carol Bosshardt, Mitch McCartney, and the newly elected members of the 2011-2013 NSWOW Board.

Open the Door of Your Heart

By VAL FLOREA

Open the Door of Your Heart—Ask... Seek... Knock... That was the theme of the Fourteenth Convention (Tenth Biennial) of the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization held in Kearney Nebraska on September 23 to 25. Besides my heart, my mind and eyes were opened to the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization. It is amazing all the wonderful things this group of women accomplished over one weekend, and the plans and hopes this group has for the future.

First, I had never attended an ELCA Women's convention prior to this weekend, and was blessed to receive a scholarship to attend by applying for a "first time attendee scholarship." I had seen the agenda, and knew the convention would include worship, Bible study, exhibits, and business; but I was surprised by the fellowship, fun, and excitement that this group of women showed.

I must admit, I did not attend every workshop nor did I sit through the whole business meeting; but I got the flavor of the weekend in all that I sampled. The speakers spoke from their hearts, and made us laugh and cry. The business meeting was interesting, fair, and informational. The conduct of elections and voting is an experience of green and (red) cards. Worship was a time of fellowship, singing, and hope led by Pastor Linda Walz. Bishop David deFreese shared a thought provoking Bible study and made us feel.

We served several missions during the weekend by giving monetary offerings to the Women of the ELCA Churchwide Women's Organization, NLOM camperships, and Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministries Activity Fund; and putting together school bags/backpacks for Lutheran World Relief. The school kits were a huge success, and many women spent time laughing and getting paper cuts preparing those kits.

I was honored and blessed to meet women

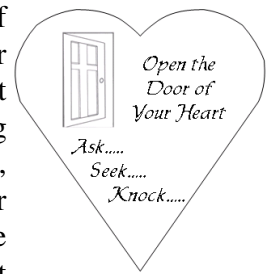
from all over the state of Nebraska and a few of our guests who were from out state. I had an exhilarating walk at 6AM with the "Run, Walk and Roll" fundraiser and visited the whole time with the funniest and most energetic women. On Sunday I sat next to a young woman who is a senior at UNK and was touched by her sensitivity. I shared fellowship at meals with women who I had not seen for fourteen years and women who I just met. I was fortunate to share this experience with six other fabulous women from my congregation, and our relationships were nurtured.

I was energized and excited after this convention and am so excited for the new NSWO Board. They will have many challenges ahead, but with the support of the Women of Nebraska ELCA Lutheran churches, they will make decisions that will enhance our organization and serve Christ.

We did it! Thanks for your help!

The supplies and school bags you made and donated helped us put together 3,012 school kits at the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization (NSWO) Convention September 23-25 for Lutheran World Relief (LWR). With 5,000 school kits filled by campers with Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries this summer, Nebraska Lutherans have finished more than 8,000 school bags for LWR.

Many congregations are finishing additional school bags as well as mission quilts, baby care, fabric, and personal care kits. Information about November 7-11, 2011 Nebraska Ingathering sites is on the LWR site (www.lwr.org) or from Stephanie Lusinski in the Synod Office.





Meet Your 2011-13 NSWO Officers and Board



President Kandy Pflaster has been a member of American Lutheran in Cozad for twenty years. She is a past president of her women's unit for four terms; served as Council member for Evangelism; past NSWO High Plains Board Representative, two terms; and Nebraska Synod ELCA Voting Member to ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando 2005. Kandy has traveled on NSWO Vision Trips to Companion Synods Argentina in 2004 and to Tanzania in 2005. Her other travels have taken her on a Leadership Training for NSWO in Atlanta, GA with other NSWO members; attended Women of the ELCA Triennial Gatherings in: Philadelphia, San Antonio, and Salt Lake City.

Kandy is coordinating a 2013 trip for her church's senior/junior youth groups with Adult sponsors to travel to the companion Synod in Tanzania to build and nurture some relationships with their youth. The group will be making a dedication to some families while there. This trip will also be open to some other nearby congregation. She is Chair for the Shared Governance Quality Council and serving on the Steering Committee for "Magnet" certification & recognition which is for nursing excellence at Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney. There are only 300 hospitals internationally that have achieved this distinction.

Kandy is a Surgical Nurse at Good Samaritan Hospital & Trauma Center in Kearney. Tony and Kandy have been married for eighteen years and they have three children: Dusty, Lindsey, and Ozzie; and two grandchildren: Khayden and Kelseigh. They also have one dog and one cat. Kandy is currently serving as a Cozad Hospital Board Member.



Vice President Terri Johnson returns to the NSWO board after a ten-year break from her previous role as High Plains Conference Board Rep. She stayed involved in her conference and church in-between and is currently her unit's treasurer. She and her husband Tim live on his family farm near Hershey and attend Maria Lutheran Church in Hershey. They have two grown children and are first time grandparents this year. Terri works at the North Platte Public Library and is active in the Nebraska Library Association. She enjoys reading, baking, photography, and traveling when they can get away. Traveling to Omaha to see granddaughter Ellie is definitely a current priority.



Secretary Randi VenHuizen is serving her first term on the NSWO board and she is excited to be a part of this team. Randi and her husband Brad moved from California to Omaha in 2004 and loves living in the Midwest. Randi and Brad joined Lord of Love and immediately became involved in the life of the church. She has served in her congregational women's unit as Treasurer and a board member at large. She is currently on the church council, worship planning, choir, and is a Stephen Minister. She has also served on Metro East's Spring Gathering Planning Team and is currently their Recorder for the 2012 Gathering. She loves reading and entertaining and traveling with her husband. They are a blended family and have four children and two grandchildren who all live in other parts of the country.



Renew, Respond, Rejoice!

**Eighth Triennial Gathering
July 14–17, 2011 • Spokane, Wash.**

The Spokane Convention Center was the location for the Eighth Triennial Convention and Gathering with more than 2,000 participants in attendance. Nebraska was well represented with over forty in attendance.

Women of the ELCA gathered in Spokane, July 14-17 for a weekend of learning, inspiring speakers, worship, and service in the largest gathering of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For detailed information on both the Convention and the Gathering, visit the Women of the ELCA website for news updates.

Of the over forty participants from Nebraska, ten were voting delegates, three NSWO officers, and seven NSWO Board Members. Nine of the ten voting delegates were elected at the NSWO Convention in September 2009; our president Gwendolynn Edwards was the tenth delegate by virtue of office.



Jennifer Michael and Gwen Edwards

On the third ballot delegates elected Jennifer Michael, Pensacola, Fla., as the churchwide Women of the ELCA president. "I am profoundly humbled by your faith in me (and) by this affirmation," she told the delegates. "I can't express the overwhelming love I feel for you and how I know that the Holy Spirit moves in this organization." Michael currently serves on the churchwide executive board and is a former president of ELCA Florida-Bahamas synodical women's organization and her congregational unit. She will succeed Beth Wrenn, the organization's current president.ⁱ

JoAnn Fuchs, West Columbia, TX, was elected vice president; Jackie Wilson, Hot Springs, Ark., secretary; and Barbara Martz, New Kensington, Pa., treasurer. Churchwide executive board members elected to serve the next three years are: Patti Austin, Lilburn, Ga.; Betsy Baguhn, Mount Horeb, Wis.; Betty Brandt, Grand Rapids, Minn.; Syd Brinkman, Allison, Iowa; Kristine Brugamy, Dickinson, N.D.; Susan Drane, Mesa, Ariz.; Gwendolynn Edwards, Bellevue, Neb.; Diane Frederick, Oak Park Heights, Minn.; Dona Jenkins, Riverside, Calif.; the Rev. Gwendolyn King, Philadelphia, PA; Sandra Lange, Choteau, Mont.; Vickie Murph, Columbus, Ohio; Phyllis Rude, Anchorage, Alaska; Anne Shelton, Ypsilanti, Mich.; Ely Smith, Fircrest, Wash.; Charleen Walker-Horton, York, Pa.; and Deborah Williams, Chicago, IL.ⁱⁱ

The Gathering offered participants the opportunity to attend a variety of workshops; work on service projects on-site at Camp Dianoigo (exhibit hall); participate in the 5K Run, Walk and Roll; make new friends; worship with over 2,000 people; and much more.

The 2009-11 NSWO Officers and Board Members had these reflections to share regarding their experience after attending "Renew, Respond, Rejoice!"



Thirty-five of the Nebraska attendees



Three generations. Mary Hock, NSWO President 1991-1993 with her daughters and mother. [picture from W/ELCA]

President Gwendolynn Edwards said, “Renew, Respond, Rejoice! is exactly what I did during my week in Spokane. This marked my third Triennial and I thank the NSWO for giving me this opportunity to attend. This year I attended as a delegate; I had attended the business sessions before; however being involved as a delegate gives a whole new meaning to business. It was an enlightening and enriching time. While in Spokane, I once again had the opportunity to make new friends, see ones I hadn’t seen in awhile, and enjoy true sisterhood. It was fun knowing that my friend Ruth and my Pastor were watching the Convention as it was being live streamed over the Internet; then receiving a text from my Pastor, “You really are in Spokane. I just saw you up on the stage...” As some of you know, the Churchwide office called me in March asking me to consider putting my name into nomination. After several weeks of discernment, prayer, and visits with Pastor Brad and Bishop deFreese, I said ‘yes.’ I could not be where I am today without all the support, love, hugs, and encouragement from you—the women of the Nebraska Women of the ELCA. Thank you!



The CWO 2011-2014 board is introduced. Beth Meyer, NSWO President 2005-2009 (paparazzi), takes a picture. ☺

I had the opportunity to walk Riverside Park; it was always a calming, refreshing walk. It was a time to hear God’s voice and to unwind as I headed back to my hotel. A convention highlight for me was the opening worship with Bishop Jessica Crist, ELCA Montana Synod. “Sisters we come here to renew—all areas: our family life, our church life, our spiritual life, etc.,” she said. “It is good to be with women who ‘get’ the church—with women who are the church.” Another highlight was the State of the ELCA report presented by Presiding Bishop Hanson. A special moving highlight was “yes” when I was elected to the board on the first ballot (third highest votes, but who’s counting) and then being installed by the Presiding Bishop.

The Gathering attendance was over two thousand, and it renewed us, invited us to respond, and allowed us to rejoice. We heard from keynote speakers, attended worships, attended inspiring workshops, and visited Camp Dianoigo (Exhibit Hall); it was the home of servant opportunities, hands-on activities, and exhibitors. I took time to help count socks at the in-kind gathering booth, staffed the Dining Hall (Women of the ELCA booth), and made a pictorial prayer journal—where I was reminded that God likes our fellowship. I attended a “Prayer in Our Busy Lives” workshop and hope to put some of the information into practice. Nebraska Women also had lunch with our Sister Synod, Pacifica; it was fun!

I encouraged each and every one of you to consider attending in 2014 at Charlotte, North Carolina. We had over forty Nebraskans in Spokane; let’s increase that by at least thirty percent. Bring a friend with you. You both will make new friends and leave refreshed, renewed, and excited. See you there!”

Vice President Kandy Pflaster stated, “This would be the fourth time that I have had the wonderful opportunity to attend a Triennial. I believe that is ranks up there in being one of the most popular. Each Triennial has been incredible as was this one that encouraged the women of the ELCA to “Renew, Respond, and Rejoice!”



The environment setting was inspiring.
[picture from W/ELCA]

I believe that so many things influenced me with this gathering. One big influence was the opportunity to hear a speaker from Liberia, Leymah Gbowee. Leymah is a women’s activist that led a group of women in Liberia to peace and prayer rallies to change the abuse, rape, and killing of women in Liberia, which she and several women did successfully. She delivered a wonderful and powerful message for women that faith without action is dead. She proclaimed to us as a gathering of women that it is time to rise up and reclaim our space. She left me with a saying that is in the scripture that “He who calls you will equip you!” I felt this was particularly fitting as I had just been declared the President of the NSWO, when Gwen was elected to the CWO board. So Lord, please equip me for the job that was ahead of me, was my mantra for the rest of the gathering. LOL.

Another influential opportunity I encountered was the address of Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. He is such a gifted speaker and spiritual leader. I have been fortunate to have heard him at least six to seven times. I am captivated each time he speaks. His message this time was “A challenge and a Promise.” He has a six minute video on the women’s website. I really encourage you to listen and view it, it is a powerful message. The challenge is for us women of faith to contact our politicians

to shout, plead, pray, or rally to make sure that our national budget is a moral document that sustains those that live in poverty. The promise is that we should be having a High Expectation of the Holy Spirit and that it will happen.

Lastly for me to be surrounded by 55+ women from Nebraska and 2,000+ women of faith from our country at one meeting place is phenomenal. The music, love, worship, the stories of faith, the action of health kits and prayer shawls is a very transforming event. It always makes me look forward to the next time this event will be held."

Secretary Jane Johnson commented, "The Eighth Triennial was special to me because I was able to see it through the eyes of my granddaughters. A highlight was singing in the choir with Caitlin and hearing Courtney's insights about justice which helped me have a better understanding about those issues."

Treasurer Nancy Johnson added, "I really enjoyed the 8th Triennial of the Women of the ELCA. Spokane welcomed us in style. It was so enlightening to see the Gathering of the over 2,000 ladies in the convention auditorium. What an experience of the Holy Spirit! We Renewed, Responded, and Rejoiced! The choir was so spiritual. The speakers were enlightening. The workshops were very informational. Presiding Bishop Hansen spoke to us. We learned about several mission areas of the ELCA. We watched documentaries about the women's protest for peace in Liberia and fistula health issue in Ethiopia. Thank you to Diane Brauer for her years of service on the Women of the ELCA board and congratulations to Gwen Edwards for her willingness to represent Nebraska as our newly elected Churchwide representative.

Central Board Rep Carol Ortegren stated, "What an experience! When other people told me how wonderful Triennial was I couldn't quite believe them—now I'll go home and tell others the same!

The most impressive thing for me after all the new people I met was the sense of power and spirit when all 2,000 plus people in the hall were singing and praying. In that setting I believe anything is possible together.

Leymah from Africa inspired everyone in the room. I wish I had just a tiny bit of her courage and determination. I also liked the Bible study couple. They were so down to earth and worked so well together. Then, my favorite thing of all was the music and the gospel workshop."

High Plains Board Rep Nancy Steele added, "Our Women of the ELCA Triennial left us with much to think about—from de-toxing our bodies and our homes as well as our unholy attitudes and practices toward each other, to helping others in very practical ways. Leymah Gbowee's message was so inspiring to me showing what power we women have in this world and yet we don't even begin to tap the source of that power. Leymah and the women she organized to stand against her government and the war lords, not only put her life in danger, but also the lives of her friends and their families. It made me think, how much power we women have if we only listen to God's voice. What a difference we could make if we were to take public stands together on the issues that injure, kill, or shame ourselves or others."

Metro East Board Rep Emily Laaker commented, "Wow! Each time I attend a triennial, it is better than the last! This was my third time, but the first as a delegate. I had been elected delegate at the NSWO Convention 2009.



Emily Laaker and Teresa Christensen checking in with Valora Starr [picture from W/ELCA]

Then, this spring I was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Metro East Representative, so I got to experience both. I felt more like a participant this time, instead of a tourist. I got to vote in the election of officers and board members, as well as adopt new constitutional amendments, and approve the budget for the next three years. I thoroughly enjoyed this convention. I thank the women of Nebraska and the NSWO Board, in particular, for allowing me to be a part of this Triennial Convention."

Midlands Board Rep Jane Flores added, "I think it was all good. I found the delivery of the Bible study, *Renew, Respond, and Rejoice* was quite interesting. I went to that workshop also and got more Bible study ideas. I also enjoyed singing in the choir as the one song "He Never Failed Me Yet" is still going on in my head as I walk down halls."



Michelle Steadman, Emily Laaker, and Nancy Johnson getting prepped to tape a segment about Saved to Serve Opportunities for "Telling Your Story."

Northeast Board Rep Mae Greve stated, "What an event filled with spirit-filled women. The Holy Spirit was at work with all the women every minute of every day. When you walked into the building you felt the Spirit guiding you to learn, greet, and listen. When Leymah Gbowee told her story on peace making and working with all of those people she worked with and all of the people she helped, you were inspired. We don't need to be afraid if we have God on our side. She was an inspiration to all. It was a wonderful Gathering and great to see so many ladies from all over the United States. I'm so glad I could be a part of the Gathering."



Southeast Board Rep Michelle Steadman commented, "When the call went out for prayer shawls to distribute to ministries and charities within the host synod (Northeast Washington/Idaho), women across the nation did respond enthusiastically! Two thousand, two hundred and twenty five prayer shawls arrived at the gathering. They came by mail, by UPS, by Fed-Ex, or were hand carried. Some packages contained a single shawl while others had a dozen in a vacuum sealed bag. The shawls came in all colors, patterns, and styles. They were knitted, crocheted, woven, and pieced. They were long and narrow, square, triangles, fringed, cuffed, light and lacy, thick and warm. Some were donated anonymously; others came with notes describing the donating church's prayer shawl ministry. Many had attached notes which spoke blessing and healing to the shawl's recipient.

On Thursday afternoon I spent several hours helping to unwrap, count, and repack the prayer shawls. Over and over again I was amazed at the variety and artistry displayed and humbled by the compassion and generosity they demonstrated. I was so impressed that I took the opportunity to take a crocheting lesson at the gathering's "craft hall." I am only working on a dishrag now, but I hope that by the next Triennial Gathering (2014 in Charlotte, North Carolina) I can add a prayer shawl to the collection."

Southern Prairie Board Rep Carol Bosshardt added, "Art from women involved in the Grief Project through Transitions; quilts interpreting the Renew, Respond, Rejoice! Theme; as well as those stitched and tied in the Quilting Area added to the sensory experience at the Triennial Convention and Gathering. Worship, devotions, plenary sessions, and walking in the Riverfront Park area all enriched our experiences as I and other members of the Nebraska delegation (and my husband) enjoyed the fellowship of thousands of Women of the ELCA (and a few good men). My workshop selections included programs on spiritual gifts, "Sacred Spaces in Metaphor," Luther on sexuality and marriage, and "Intercultural Competence for Leadership in a Diverse, Changing World," and I purchased the video *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, so I or another board member could help you put on programs related to these or other topics."

Tracy Steele, an attendee from Nebraska, added, "I come back from the W/ELCA Triennial refreshed and inspired. My most inspiring "ah ha" moment was listening to the amazing story of Leymah and her amazing faith journey, in Liberia, and desire to not fight violence with violence. There were so many times that I am sure she felt like giving up and instead dug deeper and prayed. She followed what she knew was right, and risked so many things. The power of uniting together for the right thing is what I hope to carry into my own life. There are many ways that I can use this message and story in my everyday life, and I know that I now have to dig deep myself to not let the things we see in that every day life become okay and normal when it is an injustice to another person. I have also been inspired to find space and let God's "Enough" flow through me. I will not focus on the surfeits of life, but trust in the fact that I am ENOUGH in God's eyes!

Mark those calendars now, July 24 – 27, 2014, Charlotte, North Carolina, for the Ninth Triennial Gathering.

Mark those calendars now, September 20 – 23, 2013, Kearney, Nebraska, for the NSWO Convention where we will be worshipping, learning, networking, and voting for delegates for the 2014 Triennial Convention.



Carol Bierman at Camp Dianoigo making a pictorial prayer journal.

ⁱ <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Women-of-the-ELCA/Triennial-Convention-and-Gathering/Triennial-Convention/Convention-News/Report-3.aspx>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Ministry/Women-of-the-ELCA/Triennial-Convention-and-Gathering/Triennial-Convention/Convention-News/Report-4.aspx>



Treasurer Janet Schmidt is a member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lincoln. She is the past-chair for the 2011 NSWO Convention Team. She has served in a leadership capacity in her previous congregation as Chair of Mutual Ministry Committee, Sunday School Curriculum Coordinator, Confirmation Group Leader, and past unit Vice-President and President. On the Nebraska Synod level, she is a trained Mission Interpreter. In her community, she has served for many years on the Lincoln/Lancaster County CROP Walk Planning Committee. Janet works for the state agency, ServeNebraska, as a Fiscal/Operations Officer. She is also a certified grants management specialist. She enjoys reading and doing scratch art. Janet is married to Lyle and has two adult children, Emilie and Daniel. She enjoys being a grandparent to her three-old grandson, Shane.

Janet's term is February 1, 2012 to January 31, 2014.



Central Conference Board Representative Carol Ann Ortegren is a member of Salem Evangelical Church in Stromsburg. She was a school administrator for over twenty years, both as an elementary principal and Director of Special Education for Educational Service Unit in Columbus. She is an avid quilter (prolific if not perfect). Carol and her late husband, Carrol, have three children, seven grandchildren, and three step-grandchildren (I always just say ten). Everyone lives in Nebraska. They all love quilts and antiques.

She does a lot of volunteer work including being the past president of her local Women of the ELCA, an officer for Women's Civic Improvement Club, and an officer in quilt guild. Carol is also on the board for our Senior Busy Wheels. She loves to attend her grandchildren's school activities. She strongly believes that a little humor can help most any situation and enjoys making new friends.



High Plains Conference Board Representative Nancy Steele is a member of Calvary Lutheran in Scottsbluff, and has lived in western Nebraska for forty years after college graduation. She and her husband Bill just celebrated forty-five years of marriage.

She is active in her local Women of the ELCA unit as Mission Community Chair, Board member, and Helping Hands coordinator. She has also been a Confirmation mentor, Stephen Ministry leader & minister, Bible Study facilitator, and shut-in ministry. Nancy has participated in the Spring Gatherings and Autumn Renewals and was a former Conference Coordinator. She has attended many of the Women of the ELCA Synodical Conventions often as a voting member; also been a voting member to the Nebraska Synod ELCA Assemblies several times, and once was a delegate to a Churchwide Assembly.

In her community, she serves their local Cooperative Ministries Council as the Secretary/Treasurer and also the local annual CROP WALK organizer.



Metro East Conference Board Representative Emily Laaker is a member of St. John's Lutheran in Bennington, Nebraska. She has previously served at the Metro East Board Representative from 2005 to 2009. Being a delegate to Triennial Convention in Spokane was an honor. She has served several terms as president and secretary of St. John's Women of the ELCA and is currently the secretary. She is also secretary of St. John's church council, chairs the St. John's Traditional Worship Team, and works with Cooks 4 Christ. She sings in the chancel choir and keeps track of the money for BennTown Gals. Emily is president of the Northern Douglas-Sarpy chapter of Thrivent.



Midlands Conference Board Representative Joyce Olson is a grandmother of fourteen and great-grandmother of eight. (Only one lives further than twenty miles away). She still helps with accounting in the family business. Joyce attends and is active at St. Mark's in Valley. She is an avid quilter and still clowns as "Ida-no" and teaches clowning. Joyce also enjoys reading, baking, sewing, and traveling when she has time.



Northeast Conference Board Representative Mae Greve is a member of Salem in Wakefield. She served as the chairmen of the Hospitality committee, president of Women of the ELCA, and serves on the memorial and visitation committees. Mae traveled to Tanzania on a Goodwill trip; and volunteers at Oaks Retirement Home, Meals on Wheels, and Senior Center. She loves to cook, entertain, and work with older people.



Southeast Conference Board Representative Michelle Steadman is a member of St. Paul (Hickory Grove) in Auburn. She is co-president of her church's women's group, active Circle participant, youth group leader, manages the LWR Coffee Project, and encourages congregational participation in LWR's Eco Palms and Chocolate Project. She has been a Saved To Served participant and Youth Leader for the Mississippi Mission Trip in 2007 and traveled to Tanzania in 2010. She is a blood donor, helps with service projects through work and youth group activities. She is a computer programmer.



Southern Prairie Board Representative Carol Bosshardt is a member of First Lutheran in Kearney, where she is involved in Hearts Alive worship leadership and circle membership. She provides Lutheran World Relief project leadership in her congregation as well as for the 2009 and 2011 Convention Servant Rooms and is on the 2012 Winter Retreat Planning Team. Before she became NSWO Southern Prairie Board Representative, she served on Spring Gathering Planning and Nominating Committees. Carol subs in the Kearney Public School System, has been a local and national Red Cross Disaster responder, and is taking organ lessons to redevelop some skills she hadn't used for thirty years.

Save These Dates

January 14, 2012, Winter Retreat, Grand Island
February 25, Northeast SG, Christ/Wisner
March 17, Southeast SG, American/Filley
March 24, Central SG, Trinity/Wolbach
March 31, Midlands SG, First/Fremont

April 14, Metro East SG, Bethany/Elkhorn
April 21, High Plains SG, St. John's/Eustis
May 5 - Southern Prairie SG, Salem/Superior
September 15, West Autumn Renewal, TBD
September 22, East Autumn Renewal, Omaha

Radical Justice Advocacy

By BRENDA KRUEGER, NSWO Anti-Racism Appointee/TDTR Team Member



Women of the ELCA's Today's Dream: Tomorrow's Reality program has a new name. Our network and ministry will no longer be called Anti-racism but will now be known as Racial Justice Advocacy!

This means Fran and I are now called racial justice advocates. We will continue to provide the eye-opening education about racial justice that we have for years! With this new name our organization has greater opportunities for action! The new name also challenges us to sharpen our focus on taking healing actions that bring healing and wholeness.

Women of the ELCA is an active member of the racial justice movement that has always been a part of the legacy of God's people. Our educational presentations will continue to illustrate that when we are not consciously part of the solutions, we are often unconsciously part of the problem. TDTR will show us how racial injustice happens and will identify racial justice advocacy opportunities in our own communities, our church, the society and the world. Because of God's amazing grace toward us, we will be challenged to act boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ!

Fran Hughes and I will be happy to arrange a presentation at your conference or unit meeting in the coming year. We have a variety of programs to choose from to fit your time frame and interest. There is no fee for our presentation, only our cost, such as mileage. You may reach me at 402-721-1508 or grand_travelers@hotmail.com.

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Asian Cultural Exchange Saved To Serve Opportunity Creates Community and Enlarges Sense of Mission

By SUSAN WATSON,
NSWO Brochure Developer Appointee

Obvious tangible accomplishments, growth in understanding, friendly rivalry between pastors and rollicking fun were some of the results of the Asian Cultural Exchange Saved To Serve Opportunity held August 19-21 at Salem Lutheran Church near Dakota City.

Joining the twenty-seven Saved To Serve Opportunity participants from across Nebraska were a number of men, women, and children from the Salem Congregation led by Pastor Jeff Unga and from the United Asian Lutheran Congregation whose pastor is Soriya Roeun. The congregations share the same facilities while using different times for worship.



With the help of Phet and Pastor Roeun, Air tells his story and asks for prayers for his wife and daughter who are still practicing the Buddhist religion.



Shirley Kehne and Bouala sew back packs for Lutheran World Relief.

On Saturday afternoon, 110 back packs were cut out, sewn, threaded with cording, and filled with school supplies. The group also assembled fifty-six health kits, and tied and bound sixteen quilts. The supplies were provided by units from across Nebraska.

The serving retreat began on Friday evening with a time of singing and mixers. Everyone pointed out on a world map the place where they were born. Pastor Unga led an active Bible study emphasizing our cultural similarities and noting that we are all brothers and sisters in the family of God. At the Bible study on Saturday morning Pastor Unga led participants in an enlightening discussion of what the Bible has to say about aliens.



This discussion continued as about forty people car pooled to Sioux City to view Trinity Gardens with its life sized wooden carving of the last supper, huge statues of Jesus and Mary, and beautiful gardens.

On the way back the group *Pastor Unga mixes* stopped at Emmanuel Lutheran *Pizza dough using his* Church in Dakota City. It was *own special recipe.* built in 1860 and is the first Lutheran church building constructed in Nebraska.

Before spending the afternoon in service projects, Dian Boals, a member of Salem, talked about her joy in teaching English as a second language classes at the church. She described the difficulty of learning English. Students must first learn a different alphabet and then basic words and phrases. The students said it takes two to three years to gain a basic understanding of English and many years to become good at speaking it.

Some of the Asian students attempted to teach the English speaking people present to say "Hello" in Cambodian and "Goodbye" in Laotian. It quickly became obvious that speaking another language is not a simple task.

A highlight of the weekend for many was working side by side with new found friends to complete items to be sent to Lutheran World Relief.



Carol Bosshardt, Sengyen, Lyn Beltz, and Loeung put school supplies in back packs for Lutheran World Relief.

The children from both congregations sorted and catalogued a wide assortment of movies, puzzles and games brought for their activity room. These items were sent by Women of the ELCA units from across Nebraska.

At five o'clock the friendly rivalry of the Pastors' cook off began. Pastor Unga, who formerly operated a pizza franchise, demonstrated how to make pizza. As he mixed the dough and prepared the toppings, he shared tips on how to make the perfect crust, what sauces to use, and how to easily make pizza for one person.

Meanwhile, Pastor Roeun shredded cabbage and carrots and mixed noodles and seasonings together as he told each step in making eggrolls. When the filling was finished, those who wanted to could help wrap the filling into the eggrolls.

Just as the wonderful smells of baking pizza and hot egg rolls blended, so did the group as they listened to the Asian Band play and sing and experienced the evening activities.

Representative games and dances from both cultures were shared. The Asian women were dressed in beautiful native dresses as they demonstrated their gracious dances and invited everyone to try the moves. This was followed by laughs of delight as the Americans introduced the Asians to the Chicken Dance.

The evening closed with a prayer service celebrating our oneness in Christ. It was a beautiful blending of cultures with music provided by the Asian Band and songs and prayers in Laotian, Cambodian, and English.

On Sunday, as everyone joined together for a final group hug, participants shared their favorite parts of the weekend. Their sentiments were summed up by Pastor Unga when he described the success of the weekend as an increased sense of community between the people of different cultures, as well as between the people of the two congregations and the overall increased sense of being a part of the mission of the larger church.



The closing evening prayer service was especially meaningful as songs were sung and prayers were lifted up in all three languages—English, Laotian and Cambodian.



Pastor Roeun and Phleuy show Karen Anderson, Phyllis Brinkley, Pearl Anderson, Julie Reiser, Janet Sievers, Elvera Davis, and Brenda Krueger how to wrap eggrolls. The finished eggrolls and pizza were enjoyed for dinner.



Marcia Seier (center) is given a dance lesson while other participants try the graceful moves too. The music was provided by the Asian Band.



Pearl Anderson rounds the corner in a rollicking game of Duck Duck Goose. Games of Devil and The Christian and Going on a Lion Hunt were also played with smiles, cheers, and great enthusiasm.

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Check List for Congregational Units

To Do Every Month

- ___ Send stories and pictures about your unit to the *Expressions* Team
- ___ Remind women to use their Thankoffering boxes
- ___ Share information received from SWO and CWO
- ___ Send offerings to synodical treasurer

To Do on Specific Months

(S applies to units whose year starts in Sept.; J to those starting in Jan.)

November

- ___ Share *Expressions* with members
- ___ Remember in prayer the SWO conventions this month
- 3-4 – NE Synod Faithful

Stewards Retreat

- 6 – NE Synod Fall Doings
- 7-11 – NE LWR Ingrathering
- 13 – NE Synod Fall Doings
- 15 – NE Synod Fall Doings
- 18-19 – NSWO Board Meeting
- 18-19 – NE Synod Lay Leader Conference
- 20 – NE Synod Fall Doings
- ___ Hold Thankoffering Service
- ___ (J) Plan Yearbook

December

- ___ (J) Prepare Yearbook
- ___ (J) Install Officers
- ___ (J) Adopt Budget
- ___ (J) Send list of new officers after unit elections to

Valerie Killinger and to Conference Board Representative

January

- 1 – *Expressions* deadline
- 3 – Winter Retreat registration deadline
- 13-14 – NE Synod Clergy Spouse Retreat
- 14 – Winter Retreat
- 14 – NSWO Board Meeting in Grand Island, NE
- 14 – NE Synod Rural Ministry Workshop
- 27-29 – Operation IDEA College Age

February

- 25 – Northeast Conference Spring Gathering