

WHAT'S NEWS

Women ^{of the} ELCA 

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

UNITY:

A message from "The Boss"

by Maxine Cameron Stenstrom

In the words of Bruce Springsteen in his recent Jeep commercial during the Superbowl, "the boss" (as he is often referred to) says: "It's no secret, the middle has been a hard place to get to lately, between red and blue... between our freedom and our fear." He ends by delivering hope that we can find a way back to each other as neighbors, friends and Americans - in unity.

As Christians we have another "boss" who wants us to find our way back to living life together in peace and unity. Yes, we are individuals, but we are not solitary individuals.

As a society, we have rules, laws, guidelines, aimed to promote safety, order, the greater good and peace. As citizens of our country, we are held accountable to our laws promising liberty and justice for all. This does not mean we are free to do whatever we want but we are indeed free to do what is right in God's sight. Therein lies the rub: How do we determine what is right in God's sight?

Christians are called to community - to unite in worship and congregate in fellowship, and to reach out in

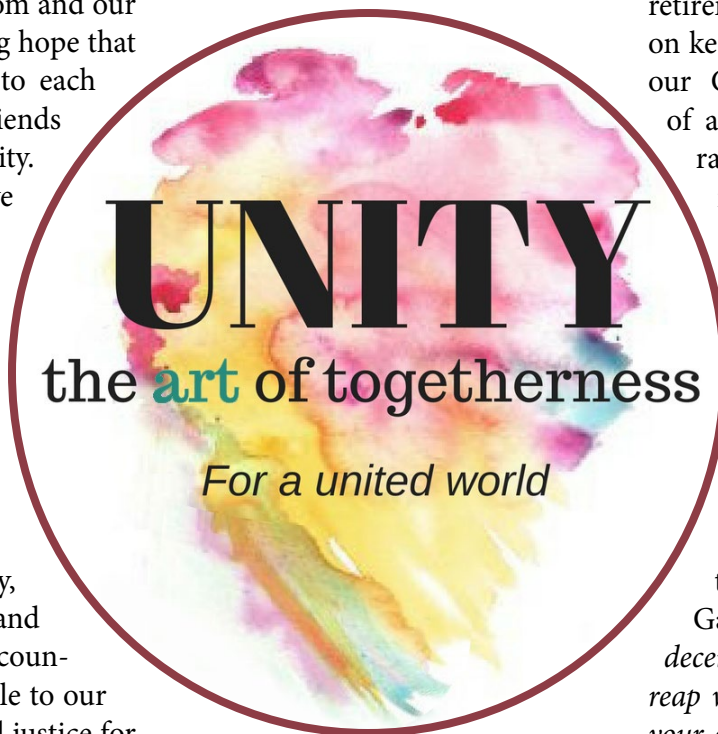
service to those in need. We use pastoral leadership, personal and group discernment, and above all, prayer, so that, to the best of our ability, we do what is right in God's sight as individuals and united in community. Accountability to our decisions keeps us on the right track, keeps us focused that we are united with Christ Jesus. Accountability keeps our groups from serving members only. Accountability

meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another... When individual Christians gather as one body in the name of Jesus, we become a vibrant community of people alive with the spirit of God that enables us to share our joy of salvation in service to and for the greater good. How can we not keep it to ourselves! Christianity is to be heralded, not hoarded. It's a lifetime commitment with no retirement age. That means we keep on keeping on doing good to and for our Christian brothers and sisters of all denominations regardless of race, economic status, and gender identity. It means that we keep on keeping on with doing good to and for ALL PEOPLE regardless of ideological disparities. It means that we keep on keeping on with doing good to and for all creatures great and small. It means that we keep on keeping on with doing good to and for the planet upon which we live.

Galatians 6:7-9 tells us: *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.* In the end, we will be held accountable. ■

keeps us and our ministries directed toward the greater good, goodwill, and peace. In the words of John Lennon: "Imagine all the people living life in peace."

Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us: *...and let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to*





UNITY NOT UNIFORMITY

I was struck on inauguration day with the theme of unity articulated by President Biden. It seemed to echo the thoughts of our SWO board members as we chose the theme for our Winter Gathering: Unity not Uniformity. Although the president was seeing unity for us as Americans in one country, under one flag, we see ourselves unified as followers of Jesus.

As I pray the Lord's Prayer each day on my daily walk, I pause especially at the petition "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and pray that it truly will be done on earth. Although we don't know exactly what heaven is like, we have Jesus' example of God's will on earth through his life among us. We sing the song "all are welcome in this place," just as Jesus welcomed all. Wow! All? Even those who don't look like me, think like me, or live like me?

Chris Michaels and Edward Viljoen in their book, *Spirit is Calling*, write; "Appreciating both the similarities and differences between people who make up a com-

munity allows for a common vision to be fulfilled without sacrificing the value of diversity." (p. 140) Under the heading of *Beyond Tolerance* they suggest we not only

tolerate differences, but celebrate them. (p. 141) At our upcoming virtual Winter Gathering (Saturday, March 20th) we will explore ways of articulating, accepting, respecting, and celebrating differences of perspective in order to strengthen our community of women. Again I quote from *Spirit is Calling*, "Accepting differences may be easier when you find yourself in the majority and your way of being is the strongest thread in a community." (p.142)

I like to think of our unity in Christ as living the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Each of these enable me to see others in their uniqueness and as valuable children of God. We are united under God in all our diversity! Thanks be to God!

Do join us on March 20th as we explore ways to live in our community of women, united by our love of God and celebrating our diversity. ■



SAVE THE DATE: Our Southwest California Synodical Women of the ELCA Convention will be held on Saturday, October 16, 2021 under the theme "Loving Connections" at the Cathedral Retreat Center in Echo Park. One of our main items of business will be the election of officers and board members. As we prepare for the election we need nominations to fill four vacancies, including vice president, treasurer and two board members. We want our board to reflect the diversity of our synod, both in ethnicity and age. Please prayerfully consider women you know who would bring diversity and creative ideas to our organization by serving on the board. Email your nominations to Beth Bunnell at bethbunnell@yahoo.com. Thank you!



Southwest California Synodical
Women's Organization presents

THE 2021 WINTER GATHERING

Saturday, March 20th

9:30am - Noon

Virtually via Zoom or audibly via phone

Your SWO Board is stepping out in faith for this year's virtual Winter Gathering as we continue our efforts to create community among women in our synod through education and dialogue. It is our prayer that this year's program will affirm our unity as followers of Jesus and teach us to articulate, accept, respect and celebrate differences of perspective that can strengthen our community of women according to our Women of the ELCA mission statement.

Theme Bible Verse: *"for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."*
—Galatians 3:26-28

Program will include: Devotions by Rev. Tracy Williams, pastor, Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bellflower. Additional music by select participating churches.

Keynote speaker/facilitator: Jennifer DeLeon, Churchwide Women of the ELCA Director of Justice

There is no charge for this event however, offerings are encouraged and will be divided between covering expenses for this event, Churchwide Women of the ELCA, and LSS of Southern California's food programs. **Make your offering check payable to Women of the ELCA and mail to Karil Drake, 3046 N. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91504.**

Please reach out to friends, neighbors and church members and invite them to join us.

**Please register to attend this event
using the MS Word document
included separately in this email. Thank you.**

**Questions? Call/text/email Karil Drake at
818-395-2353 • KarilDrake@yahoo com**



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF AND LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

There in times of trouble and need

Originally written for *First Edition*, the newsletter of First Lutheran Church, Torrance, CA
Submitted by SWO board member Mary Stewart

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) is recognizing its 75th year in 2021. Lutherans, other Christians, as well as others in the United States responded to the aftermath of World War II with donations of food, clothing, hygiene supplies, school supplies, and quilts. Gradually, as conditions improved in Europe, the work of LWR expanded to other parts of the world, in response to natural or human caused disasters.

Quilts continue to be used as blankets and to separate space within a shelter (as they have since 1946). Clothing collections were changed as the need in the places served changed. Europeans were able to use American clothing, including winter coats, that were not appropriate in tropical locations. However, some of you may remember making children's clothing during the U.S. involvement in Viet Nam. Others, may have sewn school uniforms for boys and girls in Tanzania.

Kiddie Kits originally included school supplies along with soap, a wash cloth, toothbrush, comb, and handkerchief. Klenli (cleanly) Kits would have provided the hygiene items, without the school supplies. School supplies and hygiene items are still needed. Many people have helped make Personal Care Kits, the current name for kits with hygiene items. With the addition of face masks, these kits become COVID-19 Defense Kits.

Handsewn face masks, made by Lutherans all across our country, have been sent to Mali and Haiti by LWR. In Nepal and India, the equipment LWR had provided to transmit early warnings of major flooding is now also being

used to provide lifesaving information about COVID-19. The needs change, and the work of Lutheran World Relief adapts to meet the changes.

Other ministry partners have also made program changes to address the current pandemic. Global Health Ministries (GHM) has shipped PPE and N95 masks to Madagascar and South Sudan, as well as providing grants to purchase the supplies closer to home. High grade medical fabric has been sent to South Sudan to make additional masks. GHM worked with Phebe Hospital in Liberia to determine the best way to modify isolation units designed for use with Ebola patients to use with COVID patients.

CLOSER TO HOME

Several Lutheran Social Services locations have hosted mobile COVID-19 testing and flu vaccination units. ELCA World Hunger provided grants to synods to distribute to food ministries, including some programs in our own Southwest California Synod.

Lutheran Retreats, Camps and Conferences has not been able to host traditional winter retreats during the pandemic restrictions, but they do have special events scheduled for February. Video workshops are planned, and will be posted at the LRCC website (LRCCHome.com) and on Facebook, for use by families, individuals, and church groups. They will be released on Fridays, February 5th, 12th, and 19th. They will be followed, on Saturday, February 27th (3pm) with a live Zoom Celebration. Check the LRCC website for more information. ■

Land Acknowledgment



Our Synod has encouraged us to use a “Land Acknowledgment” as part the opening of group events. A Land Acknowledgment is a way of recognizing that we are on indigenous land. In this way, we can honor the indigenous people who came before us and are still among us. In most places in the Southwest California Synod, the local people were, and are, the Chumash and the Tongva (also known as Kizh (pronounced Keech). Most of Los Angeles County would be Tongva. From Malibu north, coastal areas are Chumash as far as San Luis Obispo. Salinas Valley would be Salinians. Morro Bay area is shared by Salinian and Chumash people. For more information and other areas search for Native Americans by county.

The following (adapted from the Goshen College Land Acknowledgment www.goshen.edu) is one of the formats used for Land Acknowledgment:

We acknowledge that we gather as members of the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA on the traditional land of the **_____ peoples past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.*

*If appropriate, you may wish to insert the name of the congregation or other group.

**Complete with the appropriate tribal name(s) for your location. If you are meeting virtually, you may wish to include the names appropriate for the locations of the participants. ■

UPDATE

TRIENNIAL EVENTS NEWS, SCHEDULES, CHANGES

We’ve all sensed that the corona virus pandemic might interrupt our convention and gatherings planned for August 2021...and it has.

The Women of the ELCA Executive Board, on a specially called meeting December 23, approved three recommendations:

1. The currently scheduled August 3-5, 2021 will be held virtually (or digitally) on those dates.*
2. The Love Gathering currently scheduled for August 5-8, 2021 be postponed and registration refunds be offered. Staff will find other ways to build community and bring women together virtually in 2021 and 2022.
3. The Twelfth Triennial Convention and Gathering be held in Phoenix, Arizona during the week of September 18, 2023.

* It was stated by Linda Post Bushkofsky, Executive Director of Women of the ELCA, that before we can hold a virtual convention, delegates of the 2017 Triennial would have to approve it. The staff will take the steps necessary to contact those delegates regarding the proposed changes to the constitution.

We need to hold the staff, executive board, our synodical leaders and the upcoming Conference of Presidents in our thoughts and prayers. Many changes are taking place. During these next few months up to the August convention we need to focus our attention on how our organization can fulfill our mission (see Mission Statement). We need to find ways to financially support Women of the ELCA since our giving is down dramatically due to meeting virtually where offerings are not taken.

—Dianne Tillman, SWO board member



by Sharon Heck

I am writing this on January 27, three weeks after the horrible violence at our nation's Capitol. I have been devastated and heartsick since that day and seeing newly discovered videos of the terrible onslaught and desecration, has only added to my distress. The hundreds who were incited to this violence by the President of the United States and others have been totally deceived and lied to under the banner of "Stop the Steal." The election of Biden and Harris was so carefully prepared and completed due to the pandemic, that there was no steal - AND it wasn't even close. Those who continuously lie and say the election was stolen are inciting gullible people to continue their fight over a legally elected slate. If a lie is repeated often enough, many believe there is truth in it.

In the videos the violent people appeared to be white persons. Many have speculated that much blood would have been shed had the invaders been persons of color. Previously, peaceful demonstrations by Black Lives Matter protesters were met with tear gas and violent suppression in D.C. Racism shows its ugly head in many ways with people of color painfully paying for it.

I would like to share with you a portion of the Churchwide ELCA Advocacy Blog sent out by the Rev. Amy E.

Reumann, Director of ELCA Advocacy. "After the attack I kept hearing the refrain, 'This is not who we are!' from mostly white Americans horrified by the violence that they saw. I understand that tempting assertion. These are not our nation's ideals or our national myth, and I don't want this to be who we are either. But nothing will change unless we acknowledge that last week's violence and ongoing threats are direct expressions of our nation's deep-rooted white supremacy intertwined with a resurgent Christian nationalism. Neither are new, but both have been given new sanction and virulent life by President Trump's rhetoric and policies. Saying 'this is not who we are' is a lie that abdicates our individual and collective sin and complicity. We need to call what it actually is another thing: the fusion of Christian nationalism with violent insurrection. The cross, signs reading 'Proud American Christian,' and banners bearing the name of Jesus were carried next to Confederate flags and among people outfitted for violence. Insurrectionists appealed to faith as justification for their assault on the Capitol, including a 'Jericho March' that would bring down the walls of the Capitol. I want to again say 'this is not who we are,' but that too would be a lie. This is a face of Christianity in our nation, and although unrecognizable to me, these are our kin,

and it is our responsibility to repent and denounce this perversion of the Gospel"

We must condemn the violence perpetrated at our U.S. Capitol and the State Capitals. We must condemn the actions of those who incited the violence, and hold them accountable. Those who continue to promote the lie that the election was stolen from Trump must also bear some of the blame for inciting others to violence. Those who caused the death, destruction, and desecration at the Capitol on January 6, 2021 must be held accountable. Please help me advocate for ending this horrible stain on our U.S. history, by employing appropriate accountability. Staying silent does not condemn violence; it encourages more violence. Promoting baseless allegations is an act of complicity. We can all do better by condemning and NOT excusing it.

Pastor Amy Reumann closed her message with the following. "This is who we are - Jesus' disciples who are broken but also blessed. Sinful but also forgiven. Fearful but also called to serve. Called and sent to renew and repair." Let us pray about it and take action. ■



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Jennifer DeLeon,
keynote speaker/facilitator for
2021 Winter Gathering

Jennifer DeLeon is the director for Justice for Women of the ELCA. Most recently she served at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) for 12 years as director of government relations and advocacy. In that role she identified and tracked legislation important to LSSI and the ELCA; led advocacy events and strengthened coalitions; developed relationships that led to a new fundraising event and annual holiday appeal; and testified at legislative hearings, among other duties. Prior to serving with LSSI, she was a community organizer for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago.

A member of Trinidad Lutheran Church (Chicago), DeLeon has a master of arts degree in theological studies from Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago. She is a graduate of DePaul University with a bachelor of liberal arts degree with a concentration in leadership in nonprofit management. She has been involved with Women of the ELCA serving as vice president of the Metro Chicago synodical women's organization from 2007-2008. She's also worked with ELCA Global Mission gatherings as a musician and keynote speaker. She is president of the ELCA's Latino ministries Association. She is bilingual and bi-cultural, fluent in English and Spanish and proficient in Portuguese.

WHAT'S NEWS

Women ^{of the} ELCA 

SWO • SoCal Synod

MISSION STATEMENT

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

PURPOSE STATEMENT

As a community of women Created in the image of God, Called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and Empowered by the Holy Spirit... We commit ourselves to grow in faith, Affirm our gifts, Support one another in our callings, Engage in ministry and action and promote healing and wholeness in the Church, the society, and the world.

Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Avenue
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

ZOOM



What Is Zoom?

Zoom is an online audio and web conferencing platform/application. It is one of the biggest video conferencing solutions in use today that allows two or more people to communicate online.

How Does Zoom Work?

You don't need a paid subscription to start using Zoom. Once invited to a Zoom meeting, all you need to do is follow the instructions in the email invitation to start using Zoom. You'll need to click a link to install the Zoom app, and then enter the conference code to sign into the meeting to which you've been invited.