

WHAT'S NEWS



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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2023



KNOW YOUR BOLDNESS, HEED THE CALL

by Maxine Stenstrom, editor

What drives a bold woman? Willfulness? Ambition? Ego? Power? Maybe so. But what drives us, as *Lutheran women*, to be bold as we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly? What drives us to practice our faith out loud? Examine your heart to find the answer and look toward Scripture such as *2 Corinthians 3:4-6a, 12*. Know that your confidence and competence comes from God. Your boldness is not of yourself but is instead a gift, not to aggrandize yourself but to be humble in your walk with Him.

The late great Country Western star, Merle Haggard explained it well in his lyrics, "In the Garden."

And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own;

And the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known. I'd stay in the garden with Him though the night around me be falling, but He bids me go.....

His voice to me is calling.

Humble to listen, bold to heed His call in faith, love, honesty, courage, compassion, service. Whatever the Lord calls upon us to do will never be an act of personal willfulness—rest assured/blessed assurance.

In sharing my own story of boldness, I recall years ago while working at Saint John's Hospital in Santa Monica I came to a crossroads. I worked in data processing reconciling accounts and looking for computer glitches. I supplemented my low to adequate income by hanging my artwork in the cafeteria where many people saw and purchased it. Department heads within the hospital began approaching me to help promote their seminars and events with posters, signs, etc. The hospital gave me a standing purchase order number so any department in the hospital was authorized to hire me to help promote whatever they needed. I went to night school and learned how to prepare my

work for the printing press. It came to the point where my data processing work was falling by the wayside, much to the displeasure of my supervisor. It was time for me to make a decision.

Being a single mom with no outside support or safety net, it was a hard decision to quit my job (security, healthcare) for an income that had no guarantees. My immediate family was adamantly against it. My son was barely 12 years old. The income from my hospital design jobs would not be enough. Could I find more work? Could I keep paying the rent for our cheezy apartment? It was a tough call but I was moved by a force greater than myself. God had given me a gift not meant for data processing...and he gave me the passion to use it. He called me to grow in wisdom, courage and strength. To be of service. I heeded the call and though I struggled for a while, I persevered and developed a rewarding and financially stable graphic design business. I was able to meet and exceed my needs and responsibilities and in gratitude, I have been able to do volunteer projects for charities, nonprofits, churches and yes, even our beloved SoCal SWO. It has been a joy beyond measure.

Although it is pleasant, comforting and safe in 'the garden' He bids us go, His voice is calling. **Be Bold**

Plan to attend our upcoming SoCal SWO Winter Gathering I AM SHE: BE BOLD on February 25 at Olivet Lutheran in Hawthorne. Find more info inside this newsletter. ■



ON BOLDNESS

by Dixie Hanson, SoCal SWO president



After our W/ELCA Synod Board decided on the theme for our upcoming Winter Gathering: “I AM SHE: Be Bold,” I reflected on what it meant to be bold. This quote from an artist in our advent devotional booklet points out the boldness of Mary and how her boldness transforms her. Mary does the right thing even when it goes against the cultural norms. Joseph also turned away from what the culture expected and stood with Mary, risking being vilified. By choosing boldness, Mary is transformed.

“In a time when women had few options other than marriage, Mary’s consent to a potentially unwed motherhood is a brave act of subversive agency. In Mary’s ‘yes,’ uttered in her Magnificat, we see the transformation of a young teenage girl from fearful to determined, from simply accepting to deciding, from passivity to agency, from betrothed to surrogate mother of God—an honor rarer than gold. Perhaps the most remarkable annunciation in this passage is not the messenger’s revelation to Mary, but Mary’s ‘yes’ to the call.”—Luke 1:26-38, Carmeile Beaugelin in “From Generation to Generation . . . An Advent devotional.

My journey of being bold began when I was in college and worked against the rules that applied to women only. When these rules began to affect me negatively, the spark was lit that motivated

my desire to stand up for our rights as women. It became easier after that first experience to go against the norm, to stand up and protest later in life when I saw injustice. I had the privilege of traveling to other parts of the world and saw people with so much less. It made me bold to speak up for sharing resources in our family, our church and in our country and being more careful about resources I used. I joined organizations that brought people together to promote righting injustices in our country. Together we could be bold.

I am so grateful to be a member of a church that preaches boldness in standing up to society’s injustices and advocates on behalf of those who are in need. Our bishop speaks up boldly in the public sphere for righting wrongs in our society. I have found that being bold is so much easier when one has a community supporting the cause. We are blessed with a women’s organization that not only encourages a community that offers support for us individually, but a community that works for justice in our world. As our mission statement says in part, “... 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.”

Now that is a bold mission! Please join us on February 25 at Olivet Lutheran Church in Hawthorne when we will celebrate bold women in our lives, and let us go forward in 2023 to continue to live out that bold mission as Women of the ELCA. ■

PS: Can you name the women pictured above? See page 3.



ROLE MODELS OF BOLDNESS

FROM HISTORY

“The strongest reason why we ask for a woman to have a voice in the government under which she lives; in the religion she is asked to believe; equality in social life, where she is the chief factor; a place in the trades and professions, where she may earn her bread; is because of her birthright to self-sovereignty; because, as an individual, she must rely on herself.”

—Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *President of the National Woman Suffrage Association, 1869–1880*

Elizabeth Stanton led the fight for a woman’s right to vote, and as a woman of faith she boldly advocated for stronger and more positive images of women biblical figures and composed *The Woman’s Bible*, a written commentary challenging the negative stereotypes of women in the Bible. For a woman of her time, this was extraordinarily progressive. She was an advocate for all women, whom she believed deserved a voice in their religion, their government, and their society as a whole.

ASK YOURSELF:

- When have you stood up and asked to be heard? Was it at a church or a local government meeting?
- When you asked, were you asking for yourself and/or for others?
- Have you advocated for an underserved group in your community who needed a voice to represent them? For what were you advocating?

FROM TODAY

“When I fight about what is going on in the neighborhood, or when I fight about what is happening to other people’s children, I’m doing that because I want to leave a community and a world that is better than the one I found.”

—Marian Wright Edelman

Marian Wright Edelman was the first African-American woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar. During the Civil Rights movement, she established the course of her career by directing the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Office and later serving as counsel for Martin Luther King Jr.’s Poor People’s March. Edelman then founded the Washington Research Project, which would become the Children’s Defense Fund. The Children’s Defense Fund sponsors the annual Children’s Sabbath as well as lobbies Congress and works for the benefit of children everywhere.

ASK YOURSELF:

- Consider and respond to Edelman’s comment above.
- How do you leave the community and world better than you found it? How can you?
- Marian Edelman’s focus is children. What is your specific passion for leaving the world better than you found it?

From: *I Am She, A resource from Women of the ELCA*

Photos from pg. 2: Greta Thunberg, Hedy Lamarr, Oprah Winfrey, Maya Lin, Queen Elizabeth II, Helen Keller, Rosa Parks, Clara Barton, Sonia Sotomayor, Marie Curie, Ellen Ochoa, Amelia Earhart, Serena Williams, Princess Diana, Deb Haaland, Dolores Huerta, Marian Anderson, Flo-Jo Joyner, Dixie Hansen



AUTUMN RENEWAL RECAP



Our Autumn Renewal was held in Echo Park at the St. Paul's Commons Episcopal Retreat Center, Saturday, October 22, 2022. Our theme "Share Your Passion" was based on the scripture verse: *Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord.* — *Colossians 3:23*. Thirty-four women attended in person and nine online. Music was led by Dona Kintzi, Barbara Serio and Sharon Heck. We used hymns from the *All Creation Sings* hymnal.

Pastor Libby Denton led our Bible study using the parable of the soils asking us to reflect on where the 'good soil and bad soil' is found in our lives what of that can be composted, grown and renewed. Our 'share your

passion' presenters included: Beth Bunnell sharing her tabletop loom creations; Pastor Nancy Switzler sharing a *Stretch and Prayer* activity which she offers to her congregation; *Animals and the Bible: what they tell us about God* shared by Carole Swayze using the biblical story of Balaam, the donkey; and Pastor Marta Salazar shared how Fey Esperanza's food distribution program is so much more than just feeding people.

Jackie English (fit and trim in her 80s) recorded a video that led us in line dancing and then, after giving us a history of Echo Park Lake, Maxine Stenstrom led small group walks at the lake. Other activities included soap making with Elizabeth DiRoma and beading with Karen and Penny Moyer

(who also provided our lovely table decor). Pastor Nancy and Pastor Marta closed the day with worship in English and Spanish and a scripture message from *I Corinthians 12* that our body is made up of many members and it is especially important to pay attention to the suffering, weaker members of the body.

Our offering of \$1,511 was divided between the Fey Esperanza Food Distribution Program and Churchwide Women of the ELCA. Our thanks go to the retreat center staff for providing delicious meals and comfortable accommodations. All in all, it was an inspiring time of listening, learning, singing, sharing and enjoying the blessings of active fellowship. ■



2023 Winter Gathering features SoCal Synod Bishop

The Rev. Brenda Bos was elected to serve a six-year term as Bishop of the South-

west California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America on June 5, 2021. The election took place during the 33rd Assembly of the Southwest California Synod, the first virtual assembly in the synod territory. She is the first woman to serve as bishop in the Southwest California Synod, and the first openly lesbian bishop to serve the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her term of office began September 1, 2021, and her Installation took place on September 12, 2021, at the historic Angelica Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, a service that honored the rich immigrant history of Southern California and featured the work of artists throughout the synod.

A native Californian, Bishop Bos was ordained in 2014 in her home

congregation of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, a congregation known for its welcome of LGBTQ people. She attended Claremont School of Theology and Pacific Lutheran Theology Seminary, receiving a Masters of Divinity and Certificate of Theological Studies. Before entering the ministry, Bishop-elect Bos was a television producer at Warner Bros. studios, working on sitcoms such as "The George Lopez Show" and "The Golden Girls." She holds a bachelors degree in Broadcasting from Pepperdine University.

We are honored to welcome Bishop Bos to our Winter Gathering and look forward to her presentation as she shares her bold story. ■

THE GOOD NEWS ON GIVING

by Julie Jensen
SoCal SWO treasurer



that's part of my "job" here as your SWO treasurer. Please feel free to give me a call or send an email at 805-218-8416 or juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com. I will be happy to answer your questions.

Autumn Renewal was a delight. So good to be back together again after only being able to Zoom it for so long. The offering collected at this event was \$1,511.00. Half of that (\$755.50) was sent to Churchwide and the other half was given to the food program at Fe Y Esperanza. Pastor Marta shared with us the amazing food distribution program they have for a small congregation. Your offerings were shared wisely.

When we have a synod-wide event like this, half of our offering is given to our churchwide organization. We send 55% of your regular unit offerings to churchwide. Churchwide W/ELCA does so much good in our churches, communities and the world. They provide resources and grants to so many. We work

in partnership and our support is greatly needed.

I would like to thank the units that have contributed to our Synodical Women's Organization this year so far.

- St. Paul's, Santa Monica
- Westchester Lutheran, Westchester
- Gloria Dei, Santa Maria
- All Saints, Sun Valley
- Holy Trinity, Thousand Oaks
- Our Saviours, Oxnard
- Olivet, Hawthorne
- Salem, Glendale
- New Hope, Agoura Hills

Your checks payable to **Women of the ELCA** can be mailed to me
Julie Jensen
921 Gill Ave.
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It is amazing how quickly a year goes by. As I write this note it has almost been a year since I was elected and took over the duties of your treasurer. It has been an interesting learning curve for me. I think I finally have all the forms figured out. Do you have the same confusion that I had or have you been your unit's treasurer for a long time? Do you have questions on what to do with the offerings you collect at your unit or cluster gatherings or Bible studies? If you do,

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SoCal SWO elects Triennial Convention/Gathering Delegates



The 12th Triennial Gathering JUST LOVE logo was created by Elizabeth McBride, director for inter-generational programs and editor of *Café*, designed the Gathering 2020 logo. She has a bachelor of arts degree from Arizona State University and has designed graphics for Women of the ELCA since 2000. It represents how we are all misshapen pieces in one glorious and beautiful work of art: The Body of Christ. The logo's palette of deep purple and bright green is reflective of the scenery of the valley in the Phoenix area. Along the streets of this city, dusty earth tones are punctuated with bright purple flowers and vibrant green cacti. The turquoise color connects to the history of native cultures in Arizona and the southwest region. Red signifies love. The shade of red is not one of fire or caution, but rather one of joy.

At our special Zoom meeting October 1, we elected Crystal Shipp and Allison Johnson to be delegates and Mia McNulty the alternate at our Triennial Convention in

Phoenix, Arizona on September 19-21, 2023. Following the convention also in Phoenix, the Triennial Gathering will be held September 21-24 under the theme "Just Love." More information as it becomes available can found at welcatg.org.

WHAT'S NEWS

of the
Women ELCA 

SWO • SoCal Synod

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

MORE THAN JUST A FOOD PANTRY

My Friend's House, Inc.

(affiliated with Ascension Lutheran Church, Los Angeles) will benefit from half the offering at our upcoming Winter Gathering. **MFHI** works to end hunger and promote healthy living and is committed to uplifting those in need by providing the best services possible with love and compassion. They seek to strengthen the social safety net while maintaining human dignity.

The MFHI Food Pantry Program opens its doors each week to seniors, the unemployed and underemployed, the working poor and others on limited incomes, women and children and the homeless. All are welcome! The pantry helps individuals stretch their income, enabling them to take care of other responsibilities. We provide a friendly, welcoming place to give them a "helping hand." The food provided is donated by grocery stores and restaurants through the national Harvest



Support Network along with items received from the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank.

The MFHI Wellness Program includes exercise program such as yoga and walking. California Hospital Medical Center Community Benefit Department provides a monthly Parish Nurse who screens individuals for lifestyle diseases—hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and obesity that can

be helped by proper nutrition and exercise. The Parish Nurse explains screening results and refers those with abnormal readings to a local medical clinic or their health care provider and, where warranted, 911 is called.

The MFHI Creative Chefs Program is an interactive program that uses local chefs to promote healthy eating and cooking with the goal of improving the health of the community. Chefs introduce participants to recipes that use a variety of foods to increase their intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes, lean meats, and healthy alternatives to processed and fast foods. They show cooking methods that reduce the intake of sugars, fats and salts while still creating food that tastes good.

Check out their website www.myfriendshouseinc.org to learn more about this incredible group of volunteers.