

# WHAT'S NEWS

Women <sup>of the</sup> ELCA 

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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022

## PATHWAYS AND PAGES

by Maxine Cameron Stenstrom, editor



Many years ago I, along with other members of my Sisters In Christ Bible Study group at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Santa Monica, attended a retreat at Luther Glen Camp/Retreat Center. It was a beautiful spot near the community of Oak Glen east of Yucaipa, CA. I am ever-impressed with Lutheran Camps and Retreat Centers and Lauri and Glen Eggertson and the deeply meaningful work they do — El Camino Pines, Luther Glen and beyond.

This particular retreat was facilitated by two ladies from our Women of the ELCA Churchwide organization and the topic was “Paths to Spirituality.” Our group sessions focused on various paths that included **study, meditation, creativity, stewardship, passion**. During the three days of the retreat, many of us came to realize that we held one topic above the others and that topic varied between us all. Our spiritual paths were different but each topic led to the same goal: a deeper relationship with our creator.

These same topics—study, meditation, creativity, charity and passion are all addressed in this newsletter. As you read through these pages, the topics will speak to each one of us differently but, when followed, will lead us to that same goal.

Dixie writes on page 2 of ‘our differences’ and shares her experiences at a six-session **study** group that gave her a deeper understanding of people who had different histories. This realization spoke to Dixie’s **passion** for social justice and motivated new pathways of action for her.

Page 3 includes a recap of Pr. Alexia’s presentation at our recent Winter Gathering. It focuses on ‘difficulties’ and outlines questions, answers, and suggestions: Things to think about in times of trouble, things to **meditate** upon while seeking a closer relationship with God.

Page 4 has an invitation to join a new **creative** Bible Study centered around quilt-making. The art of transforming scraps into masterpieces, **meditating** while using a needle and thread, the strength of a thimble, and more are all artfully wrapped into this unique study.

Page 4 and 7 include the need for your **stewardship** along with **creative** ideas tips, and information on how you can help every living thing.

Page 6 directs you to **creative** and inspiring resources to honor Rachel’s Day and advocate against gun violence.

Sharon, on page 6, details the recent Lobby Day virtual event. The Lutheran Office of Public Policy is filled with folks who are **passionate** about social justice. Advocacy for change requires the fire of a **passionate** crusader to confront these tough issues.

Page 8 has a ‘save the date’ promotion for our bi-annual Autumn Renewal. The topic is ‘What is Your **Passion**?’ Mark your calendar and plan to attend. ■ 1

**“NO ONE IS LIKE YOU. . . You are a unique creation,  
a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for God to express.**

**YOUR HAPPINESS. . . comes from having the courage to be  
yourself and from embracing others who are different.”**

from *Spirit is Calling*

by Chris Michaels and Edward Viljoen p. 94



## **Seeds of our Differences**

by *Dixie Hansen*  
*SoCal SWO President*

**M**y women’s book discussion group at our church read the book *Educated*, a memoir by Tara Westover this month. Tara’s memoir is her journey of finding her identity apart from her dysfunctional family life. Although her family life was incredibly unique, it reminded me of the journey we all take as we find our identity as adults apart from the family in which we grew up. We grow up in a family that just is – we don’t question it because it is all we know. Then after graduating from high school, we enter the wider world and see other’s realities.

It was in my college years that I became aware of the biases present in the way women were treated by experiencing the rules that were different from the men. Through this experience, including reading and discussions with others, I became aware of our patriarchal systems that treat genders not just differently, but unequally. What I grew up with as normal, was now questioned as I became aware of how language patterns used in society and institutions were structured with the underlying system of patriarchy. This awareness greatly influenced how I interacted with my students during my teaching years and motivated me to seek out discussion groups

and other opportunities to learn about the limitations this inequitable system has placed on us as a society, as a church and in particular, us, as women. The recent Women’s Movement efforts have moved us as a society to reach for equality between genders. We still have a ways to go but are headed in the right direction.

Currently we, as a society, are beginning to examine the history of our systems that discriminated against our country’s minority groups. These times of rising social justice awareness bring opportunities for us to step out of the world we knew as young people and see how others experienced the world. The first step is to realize the differences and then react to those differences that impact lives. I appreciated being a part of the six-session study of the recent ELCA document titled *Now is the Time, the ELCA Declaration to the People of African Descent* led by Desta Goehner and Pastor Kacey Hahn. This opportunity brought more awareness of my limited perspective of a society that treats people differently depending on which group one belongs to. In examining the seeds of our differences, we are made aware of others’ experiences of the world. We are then able to better respond, using our understanding and advocacy to grow a more equitable society.

I am so grateful for the leadership in the churchwide ELCA in recognizing the work that must be done to move us to a place where we can examine the biases that we grew up with and move to help all of us—individuals, church and society—become more inclusive and work for justice for everyone so all can become **“a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for God to express.”** ■

## RECAP

### THEME VERSE

*Now may the God of peace,  
...that great Shepherd of the  
sheep, equip you with every-  
thing good for doing God's will  
and may God work in us what is  
pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ, to whom  
be glory forever and ever. —Hebrews 13:20-21 (NIV)*

About 40 women joined our Zoom Winter Gathering and the generous offering of \$1,540 was divided between Lutheran Immigration and Refuge Services and Churchwide WELCA after \$140 was deducted for expenses. The program included: devotions by Pastor Marta Salazar, music embracing our theme, a break with Jane Krueger who led us in chair yoga, small group conversations and the keynote presentation by Pastor Alexia Salvatierra.

Pastor Alexia began her presentation by having us discuss questions: When have you avoided dealing with difficult issues? When did it not go well and when did it go well? What did you learn? Responses for what we learned included:

- When introducing new ideas, work with doers.
- Stop and pray when the conversation turns negative.
- Be interested in what the other person has experienced in order to understand their perspective (listen).



- Choose the time and place carefully.
- Have a conversation that opens hearts, not closes them.
- Respond instead of react.
- Do what you can.

Pastor Alexia's suggestions:

We need a plan that doesn't skip steps.

- 1) Start with personal stories and listening from the heart.
- 2) Study together.
- 3) Interpret story in light of evidence.
- 4) Struggle with relevant scripture.
- 5) Use the power of prayer and spiritual stops as you manage the temperature.
- 6) Be realistic.
- 7) Use Mission projects to build trust in one another.

In addition to the ideas above, Pastor Alexia's PowerPoint used in her presentation is included as an attachment along with this newsletter. For those receiving a hardcopy version of this newsletter, the PowerPoint presentation can be emailed to you upon request to: [dixhanson@gmail.com](mailto:dixhanson@gmail.com).

Now it is our task to implement these points as we stop avoiding the difficult issues and move to a place of trust and mission together. ■



*Blessings to you as you are  
God's hands in the world!*

Several memorials submitted by synodical organizations were approved at the August Churchwide WELCA Convention. Our Southwest California Synod WELCA Board decided to promote one of these memorials as a suggested project for WELCA units in our synod:

**“Provide Assistance  
with Diapers and  
Female Hygiene Products.”**

This can be promoted in the following ways:

- Provide educational materials to your congregation on the needs of women and children living in poverty. (Talk to your local LSS provider, food banks or shelters for a list of needed items.)
- Advocate for legislation which would allow the inclusion of diapers and feminine hygiene products in low-income programs such as Food Stamps (SNAP) and WIC.
- Provide opportunities to donate these needed products to local food banks and women’s shelters as well as local Lutheran Social Services offices.
- Send in the fruits of your efforts to our newsletter editors: Karil Drake and Maxine Stenstrom.

**FROM OUR TREASURER**



**Attention:  
Unit and Cluster Treasurers**

Thank you to the treasurers who have sent in their group’s offerings. These funds are used to help your synodical and church-wide organizations provide services to you and your groups. If you have questions regarding what to do with your Women of the ELCA offerings please contact me at 805-218-8416 or [juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com](mailto:juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com).

Send your offering checks along with Form A to “Women of the ELCA”, 921 Gill Ave., Port Hueneme, CA 93041.



*Crafted in Christ*

by Katie Hines-Shah

**MONTHLY ZOOM BIBLE STUDY**  
4th Monday • 7:00 - 8:30pm

**X<sup>J1</sup>T**he Gather Bible Study for June, July and August is titled “Crafted in Christ” by Katie Hines-Shah.

Using the quilting process as the guide, Pastor Katie uses this study to help us celebrate the beautiful, useful ways God works in our lives and the goodness of the “quilted communities” we are creating even now.

During these summer months Karen Moyer will be leading our monthly Zoom Bible studies on the 4th Monday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30pm. Join us. ■

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## HONORING RACHEL'S DAY: Women boldly standing for children

The Women of the ELCA are approaching two decades of observing Rachel's Day. Traditionally celebrated in May, this program can be brought to light any time of the year. Much has been accomplished in building awareness about gun violence. **This work needs to continue now more than ever.**

The focus of Rachel's Day is "shining a light on gun violence against children." Marian Wright Edelman, activist for the rights of children and founder of the Children's Defense Fund, said, "It's everywhere. Guns and violence are in every nook and cranny of America." More children are exposed to violence than ever before. Did you know that every 30 minutes



a child or teen dies or is injured from a gun? Current data shows more than 2,694 children and teens died from guns in the United States—one child or teen every three hours and 15 minutes, seven every day, 51 every week for a year, according to a Children's Defense Fund report. More than six times as many children and teens suffered nonfatal gun injuries as gun deaths, the report said, and children and teens in America are 17 times more likely to die from gun violence than in other high-income countries. **What can you do?** Download resources from Women of the ELCA website that can help your congregation take a stand and make a difference. ■



## PEACE WITH JUSTICE *by Sharon Heck*

Our Lutheran Office of Public Policy-CA (LOPP) held a LOBBY DAY on May 18, 2022, virtually. We gathered at 9am to hear a welcome from LOPP Director Regina Banks, a description of LOPP from me as Chair of the LOPP Policy Council, and a wonderful keynote address from Anna Hasselblad who is Public Policy Director at United Ways of California. Anna challenged us when considering the story of “The Good Samaritan” to consider the dangerous road. Who built this road? Can we design a better road and let’s look at who is making decisions in constructing it? She also cautioned us, as we advocate for equitable systems, to celebrate wins even if we get only a half a loaf instead of the whole loaf for which we were hoping. Nicole Newell introduced the schedule for the day. Regina then gave an “Advocacy 101” presentation on how to interact with our elected officials which was followed by visits of over 100 participants to 49 offices of California legislators, arranged by Nicole Newell, the organizer of the event.

Six bills were chosen to advocate for based on the priorities of LOPP to support children and families in poverty. My group of seven, led by Dixie Hanson, met with Sam, the staff person from Senator Laird’s office (District 17, Santa Cruz). Two members of our group told personal experience stories regarding two of the bills as we asked for Senator Laird to support them. Sam seemed quite confident that Senator Laird would consider what we had to say.

The Appropriations Committee was to meet on the following day, May 19, and the bills would be considered to: continue, be included in the revised budget, replaced by another bill, or voted to be killed. On that day two of our bills were passed out to the next step which is a vote in the Assembly. AB 2589: CalEITC Expansion would provide a one-time payment of \$2,000 per child dependent to California residents who made less than \$30,000 in 2021 and file their taxes. It would

increase the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) minimum tax credit to about \$255 per eligible tax filer. AB 2589 would benefit approximately 5 million Californians, including 2 million children.

The second bill was AB 1615: Foster Youth Housing would extend housing assistance from 24 months to 36 months for former foster youth. Foster youth parents no longer receive payments when the youths reach the age of 18, and many foster youth become homeless. This bill now goes to the Assembly for a vote.

SB 854: the HOPE for Children Act which would have established California’s first baby bond program for children who lost a parent or caregiver to COVID-19 and eligible foster youth, did not pass out of committee. The accompanying budget ask was included in the Senate Budget proposal so there is still some hope that baby bonds will be funded.

AB 2180: The Children of Incarcerated Parents and Caregivers Taskforce would have established a statewide entity that focuses on identifying and addressing the needs of children affected by mass incarceration, and this bill did not pass out of the Appropriations Committee so is dead for this session.

Two bills are still in the process, so we are continuing to advocate on behalf of them. SB 464: Food for All would expand the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to include undocumented Californians who otherwise do not qualify for federal SNAP benefits. The other bill is SB 222: Water Rate Assistance and we need to support it with our advocacy.

Lobby Day is a wonderful experience giving us an opportunity to help design the Good Samaritan road! The day ended with breakout rooms where our visits were shared, and a closing prayer by John Halbert. I strongly urge everyone to participate in our LOBBY DAY 2023! ■



God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” — Genesis 1:28 NRSV

This verse leads us to look at the following quote:

*A religion that does nothing, that saves nothing, that costs nothing...is worth nothing.* — Martin Luther



**W**e have responsibilities bestowed upon to us by our Creator to manage, care for, save, do, protect. Right now a top priority in our state is water—water that is needed by **every living thing**. Our California State Water Resources Control Board voted unanimously this past May to implement a ban on watering non-functional turf in the commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors, as well as regulations requiring local agencies to implement water use restrictions amid the possibility that water supplies may be up to 20% lower due to extreme weather. Our changing climate also requires all of us to move beyond temporary emergency drought measures and adopt permanent changes to use water more wisely and prepare for more frequent and persistent periods of limited water supply. **Your small changes can make a big impact.**

The following are some creative ideas that hopefully will inspire us to implement and to share with our friends and neighbors.



• SWO Vice President, Beth Bunnell, submitted the following from her husband, Pastor Chuck Bunnell (Lutheran Church in the Foothills/LaCañada) who implemented this creative system for saving water for his garden: He catches the water from his shower or wash basin while waiting for the water to warm then pours it into the white receptacle, which in turn goes through the PVC to the blue water storage containers (see photos above) nestled among his boysenberry bushes. He then can use the water during the summer months when water is even more scarce.

## AROUND YOUR YARD

- Using drought-resistant plants and trees can save 30–60 gallons per 1000 sq. ft. each time.
- Installing a drip irrigation system and a smart controller can save 15 gallons each time you water.
- Using a broom to clean outdoor areas instead of a hose can save six gallons every minute.
- Setting mower blades to three inches encourages deeper roots and saves 16–50 gallons per day.
- Using mulch can save 20–30 gallons of water per 1000 sq. ft. each time you water.
- Wiping the car down after a heavy dew or rain to keep it cleaner or just using a dry towel to remove dust.

## AROUND YOUR HOME

- Filling your bathtub halfway or less can save 17-25 gallons of water per person every bath.
- Fixing leaks inside and outside the home can save 27 to 90 gallons of water each day.
- Installing faucet aerators can save .7 gallons per minute.
- Installing high-efficiency toilets can save 6-35 gallons per day.
- Recycling indoor water to use outdoors can cut water use by 30%.
- Keeping showers under five minutes can save 12.5 gallons per shower when using a water-efficient showerhead.
- By turning off the water when brushing teeth, rinsing dishes and washing hands can save eight gallons of water per person per day.
- Washing only full loads of clothes saves 15–45 gallons per load.
- Run only full loads in dishwasher saves 5–15 gallons per load.

**Let's all try to do our part to make our environment more livable!**

[waterboards.ca.gov](http://waterboards.ca.gov) • [saveourwater.com](http://saveourwater.com) • [drought.ca.gov](http://drought.ca.gov) • [water.ca.gov/Water-Basics/Conservation-Tips](http://water.ca.gov/Water-Basics/Conservation-Tips)

# WHAT'S NEWS

Women <sup>of the</sup> 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  
Port Hueneme, CA 93041

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

SAVE  
THE  
DATE



*"Share your Passion"*

Our Autumn Renewal Retreat will be  
**Saturday, October 22, 9:00am to 3:30pm**  
at the Episcopal Center in Echo Park.

It will be a hybrid event with both in person  
and Zoom participation.

We look forward to a few sharing their passion with the  
whole group and the rest of us sharing our passion in  
small groups.

**Searching for our websites?  
Here's a few that might help  
you connect:**

**SoCal SWO Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/swcawomenoftheelca](http://www.facebook.com/swcawomenoftheelca)

**Southwest California Synod**

[www.socalsynod.org/ministries/swca-synod-women-of-the-elca](http://www.socalsynod.org/ministries/swca-synod-women-of-the-elca)

**W/ELCA | Southwest California Synod**

[www.socalsynod.org/category/welca](http://www.socalsynod.org/category/welca)

**W/ELCA Churchwide website**

[www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org)

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