

Celebrate Bold Women's Day this month

Yes, it's February and the 2012 incarnation of Bold Women's Day is scheduled for Sunday, February 26th, but it's not too late to pull together a celebration. Lots of ideas—from simple to elaborate—can be found at womenoftheelca.org/bwd. If nothing else, download one of the litanies and use it in your meetings this month or even your personal devotions.

Also at womenoftheelca.org/bwd you'll find a link to "how others celebrate" where you can find several real-life examples of Bold Women's Day celebrations. Destined to be added to that link is what will be happening this month in Windom, Kansas—a town of 130 people that bills itself as the Covered Dish Capital of the World. There the women of Andover Lutheran Church are

celebrating Bold Women's Day with a daylong retreat held at an event space in neighboring McPherson. The retreat involves fun, fellowship and relaxation, including a coffee foot soak and a chocolate fountain. Sounds great already! Participants will be using the Women of the ELCA resource *Finding Your Bold* and local women will be recognized for their boldness.

Visit our Facebook page, [facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA](https://www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA), and tell us how you're celebrating.

If you feel it's too late to do something this year, begin thinking now about how you'll celebrate Bold Women's Day in 2013 during our year-long 25th anniversary celebration. By starting now, you'll be able to create an extraordinary event in 2013!

Grants, scholarship applications due

February 15 marks the deadline for two important annual programs of Women of the ELCA: grants and scholarships.

Agencies and non-profits that support healing and wholeness for women of all ages are invited to apply for a 2012 grant from Women of the ELCA. Last year grants were given to teen parent mentoring programs, therapeutic support groups for adolescent girls who are victims of sexual trauma, culinary and life-skills training for women stuck in poverty, seminars for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and peacemaking training, among others. If you know of similar agencies and non-profits in your community, encourage them to apply. Details are available at womenoftheelca.org.

Scholarships are available for women who are members of the ELCA. There are scholarships for Lutheran laywomen who are studying for a career other than ordained ministry as well as scholarships for those in their final year at an ELCA seminary. The other scholarships fall into two administrative categories: for women administrators and faculty at ELCA colleges and seminaries who are participating in leadership training or management training institutes and for women interested in reaching the top of their fields as administrators. Last year 24 women received scholarships from Women of the ELCA. Encourage someone you know to apply today. Details are available at womenoftheelca.org.

A Stewardship Devotion for February Supporting Epiphany people

Opening Hymn: Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
ELW 712 (vs 1-3)

Reading: Mark 1:29–39

Reflection

During this season after Epiphany, the church calls attention to the events of Jesus' public ministry, when he is revealed among the people. Traditional Epiphany stories tell of the magi visiting the newborn Jesus, John baptizing Jesus in the Jordan, the wedding guests seeing him turn water into wine and Jesus healing the sick. Epiphany scriptures are full of the *people* who invite, witness and respond to Jesus as his ministry unfolds.

As we consider how to support Christian ministry in our time, it is useful to reflect on the logistics of these Epiphany stories. *How* did the magi travel to Bethlehem, and where did they stay and eat along the way? What did Simon's mother use to serve Jesus and his disciples after she was healed, and to host the crowds that came in the evening? Where did Jesus and the disciples eat and sleep as they traveled throughout Galilee?

Women of the church know that someone must provide food and water, beds and tables, roads and modes of transportation. We know that providing logistical help

also requires generosity and attention, to make sure that everyone has what they need.

In this season of Epiphany, consider how your stewardship enables others to participate in Christian ministry. Whether the gift is hospitality, travel, lodging or sanctuary, we are called to support women, to be active participants in the epiphany stories of our time.

Closing Hymn: Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service
ELW 712 (vs 1–3)

Closing Prayer: God, who is revealed in the Epiphany of Jesus Christ, help us to be stewards of the epiphanies of our time. Keep us mindful of the logistical support that ministry requires. May our stewardship support women to be Epiphany people, who invite, witness and respond to you. Amen.

Offering Focus: Your offerings enable Women of the ELCA to equip women for education, advocacy and service, at events held across the country. These include the Triennial Gathering and ELCA Youth Gathering, workshops at synodical conventions, trainings about public speaking and leadership, documentary screenings and global educational travel, to name a few. The impact of each event extends far beyond those who attend, bearing fruits of ministry for years to come.

Women of the ELCA Interchange is a monthly publication of the women's organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The purpose of *Interchange* is to equip and empower Women of the ELCA participants with the information and resources necessary to carry out the organization's mission.

Interchange is distributed free of charge to the congregational, synodical and church-wide leadership of Women of the ELCA, and to Women of the ELCA cluster and conference coordinators and newsletter editors.

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Convention offering totals \$84,932



The Eighth Triennial Convention, held July 2011 in Spokane, Washington, honored two Lutheran ministries with gifts from the triennial convention offering which totaled \$84,932. “It is so rewarding to see the power of women’s ministry!” said Jenny Michael, president of Women of the ELCA for the 2011–2014 triennium, when informed of the total offering collected.

“Thanks are due not only to the delegates to the Eighth Triennial Convention but also to the many congregational units who contributed to the convention offering,” noted Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA.

The Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia (ELCMA) received \$21,233. ELCMA was selected by the executive board of Women of the ELCA as a recipient of the 2011 convention offering because several memorials at the 2008 triennial convention focused on environmental issues, including water consumption and mountaintop removal mining. Since ELCMA’s work focuses on environmental education, advocacy and care of God’s creation, ELCMA was a natural choice as an offering recipient.

“Please extend sincere gratitude to the Women of the ELCA for their wonderful gift to ELCMA,” writes the Rev. Wayne R. Kaufman, chair of the ELCMA’s Coalition Council. “This gift could not come at a better time. The financial problems facing our national church, our synods, and congregations has had a very negative impact on our financial status. Your very generous gift will be a great financial boost to us.”

ELCA Outdoor Ministries also received \$21,233. Again, ELCA Outdoor Ministries were selected by the executive board because several memorials at the 2008 triennial convention focused on environmental issues and ELCA Outdoor Ministry sites serve as role models of environmental stewardship for the whole church. Calling this “an amazing gift,” the Rev. Mark Burkhardt, an associate executive director of the Congregational and Synodical Mission program unit of the ELCA, reports that this gift will fund a special grant program to encourage the development of new and innovative initiatives in environmental stewardship at ELCA Outdoor Ministry sites.

The remaining portion of the offering, \$42,466, was designated by the churchwide executive board for the ongoing churchwide ministries of Women of the ELCA.



Outdoor ministries like those pictured here will benefit from a grants program for new and innovative initiatives in environmental stewardship, funded by a portion of the offering collected at the Eighth Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA.

Meet the Executive Board

Over the past few months, we've been introducing you to the 2011–2014 triennium executive board, elected last summer in Spokane, Wash. Meet two more members who are new to the board, and three who are serving a second term.



Anne Shelton
Ypsilanti, Mich.
Southeast Michigan Synod (6A)

Q. When did you first become involved with Women of the ELCA and how?

A. I heard a lot of good things about the organization from Christine Blossom, who was a member at my church and a board member for Southeastern Michigan SWO. Barb Miller, my church's unit president, asked me to be a delegate to the synodical convention.

Q. What other positions have you served for the organization?

A. Board member and treasurer of our SWO.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish over the 2011–14 triennium?

A. To spread the good news of the Women of the ELCA to a diverse range of women.

Q. What's your favorite hymn?

A. "Here I Am, Lord"



Ely Smith
Fircrest, Wash.
Southwestern Washington Synod (1C)

Q. When did you first become involved with Women of the ELCA and how?

A. As a young bride I was invited by my mother-in-law to attend a Southwestern Washington Synod retreat, which I did for several years. Because of demands of motherhood and work, I dropped out for many years. Then one day I was asked if I would consider being president of our unit. I was baffled, but realized the organization needed

new blood and perhaps new ideas. I served as president of the unit, then later on the synodical board.

Q. What other positions have you served for the organization?

A. I served two terms as treasurer of the SW-WA Synodical Women's Organization before being asked to run for churchwide board.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish over the 2011–14 triennium?

A. I hope that my experience—or lack of it—will serve as an example to other units and synods. The key to my being here is that I was asked. I hope to encourage others to do the "ask." Look around—even at the women who are not active in your organization—you never know where it might lead.

Q. What's your favorite hymn?

A. One of my favorite hymns is "Borning Cry."



Elizabeth (Betsy) Baguhn
Mt. Horeb, Wisc
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (5K)

Q. When did you first become involved with Women of the ELCA and how?

A. When I joined the American Lutheran church in 1980, the vice president of the ALCW (American Lutheran Church Women) invited me to attend regular monthly unit meetings, circle Bible study meetings and the quilting group. I visited all of them and still am a regular in each.

Q. What other positions have you served for the organization?

A. I was vice president and president of my unit before 1987. Since the merger, I have been unit president a few times, conference coordinator, synodical board member, communicator, synodical vice president, circle president, Bible study leader and chair of the funeral lunch committee.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish over the 2011–14 triennium?

A. I try to encourage younger women to participate. Any organization that wants to continue into the future needs to allow the next generation to express ideas and take on leadership roles. We need to provide the training and support and then step out of the way so as not to foil their plans.

Q. What's your favorite hymn?

A. Hymns are occasion and mood specific. I don't have just one favorite. In general, if it has a good tempo, my favorite is the song I'm singing now. I hope someone will remember to sing "Because He Lives" at my funeral.



Betty Brandt
Grand Rapids, Minn.
Northeastern Minnesota Synod
(3E)

Q. When did you first become involved with Women of the ELCA and how?

A. My first involvement was when my mother would take me to the Ladies Aid meetings. I remember sitting with her, but not much else. When I was newly married and living in our first rented home, ladies from the church we visited invited me to attend their monthly meeting. They left nothing to chance and came and picked me up for the meeting. It was shortly after that they asked if I would be the treasurer.

Q. What other positions have you served for the organization?

A. Seems as if I have held all positions in the individual church women's group I have been involved with in three different synods.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish over the 2011–14 triennium?

A. I am interested in helping church members that want to stay with the ELCA form anew, especially Women of the ELCA groups. Out of the ashes rises new growth. We have wonderful leadership in Women of the ELCA; I want to be a part of the organization that looks toward the future and remains strong and viable.

Q. What's your favorite hymn?

A. "Amazing Grace" and "On Eagle's Wings." This was the most difficult question to answer as there are so many that are great in different seasons of the year.



Syd Brinkman
Allison, Iowa
Northeastern Iowa synod (5F)

Q. When did you first become involved with Women of the ELCA and how?

A. In the later 80s early 90s, I went to a cluster meeting after the Spring Gathering morning program because my mom said I should and because she wasn't going. There were five at that meeting, and so I was gifted the cluster president's job! The rest is history!

Q. What other positions have you served for the organization?

A. Cluster president, SWO board member, SWO president, unit president and various other gifts as assigned by the Spirit!

Q. What do you hope to accomplish over the 2011–14 triennium?

A. I want to increase the *active* participation of women between the ages of 25 to 40. Notice I said active, not just attending a Café event, but becoming active in a unit with their passions to study Scripture and to study what makes them uniquely Lutheran in their faith.

Q. What's your favorite hymn?

A. "Here I Am, Lord"; "Canticle of the Turning"; "On Eagles Wings"; "All Are Welcome"; "We Are Called." Each speaks to a different part of me and a different part of the ministry.

Supporting the 1,000 Days Initiative

We are committed to bringing about healing and wholeness in the church, the community and the world. One way for us to live up to that commitment is to mobilize our considerable power and clout in support of the 1,000 Days Initiative that seeks good nutrition between a woman's pregnancy and the child's second birthday (i.e., 1,000 days). At the Eighth Triennial Convention this past July, delegates called us all to support the 1,000 Days Initiative, working across expressions of Women of the ELCA as well as with ecumenical partners. Learn more and get involved today.

For more information, go to www.thousanddays.org/ where you'll find resources, a blog, e-mail updates and more. We can and will make a difference by supporting the 1,000 Days Initiative.

Lent: Penitence, Pilgrimage, Preparation

Lent: *Penitence, Pilgrimage, Preparation*, a new program resource, is available for use during Lent 2012 which begins on Ash Wednesday, February 22. Intended for use by a group, it also includes many Lenten practices, some of which can be taken up immediately and others that call for additional preparation. The resource could be presented as part of a half-day retreat or it could be presented over three or four sessions. Three excerpts follow. To get the complete resource, go to womenoftheelca.org and download the free PDF.

A season for penitence

Every year on Ash Wednesday, Christians all over the world have our faces marked with ashes, with a reminder that we are dust and to dust we will return. Where does this come from?

In the Scriptures, we find stories of people marking themselves with ashes as a sign of penitence, humility or grief. See, for example, Jonah 3:5–9, Job 42:6, Jeremiah 6:26 and Matthew 11:21.

The church continued this practice, using it to signify penitence. At least as far back as the third century, people who had fallen into serious sin and wanted to be reconciled with God and the community went through a penitential rite that began with a mark of ashes on the forehead on the first Sunday of Lent. On Maundy Thursday, they would be solemnly and joyfully welcomed back into full fellowship with the community.

Sympathetic friends and relatives would often present themselves for ashes alongside the repentant sinner, and before long almost everyone in the congregation received ashes on the first Sunday of Lent.

The six-week Lent observed in the western part of the Roman Empire as far back as the fourth century didn't quite add up to forty days. If we count from the first Sunday of Lent to Maundy Thursday, leaving out the Sundays (which are never fast days, being little Easters), we come up with 36.

A season for pilgrimage

Sometimes people describe Lent as a journey, perhaps thinking of the Exodus story of the people journeying through the wilderness for forty years before finding the promised land, or of Jesus' Gospel journey from Galilee

to Jerusalem. Or maybe they're thinking of a spiritual journey of Lenten renewal.

Another kind of journey is a pilgrimage—a spiritual journey that also includes a physical journey. Traveling to see and experience a holy place has a long history. The Bible is full of pilgrimages—there are even 15 psalms that were especially intended for pilgrims to sing on their way to the temple in Jerusalem (Psalms 120–134).

Take a look at Psalm 122. Jesus and his family and friends almost certainly sang this on the road every time they went to the temple in Jerusalem.

A season for preparation

For us, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when we are marked with ashes and reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. It leads us into the Triduum, the Three Days, when we remember and relive how God has acted to save all creation through the life, death and resurrection of his son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Triduum reaches its climax in the night before Easter Sunday morning.

Since very early times, these hours before sunrise have been a favored time for Holy Baptism, the sacrament that joins us to Christ and to the church throughout the ages and throughout the world, the sacrament of the new life that Christ won for us in his death and resurrection.

Baptism is when and how each one of us becomes a Christian.

It takes a while to really know how to be a Christian, as we all know—most of a lifetime, at least! But we all start somewhere, and we all need someone to help us along the way.

In the book of Acts, we have several stories of people whose encounter with one of God's people led to their being joined to Christ in baptism.

Take a look at Acts 2:37–41, Acts 8:26–39 and Acts 9:10–18.

These scriptural stories make clear that coming to faith calls for a relationship with a person of faith and the resources of a believing community—especially the Scriptures.

Prepare for 25th anniversary by celebrating Women's History Month

by Linda Post Bushkofsky

Editor's note: A version of this piece appears in the March 2012 issue of Gather, gathermagazine.org.

Women of the ELCA is set to observe the 25th anniversary of its creation, and we remember the Lutheran women who have paved the way for us today. With the rights and freedoms we enjoy, it's all too easy to ignore the struggles that our foremothers endured, even those foremothers who are just a generation or two older than we are. Consider observing Women's History Month next month in a way that helps prepare for our year long 25th anniversary observance that begins this June. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Use Women's History Month (March) to collect the stories of women in your congregation. Then publish their stories as part of your anniversary celebration. Ask them to recall women's roles in the congregation and church during their lifetimes. How have they changed? Ask if they were involved in the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s. How did that involvement influence their faith journey? If you record their stories, consider creating podcasts or videos to share, maybe even creating a composite that could be aired as a kickoff to the 25th anniversary year.

Record the dreams and hopes of teens and young women in your congregation, honoring their aspirations. Invite younger and older women alike to imagine what the next 25th years of Women of the ELCA will include. Pair up those young women with older women, offering mentoring opportunities. Together older and younger women can live out the purpose of Women of the ELCA in supporting "one another in our callings."

Select a book to read or video to watch and follow it with a discussion. You might consider the memoir *Mighty Be Our Powers* by Leymah Gbowee, a featured speaker at our triennial gathering last summer who was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. Upon reading Gbowee's book, churchwide executive board member Phyllis Rude of Anchorage, Alaska, remarked, "her book makes me ask myself 'What more can I do besides talk and pray about problems I see around me?'" Use

that question to frame a kickoff to the 25th anniversary year where each participant in your congregational unit makes an intentional commitment to move beyond talk and prayer into action. Plan ways that you can inspire and encourage one another throughout the year.

We're going to have a great celebration of Women of the ELCA's first 25 years. Plan now to take an active role in that celebration. For more information, visit womenoftheelca.org.



Linda Post Bushkofsky is executive director of Women of the ELCA.

For more information about Women's History Month, visit

- womenshistorymonth.gov
- nwhp.org

Plan now for World Day of Prayer

This year's World Day of Prayer service theme, "Let Justice Prevail," is inspired by the guiding principles of the World Day of Prayer movement. The women of Malaysia ask us to come together in March as worshipping communities to think about justice and how we may approach it in an interfaith world. "Let Justice Prevail" will be celebrated all over the world on Friday, March 2, 2012.

If you have not participated in World Day of Prayer in the past, seek out services in your area or hold a service in your congregation. Enhance the worship with the many related resources created by the women of Malaysia. In addition to the 2012 worship bulletin, you can order a leader's/planner's guide, Spanish resources, children's service, slides, posters, postcards and music. To order all 2012 materials, call Kutztown Publishing at its toll-free number: 800-523-8211.



Calendar

For information on any of the programs or events listed here, contact Women of the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, or e-mail Women.ELCA@elca.org

You are invited to hold the women of our organization in prayer as they gather for these important meetings and events.

February

- 23–26 Conference of Synodical Presidents, Chicago, IL
- 26 Bold Women's Day

March

- 2 World Day of Prayer
- 31 Metro Washington DC SWO Convention, Christ Church, Fairfax, VA

April

- 20–21 Churchwide Executive Board Meeting, Chicago, IL
- 20–21 St. Paul Area SWO Convention, Prince of Peace, Burnsville, MN
- 21 La Crosse Area SWO Convention, St. Peter, Prairie du Chein, WI
- 27–28 New SWO Treasurers Training, Chicago, IL
- 27–28 NW Synod of Wisconsin SWO Convention, Plaza Hotel & Conference Center, Eau Claire, WI
- 28 Delaware-Maryland SWO Convention, St. Michael, Perry Hall, MD

May

- 4–5 Northwestern Pennsylvania SWO Convention, Marriott Ambassador Center, Erie, PA
- 18–19 Southwestern Pennsylvania SWO Convention, Bishop Connare Center, Greensburg, PA
- 19 Allegheny SWO Convention, St. Paul, Pine Grove Mills, PA
- 25–27 South Carolina SWO Convention, Lutheridge, Arden, NC

February 2012

Please copy and share with the women in your congregation!

- Please route to Women of the ELCA leaders
- pastor(s)
- other church leaders

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