

# Women of the ELCA

## NORTH CAROLINA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

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

## THE BULLETIN

March/April 2023

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*The Bulletin* is the official publication of the NC Women of the ELCA, published bi-monthly. Articles and information relating to the Women of the ELCA are accepted for publication, following review by the Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) President and the SWO Secretary, who serves as the Editor. You may submit articles to Susan P. Harris, [sepharris@bellsouth.net](mailto:sepharris@bellsouth.net) or 4369 Herter Road, Lincolnton, NC 28092.

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- Bulletin Subscription Form
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### 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.

### OUR MISSION

MOBILIZING WOMEN TO ACT  
BOLDLY ON THEIR FAITH IN JESUS

## FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT:

Salutations, beautiful ladies! We have an amazing year lined up for you all! I can't wait for the One Day Retreat – *Becoming a Butterfly!* How about you? Not only do we have that special Saturday (March 18<sup>th</sup>), but did you know that the entire month of March is recognized just for us?! Did you know that March is National Women's History Month??

Since 1987, the people of the United States have formally recognized March as National Women's History Month. We know that EVERY woman has her unique story to tell and special gifts to share with the world. Not only does the US recognize March for all the wonderful women throughout history, so does the United Kingdom and Australia. In Canada, Women's History Month is observed in October. Why was March chosen to the Month of Women in the US? Because March 8<sup>th</sup> is International Women's Day.

We have not always enjoyed such accolades and brought forward to be honored in March. Actually, in 1978, a school district in Sonoma, California organized the very first month-long commemoration which began with the Women's History Day. Hundreds of students participated in essay competitions, gave presentations, and joined in a parade in Santa Rosa. This was just the beginning!! A few years later, other school districts, organizations, and communities all over the US were celebrating Women's History Day. Eventually in 1980 the National Women's History Alliance, backed by President Jimmy Carter, petitioned for the holiday to be observed as a national week. President Carter issued a proclamation declaring the week of March 8<sup>th</sup> as National Women's History Week. Then, the following year, Congress forwarded a resolution that established a national observance. Eventually, six years later, things expanded and the whole month of March was petitioned successfully by the National Women's History Project as National Women's History Month.

Many amazing things happen across our great nation and the world that are led by phenomenal women throughout history. We have come a very long way in equality, respect, success, and careers.

# NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH TIMELINE

1920

## Women Win the Right to Vote

Women are granted the right to vote thanks to the 19th Amendment.

1981

## A Women's Place is in the Court

Sandra Day O'Connor is the first woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court.

1983

## Women Go to Infinity and Beyond

Sally Ride becomes the first woman in space.

2016

## I'm with Her

Hillary Rodham Clinton is the first woman to be nominated for president by a major political party.

As we go through the month of March, I challenge you to become more familiar with 6 AMAZING women found in the pages of the Bible: Shiphrah, Puah, Rahab, Ruth, Esther, and Deborah. I will begin with Shiphrah, Puah, Rahab, and Ruth. Stay tuned for Esther and Deborah in the next Newsletter!

### **Shiphrah & Puah:**

These brave and strong ladies were Hebrew midwives. They lived during the time of a new Egyptian Pharaoh who enslaved the people of Israel due to fear. The fear of losing his kingdom to the people of Israel was so great that, Pharaoh went to Shiphrah and Puah to command them to kill all the male children born to the women of Israel. However, Shiphrah and Puah did not follow through with the Pharaoh's command because they feared God. When they were later confronted by Pharaoh, God protected them due to their loyalty and obedience to Him.

*"I am not trying to please people. I want to please God." Galatians 1:10*

**Rahab:**

Rahab, a strong, brave, bold and loyal follower of God, was a woman who had a bad reputation in the city of Jericho. Even though Rahab was a Canaanite, she trusted in Israel's God. Against the orders of her king, she chose to hide two spies who came to Jericho. When the king's soldiers came to her home and inquired about the two men, Rahab misguided them long enough for the two men to escape. For her protection, she requested that the two spies spare her family. The two men did as promised and spared Rahab's entire family.

*"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1*

**Ruth:**

The loyal, faithful, and loving Ruth was a young Moabite woman who traveled to Moab with her husband, his brother, and his parents. Shortly after settling in all three men of the family died. Even though it was customary for women to return to their family and seek a new husband upon the death of their husband, Ruth refused to leave her Mother-in-law Naomi. She committed to follow Naomi back to Israel and to follow her God. Once back in Israel, the women worked hard in the fields to provide for themselves. After some time, it was evident that survival was going to be a long hard road. At this point, Ruth humbled herself and offered herself to Boaz in marriage.

*"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (or sister)." Proverbs 18:24b*

So, let's take a moment to remember the women who came before us, thank the women beside us, and dream of the amazing women to come!

**Lisa Philbeck**

President, NC Women of the ELCA



**A Prayer to Share**



**The following was submitted by Joyce Ohlson, Gathering Planning Committee member.**

This is from Kathleen Norris, from the *Weavings Journal, A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life.*

Prayer is not doing, but being. It is not words, but the beyond-words experience of coming into the presence of something much greater than oneself. It is an invitation to recognize holiness, and to utter simple words, "Holy, Holy, Holy" in response. Attentiveness is all; I sometimes think of prayer as a certain quality of attention that comes upon me when I'm busy doing something else.

Praying with the gift of air through attention to breath is an ancient Christian practice. One of the earliest forms is the 'Jesus Prayer', also called the "Prayer of the Heart".

Here is a guided meditation of this prayer.

[Lord Jesus, Son of God. Have mercy on me, a sinner]

Get comfortable where you are sitting. Place your hands on your chest and abdomen so you can feel your breaths. Breathe in deeply and slowly over 5 counts, and exhale deeply and slowly over 5 counts. Inhale slowly over 5, exhale slowly over 5

[inhale ----Lord Jesus, son of God  
exhale----Have mercy on me, a sinner]

Continue taking slow deep breaths in and out, reciting that prayer to yourself silently. [breaths]

Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Feel your breath moving beyond your lungs into your entire body, follow it into your belly, your legs, down to your toes. Now imagine it filling your shoulders, flowing down your arms into your fingertips. Feel your breath soothing your neck, circulating through your brain, massaging the space behind your eyes. Slow deep calming breaths.

Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.  
Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.  
Amen

## The Power of Prayer

Prayer has the power to transform our lives. There is tremendous power in daily prayer. Jesus tells us that with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do great things. Prayer is one of the most powerful weapons God has given us. Effective prayer releases the power of the Holy Spirit, and by the Holy Spirit, God's servants are made bold and courageous to speak for the Lord.

Occasionally, I reminisce about my summer as a camp counselor at Lutheridge, located in Arden, in the North Carolina mountains. My first experience as a camp counselor was in 1973, almost fifty years ago! I remember during my free time, whenever I had general duty, hiking on the trail leading to the Chapel. It was a special moment having a heart-to-heart conversation with God. Whenever I went inside the Chapel, I immediately felt at peace. I thought of the Bible verse, "Be Still and Know That I Am God." This verse calls for us to take time to pause and reflect. It reminds us that God is still in control no matter what happens in our lives. By taking time to be still and connect with our faith, we can find peace even amidst the chaos of life. We can take a moment to be thankful for what we have and remember that our trials are part of God's plan. After I reflected on this verse, I prayed for God's guidance and renewed strength. Whenever I left the Chapel, I experienced serenity. I felt refreshed and renewed. That is the power of prayer!

Prayer helps us stay close to God. When we pray, we are opening up our hearts to Him and He is able to work in us and through us. We can connect with God and realign our hearts with His through prayer. The Bible says in James 4:8, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (NKJV) Prayer is important because it helps us see life through a Heavenly lens! You can have a special relationship with God by listening to His voice and feeling His comforting presence through prayer.

Paul writes in Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be known to God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus".

Through prayer, we can:

- 1) Focus on what is important in our lives
- 2) Stay hopeful during dark times
- 3) Feel connected to God
- 4) Deal with difficult situations and emotions
- 5) Find comfort in peace
- 6) Develop a strong relationship with God

- 7) Become more compassionate people
- 8) Receive strength during difficult times
- 9) Keep our minds and thoughts clear

\*Have communication with God and ask Him for guidance and support in our lives (excerpts from Aaron Joseph Hall, thinke.org)

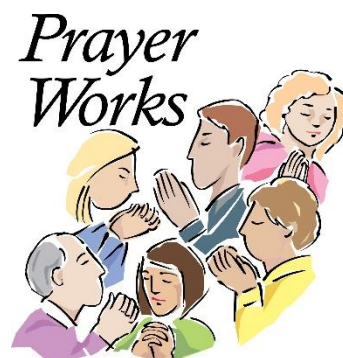
God is the one who can help you focus, find healing, comfort, strength, peace, purpose and so much more.

World Day of Prayer is the first Friday in March. It is a worldwide, ecumenical movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year, and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service. It brings women of different races, cultures and traditions in fellowship, and action throughout the year. The motto of World Day of Prayer is "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action." Through World Day of Prayer, women affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and have immeasurable influence in the world. So, as you see, prayer is very powerful.

In closing, I would like to share inspirational quotes about prayer:

- "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." - Martin Luther
- "Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God." - Mother Teresa
- "Whenever you pray, God listens, when you listen, God talks, when you believe, God works." (Daily Inspirational Quotes)

Submitted by Karen Overcash  
Co-Chair of Discipleship Committee



## National Quilting Day

Saturday, March 18 is National Quilting Day. How will you celebrate that day?

According to the Lutheran World Relief website, “For more than 75 years, compassionate people just like you have put their faith into action and made quilts for people in need around the world. And not just a few quilts — nearly 28 MILLION QUILTS!

These gifts of love make life brighter, softer, and a bit more comfortable for our neighbors around the world struggling with chronic poverty, illness, natural disaster and conflict.

Every stitch created, every square chosen, from the batting to the ties - is a demonstration of God’s love. We value and appreciate the love you have sewn and the generosity you have shown to our neighbors in need around the world. We look forward to seeing how you lift up your ministry on this very special day.”

For information on ways to celebrate National Quilting Day, click on the website [LWR.org/nqd](http://LWR.org/nqd). You can download a “Quilts and Kits of Care blessing” and a guide to help you plan a National Quilting Day event.



“Those who sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket of love.”

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**WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING**  
**SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2023 | PHOENIX**  
**WELCATG.ORG**

Registration for the Triennial Gathering **Just Love** scheduled for September 21-24, 2023, in Phoenix, Ariz. opened **March 1**.

This special in-person gathering is an opportunity to live out the message that the Rev. Angela Khabebe left us with in Minneapolis in 2017 and virtually in 2021, "Christianity is not comfortable. If you are comfortable in Jesus, you are doing it wrong."

We are different from the people we were in 2017 and 2021. Yet we know that, as people of faith, we are still called to justice and love. It is up to us to carry this work forward.

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**OFFERING REMITTANCES SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO:**

DEBRA WEINEL, SWO TREASURER  
1612 Sherburg Court  
Raleigh, NC 27606

**CU Treasurers should continue to use Form A.**

[dweinel@gmail.com](mailto:dweinel@gmail.com)

(919)851-3093 Home (919)215-6624 Cell



**Sign Up for Daily Grace**

Daily Grace is an on-the-go companion for your spiritual journey, offering a faith reflection every day. Encounter God’s extravagant, boundless, and often surprising grace by signing up for a daily email message. You can also download the app for your IOS and Android devices. Learn more at [welca.org/dailygrace](http://welca.org/dailygrace).

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**NEED A SAFE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR STORY?**

Executive director, Michelle Morgan, of the Women’s Resource Center, in Hickory, says that so many women need to have someone to “look them in the eye” and hear the story of the abuse they are experiencing. She also stated that the average number of times a woman asks for help is 7 times before the woman may be ready to leave an abusive situation.

According to the North Carolina Bar Association domestic violence is more common that we know. It affects the rich and poor, white and black, young and old. It is a deep dark secret for lots of people. The good news is that there can be help for victims of domestic violence.

According to the Mayo Clinic it might not be easy to identify domestic violence at first. While some relationships are clearly abusive from the onset, abuse often starts subtly and get worse over time. You or someone you know might be experiencing domestic violence if in a relationship with someone who:

-Calls you names, insults and puts you down

- Prevents or discourages you from going to work or seeing family members or friends
- Tries to control how you spend money, where you go , what medicines you take, or what you wear
- Acts jealous or possessive or constantly accuses you of being unfaithful
- Gets angry when drinking alcohol or drugs
- Threatens you with violence or a weapon
- Hits, kicks, shoves, slaps, chokes or otherwise hurts you, your children or your pets
- Forces you to have sex or engage in sexual acts against your will
- Blames you for his or her violent behavior or tells you that you deserve it

There are many other possible acts of abuse. The important idea to remember is that you or someone you know is not alone, there are people who want to help. According to Michelle Morgan, “There are people to cry with you and help you get the assistance you need”. According to the North Carolina Council for Women and Youth involvement there 75, 556 clients who received services form July 2021-June 2022. Domestic violence is a public health crisis that is not just affecting primary victims, but also affecting our entire population.

If you are in the Unifour area around Hickory, call- 828-228-1787 to talk to someone at the Women’s Resource Center.

Across the state of North Carolina call the National Abuse Hotline -1-800-799-7233 or call 911 in an emergency

Across our Synod many of you know about the excellent services you have in your area. You may be the one person someone needs to find out how to get the help. Why not put the number 1-800-799-7233 in your phone contacts or write it down somewhere else where you know you can find it? You never know when a sister in Christ may need it.

Submitted by Karen Birkedal, Member of Justice Committee

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## Girls on the Run

Girls on the Run was founded in 1996 by Ironman triathlete Molly Barker. Her biggest goal was to create a safe space for young girls. The program is designed for girls in grades 3-5 and uses exercise and running as tools to teach it.

My daughter participated in this program in elementary school. The program ran in the afternoons after school for several weeks and at the end they ran a 5k and got to bring a friend or family member to run with them. It really helped my daughter become more independent and give her some great leadership skills.

The core values that Girls on the Run are:

- Recognize our power and responsibility to be intentional in our decision making.
- Embrace our differences and find strength in our connectedness.
- Express joy, optima and gratitude through our words, thoughts and actions.

**The offering for the Spring Gatherings is designated for Girls on the Run.**

Submitted by Robin Stuart, Co-Chair of Justice Committee



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## FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY

You know how it is when you are driving down the road and suddenly a light turns red just as you get to the intersection. Well, in March of 2020, we – the Women of the ELCA, the church in general, the whole world really – had to put the brakes on suddenly because of COVID-19. Everything came to a stop. Most of our activities and meetings – even worship – was cancelled for a considerable period of time. That didn't mean we stopped living but it

meant we had to make drastic changes in our lives – masks, hand sanitizer, social distancing.

Now that the pandemic is over for the most part, and with the availability of vaccines, we are easing back into living life in a somewhat normal manner. Even though we may still have to tap the “brake” occasionally, we are resuming some of the activities that we were accustomed to before March of 2020. And that includes the NC Women of the ELCA One-Day Retreat and Spring Conference Gatherings. I am excited to see some of my friends again at these events.

Better still, the Annual Gathering is scheduled to return to Lenoir-Rhyne University with our voting members and guests on campus! The dates are Friday, June 23 through Sunday, June 25. The Gathering Planning Committee is busy working on the schedule. At this point, we have scheduled the keynote speaker, Amanda Held Opelt, who will join us on Saturday morning and also entertain the women on Saturday evening. We are planning to have several awareness sessions on Saturday afternoon and, of course, there will be business conducted throughout the weekend. Five board members, the Vice President, and a new Secretary will be elected. Registration forms are attached to this newsletter and will be available on the website [www.ncwelca.org](http://www.ncwelca.org).

We hope you will join us this Spring and Summer, as we ease off the “brakes,” and get back on the road again!



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## Annual Gathering Scholarships

The NC Women of the ELCA, along with the other Synodical Women's Organizations (SWO) in the U.S., recently received a \$1,000 check from the Churchwide Women of the ELCA (CWO) as a grant from **2122: Growing Katie's Fund for the next 100 years**. As stated in a letter from the Churchwide Women's Organization, the funds should be used "to support programs, resources, and opportunities in one or more of these three categories: leadership development, global connections, living theology."

At the March meeting of the Board of the NC Women of the ELCA, it was decided that the money would be used to fund scholarships for women who would like to attend the 2023 Annual Gathering and who have a financial need. The amount of each scholarship will be limited to \$100 per person.

By awarding scholarships, our goal is to develop leadership skills in the women of this synod. A scholarship application is attached with this newsletter. If you or some other woman in your congregational unit has a financial need, feel free to submit an application.

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## THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

The following is information you need to know regarding the NC Women of the ELCA.:

First, our **offering designations** for this year:

**Pennies 2023-2024 – Church World Service**

**Spring Conference Gatherings – Girls on the Run**

**Annual Gathering – 1/3 Girls Helping Girls  
1/3 Churchwide  
1/3 Triennial Offering**

Second, **Annual Gathering Registration**:

There are multiple forms attached to this newsletter. **Each congregational unit is encouraged to send a voting member**. Any other women who would like to attend are welcome. They would be considered non-voting members. Commuters are those voting members and non-voting members who will not be staying overnight at Lenoir-Rhyne.

## Third, Annual Gathering Scholarship Applications:

A form is attached with this issue of this newsletter for those women who may need assistance with the cost of attending the Annual Gathering. (Please read the article regarding the application above.)

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## What is Church World Service?

Before we can answer this question, we should talk about the Bishop's Challenge.

*"As a church called to welcome the stranger, and as the North Carolina Synod, we are asking you to help us care for and welcome refugee families."-Bishop Tim Smith, NC Synod*

A key partner with the Bishop's Challenge is Lutheran Services Carolinas (LSC).

Lutheran Services Carolinas' current resettlement offices are in Raleigh, Asheville and a Salisbury office opened in January 2023. There are 164 congregations within the 100-mile radius of LSC offices. Currently there are 133 North Carolina congregations participating in the Bishop's Challenge.

Congregations outside of LSC's coverage radius can partner with a congregation that does or connect with a partner like Church World Service.

With that said, let's look at Church World Service.

From their website: A brief history:

Church World Service was born in the wake of the devastation of World War II. Seventeen Christian denominations came together "to do in partnership what none of us could hope to do as well alone."

In our early days, the CWS family mobilized more than 11 million pounds of food, clothing and medical supplies for war-torn Europe and Asia. In the United States, we began to welcome refugees who were looking to start new lives in safety, resettling more than 100,000 refugees in our first 10 years.

Look for more information in our next NC Women of the ELCA Bulletin!

Submitted by Anita Miller, VP NC Women of the ELCA