From the Desk of the President – January/February 2021

2021 has finally arrived and it is my hope that the Covid-19 pandemic will soon become more controllable. In December of 2020 our number of cases began a large jump in positive cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Also, we were able to begin two vaccines. As time goes by, more and more will be able to take the shot. The specialists have told us that this will help slow the virus down but we must keep practicing the 6 feet distance, wearing a mask, and washing our hands frequently. This virus does not affect patients the same so we must be diligent in all that we do to stop this pandemic. Please take note that many have tested positive but show no symptoms.

Did you make New Year Resolutions? This year let’s work harder at helping those in need, sharing, and showing patience in our activities. As a community of women, we should really put our Purpose Statement in action each and every day. During January our emphasis with be on stopping Human Trafficking. Read the articles in the Bulletin, on our North
Carolina WELCA website, and work on ways to stop this very profitable and horrible lifestyle for those who are trapped in the system. Remember most cannot escape this wicked web of life. Those in charge would rather kill anyone who tries to get out of their control.

As you have already learned, Committee Day 11 and all Spring Conference meetings have been cancelled due to the pandemic. Don’t forget to keep sending offering to the treasurer. More information will be coming about offerings for 2021.

Yes, as of right now, the Triennial Gathering is still on for August in Phoenix, Arizona. I hope to see many of you there.

Thank you for all your work as we continue to meet by Zoom meetings, meeting outdoors keeping distance between each other, and the other creative ways that you are meeting. Please send pictures and articles of how your Congregational Unit continues to work. Also please send names of any ladies in your congregations that have not survived the Covid-9 virus.

May God bless each of you and your work in our organization. Plans are still being made for the 2021 North Carolina Gathering.

February has arrived and so has some colder weather. Some have had snow, some rain, and still others just windy days. Yes, we still have the Covid-19 virus infecting more each day. Now we have learned that new-born babies are getting the virus. Ladies we must do our best to stop the spread. Stay in and do less socializing except on the phone, texting, or Facebook. Keep a six feet distance between each other, wash your hands frequently, and wear a mask that covers our nose and mouth. The sooner we get control then we can get back to our normal lifestyle.

February is thought to be the month of LOVE. This means family, friends, neighbors, and all people. A smile, if we could see through our masks, would go a long way to make others feel good. During this month I hope you are helping out in any way as we reach out to help all people. Also, during this month we will be putting emphasis on Racial Justice. Be sure to read the articles from the Justice Committee.

I am hoping that all are lifting prayers for our country as we begin a new year with a new president, vice-president, new senators, and legislatures elected during the 2020 elections.

Please continue to send in pictures and articles as to what your Congregational Units are doing to promote the work of the WELCA.

As you may have heard our Churchwide Organization is undergoing change also. Linda Post Bushkosky (Executive Director) and Elizabeth Hunter (Gather magazine editor) will be the only full-time employees while the other eight employees will be part-time workers. From January until August of this year these ladies will be focused on how our organization can best meet the mission of WELCA. Go the Women of the ELCA webpage and Facebook page to read the copy of the last Interchange Bulletin to learn how our organization will continue.

You are receiving both the January and February Bulletin together due so looking for ways to use our finances wisely and the less information to pass on.

Thank you for all you are doing and may 2021 be a better year for all.

May you have LOVE, JOY, PEACE, and GOOD HEALTH in 2021.

Jane R. Cadwallader, President of the North Carolina WELCA
2021… Here We Come!

Greetings and Happy New Year to all Conference Leaders and participants of NC Women of the ELCA. I am writing this to bring updates from the NC SWO Board in regards to our hopes and aspirations with the start of the new year.

The NC SWO Board has been meeting virtually via Zoom. We met in December and again this past weekend to make some challenging decisions in regards to our organization and its response to the global pandemic – COVID. Who ever would have thought that we’d be in as difficult a position when 2020 ended as when it began? Who ever would have imagined that the New Year would bring as many if not more restrictions due to COVID and its unrelenting grip on our country?

Let me explain some of the decisions the NC SWO Board has made for our organization and some of the happenings within the greater Churchwide Women’s Organization. First and foremost, NC WELCA has canceled all events for the foreseeable future. This includes the One Day Retreat in February, all Spring Conference Gatherings, and the Spring Retreat at Kure Beach. Safety was the underlying factor that drove these cancellations. The next event that we tentatively have scheduled is our Annual Gathering in June.

We are continuing plans for the 2021 NC SWO Annual Gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne University in June. However, in recent conversations with LRU it was advised that the University is currently still virtual only. LRU will be making decisions about when they will be opening up the campus for events sometime in the Spring. We may not have confirmation our Annual Gathering is going to take place until April. So please be patient – you’ll all know something as soon as we know. And we’re all at the mercy of the virus.

We do know that when we hold our next Annual Gathering, we will need to hold the missed elections from 2020 along with the current elections for 2021. The 2020 elections will be held first and they will all be for a (1) year term – President, Treasurer, and four Board Members. The 2021 elections will be for the standard (2) year term – Vice President, Secretary and five Board Members. We don’t yet know how the Nominating Committee is going to work with everything still being virtual at this point in time. We will communicate updates as they are worked out closer to June. For now, continue to pray that we will be able to hold our gathering as planned in June.

We don’t yet know how the Conference Leader elections are going to be handled. We’ve never been in a position where one year’s elections were missed, never mind two years. I hate to use the word unprecedented, but when the shoe fits, wear it! And these truly are unprecedented times with unimaginable decisions to make. It is our hope and prayer that we will hold our NC SWO Annual Gathering in June and the newly elected NC SWO Officers and Board will be able to decide how we will move forward with Conference Leader elections. I know how challenging it is to remain in a holding pattern, but please be patient as we take things one step at a time.
The NC SWO Board has also voted on the 2021 Pennies Offering Designation. We have settled on Homelessness as the focus for the upcoming year. Our choice was again influenced by the far-reaching impact COVID has had on every community in every corner of our state. Single mothers have been impacted the hardest and our hope is that our 2021 Pennies Offering can have a positive impact in the coming year. Please read the related article in this Bulletin that gives more details on the two organizations in Asheville and Wilmington.

Our Churchwide Women’s Organization has been hard at work during these past months. They are taking steps to amend the Constitution to allow for Virtual Gatherings and Virtual Voting. Once the Churchwide Constitution has been amended to allow for alternate methods of meeting and/or voting, we can then take steps to amend our own NC SWO Constitution to allow for the same. Again, one step at a time to bring our organization into today’s Virtual World. Churchwide has also made some difficult decisions driven solely by finances. They have reduced eight of the ten staff members to part-time effective January 1st through June 1st when the fiscal year ends. Currently, plans are going forward for the Triennial in August, but the Churchwide Board will be meeting in late April to make a final decision about Triennial.

April is looking to be a pretty important month! I am hopeful that we will soon have more encouraging news to share in the months to come. In the meantime, I encourage each of you to be Patient, be Vigilant and be Hopeful. God has called me to be an essential worker during the pandemic, but I work from the safety and comfort of my home. I process Death Claims for a large paper company. I have spent the past ten months talking to families who have lost loved ones, mostly to COVID, all day, every day. So if I can remain hopeful, then all y’all can keep the faith, too! I will leave you with the Scripture from Romans that never fails to uplift me, even on the most challenging days…

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice with the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us.”

Until we meet again,
Lorri Monterose
NC WELCA Conference Coordinator
Pennies Project 2/1/2021- 1/31/2022

We are excited to announce that our focus for this year will be on serving our homeless neighbors in the state of North Carolina. The donations gathered will be donated to Homeward Bound in Asheville, and a home community project in Wilmington. You can read more about Homeward Bound at www.homewardboundwnc.org and more information about the community housing project in Wilmington will be forthcoming in later Bulletins.

Please pray for giving with grateful hearts, the faithful servants that work diligently on these projects, and for those that we are serving.

Blessings, Anita Miller,

Co-Chair Justice Committee

The Twinkling of an Eye

When I think of the phase that titles this article my mind is drawn to 1 Corinthians 15:52-52. In this text, the phrase refers to the dead being raised to life. With this in mind, try to picture an innocent but life changing interaction I had with my granddaughter.

I was at the computer working on this article when my 12-year-old granddaughter asked, “What are you writing, Grandma?” I hesitated but then nonchalantly answered, “Oh, something for the newsletter for the North Carolina Women of the ELCA”. Then in the twinkling of an eye the Holy Spirit reminded me that I could have a life changing conversation with her. The article’s topic was on human trafficking.

What happened in the next few minutes could change my granddaughter, her mother’s and father’s lives forever. Her parents were in earshot of our conversation as I explained how children younger than her can be lured through deceptive means to life of exploitation. I told her that I have been learning about sex trafficking for the past 20 years, and that most people don’t think that exploitation could ever happen to them or someone they know. People who lure children into trafficking are deceptive and cunning. They only think of the child as a product to be sold rather than a person. I told her about the those I knew of who had suffered from exploitation, a middle school girl, a high school VBS teacher, a medical student and many others. I told her that those who would try to deceive her would search for any little need of dissatisfaction with life and promise to fulfill it. People she doesn’t even know may try to say that they know better that her parents or that she could even surprise her parents by going doing something the deceptive person suggested. It was then that my granddaughter’s parents joined in talking about what they knew about human sex trafficking. In the twinkling of an eye, a family conversation that may save this young girl’s life or the life of a friend began.
If you think this sounds too dramatic for what could really happen, I invite you to listen to a couple of podcasts by Al Erickson the founder of Adults Saving Kids. The North Carolina Women of the ELCA have worked with Adult Saving Kids through the years. The podcasts are the true story of what happened to Al’s own daughter, Debra. From my perspective these may be the most life changing podcasts you will listen to this year.

Here is the link to the first Podcast:
https://soundcloud.com/user-735353670/introduction-debs-story/s-dbxv3hXGVM3

Here is the link to the second Podcast:

There are more podcasts to listen to about Deb’s story and other true stories about human trafficking provided by Adult Saving Kids. This organization is seeking to get these podcasts to congregations. Contact;
info.adultssavingkids@gmail.com.

Human trafficking is a situation in which an individual is compelled to work or engage in commercial sex through the use of force, fraud or coercion. If the individual is under the age of 18 and engaging in commercial sex they are experiencing regardless if force, fraud, or coercion is also taking place. If you believe you may have information about a trafficking situation:

Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline toll-free hotline at 1-888-373-7888: Anti-Trafficking Hotline Advocates are available 24/7 to take reports of potential human trafficking.

Text the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 233733. Message and data rates may apply.

Lives are changed one moment at a time. In the twinkling of an eye the Holy Spirit may enable you to save a life.

Karen Birkedal, Justice committee
The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge

My eyes watered, I was awed by the courage, and I knew I was in the community where I belonged when I read the words of one of the leaders in our North Carolina Synod, “We sold the soul of our nation to the brokers of individual wealth and power that demand the status quo, which is white privilege and white supremacy. It’s white supremacist nationalism, y’all. And yes, as a matter of fact, I DID condemn it four years ago. And in the name of Jesus, I condemn it again right now and forever.” One could also make a strong case that it is white supremacy, and white entitlement that is at the root of all social ills including, economic disparities, health disparities, educational discrepancies, environmental devastation, police violence, family violence, immigration intolerance and of course racism. This is the root that must be extracted.

Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. on the website America and Moore states, “Change is hard. Creating effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with issues of power, privilege, supremacy and leadership is like any lifestyle change. Setting our intentions and adjusting what we spend our time doing is essential. It’s all about building new habits. Sometimes the hardest part is just getting started.”

The Debby Irving website states, “Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr and Debby Irving set out to create a way for people to make a habit out of anti-racist thinking and behavior. Within weeks of creating the original 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge, they saw it take off among individuals and organizations eager to make a change and looking for just such a tool.

Using this platform, I would implore that you consider launching a 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge, in your congregation. For 21 days, choose one action from a list to further your understanding of power, privilege, supremacy, oppression, and equity. Plan includes suggestions for readings, podcasts, videos, observations, and ways to form and deepen community connections. Use the tracking chart provided to stay on course. You can drag the image to your desktop and print, or you can access a digital version. Can be done individually, with friends and family, or organization-wide.” https://www.debbyirving.com/21daychallenges/

And finally consider ending your congregational 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge with the ELCA Anti-Racism Pledge. The ELCA website states, “As church we are called to confess the sin of racism, condemn the ideology of white supremacy, and strive for racial justice and peace. Beyond statements and prayers, we are called to also act and respond to injustices.” The ELCA invites you to commit to one or more of the actions listed in the Anti-Racism Pledge.

As you plan additional programing remember that “in 2019, at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution designating June 17 as a commemoration of the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9—the nine people shot and killed on June 17, 2015, during a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C. Congregations of the ELCA are encouraged to mark this day of penitence with study and prayer.”

A debt of gratitude for the example, inspiration and trail blazed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. May we courageously carry the Dream in his honor.

Respectfully, Judy Hughes, Justice Committee
STEWARDSHIP SUMMARY

At our latest Zoom board meeting on Saturday, January 16, 2021, we discussed our financial situation. The Board felt it important to provide you with a synopsis of the past few year’s offerings and expenses. We started using Quickbooks during the 2013-2014 fiscal year, so I chose that year, the 2015-16 year, and the last three years to provide you with a synopsis. Please see attached spreadsheet.

First, we want to thank all the congregational units that have sent offerings during this 2020-2021 year. We realize that many units are not meeting due to the pandemic, and therefore not collecting offerings.

All our offerings that are collected at the Fall and Spring Gatherings are given to the recipients. The Annual Gathering offerings are designated to the Women of the ELCA Churchwide Organization (CWO), but we have also set aside a portion of those offerings for Triennial Scholarships. During the year of the Triennial, we also set aside a portion for the Triennial Offering.

The Regular offerings that each Congregational Unit (CU) donates is sent to CWO (60%) and the remaining 40% is kept by the NC Women of the ELCA to offset expenses.

Registrations for the retreats (Fall, One-Day, and Spring) and the Annual Gathering are used to offset expenses. Sometimes there is a small profit and sometimes there is a loss. We try to break even.

Several offerings that are donated are designated for scholarships, such as the Christine Bohr Anderson Scholarship and Leadership Legacy.

Another source of income for the NC Women of the ELCA is any overages sent in by the host churches at the Fall and Spring Gatherings.

Monthly/yearly expenses include the copier lease, copier paper, postage/labels for the bulletin, the website monthly fee and yearly renewal, insurance on the copier, and ink for the printers. Expenses are also incurred for travel for the board and committee members to meetings, supplies for the committees, and speaker fees for the retreats and the annual gathering.

We try to be good stewards of the monies donated. In 2019 we noticed a surplus of funds in the Lutheran World Relief account, so we gave a larger donation and asked CUs to hold back donations for LWR.

In 2019 we donated $2,000 of the available funds to each of the following: Vigilante Truth (2019-2020 Pennies recipient), Carolina Caring (2019 Fall Gathering recipient), On Eagle’s Wings, body of Youth4Abolition (2020-2021 Pennies recipient), and Samaritan’s Feet (2020 Spring Gathering Recipient), for a total of $8,000 donated to these worthy causes.

We acquired three laptop computers for the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the organization, and printers for the President and Treasurer. The computer and printer that the treasurer was using were aged and needing replacement. These assets will pass along with the office.
We are in good financial state due to past donations. However, we are about $20,000 behind in our 2020-2021 offerings. That means that we are $12,000 short in our offerings to CWO. Therefore, monies are not being sent to the ministries that need funds to run their programs, feed the homeless, rescue the children from sex trafficking, provide shelter from earthquakes, floods, and other tragedies that occur on what seems like a daily basis in our country and around the world. Monies to CWO support the staff and produce publications, such as Gather magazine, Bold Café, Interchange, and Bold Connections. No fall gathering means no funds for a worthy cause, around $3000 for our usual receipts. We do not foresee having a spring gathering, so another organization will be lacking funds.

Please, talk with your CU and collect offerings for our Pennies project for the new fiscal year. We will be supporting a mission that works to provide shelter for the homeless. Please read the article in the bulletin concerning it. Collect and send in Regular offerings, which will be sent to CWO and also used locally. We will be able to give our 2020-2021 Pennies recipient, Youth4Abolition, an additional $2,000 from our general funds because of your past generosity.

Again, a big thanks to all of you who use your time and talents to be good stewards of the church.

From 1 Peter 4:10, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

Nena Babb, Treasurer of the NC Women of the ELCA

What’s Going On in North Carolina?

This is a new section of our Bulletin. Our readers are wanting to know more about you and your congregations. Everyone is welcome to participate. Write a paragraph about what is going on in your church or church group. For example, a new pastor, your gracious gift-giving, your church anniversaries, your Outreach Ministries, etc. You can send a picture, if you’d like; also send your Conference, the name of your church and your town. Please send your short article to Joyce Ohlson at karmagma@gmail.com

How is our stay at home practices affecting your church/meeting/worship practices? Send me your stories or pictures. We are going to publish a few Bulletins this summer, since we are not having our Annual Gathering. So send me some information, please.
LATEST NEWS FROM THE WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Because of COVID-19, for almost a year now, there has been very little happening with the NC Women of the ELCA, with our congregational units, and even the Churchwide organization. Last March the NC Women held the annual Spring Retreat at Kure Beach and, when we returned home after that weekend, we were faced with congregations that could not gather indoors, with no “circle” meetings, and with more Zoom gatherings than we have ever hoped for. And the story has pretty much remained the same since that time.

All the planning that had begun for our Annual Gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne was put on hold. The Fall Retreat was cancelled and now, we are moving into a second year of similar cancellations. When we would normally be registering for our one-day retreat and leading worship for Bold Women’s Sunday at the end of February, we know those things will not happen this year.

The biggest news last year, for those of us who had planned to attend the Triennial Convention and Gathering, was the postponement until August 2021. In a message from the Churchwide Women of the ELCA yesterday, it was announced that we will have to wait a while longer for the Triennial Gathering. In a specially called meeting of the Executive Board of the Women of the ELCA, three recommendations were approved:

That the Eleventh Triennial Convention, currently scheduled for August 3-5, 2021, be held virtually (or digitally) on those same dates.

That the Just Love Gathering, currently scheduled for August 5-8, 2021, be postponed and registration refunds be offered. Staff will then find other ways to build community and bring women together virtually in 2021 and 2022.

That the Twelfth Triennial Convention and a Gathering be held in Phoenix, Arizona, during the week of September 18, 2023.

Before a virtual convention can be held, voting members of the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017) must approve it; so, if you served as a voting member in 2017, you can expect to be contacted regarding proposed changes to the constitution.

This is all unprecedented and, as far as I know, has never happened before; but there are some positive things to remember. The Churchwide Women of the ELCA has been, and continues, taking into consideration the health and welfare of all attendees. And the silver lining to this announcement is you will have additional time to save money to pay for the cost of attending the next Triennial Gathering in 2023.

(If you would like to read the entire article, go to www.welca.org. Scroll down near the bottom of the page to the article entitled “Churchwide Executive Board Decides about Convention, Gathering Dates,” and click on “Read More.”)

What all this means for the NC Women of the ELCA remains to be seen. Your Synodical Women’s Board have been, and will continue, making decision regarding gatherings and retreats in the synod, taking into consideration the latest guidelines from CDC.

We must continue to be vigilant and cautious until the pandemic subsides. Until then, maybe we can gather on Zoom. See you there!

Submitted by Susan P. Harris
“Dear Friend in Christ, our letter exchange project, has proven so popular that it’s been extended to March 5, 2021,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director. “Women throughout the ELCA have written letters, sharing their faith, offering advice on coping through the pandemic, even exchanging poems and recipes.

“The project’s success coupled with the most challenging days ahead in the coronavirus pandemic suggested we should extend Dear Friend in Christ into the new year,” she explained. “Maintaining community through Thanksgiving, Christmas and into the New Year, all at a time of physical distancing, is critically important.”

Women who have already exchanged letters in the project are encouraged to exchange cards and continue writing into 2021, sustaining community, and lifting spirits. Those who are new to the project are invited to do the same.

It’s easy to participate in the Dear Friend in Christ project. You simply write a letter, complete the release form, and mail it to the address provided on the form. Soon thereafter, you will receive a letter and the author of that letter will receive your letter. Visit welca.org/dearfriend to learn how to send and receive a letter.

NC WOMEN OF THE ELCA
Calendar
January 2021-January 2021

January 2021  Human Trafficking

February 2021  Racial Justice
28............................Bold Women’s Sunday

March 2021  Domestice Violence
5..............................World Day of Prayer
20.............................Zoom Synodical Board Meeting

April 2021  Child/Animal Advocacy Month

May 2021  Suicide Awareness/Substance Abuse Month

June 2021  LGBTQ Pride Month
Joy to the World

(The following is a reprint of a blog post that I wrote for the Churchwide Women of the ELCA which was published on Monday, December 28, 2020. Susan P. Harris)

In this season when we should be singing “Joy to the World,” I wonder how many of us are feeling the joy right now. With COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths on the rise, how can we sing “Joy to the World?” With social distancing and mass gathering restrictions in place, how can we celebrate?

This Christmas, with recommendations for limiting social and family gatherings, makes me think of the movie, “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” or even Ebenezer Scrooge in the Charles Dickens’ novel, “A Christmas Carol.” Neither the grinch nor Scrooge saw anything joyful in Christmas. The grinch sets out to ruin things for the people of Whoville and Ebenezer Scrooge is a miser who despises Christmas. I think we could cast COVID-19 in either of those roles. Eventually, both Scrooge and the Grinch realize the joy of Christmas.

We, as Christians, have always celebrated with joy the birth of Jesus Christ. On Christmas Eve and the time following, we normally sing “Joy to the World” with exuberance in our worship. Unlike years past, this year, if we sing the well-loved hymn, it will mostly be in our homes or with others on Zoom. How can we be joyful when all the world seems to be hurting?

We only need to look to the second phrase of the hymn and the words, “the Lord is Come.” Jesus Christ, our Lord, was born on Christmas Day. That thought alone should make us joyful and happy during these unprecedented times. Looking further at the words of this familiar hymn though assures us that “the savior reigns” and “He rules the world with truth and grace.” The words continue, “He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.” No matter what befalls us, COVID-19, or some other calamity, we know Jesus was born in that manger and he is our Messiah.

As we look back on this time of the Coronavirus in 2020, we may think about it as a curse, but there is still joy to be found as we manage to worship in new and different ways, as we connect with our friends and neighbors remotely, as we share the joy of Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ in whatever ways possible. Let us sing “Joy to the World” as we think about the many blessings we receive, even in time of a pandemic, and as we acknowledge that Christ is King!

Submitted by Susan Harris

The final issue of the Interchange was printed a few weeks ago. To see this issue go to:

https://www.womenoftheelca.org/publications.

Bold Connections will continue to be posted on the www.womenoftheelca website,

Stay connected with Bold Connections

View the latest issue of Bold Connections, the monthly e-newsletter that features the latest news and information about our programs and activities. Bold Connections is delivered via e-mail on the first of every month. Subscribe on the website.
Change of Name/Address or Change of Status in Church/Conference

Name of Conference……………………………………………………………………………………………………
Date of Change…………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Church Name/Town…………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Retiring Officer…………………………………………………………………………………………………….
Officer____President _____Treasurer’s Assistant _____Dir.of Comm.
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Send all changes to Joyce Ohlson
12034 Asbury Chapel Road or
Huntersville, NC 28078 karmagma@gmail.com