

# WHAT'S NEWS



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

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

## Loving Connections

Southwest California Synodical Women's Organization **CONVENTION 2021**

Friday & Saturday, October 15-16 • Via Zoom

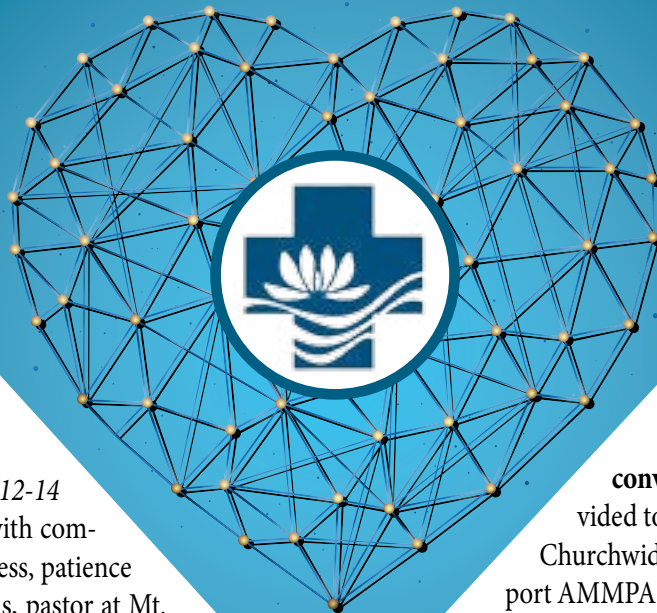
Plan to join us as we strengthen our connections to God, to our women's organization, to diversity among us as women and to the business of the Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) using our Zoom, (not so loving) technology connection.

Our Bible focus is *Colossians 3:12-14* which asks us to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and above all love. Rev. Julie Morris, pastor at Mt. Cross in Camarillo will lead our Bible study sessions as we reflect on that "clothing ourselves" process.

Our convention will open Friday evening at 7:00pm with worship led by our board member Pastor Tracy Williams followed by the business of receiving election ballots for president and vice president. On Saturday, Clusters have an optional time to meet at 7:45-8:45am with gathering for the convention at 8:45am and the opening of the convention at 9:00am. Saturday will conclude at 6:30pm with closing music and prayer.

In addition to the business of electing new officers and board members, we will have three workshops strengthening our connections to:

1. Women of the ELCA through a discussion of models of active units, Bible study leader models and resources available to us through [welca.org](http://welca.org);
2. Diverse communities promoting dialogue through stories of



individual women's lives; and

3. Racism dialogue led by Pastor Joseph Castaneda Carrera, Assistant to the bishop for Authentic Diversity+Ethnic-specific Ministry in our synod.

**There is no registration fee to the convention,** but your offering will be divided to cover convention expenses, support Churchwide Women of the ELCA, and also support AMMPARO, the ELCA's strategy to Accompany Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

You can contribute to our convention by your presence, by making sure your congregation is represented by a delegate, by nominating someone to be part of the synodical women's board and by your offering.

**TO REGISTER FOR THE CONVENTION:** Send an email to Julie Jensen at [juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com](mailto:juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com) or by mail to Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Ave., Port Hueneme, CA 93041. Include your name, contact info (address, email, phone #), your church and city and whether you are a guest or delegate. Julie will send you the information for the convention along with the Zoom link.

As we figure out how to vote, enjoy music, dialogue and make loving connections online, we are excited to have you join us for our first ever Southwest Women of the ELCA Zoom Convention!

## From Dixie Hanson, SoCal SWO President



*Seeking God: Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it. (Ps. 34:11-14)*

**Loving Connections** is our theme for our first Zoom synodical women's convention this year.

Connections seemed to be a fitting word for this pandemic time. Certainly one of the first and lasting intentions for the lockdown, was how to maintain connections with God, with family, friends, congregations, community and the world. I was so in awe of the whole world being affected and dealing with the same issues of how to preserve life as the pandemic spread to the farthest edges of our planet. We hope you will want to join us as we reflect and listen to each other, making our connections loving ones. Our goals for the convention are:

**1) To deepen our connection to our source of life: God our Creator, Jesus the Christ and Sophia, the Wisdom** (see *Gather* Bible study insert below) In addition to our worship time on Friday evening led by Pastor Tracy Williams, and our times of praise through music, Rev. Julie Morris (Mt. Cross in Camarillo) will lead us through two Bible study sessions with our theme verse *Colossians 3:12-14*.

**2) To support and strengthen our Synod Women of the ELCA connections to clusters, congregations and churchwide.** As we contemplate restarting life after the pandemic, we have the opportunity of thinking about life-giving changes to our schedules, to new groups, and to creative use of technology to foster new connections. Our workshop "Connections to the Women of the ELCA" will include new possibilities for organizing, for Bible study, for using the resources offered through our publications and for new events.

Your synod board is trying two new ways of connecting: A Zoom Thankoffering service for those who do not have a tradition of having one in their congregation on Monday evening at 7:00pm, November 15. Also a monthly Zoom Bible study gathering on the fourth Monday evening of each month for those who do not have a Bible study group in their congregation, but would like to discuss the *Gather* study with others. Our first study is Monday, September 27, 7:00 - 8:30pm.

In addition we want to keep a connection with you and your women through regular telephone conversations by our board members who are each assigned to congregations in a Cluster. Could we connect women in congregations with each other by occasional Zoom meetings to share ideas and social justice projects? See the list of adopted Memorials found in Dianne's Triennial Convention for social justice issues to promote.

**3) To promote loving connections with one another through storytelling and dialogue.** Our workshop "Connections to our Diverse Communities" will feature women from diverse communities in our synod telling their stories. In addition Pastor Joseph Castaneda Carer will lead us in the workshop "Loving Connections through Anti-racism Dialogue" where we listen and learn new ways of making inclusive connections.

**4) To connect us all to the business of the Southwest Cal. Synod of the Women of the ELCA.** The business of this convention will center on adopting our budget and the election of five new board members including Vice President, Treasurer and three Board members to replace our termed out members Rosemary Lawson, V. Pres., Karil Drake Starleaf, treasurer and board members Dianne Tillman and Pastor Tracy Williams (pivoting to Churchwide Executive Board). We welcome your nominations for these positions that include diversity. We will need technology skills, bookkeeping skills and enthusiastic, creative energy for serving our organization.

I look forward to working with you to make many loving connections!

God of peace, you desire for all humanity to seek life and to do good. Incline our wandering hearts to your saving word and holy wisdom, teach us the ways you would have us go. (*Bread for the Day*, p 248)

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### Excerpt from *Gather* Magazine June 2021 Bible study

But the focus of this Bible study session is the kind of wisdom that Greek translations of Scripture refer to as Wisdom (with a capital "W" in some versions of the Bible) or "Sophia." We will primarily engage the eighth and ninth chapters of Proverbs, where we have a front-row seat to watch Wisdom at work among humanity.

#### LOST IN TRANSLATION

For some of us, Sophia (Wisdom) may be a familiar understanding. For others, it may be a new discovery. Still others may be reminded of a forbidden mythological Greek goddess—not at all what is meant in the Bible. In Scripture, Sophia is not a goddess, but is the Greek word for divine Wisdom personified. Take a moment to absorb this astonishing concept: Holy Scripture uses a feminine noun, in conjunction with feminine verbs, to refer to holy Wisdom as a woman! Why on earth have so many of us never heard of this before? Because, unfortunately, this feminine imagery for divine Wisdom was lost when our sacred texts were translated into English. Human language is always inadequate for encapsulating all of who God is. Every metaphor and comparison eventually breaks down when we attempt to describe the indescribable Holy One.



## BIBLE STUDY ON ZOOM

4th Monday of the Month  
beginning September 27  
7:00 - 8:30pm



### *The Gifts of the Spirit*

by the Rev. Sara Olson-Smith

**Dixie says...** Our SWO Board has learned during the pandemic that Zoom can work! We hear that some congregations do not have a Bible study group because they do not have anyone who feels the call to lead it. So how about a monthly Zoom study group for those who would like to do the study from the *Gather* magazine with others. Or if you miss your in-person meeting and want a chance to discuss, come join us on Zoom. Dianne Tillman will begin leading the study, but we would love to turn it over to someone else in the synod or beyond who loves leading these studies.

#### **TO RSVP FOR THE BIBLE STUDY:**

Email Dianne at [dianne.tillman08@gmail.com](mailto:dianne.tillman08@gmail.com)  
so see can send you the Zoom link for the study.  
Looking forward to seeing you on Zoom!



## *Thank Offering*

### **THANKOFFERING SERVICE PRESENTED BY SYNODICAL BOARD**

Mark your calendars for Monday, November 8th at 7pm  
on Zoom to attend a thankoffering service.

There are Women of the ELCA who have thankoffering services in their church during their congregation's Worship Service usually during the month of November.

However, if your congregation doesn't offer a thankoffering service this would be a good time for you to attend our online service on November 8th. If you would like to give a thankoffering after our service, you can make a check out to Women of the ELCA and send to Karil Drake Starleaf (address in this newsletter). She will forward all thankofferings to Churchwide Women of the ELCA.

Thankofferings are a long-standing custom among us women. We give in thanksgiving and gratitude for blessings received.

I give thanks at all times, for the Lord is good,  
for God's mercy endures forever. Amen!

Rosemary Lawson, SWO Vice President

#### **TO RSVP FOR THE THANKOFFERING SERVICE:**

Send an email to Julie Jensen at [juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com](mailto:juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com)  
or by mail to Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Ave., Port Hueneme, CA  
93041. Julie will send you the Zoom link just prior to the  
service.



## 11TH TRIENNIAL NEWS



**PASTOR TRACY WILLIAMS  
ELECTED TO  
CHURCHWIDE BOARD**

What an honor and privilege to have one of our own elected to the Churchwide Board! Pr. Tracy joins the ranks of those previous elected from our Synod: Sharon Heck and Joyce Opjorden.

The current Churchwide Board has been pared down almost in half to 4 officers and eleven members with a maximum of only two members from each Region). Our Region 2 is now represented by Pr. Tracy (2B) and Laura Krueger from Grand Canyon SWO (2D). Of the 15 selected for the current board, eight served on the 2017-2020+ so that makes seven new members in all.

## 2021-2023 CHURCHWIDE EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Joy Michalick, president  
Duluth, Minnesota  
Northeastern Minnesota SWO (3E)
- Freddie Jordan, vice president  
Columbus, Ohio  
Southern Ohio SWO (6F)
- Angela Bell, secretary  
Palos Heights, Illinois  
Metro Chicago SWO (5A)
- Raeann Purcell, treasurer  
Deland, Florida  
Florida-Bahamas SWO (9E)

Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer  
Latrobe, Pennsylvania  
Southwestern Pennsylvania SWO (8B)

Elizabeth Burgess  
Augusta, Maine  
New England SWO (7B)

Lorie Garcia  
Corpus Christi, Texas  
Southwestern Texas SWO (4E)

Diane Henning  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
Saint Paul Area SWO (3H)

Laura Krueger  
Avondale, Arizona  
Grand Canyon SWO (2D)

Yma Mulero  
Carolina, Puerto Rico  
Caribbean SWO (9F)

Jean Pishaw  
Forest Grove, Oregon  
Oregon SWO (1E)

Miranda Searcy  
Lawton, Oklahoma  
Arkansas-Oklahoma SWO (4C)

Lynette Todd  
Baltimore, Maryland  
Delaware/Maryland SWO (8F)

Dawn Wicklund  
Superior, Wisconsin  
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin SWO (5H)

Tracy Williams  
Long Beach, California  
Southwest California SWO (2B)

## OTHER BUSINESS

- ✓ The Audit was approved and the Budget of FY2022 of \$1.6 million which was down from \$2.366 million in 2020, was adopted.
- ✓ Changes to the Churchwide Constitution and Bylaws involved changing the wording from SWO officers to SWO leaders giving flexibility to the number and names of the SWO leaders and flexibility for the number of members of SWO Boards.
- ✓ The elected voting members from each

SWO to the Triennial Convention remains at three: two elected voting members plus the group president. The amendment to change to four was defeated.

✓ Article XIII, Section 1 was adopted shrinking the executive board size to: four officers, eleven board members, one member from each of the nine regions and two at large member regions for a total of 15.

✓ Also the constitution was amended to allow for meetings and voting to be done electronically.

✓ The changes from Synodical Constitution and bylaws were accepted “en bloc,” which means all were voted on together rather than one at a time.

The following resolutions brought to the convention from synods were referred to the Executive Board for final decisions.

**2021.1** ▶ That the First Timers at this triennial be considered First Timers at the next Triennial because this was such an odd convention.

**2021.2** ▶ To extend SWO Board members service term from the original seven year maximum since the synod that brought this resolution had all board members at the maximum seven years’ service on the board.

The final resolution that was passed was a thank you to all who made the convention happen.

The following memorials were adopted by the Triennial convention as recommended by the Memorials Committee:

- ◆ Continue to fight human trafficking by:
  - using resources from Women of the ELCA and other organizations to inform, educate and end trafficking
  - assist victims including actions such as learning about laws our state has in place to help end human trafficking
  - since the Super Bowl weekend traditionally has one of the highest incidences of human trafficking in the U.S., four weeks prior to the annual Super Bowl be established as a time of prayer to end human trafficking.



- ◆ Continue support for solar energy projects in Liberia by supporting Current for Curran:
  - through education about the project
  - financially and through prayers for all involved in this work.
- ◆ Thursdays in Black is a campaign “towards a world without rape and violence.”
  - support and participate in the campaign by recommitting to end gender- based violence through actions, awareness and information sharing from the World Council of Churches on the Women of the ELCA website.
- ◆ Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women by:
  - observing this anniversary through use of resources for Bible study, adult forums and worship using We Are Church, We Are Called: 50\*40\*10 in our units and congregations
  - sharing the history and contribution of the predecessor women’s organizations and their effort to achieve the ordination of women.
- ◆ Encourage the use of reusable bags

- ◆ Provide assistance with diapers and female hygiene products by:
  - providing educational materials on the needs of women and children living in poverty
  - advocating for legislation that will allow the inclusion of diapers and feminine hygiene products in low-income programs such as Food Stamps (SNAP) and WIC
  - providing opportunities to donate these needed products to local food banks and women’s shelters.
- ◆ Immigration Reform be advocated for by encouraging Women of the ELCA to:
  - voice concerns and positions regarding immigration laws that ensure the safety of minors and the wellbeing of children and families in detention
  - advocate for the reunification of families.
- ◆ School violence and mass shootings
  - encourage Women of the ELCA to engage in conversation and discernment regarding school and workplace safety, gun safety and mental health issues using these resources:
    - ELCA 1994 social message on community violence

- the ELCA 60 Day Journey Toward Justice in a culture of gun violence
- WELCA’s Rachel Day.
- ◆ #METOO - Women of the ELCA be encouraged to support a safe environment for all women and girls by reviewing the ELCA Social Statement: Faith, Sexism and Justice: A Call to Action and other resources on this issue in order to:
  - conduct discussions with women and especially youth regarding situations they may encounter.
  - provide voice and support to women before they are victimized.
  - provide education, support and prayers for women who have been victimized.

For more information see the 11th Triennial Convention Program and Reports which includes the profiles of elected leaders, reports from the President, Executive Director, Treasurer and Churchwide Board as well as the Constitutional changes and the texts of the Memorials at [welca.org/convention](http://welca.org/convention).

—Dianne Tillman, 11th Triennial Delegate and SoCal SWO board member

## Are you part of an active unit?

■ Part of being an active unit means your unit financially supports the Women of the ELCA by regularly doing any of the following:

1. Collecting regular offerings and sharing a portion with your Synodical Women’s Organization. (use regional-form A)
2. Having Thankoffering services and sending 100% of the Thankofferings to the Churchwide Women’s Organization (use national-form B)
3. Supporting Women of the ELCA’s designated giving programs such as: Katharina Von Bora Luther Endowment Fund,

Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem, Freight for Quilts. (use national-form B)

4. Participating in occasional giving opportunities, like the anniversary of the organization, memorials or disaster relief. (use national-form B)

5. Subscribe to publications:

*Gather* ([www.gathermagazine.org](http://www.gathermagazine.org))

*Interchange* ([www.womenoftheelca.org/publications](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/publications))

*Bold Café* for the younger women ([www.boldcafe.org](http://www.boldcafe.org))

6. Purchasing other resources produced by Women of the ELCA

Another part of being an active unit is to have someone in your unit be the contact person, so information from the Synodical and Churchwide Women’s Organizations can be sent to your unit through this person.

New forms A & B need to be used. These forms are updated almost yearly. You can obtain current report forms by contacting current SWO treasurer, Karil Drake Starleaf (contact info listed in newsletter roster). This is important because Churchwide has changed where their receipts are mailed.

Mail form A reports to Karil Drake Starleaf, the SWO treasurer (information listed in newsletter roster), not to anyone else.

Thank you to all of the churches that are sending their offerings!

*Peace,*

Karil Drake Starleaf  
SoCal SWOTreasurer





## OUR SWO NEEDS YOU!

Our Southwest Synod Women of the ELCA Board is made up of four officers and seven board members. Each officer and board member is eligible for two consecutive terms, but cannot serve more than two terms in the same office. No elected board member shall serve on the board in the capacity of officer and/or board member for more than seven consecutive years. Therefore each election cycle we have members who are not eligible for reelection. The current board with contact information is listed in this newsletter. Those ineligible for reelection are Vice President Rosemary Lawson, Treasurer Karil Drake Starleaf, Board member Dianne Tillman and Board member Tracy Williams (who was elected to the Churchwide Executive Board so is ineligible for the SWO Board). In addition we have one more board position to fill. The two-year term of each position begins after the convention except for the treasurer which begins Feb. 1.

The President and Vice President are elected by a nominating ballot which means names may be submitted along with profiles for the ballot ahead of time or at the convention. For the other positions, two names are placed on the ballot by the nominating committee and additional nominations may be submitted from the floor.

Our Board needs a member that has some technology skills as in setting up Zoom, etc., someone comfortable with keeping records of money as treasurer and some women from diverse backgrounds both in age and ethnicity. Beth Bunnell is taking nominations for the ballots. See the nomination form included with this newsletter and send to her at [bethbunnell@yahoo.com](mailto:bethbunnell@yahoo.com) or by mail at 20118 Marilla St., Chatsworth, CA 91311.

Thank you for your help in identifying women who will help keep our SWO strong!

## 2021 SWO BOARD TEAM MEMBERS

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## PEACE WITH JUSTICE



by Sharon Heck

**REDISCIPLING THE WHITE CHURCH** is the title of the book being studied by a group of people in our synod each Tuesday night throughout August on Zoom. The study is being lead by Pastor Tracy Williams and Pastor Joseph Castaneda. Tracy is a member of our Synodical Women of the ELCA Board, and was recently elected to the W-ELCA Churchwide Board. A subtitle of the book is *FROM CHEAP DIVERSITY TO TRUE SOLIDARITY*.

Before our first session on August 3, 2021 we were asked to read two essays and watch a video about racism. I will quote from all three of them. The final paragraph of “What If I Talk About Race Wrong?” is as follows: “Take care in your conversations, remember that you are dealing with the real hurt of human beings. But be brave in that care, be honest in that care. These conversations will never become easy, but they will become easier. They will never be painless, but they can lessen future pain.

They will never be risk-free, but they will always be worth it.”

The final paragraph of “White Fragility and the Rules of Engagement” reads as follows: “I repeat: stopping our racist patterns must be more important than working to convince others that we don’t have them. We do have them, and people of color already know we have them; our efforts to prove otherwise are not convincing. An honest accounting of these patterns is no small task given the power of white fragility and white solidarity, but it is necessary.”

The video is a stirring summary of racism given by Dr. Camara Jones as a commencement address to the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. She stated in allegories and listings that racism is a system of power. There are three levels of racism – Institutionalized, Personally Mediated, and Internalized. She told a story of two flower boxes – red flowers planted in rich soil and nurtured, and pink flowers planted in rocky soil with little care. The red flowers flourish as does the white population. The pink flowers struggle as do people of color. They

go to seed and grow again each year and after 10 years of this the pink flowers even look at the red flowers as being more desirable. The grower decides she was right to prefer the red flowers. The question becomes “Who is the gardener?” It could be the government and communities. She gave us a three point charge. 1. Be courageous and address the challenge of racism, 2. Be curious and ask questions of why this is so. Examine history, and 3. Be a citizen and care about the whole. Her final words were, “Go Forth and Matter.” It would be excellent for each of you to watch this video. It is on YouTube under her name, Dr. Camara Jones.

Our readings and discussions have looked at our congregations created and divided into separate racial groupings. White supremacy throughout history has established a power structure which has rarely allowed for full integration and power sharing. Our goal is that congregations find ways to truly re-disciple. We looked at communion and preaching as first steps in our rediscipling journey. This is a very important study and should be encouraged as a series of adult forums in all of our congregations. ■





Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Avenue  
Port Hueneme, CA 93041  
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

**MISSION STATEMENT**

To mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

**PURPOSE STATEMENT**

As a community of women Created in the image of God, Called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and Empowered by the Holy Spirit... We commit ourselves to grow in faith, Affirm our gifts, Support one another in our callings, Engage in ministry and action and promote healing and wholeness in the Church, the society, and the world.

**Reverend Julie Morris will be our Bible Study leader at our 2021 Convention**

The Reverend Julie Morris is a priest in the Episcopal Church who, thanks to our full-communion partnership, serves as the pastor at Mount Cross Lutheran Church in Camarillo, California. Ordained in 2001, she has served in parish ministry as well as community ministries and university, hospital and eldercare chaplaincy. She is one of the founders of the Abundant Table Farm, promotes local ecumenical and inter-faith collaboration, and is a retreat leader, spiritual director, and mentor to seminarians and newly ordained clergy. Pastor Julie is married to Paul DeBusschere, a Ventura County farmer. They have three daughters.



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

- **SoCal SWO Facebook**  
Southwest CA Women of the ELCA  
[www.facebook.com/swcawomenoftheelca](http://www.facebook.com/swcawomenoftheelca)
- **Our Synod website connections Southwest California Synod**  
[www.socalsynod.org/ministries/swca-synod-women-of-the-elca](http://www.socalsynod.org/ministries/swca-synod-women-of-the-elca)
- **WELCA | Southwest California Synod** [www.socalsynod.org/category/welca](http://www.socalsynod.org/category/welca)
- **WELCA Churchwide website**  
[www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org)
- **WELCA Churchwide Facebook Women of the ELCA**  
[www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA](http://www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA)