

President's Report by Kristy Henriksen

The SW MN Synodical Women of the ELCA gathered for their 29th annual convention Friday and Saturday, June 17 & 18, 2016, at Vinje Lutheran Church in Willmar, MN. Attendance was 200. Theme was "And the World Is About to Turn..." Theme verse was, "It changes direction, turning around by His guidance, that it may do whatever He commands it on the face of the inhabited earth." Job 37:12 NRSV

Opening Worship was "And the World is About to Change" with Rev. Gwendolyn King presiding and Rev Amy Juel preaching. Guest Speaker on Friday was Jerrid Sebesta and "Livin' the Dream." Gwen King from Pennsylvania brought greetings from churchwide. Workshops were: Intersensory Worship, Human Trafficking, Global Health Ministries, Young Adults in Global Mission, Laughter Yoga, Phebe Hospital, and Engaging Women in Bible Study. Bible Study was led by Tera Elness. Friday evening musical entertainment was John Jahr and Friends. Mary Jo Mettler presented Phebe Hospital. Closing Worship included "Whistling Liturgy" with Nate Crary and Pastor Linda Pedersen presiding.

Convention offerings totaled \$11,178.00. 50% was given to churchwide ministries, 25% to Phebe Hospital, and 25% to Young Adults in Global Mission. Also received was \$1540.00 for LWR shipping. In-Kind Offerings: Fabric Kits-80, Quilts-2368, Personal Care Kits-715, School Kits-1039, Bars of Soap-673, and Fleece Blankets-620, plus a full van of Christian Literature. Cans for Katie's Fund were on the tables and \$327.61 was collected.

Six first time visitors were awarded scholarships to attend the convention. Kathy Bergs and Gayle Davidson served as mentors. The visitors shared their experiences with an enjoyable skit. Other thoughts were included in the Communicator.

Elected to serve on the board were President-Kristy Henriksen; Treasurer-Maria Lokensgard; Board-Members-At-Large: Christina Nelson, Joanna Rustad, Sande Mathison, Kim Christianson, and Betty Brandt. Many thanks to Jan Bjorngjeld, Sonja Farmer, Rhonda Hermanson, Karen Skarphol, and Algene Larson for their years of service. Joan Iverson continues her term on the churchwide board.

Maria Lokensgard was selected to serve as a Triennial Promoter for the 10th Triennial Gathering. Only 15 were chosen for the entire church. The Triennial "All Anew" will be in July 2017 in Minneapolis, MN.

The Serving in God's World ministry invited the Women of the ELCA to partner with them again in a Hunger Packing Event. This one was planned for the St. Cloud area with an emphasis on working beside our new neighbors. Lutherans, Whites, Blacks, Christians, Muslims, all ages worked together to pack food for the backpack programs, food shelves, and veterans groups in the St. Cloud area. Trust and community was built by working side by side for a common goal.

Our synodical board held five board meetings to plan and implement leadership events and the convention. E-mail is an essential tool to get things done as well. The president is an advisory member of the Synod Council. I attend to know what is going on in the SW MN Synod, and to share what the SW MN Women of the ELCA are planning and accomplishing. Our organization will have a display at the 2017 Synod Assembly June 9 & 10 and will supply quilts to adorn the assembly site. These quilts are then taken to Lutheran World Relief. In February I attended the Conference of Presidents in Chicago. There I learn from other presidents, get updates on projects, experience new worship ideas, and get answers to questions.

A Leadership Training Event was held September 10, 2016 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Redwood Falls. Theme was "Walking With Our Global Neighbors." Pastor Jennifer Thul and Sara Larson spoke on their South African experiences with our Companion Synod. Each conference shared what their conference was doing with their sister circuit in South Africa. Over 80 conference officers and synod board members participated. Individual officer training was held and the in-kind offering for the 2017 convention was announced-Baby Care Kits and School Kits, with all other LWR items accepted. Over 630 women attended the ten Conference Fall Gatherings.

Christina Nelson is the new editor of *The Communicator*, which is sent to all units, board members, and anyone who wants a copy. For the first time, in January, it was sent electronically only. This has been a good thing with less paper, less cost, and no worries about the length of the issue, plus there is no charge for this service! *The Communicator* is published quarterly-January, April, July, and October. Christina also puts together our Convention Booklets and sends the Convention Publicity Packet, which is also sent electronically. She is working on a website of our own, which will debut soon. Information can also be found on the synod website www.swmnelca.org.

We are always looking for good speakers, Bible Study leaders, musicians, and program presenters. Contact the Vice President when you have a name to share. Please get permission from the individual before you give the name and contact information. We are updating our list and will put in on the website when it is ready. Check it out.

Conference Boards do a wonderful job of planning fall and spring events. Many women attended Spring Gatherings in their respective conferences. I enjoy attending and hope to visit each conference sometime each year. This is not always possible. I cherish the many wonderful people I have met and the inspiring programs and Bible Studies given. Women of the ELCA is a special organization. Patti Austin, churchwide president calls is a movement more than an organization. We are an active bunch! Thank you for supporting Women of the ELCA and your diligent work to serve the Lord. I am honored to serve as president with the outstanding women on the synodical board. Please consider accepting a nomination to the synodical board when the Nominating Committee contacts you. You will be richly blessed by the experience!