

Friends, Inc. *[in Christ]*

NEWSLETTER OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNODICAL
WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
WOMEN OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
www.southwesternpasynod.org

VOLUME XXI NO 2

SPRING 2009

Greetings Sisters in Christ,

After such a cold and snowy winter, spring is such a welcome event and with spring comes Spring Clusters and Convention. At this time, you are probably attending or have attended your Spring Cluster Events. I hope you enjoyed the time you shared with your sisters in Christ. The themes sounded inspiring and worthwhile.

In February I attended the President's Conference in Chicago with 63 other synodical presidents. I am so blessed to have attended and I thank you for the opportunity. The presidents participated in several workshops that will help us to better understand our office, the churchwide expression, and how we may serve you. We also met all of the churchwide staff. (There is an article in the February *Interchange* "Get to know the churchwide staff" that will help you to know whom to contact for particular needs and comments.) It was also nice to share ideas with all the presidents, and to meet with Region 8 presidents. The fellowship is wonderful and the bible studies are very inspirational. Jean Knapp (President from NW PA SWO) and I were asked to give a presentation about our successful 2008 Fall Retreat at Camp Lutherlyn. Several presidents wanted more information about "Dancing with the Biblical Stars."

In the January 2009 "Interchange" there was a three page article on updating your constitution. Please review this information and make the necessary changes in your unit's constitution. I have received two constitutions so far this year. If you need a copy of the article, please let me know. I will gladly mail you a copy.

I look forward to seeing you at Convention, May 8 and 9 at Bishop Connare Center in Greensburg. If you have not mailed in your nominations, delegate forms, registration, or resolutions, please do so. Teresa O'Malley, our chairperson, and her Convention Committee have worked hard to make this a success.

If you need a recent copy of Friends, Inc., remember it is available on line www.southwesternpasynod.org. Look for Women of the ELCA with the Cross and Lily.

Have you viewed the DVD *Created in the Image of God: A Community of Women*? This video shows and explains what we as Women of the ELCA do in our churches and communities. You may order the DVD by calling 800-638-3522 or email women.elca@elca.org. The video can also be viewed on the Web site, www.womenoftheelca.org.

I need to share my wonderful winter news. The Lord blessed my family again with another granddaughter. Cassandra Diane (11months) was adopted from Vietnam by my daughter and son-in-law Pastors Tricia and Tony Schneck. Cassandra arrived in the United States Ash Wednesday.

May you enjoy this Easter season and find the joy in serving our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Your Sister in Christ,
Marilyn Foringer

OUT WITH STYROFOAM AND PLASTIC

Many U.S. cities have banned the use of Styrofoam take out containers in restaurants and cafes.

Why wouldn't all cities do this when there is readily available biodegradable and compostable alternatives to this deleterious plastic.

Could we, as a Synod, start a campaign to stop the use of Styrofoam in our communities?

Polystyrene exists in our environment for hundreds and thousands of years because it does not biodegrade. It "photodegrades" meaning sunlight breaks it into progressively smaller pieces, literally too small to measure.

Similar to plankton, tiny pieces of polystyrene are consumed by filter feeders, which in turn are eaten by animals higher on the food chain, such as fish, birds and sea mammals leading to bioaccumulation.

Due to human littering, urban run-off and redistribution by storms and wind, ultralight polystyrene cups, clam shells, packing peanuts and other products end up in water ways and oceans. All sorts of floating plastics including tiny broken up bits of polystyrene cover areas in the **Pacific Ocean roughly the size of Texas.**

Not only has Styrofoam polluted our oceans and killed sea mammals, it is also very dangerous to humans. Long term exposure to small quantities of styrene can cause neurotoxic (fatigue, nervousness, difficulty sleeping) and carcinogenic effects. Think about this – drop a tea bag in a styrofoam cup and pour your boiling water over it. Any ideas how many chemicals you consume with your tea or coffee??

Along with Styrofoam containers, we certainly need to take a serious look at plastic water bottles. They really need to go. Water bottles have become one of the biggest sources of pollution in the USA. Sixty million plastic bottles are produced, transported and disposed of every day in the United States alone. Not all bottled water bubbles up from a clear, fresh spring. Many sources are not as safe as your tap water.

Why not buy a glass water bottle. Glass is 100% recyclable and glass preserves the taste and purity of water. Water stored in plastic bottles risks becoming contaminated from plastic in products, like BPA and phthalate. As these substances leach from the plastic, water loses its taste and purity.

When you attend your next meeting, take along your glass cup especially if they serve coffee or tea in Styrofoam cups.

Submitted by:
Patsy Costanza
Action Committee

Information Sources:

"Saying No to Styrofoam" by Ellie Rose
Bottle Water Blues "Why Bottle Water Has to Go" by Olivia Romero

Quote: Dr. Julian Whitaker

"There is no logical explanation for regular bottled water use; it cost more; offers less and pollutes our planet unforgivingly."

The SWO Board has started this practice: No more Styrofoam plates and cups and no plastic water bottles.

Southwestern Pennsylvania
Women of the ELCA
Synodical Board

MAY FRIENDSHIP DAY

May Friendship Day is Saturday, May 2, at Faith Lutheran Church, 7060 Lemington Avenue, East Liberty. BUILDING on our STORIES is an invitation to a journey through our memories. The logo depicts a book held between two hands, symbolic of the remarkable experiences of Church Women United, past and present. Writers are Joan Brown and Jeannette Ross. This day includes the celebration of "The Least Coin" collection.

2009 WEEKEND RETREAT

Come to the Women of the ELCA Retreat September 18-19-20, 2009 at Lutherlyn. Join your new friends from the Northwest PA Synod on a "Journey to the Well".

Pastor Karen Parsh, our Bible Study leader, will start us on our journey. There will be others to help us women of faith on our way—and there will be an actual well!!

We will hold a wine and cheese reception on Friday evening. We have included fun things like crafts and line dancing and more fun shops. We are also having a healing service on Saturday afternoon. You will be able to be a part of a "Mystery Dinner Theater" at the evening meal.

"Those Girls" are back to do the campfire! Both our Bishop Kusserow and Northwest's Bishop Jones will speak to us Sunday morning, informally and lead us in worship at Chapel Hill.

Plan a rest with a spiritual uplift this September at Camp Lutherlyn. Watch the Summer Newsletter for the registration form and information to order shirts. Love to see you there!

Linda Cunningham
Retreat Co-Chair

WORLD COMMUNITY DAY

"Piecing Earth Together" is the theme of World Community Day to be held Friday, November 6. Writers are Cathy Smith and Kristina Peterson. The logo shows the Creation story from the Book of Genesis depicted as quilt, reminding us of the environment's broken nature and the need to repair the earth so that it can once again provide. The "quilting bee" is part of our American heritage.

FROM OUR TREASURER

Thanks to all the congregational units who re-mitted offerings for the fiscal year 2008, which ended January 31, 2009. Our Outreach is based pm the calendar year. Special efforts were made by one-third of the Southwestern PA Women of the ELCA; let's use the Stewardship Package to connect and challenge for 100%.

The good news is that expenses were held within the budget for 2008. We need to focus on our regular offerings, Cluster offerings, Convention offerings and don't forget our Thankofferings. Detail information will be included in the Informational Directory available at convention.

New envelopes have been printed and will be available at Convention and Retreat. We ask that you include your Cluster number and Parish number

Also available to you at Convention will be Churchwide self-addressed envelopes for your convenience in mailing your Thankofferings and Specific Ministries offerings. Check your Stewardship booklet, Lutheran Woman Today and/or the web site for additional information on these envelopes.

Blue (recycle) envelopes will be available to use for our 2009 Designated Outreach, Lydia's Place.

BE BOLD—SEEK OUT "Friends, Inc." our newsletter mailed to each Congregational Unit and/or Contact Person. The last page of the newsletter lists the Officers and Board Members. Please contact one of these persons for any information you may need.

Mary Durmis, Treasurer
mldurmis@verizon.net

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Good Deed Foundation: Cell Phone Recycling

If you don't have a computer, but you want to recycle your old cell phone, how can you find out what to do?

Q: How are the cell phones recycled?

A: About 60% of cell phones recycled are in good working order and can be refurbished and resold. These cell phones generate the greatest amount of revenue to help dismantle poverty and resolve climate change. A portion of the phones recycled are programmed to dial only 911 for use in emergencies and donated to domestic violence survivors, elders and low-income people at risk. The rest are recycled according to the EPA standards and returned to the materials stream.

Q: How should I prepare my phone before I recycle it?

A: Make sure your phone is de-activated. All personal information is removed from refurbished phones; however, any sensitive information should be removed prior to donating your cell phone. Find out how to remove information from your specific phone model by visiting:

wirelessrecycling.com.

You probably have a family member who can help you with this, or you know someone who has a computer. Then have them visit:

www.GoodDeedFoundation.org/recycle to request a free, postage-paid envelope or print a shipping label to recycle your cell phones. Remember—in all cases, if you pay for the postage it will help offset our costs, and provide that much more funding to help women and families in poverty and climate change!

Q: How long does it take to receive an envelope or collection box?

A: Please allow approximately fourteen days for delivery.

We hope this is a little help for those of you who are not "high-tech"!

Jane Taylor
Wilma Johnson

YOUR HELP NEEDED!

In January the Winter Edition of "Friends, Inc." went out to 336 Contact Persons, Subscribers and Friends of the Southwestern PA Synodical Women's Organization. I have been notified by our mailing service that nine of these individuals have addresses considered "bad" or not verifiable by the United States Post Office. Since our mailing goes out by Bulk Mail, the newsletter will not be forwarded.

The January newsletter may or may not have been delivered to the following persons. I am asking that if you know any of these persons of if they are a member of your church, have them contact me with their correct address:

- ⇒ Martha Abarbanell— RR 2, Vandergrift
(Reformation Lutheran Church Contact)
- ⇒ Vicki Daley— 269 Spring Valley RD,
Jeannette (Subscriber)
- ⇒ Dawn Himier—458 Himier RD,
Greensburg (Subscriber)
- ⇒ Vivian McCrackin—RR1, Scenery Hill
(Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church Contact)
- ⇒ Betty Parks—1108 Parks DR, Vandergrift
(First Lutheran Vandergrift Contact)
- ⇒ Shirley Sheasley—Elbow Run RD, Ford City
(United Rockville Lutheran Church Contact)
- ⇒ Marilyn Smail—2604 Forks Church RD,
Leechburg
(Forks-Zion Lutheran Church Contact)
- ⇒ St. John Lutheran Church—641 Vermont Ave.
Glassport (Contact)
- ⇒ West Sunbury Parishes —1061 Mahood RD,
West Sunbury (Contact)

We must be good stewards and not be paying postage on newsletters not being delivered.
Your help is greatly appreciated.

Virginia Strobeck
Newsletter Editor

COMMUNICATIONS

We hope you have all been able to attend a Cluster Meeting this spring and enjoyed the information that was given to you, the good fellowship, good fun, and of course great food. Hopefully, at the Spring Clusters you got the date for your Fall Cluster. These events are important, and the Cluster Leaders do put a lot of hard work into them. If you have a favorite memory of a recent cluster meeting, please share it with us so we can pass it on in Friends, Inc.

"Friends, Inc." is online. Just go to the Synod's website:

**<http://southwesternpasynod.org/site/>
go down to the end of the page and there is our link.**

Did you know that every congregational unit gets a copy of "Friends, Inc." for free? These go to your contact person who is listed in the Informational Directory that you or your delegate receive at convention. Please contact Nancy Adams, our secretary, if you are not receiving a copy. We can only know the correct contact person with the help of all congregational units.

With all costs going up—this year we had to raise the subscription of "Friends, Inc.;" the cost is \$5.00. If you would like a subscription or would like to renew, use the subscription form on the last page of "Friends, Inc." and mail to Virginia Strobeck whose address is shown there.

We would love hearing from you.

The Communications Committee
Nancy Adams

swpaswo@verizon.net

Barbara Martz

blmartz@salsgiver.com

OUR MISSION

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

CONNECT

One way we live out our purpose as women of faith is by connecting with and challenging one another in our stewardship. Building our commitment to giving affirms not only our own ministries but also contributes to the crucial transformation of the world in which we live. The *Stewardship Planning Guide 2008-2009* gives you the tools to connect with and challenge one another in your community of faith.

Successful stewardship cannot be done alone, so try planning as a group. Connect to new voices and challenge one another to strengthen your commitment to ministry. As you work to encourage good stewardship, always take time to thank women for serving and for using their gifts and skills in ministry. Also be sure to share your stories of faithful stewardship with those outside your normal "circles."

You have the ability to be God's voice to the faith community when you connect with others and challenge your community to identify the resources it has and opportunities for ministry and service. You can create exciting change!

Women of the ELCA's purpose and mission statements are living documents. They keep before us our collective efforts in mission and connect us to one another as we prepare our stewardship plan. The tools in the *Stewardship Planning Guide* will help you connect both as individuals and as groups in your stewardship planning.

Reprinted from 2008-09 Stewardship Planning Guide

OUR PURPOSE

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.

One day retreat

Many Bible study groups love to gather monthly with *Lutheran Woman Today's* three-session summer Bible study, but for others, vacations and travel plans make it hard to get together. What to do?

Gather for a one-day retreat with the *LWT* summer Bible study, "Mary: A Woman for All Seasons."

WHO: Invite the women in your congregation and other congregations, especially college-aged women and high-school girls. This study considers Mary at different ages—wouldn't it be wonderful to look at how her example sheds light on our own spiritual lives in the company of women of different ages?

WHERE: Choose a scenic spot—perhaps the back yard of a first-class gardener. Or maybe someone's condo has a nice clubhouse with a patio. Think of a place that'll let you all enjoy not only the riches of Scripture but also the beauty of summer.

WHEN: Any time after the July/August issue arrives in about the middle of June. Remind everyone to bring their copies of both the June and July/August issues to the retreat, or you can download all three sessions for free from the *LWT* Web site (www.lutheranwoman.today.org) and make copies for everyone—plus a few extras. The leader guide is included, so people don't need to bring anything else but their Bibles.

HOW: Share the work! Ask someone different to lead each of the three sessions (it's easy; the leader guide appears in the magazine with each session). Ask someone else to lead the hymns and ask some others to

lead the opening and closing prayers. Ask a few other people to arrange healthful refreshments, and ask some others to decorate the area with fresh summer greenery and flowers.

DIRECTIONS: Start the morning with a light breakfast: coffee, bagels or croissants, and fresh fruit. About 9:30, gather the group for the first session, "The Annunciation," in the June issue. That'll take about an hour.

Stretch your legs, go look at the garden, stroll around the patio, have another strawberry or two. Then call the group back together for the second session, "Kinships, Friendships, and Holy Encounters," in the July/August issue. Then it's time for lunch.

After lunch, call the group back together to enjoy the third session, "Mary Among the Disciples." When the group has completed that, it's time for a closing devotion of your choosing.

Welcome people to linger for a little more conversation before picking up and heading for home.

Be sure to tell the group about the *LWT* Bible study that starts in the September issue—"To God's Beloved: Paul's Letter to the Romans." Author Sarah Henrich shows us what it is about this letter that made Martin Luther call it the most important piece in the New Testament. He even said it would be worth memorizing!

And as you wave goodbye until the next time, bask in the joy of sharing friendship, hospitality, and God's word together in the beauty of a summer day.

**PA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
2008-2009 OFFICERS AND BROAD MEMBERS**

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS
2009**

May 8-9—SWO Convention
Bishop Connare Center
May 9—9:00 am—Deadline for
Resolutions Forms
Sept. 18-20—Weekend Retreat
Camp Lutherlyn

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The SW PA Synodical Women's Organization NEWSLETTER is published four times a year following Board Meetings. Each Board Member, Officer, Cluster Planning Committee member, Congregational Unit Contact Person and congregations without a contact person receives a complimentary issue.

We welcome submissions to the NEWSLETTER of activities or news items which you would like to share. We reserve the right to reject any material deemed unsuitable as submitted and we will edit as necessary. Due to space limitations some items may not be included. **DEADLINE** for sending articles for the next issue is

MAY 15, 2009.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$5.00 PER YEAR - ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS BEGIN SEPTEMBER 1

**CHECKS ARE TO BE MADE PAYABLE TO: SW PA SYNOD WOMEN OF THE ELCA AND MAILED TO:
Virginia Strobeck, 128 Troy Circle, Greensburg, PA 15601**

Please use this form to enter or renew your subscription. Form may be duplicated.

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