

Ask the Lord to lift this cloud of suffering - The Rev. Dinah Dutta

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For a couple weeks, I have been pondering what I should share with you? I changed my mind several times and finally got stuck with the passage we read a few weeks ago from our Gospel lesson (Luke 24: 13-25). The resurrected Jesus joined the walk with the disciples, and he asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

I want to ask you all the same question, my dear sisters, what are you talking about? These days. I know you are saying. "Are you kidding? What else would we talk about but COVID, COVID? That's all there is to talk these days right?"

The disciples replied the same way. "Are you kidding? Are you the only person in the whole region who doesn't know all that's been

happening around Jerusalem recently?"

Like what? They told him about Jesus. They told him about the crucifixion on Friday. One of them said, "We had hoped this Jesus was one who would turn things around

for Israel and that he would set us free from Roman occupation."

Sounds familiar right? I hear a lot of people sharing the hope that Jesus would lift this cloud of COVID and set us free from fear, anxiety, **(continued on page 3)**



**W/ELCA
TRIENNIAL,
CSS W/ELCA
SYNOD EVENTS
POSTPONED
FOR 2020**

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Pandemic forces postponement of W/ELCA events

Triennial Convention and “Just Love” Gathering

As you probably already know, the W/ELCA Triennial Convention and the “Just Love” Gathering scheduled for July 2020 have been cancelled. The events will be held August 3-8, 2021 in Phoenix, AZ.

“We hope that everyone who is currently registered will come next year,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director of Women of the ELCA. “And if they aren’t able to come, they could gift their registration to someone else.”

Staff will be working out final arrangements with the Phoenix businesses and communicating directly with all who are voting members-elect for the convention and who have registered for the gathering. For the 2023 convention, “we will be back to our three-year cycle,” said Bushkofsky.

The following information was sent out by Lisa Plorin, W/ELCA President, 2017-2020 Triennium.

What do you need to do about your **event registration**? If you plan on joining your Lutheran sisters at the “Just Love” gathering at its rescheduled dates, August 5-8, 2021, **no action is required**. All tours and options will also be automatically transferred to the 2021 dates.

To make one of the following actions, email info@frameworkmeetings.com or leave a detailed message at 208-502-1150 and our registration provider will assist you.

- If you can’t make the 2021 event, you may **transfer** your registration to a friend.
- If you can’t make the 2021 event, you may **donate** your registration fee and any purchases you made, providing a gift to Women of the ELCA.
- You may request a **refund**, less a \$20.00 processing fee to help cover fixed costs.

What do you need to do about your **hotel reservations**? Our two gathering hotels, the Sheraton and Hyatt Regency, have cancelled all

2020 room reservations and will be refunding deposits. The hotels will provide new online reservation links for the August 2021 dates in the next couple weeks. We will provide you with the new links and the reservation phone numbers via email, as **you will need to make new hotel reservations**.

What do you do about your **airline reservation**? Because of the corona virus, most airlines are offering travel credits for future flights. Click [here](#) to find out how each airline is handling changes and refunds. If needed, contact your airline directly for assistance with flight changes or refunds.

While the gathering is postponed, our ministry continues. We are still mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. Visit welcatg.org for updates. Stay tuned for a virtual gathering experience this July; more details to follow. Support the churchwide ministries of Women of the ELCA with a gift today by [donating here](#).

CSS W/ELCA Gathering

With no covid-19 vaccine on the horizon, Women of the ELCA Central States Synodical Board voted to POSTPONE the organization's convention until 2021. The Board met by conference call on Saturday, May 2. More details will follow in the Central States Synod newsletter (Tim Anderson), the CSS W-ELCA Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CSSwomenofECA), CSS W-ELCA website (css-elca.org/welca), and blog at www.womenoftheelca.org/blog. At this time, a date for the 2021 CSS W/ELCA convention has not been determined.

Sunflower Cluster meeting

The Sunflower Cluster meeting scheduled for Sept. 26, 2020 at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Lawrence, KS has been cancelled. It has been rescheduled and will be held at the same location on Sept. 25, 2021.

Ask the Lord to lift this cloud of suffering

(continued from page 1)

anger, and uncertainty.

It is not happening as we expected and we all are disappointed. As a chaplain working in a hospital, I have seen how difficult this situation has been not only for those who got the virus but also for their families. I hear more fear as things are opening up. And now it looks like we may never go back to our normal lives.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples in the passage, "You do not get it do you?" Here is the thing. We, like the disciples, also do not get it.

We doubt. But is doubting wrong? *Doubt is not the opposite of faith.* Doubt, in fact, is very important to faith. Faith, by definition, is trust *in spite of* a lack of evidence. Faith is not knowledge. It is *acting as if* something is true even when you have no proof that it is. However, our hope, dear sisters, comes from our Lord.

My main fear is for those people who are not taking the pandemic seriously. As a former scientist, I know the virus is not gone. It will stick

with us until we have a vaccine. Of course, this is not encouraging news. However, as a community of faith, resurrection-believing Christians, chosen people, God's special possessions (I Peter 2:9), we all need to be good stewards to gently encourage those who do not want to follow the guidelines. We need to support them so they may understand with love.

Most importantly, take care of yourself, *that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.* God's promises are true, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." (John: 14:1). "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb 13:5). "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (John 14: 14).

My dear sisters in Christ, let us continue to ask the Lord to lift this cloud of suffering from the face of the earth united together trusting and believing. This too will pass!

May the peace of the Lord be with you!

pastordutta@gmail.com

Rejoice with joy and gladness - Alice Burnett, president

Work is underway to make new plans for the 2021 CSS W/ELCA Gathering. Because we just recently were excused from the "stay-at-home orders", hotel workers have not been available to reschedule for 2021. We pray that may be accomplished sooner rather than later.

"My story, your story, our story" remains the theme for next year's gathering. I invite you to reflect on Psalm 51:15 and act on sharing your faith, especially at this time. I am sure you have added your story during these unprecedented times. Verse eight of that chapter says, "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice."

We certainly have had to address our faith differently. We can rejoice in that!

I welcome your comments and questions by phone, email or text. In the meantime, hold your board in prayer. Wash your hands and be safe. Your sister in Christ. kaburnett@cox.net

Oh, Lord open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Psalm 51:15

Shortfalls in W/ELCA offerings will affect budget

- Vickie Donnell, treasurer

In late April 2020, the CSS W/ELCA board received the review of the churchwide women's organization's finances at the close of fiscal year (FY) 2019, which ended on January 31, 2020. Due to the interdependent nature of our Central States synodical organization and the churchwide women's organization, the board feels it is important to provide a bit of the information we received.

Total revenue received by the churchwide organization was \$2,055,194. This reflects 71.3 per cent of the revenue that was expected, or a deficit of 28.7 per cent. Specifically, the budget underperformed by \$826,337. Contributing to this deficit were shortfalls of 40 per cent in regular offerings, 20 per cent in thank offerings, 17 per cent in convention offerings, and 10 per cent of cluster offerings. We reported to you last year that there was also a deficit on the revenue side in FY2018. The deficit in FY2019 compared with budget was nearly twice as large as the 2018 figure.

Expenses at the end of FY2019 came in under budget by \$602,471 or approximately 79 per cent of the budgeted amount (21 per cent under budget). However, despite significant underspending, expenses still exceeded income. The churchwide board will determine how to cover the excess expense over income and no doubt will adjust the FY2020 budget.

This information would be incomplete to not include the contributions made by our synodical organization, congregational units, and individuals in the Central States Synod. While total giving to churchwide was \$26,792, this amount reflects a 31.2 per cent decrease in giving from our synod compared to FY2018.

As we remain in the midst of COVID-19 "stay safe" order, we learn that the percentage of our population who are unemployed has reached an astounding 14 percent. We all will be touched

by the cascading effects of the pandemic. And our congregations, synods, the ELCA and the Women of the ELCA are going to feel significant financial stressors as well.

With congregational units, clusters, and churchwide meetings and events postponed or cancelled, the board encourages you to give our financial contributions via the method that works best for you.

- Give on-line:
- <https://community.elca.org/welca>
- Give by mail: *Women of the ELCA, ELCA Gift Processing Center, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009*
- Give by phone: Call 800-638-3522 to make a donation with a credit card
- Give through automatic payment: Give via *Faithful Friends* program at <https://community.elca.org/faithful-friends>
- Give by: sending check to your synodical organization—Vickie Donnell, 4672 E Hidden Oak Pl, Springfield, MO 65802
- Give by: contacting the treasurer of your congregational unit

Another reminder...if you have Thrivent Choice Dollars® available to direct, consider directing them to our synodical organization. I am always here to help you with your questions, concerns, or suggestions.

vickiedonnell@yahoo.com or 417-839-8862

God will not permit any troubles to come upon us, unless He has a specific plan by which great blessing can come out of the difficulty.

Peter Marshall

Reach out to others in need - Ann Hoover, board member

“My Story. Your Story. Our Story”

*This will be our theme for another year. My goodness, the stories we will have after 2020!

We are all going through this differently; as different as we are individuals. For myself, I have never heard as many sermons, discussions, and bible studies with the availability of those items online. Plus, we have the time to Listen.

I have found there is SO MUCH to learn! However, I sure do miss seeing the faces of those in my church family. And there is something special that is missing when we are unable to share our faith

together. We also will miss seeing our extended church family in the Women of the ELCA. That could be an “Our Story” for sure.

I pray all of you are doing okay and I encourage each of you to reach out in some way to help those in need.

I will miss your smiles, laughter, and hugs. Together in Christ. jstmom@hotmail.com

*“My story, your story, our story” remains the theme for next year’s CSS W/ELCA gathering. It is based on Psalm 51:15, see page 3)

Do not be idle, make a prayer square - Kathy Steinke, board member

Peace be with you! In uncertain times like these, when we are called to safely distance ourselves from our neighbors, family members and sisters in Christ, it is essential to keep our minds on God and our hands busy as we look forward to the time when we can safely gather and travel.

The theme of the postponed CSS W/ELCA convention is “My Story, Your Story, Our Story”, and we certainly will have many personal examples to share of times we have seen God working in our lives or in the lives of others during this time of shared struggle AND disguised blessings.

When we meet in 2021 at our long-awaited convention, there will be a knitting/crocheting area where we can sit, relax, create and share our stories as we work. If you and unit members have time, we ask you to make some of these prayer squares in advance and bring them to the convention.

The prayer squares will be donated to Christian ministries. The knitting and crochet patterns are found on page 6.

Stay safe and remember that God’s hand is on us. Love in Christ. kathysteinke81@gmail.com

God’s love and our faith remain constant - Annalee Crotinger, secretary

Dearest Sisters in Christ

So much has dramatically changed in our lives since the publication of our March newsletter. The corona virus has interrupted more than our normal, comfortable routines of daily living. The pandemic also has changed our methods of worship.

It has crept into practically every aspect of what we do and how we do it - whether we have jobs, are caretakers, or are retired. We have adapted—some of us gracefully and some of us still kind of fumbling along—to this new normal.

However, our personal stories have not stopped. Our stories are just evolving from new experiences as we “travel” into territories we never would have imagined having to traverse.

Regardless of where our paths lead us, two things remain constant: God’s love for us and our faith in Him. With this love and this faith secure within us, we will rise above the recent challenges with which we have been faced.

So, continue to tell your stories in Jesus. We still have much to share with one another and learn from one another!

Remember Ephesians 3:17 along this often- rocky journey. ***“May Christ through your faith dwell in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love.”***

Enjoy your Blessings! crotingera@usd403.org

Crochet many prayer squares, bring to convention

Crochet hook: H, (size G or F makes smaller size)

Make a slip knot.

Chain 5 & join

Chain 2 (counts as first double crochet)

Work 2 more dc in center of ring.

Chain 2 for corner space. Then 3 dc into ring

Repeat steps from * to * 2 more times

Ch 2 for corner

Slip stitch to join to the beginning of round

You should have a total of 12 dc st all together in this round counting the first chain 3 as one of the double crochet stitches.

ROUND 2

Slip stitch over to corner ch 2 space

Chain 2 (counts as first double crochet)

2 dc, ch 2 for corner space, 3 dc in same space.

[Ch 1, 3 dc, ch 2, 3 dc in corner space]

Repeat sequence 2 more times.

Slip stitch to join the beginning of round. You should have 24 dc stitches.

ROUND 3

Slip stitch to the chain 2 corner

Chain 2 (counts as first double crochet)

2 dc, ch 2 for corner space, 3 dc in same space

[*ch 1, 3 dc in chain 1 space below. Then ch 1*,

2 dc, ch 2, 3 dc in next ch 2 space)

Repeat sequence in brackets 2 more times and then repeat from * to * once, then ch 1 to join to beginning dc for a total of 36 double crochets.

Tie off, weave in the ends.

For a larger square, add a round 4.

Knit more prayer squares, bring to convention

KNITTED POCKET PRAYER SQUARE PATTERN

Use size 6 needles

Use either baby weight, Caron Simply Soft or anything of that weight

Cast on 15 stitches

Rows 1-6 Knit

Row 7 K6, P3, K6

Row 8 Knit across

Rows 9-18 Repeat rows 7 and 8

Row 19 K3, P9, K3

Row 20 Knit across

Rows 21-22 Repeats rows 19 and 20

Row 23 K6, P3, K6

Row 24 Knit across

Row 25-26 Repeat rows 23 and 24

Rows 27-32 Knit each row

This note will accompany each square.

“May this pocket-sized prayer square be a reminder that God’s love is with you always. May it heal your pain, give you comfort from loneliness and give you peace.”

(Pattern from Judy, WELCA member of Lutheran Church by the Lake in McCormack, SC.)

OFFICERS/BOARD MEMEBERS 2019-2020
CENTRAL STATES SYNOD WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Executive Board Member: Rev. Dinah Dutta
 1000 Colonial Circle
 Lawrence, KS 66049
 785-979-8362
pastordutta@gmail.com

Vice President: Beth Rockelman
 2103 Blair Drive, Apt. E
 Jefferson City, MO 65109
 Ph: 573-761-0722; 573-782-4759
bethr@midamerica.net

Treasurer: Vickie Donnell
 4672 E Hidden Oak Place
 Springfield, MO 65802
 Cell: 417-839-8862
vickiedonnell@yahoo.com

Board Member: Loretta Holmes
 568 Turtle
 Haysville, KS 67060
 Ph: 316-524-0960
lholfmes8@sbcglobal.net

Board Member: Wendy Hoops
 408 South Country Club Road
 Chanute, KS 66720
 Ph: 620-245-1937
wendy.hoops75@gmail.com

WITW Newsletter Editor: Mary Liby
 25680 S Urish Rd
 Osage City, KS 66523
 Ph: 785-528-3434
 Cell: 785-817-3942
lmfarms72@gmail.com

President: Alice Burnett
 12130 Dove Hill Court
 Derby, KS 67037-9485
 Ph: 316-776-2838 or 316-258-7685
kaburnett@cox.net

Secretary: Annalee Crotinger
 3633 Avenue N
 Bison, KS 67520
 Ph: 785-387-2454H; 785-387-2336
crotingera@usd403.org

Board Member: Ann Hoover
 25370 Little Buffalo Rd
 Stover, MO 65078
 Ph: 573-377-6389
jstmom@hotmail.com

Board Member: Kathy Steinke
 10661 Hackamore Ln
 St. Louis, MO 63128
 Cell: 314-422-2835
kathysteinke81@gmail.com

Board Member: Kara Jecha
 117 Pine Street
 Timken, KS 67575
 Ph: 785-355-2000
 Cell: 785-372-1637
churchlady@gbta.net

Central States Women NEW website
www.css-elca.org/welca
 Central States Women Facebook:
www.facebook.com/CSSwomenofeca
 (this is not a typo—it is eca)
 All are secure websites



*No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
 no mind has conceived what
 God has prepared for those who love him.*

1 Corinthians 2:9

**Official Newsletter of
The Central States
Women of the ELCA**

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