Conventional 2022
Strength and Dignity
without Fear

It is hard to imagine that it has been three years since we last met in convention. The pandemic has wreaked havoc on so many plans. The wonderful convention that was planned for 2020 never happened so we are going to try again. We had planned for April 2nd, and now are planning for July 16th. It seems that the pandemic is finally losing its grip. We would like to be as safe as possible so women are able to attend without fear, as our theme states. We have lots of good things planned. Learning sessions featuring an ELCA social statement on politics and Christianity, Cherish All Children and Days for Girls will be offered as well as a Racial Equity keynote address. Bishop Lull will offer the sermon for our worship time. It is looking to be an incredible faith filled day with lots of fellowship and learning time as well.

Elections will be held during plenary. This year we also have to elect voting members to Triennial 2023! Sounds like a busy plenary session. Resolutions and the budget must also be passed. We are planning only one plenary session this year, so there is not a lot of wiggle room in the planning for that.

Please share this information with ladies in your groups, units, congregations, clusters, wherever you can. This is an important convention as we endeavor to rebuild and reconnect after two years of isolation and fear. We move forward by each of us taking first steps, but taking them together.
Wow! It is almost Spring! We had planned to have an in person convention in April, but unforeseen conflicts for some of our speakers and the ongoing pandemic caused to board to change the date. The new date is July 16, 2022. Bethesda Lutheran, Inver Grove Heights. We are excited to present a varied program of learning sessions and speakers. Laura Krueger will continue to be our church-wide representative. It is exciting to look forward to this time for the work of the body and the fun and fellowship of seeing friends that we may have not seen in over two years. The opportunity to learn and grow together is so motivating. As we continue to navigate the challenges of Covid-19, we also find our strength. There are lots of things to discuss at convention. How do we continue to “come back”, rebuild, move forward in light of all the changes that have happened in the organization, the church, and the world. We are continuing to update our contact lists and are rolling a Bridges subscription into the convention registration. Everyone who attends convention will automatically get Bridges. A digital copy of the newsletter is available for all who want it at no cost. Hard copies mailed will require a subscription. (Hint, have your church print the newsletter out for you if you don’t have access to printing it yourself.) The exact information has not yet been confirmed so watch for more information by convention time.

We are pleased that Bishop Lull will be joining us in person to preach during worship this year. She has always graciously done the Bible Study for us, but this year we offered her a choice, sermon or Bible Study. She chose to preach. I am looking forward to her message. Especially with our theme verse.

Mid February brought a chance for us to gather via zoom for a three day leadership event. This year leaders included presidents, executive board members, board members, and cluster leaders. With the wide variety of leadership roles represented, the breakout groups were quite interesting. We studied the book of Esther, learning what it means to be a servant leader. We learned about a method for planning our way forward as an organization. We discussed challenges our units, clusters, and synodical groups faced and brainstormed some ways to help each other. One thing that stuck out for me was learning more about advocacy and the different advocate groups with whom we can partner. There is so much wisdom in the leadership of Women of the ELCA. Wisdom at every level. Also, there are amazing resources available on the website. Please take time to explore these amazing, and free, resources.

Don’t forget. We have a Facebook page and a page on the synod website. We try to get something new each week and certainly when there is news. Check it out. Engage with us and with your friends. Just another way to connect. Churchwide is sponsoring position specific trainings coming up in April and May. Please check the website for dates and times!
A Day for Making Comfort
The last several years A Day for Making Comfort has been held on the 4th Saturday of January. This year of 2022 it will be held on Saturday, March 19, at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Stillwater (1616 W Olive St). It is a day when women from throughout the Saint Paul Area Synod gather to complete comforters to be given to those in need both locally and internationally. No experience is needed. The time will be 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Come for the whole time, for just an hour or for whatever amount of time works for you. Bring a lunch if you will be there around noon. Bring a friend and enjoy the fellowship while making a difference in the world.
What if

By Carol Bidwell

In the fall of 2021, a group of concerned and dedicated South St Paul clergy met with Mayor James Francis and members of his staff and committed to reinstitute a SSP city-wide MLK Celebration and call it “What If”.

Why? To take time to reflect on civil rights issues in SSP, in our country and across the globe. The MLK Day not only honors the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but it encourages all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. This holiday serves as an opportunity to educate and demand social justice in real and tangible ways for everyone.

This event reminds us of God’s call that all people are created equal and have value because we are all created in the image of God. The keynote speaker for this event was Rev. Oliver White from Clark-Grace United Methodist Church in SSP. During his address he encouraged us to ask the question what if. What if all people were welcome? What if we supported one another? What if we stood up for those who are persecuted? What if we treated racism as a threat to community safety? What if we listened to the voices of those who are undervalued? These questions of what if and the theme of this event will remain at the center of community conversation in the year ahead.

You can listen to this MLK celebration at this link: https://townsquaretv.granicus.com/player/clip/15801?view_id=9&redirect=true

I am so proud that my church (Luther Memorial Church in SSP) and my Pastor Patrick Joiner hosted this first event for 2022.

Those that also were part of the celebration: Pastor Marjorie Stewart-Church Wherever, Pastor Ray Valenzuela-Seventh Day Adventist Church, Brad Miller & Mike Sabbann-Wakota Ridge Campus-Woodbury Lutheran Church, SSP Varsity Singers, students from SSP Black Pride, artist Ray Aaron, Jr did the cover photo, Dr Suzanne Hansen, Kwesi Pasley-Director of Music-Luther Memorial Church and TownSquareTV.

Whereas, the politics of division, isolation, and hate have no place in our community; and

Whereas, in going forward, the faith and civic leaders of SSP have pledged to meet regularly to discuss ways in which our community will continue to grow and honor the humanity and dignity of every person, and ensure that they are nurtured, preserved, and respected; and

Whereas, SSP strives to be the gateway city that unhesitatingly proclaims and recognizes the worth of every human being and the universality of all our brothers and sisters; and

Whereas, if we continue to march in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, who looked beyond social ugliness to a society where the sacred civil rights of every citizen were preserved, then we, the people of SSP, MN, will lead the world closer to his dream of a “Beloved City”

Now, Therefore, on the day of January 17, 2022, I, James P. Francis Mayor of SSP, have the distinct honor of proclaiming today, January 17, 2022, Martin Luther King Jr. day in SSP, kicking off a series of community conversations with the theme of “What If” uniting the community as one.
Strong and Respected Women

When I heard from Tricia that your theme for the Spring Synodical Convention was based on Proverbs 31:25, I thought “how perfectly fitting”. I read all of Proverbs 31, picking out verses like “Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless.” v.8 In our work together with Cherish All Children, we speak up for the vulnerable, we work to protect children and youth from unspeakable harm. “She is a hard worker, strong and industrious.” v.17 Women like all of you have been the driving force behind getting the messages and the work of Cherish All Children into your churches spanning two decades now.

And your key verse, “She is strong and respected and not afraid of the future.” This verse reminds me of a teenage girl in one of our Confirmation class sessions. We had watched a video called “Your photo fate” and then asked the youth to write in their guide what they would say to someone asking them to share a nude photo over social media or direct messaging. This young girl strongly answered, “Just a minute, let me check with my Dad!” And then she blocked the person. She showed strength and a lack of fear to this predator.

I’m looking forward to joining you all in July to share our new resources for churches, especially our Safe & Healthy Relationships Youth Guide. This is a free, downloadable resource for churches to use with middle school and high school youth. We’re also continuing to educate adults – parents, grandparents, and all who interact with young people – sharing all the ways we can make an impact in everyday life to keep youth safe and help them to grow into healthy relationships.

Strong and respected women – YOU are continuing to raise up the importance of protecting children from harm and cherishing them as God’s most precious gifts.

Thank you for partnering together to raise healthy generations!

Joy McElroy

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Help Wanted!

**Communications Coordinator** Email blasts, Bridges mailings and convention mailings. Wanda Hurtgen and Lois Berg have served faithfully in this ministry for years and are both looking to step down. Please consider serving in this way.

**Bridges editor** We have been without an editor for several years. It is published quarterly and the board plus various other contributors do the writing. It requires someone who likes the puzzle of lay-out and design. Please prayerfully consider this position for yourself or someone you know.

**Women to serve on the board** We are gearing up for convention and looking for people to run for the board.

**Historian** Barb Greaves has been our historian. She is no longer able to fulfill this role. This job involves keeping photographic and written history for the SWO
Saint Paul Area Synod
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Return Service Requested

Calendar of Events
Saturday, March 19, 2022  Our Savior’s Lutheran, Stillwater
A Day for Making Comfort
Saturday, July 16th, 2022 CONVENTION

“She is clothed in strength and dignity and laughs without fear of
the future.” Proverbs 31:25

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May 15, 2022.
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Bridges is emailed as a PDF file to all churches in the Saint Paul Area Synod.
Please encourage your church to post or link it to their website, and share with other women in your church.
If the email is not being received, or another address should be used, please contact Tricia Niesche
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Thank you to the Saint Paul Area Synod Office for providing this service to us!