



For the Love of the Earth

If smiles, comments, and evaluations can be trusted, especially from Lutheran women, the NW Cluster Spring Gathering was a great success. Forty-one women, including one we'll call a Luthebaptist because she usually finds her way to our gatherings, were in attendance from 10 (plus 1 Baptist) churches. A very special treat was welcoming Holy Shepherd for the first time! Morning session included an empowerment session led by me, complete with PowerPoint, as I promised last year; and a dynamic Bible study from *Awakening to God's Call for Earthkeeping*, led by Darlene Deck, that got the women really engrossed in "The Biblical Foundations for Earthkeeping." Only a personal greeting from Bishop Stuck pulled them briefly away.



Darlene Deck installs the 2008-09 NWV Cluster committee: Nancy Walbar, Holy Shepherd, St. John; Nancy Miller, Bethlehem, Chesterton; Norma Lewis, Augustana, Hobart; and Annette Holtan, coordinator, Gloria Dei, Highland.

The afternoon followed a heaping healthy helping of harvest and hospitality by Bethel's women, and featured an enlightening presentation by Dorreen Carey and Lori Peterson who traced the history of environmental changes, and enlightened us on what city projects are in the works for correcting some of the harm from the past, and its impact on the whole of Northwest Indiana.

[By the way, my afternoon PowerPoint was right on the computer, just couldn't remember the name.]

A sad note was Mary Muaura's sudden loss of her husband in Kenya, making her unable to present the Bible study. The women contributed \$152 to LDA, which will help toward airfare for her youngest children to join their mother.



Left: Dorreen Carey, Director of Environmental Affairs Department of the city of Gary, addresses the women.

Bottom: Addie Hooper, Bethel, and Kata Knoezer, Holy Shepherd, listen intently, and Lori Peterson, project manager, enjoys a mirthful moment



In 1996, the Metropolitan Chicago SWO

brought a memorial to the Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention asking the organization to broaden awareness of the violence children face, and Rachel's Day was born. Rachel's Day, from Matthew 2:18, is observed on the first Sunday in May. If you've never observed this special day, download the resource from womenoftheelca.org/resources/rachelsday.html, and share it with your group. Then get a group of women to work on plans for next year. Rachel's Day is neither a fundraiser, nor a funraiser, no "feel good" celebration; instead it cuts to the heart of what Women of the ELCA is all about—*discipleship*. You will be raising your voice for the sake of those who have no voice!

Who better than we to speak for Rachel's children?

The following request was forwarded to me.

Date: Tue, 29 Apr 2008 12:28:09 -0400

Dear Prayer Warriors,

We have received a prayer request from someone who ministers in the Middle East. April 27th during a prayer meeting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, families and small children were arrested when the police raided the meeting. No one is allowed to see those arrested and they have not been given food or water. Please pray for their release and protection.

I do not know what the situation is currently, but, as an integral part of the community of God, we must hold others in prayer. Visit "The Praying Church" at prayingchurch.org. There you will find reflections, devotions, and "Jump-start Your Prayer Life." You can even request prayer, and you or a group can join the ELCA prayer network online.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

I-K Women of the ELCA, NW Cluster
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Why not download a copy and share.

(Never fear. You can print this in black and white to avoid the high cost of colored ink...straight from iksynod.org)

And while you're there, check out the *KINswoman*.

NW Women BOLD in Discipleship...

St. Paul, Michigan City: The women prepare breakfast for the high school graduates. They also make a quilt for the grad to take off to college to serve as a forever home church bond.

Gloria Dei, Highland: Women give pull tabs from soda cans to help Lansing, IL-based Camp Quality which provides a week of fun at local camps for children with cancer.

Christ, Valpo: Tabitha Circle also creates prayer shawls, sharing the love of Christ with those most in need of hope. They also practice discipleship by sharing patterns and teaching newcomers.

Bethel, Gary: Rita started the "Organic Program" for the wee ones last spring. They plant their own seeds and provide caretaking and nurturing for the plants, their first tiny steps toward "earthkeeping."

Send your sharing cards for the next *Northwex*.

Creation

Caring for God's Creation

Gen 2:15

April 22 was Earth Day and on April 19, the NW women centered the whole gathering around our Christian obligation to care for God's gift of the world. The ELCA social statement includes the following: "Humans, in service to God, have special roles on be-half of the whole creation. Made in God's image, we are called to care for the Earth as God cares for the Earth."

Too often we play lip service to what we claim to believe. We say the right words, sew a few prayer shawls, send an offering off to feed the hungry. Then we sit back all comfy, halos shining.

You received two covenants at the gathering, one for yourself and one for your church. I hope you read each of them, and advocated for "Earthkeeping" by asking your council or pastor to distribute the appropriate one to the membership--or at least did it yourself with your group or circle.

I did some garbage digging today at my church, removing a half can of paper. Then I took 30 seconds to stop at the recycling bins just past the Bakery House Cafe and drop it in.

My kids always called me "garbage picker." My daughter would yell, "Jeff, stop the car! There's a cardboard box... can't you use that bleach bottle, Mother?"

It's okay. I just laugh it off. I can take the trashing.



Thanks be to God... and the wonderful women of Northwest Indiana for being such a great group to work for and

with! Whatever the need, you just pitch right in.

- Thanks to Bethel's Pastor Armiger for the projector and screen, (*and to Sean for trusting his mom with his new, prized laptop*).
- Thanks to Pam Waltz, CU president at St. Paul, for filling in on the piano when Alison had to go back to Valpo. (Guess this would be a fitting time to thank Alison for being techie-to-the-rescue when my face turned several shades of brown as I feigned boss of the Apple®, and for being "up and coming" when my eyes sought yours!)
- Thanks to our fall (Christ Valpo) and spring (Christ Hammond) hosts for offering their churches, and for the *record-time quick* election of the planning committee. (I'm taking credit for that: I said I'd sing until we got a committee, and, voilà, Nancy and Nancy! *Great voice, huh?*)

A few "Forever" faces were missing...and *truly* missed. It's so strange having a gathering without you. Hopefully fall will be free of conflicts.

It's almost summer, and while many units take time off, it's an excellent time for an extended Bible study retreat. You only had a sliver of "Earthkeeping." Get it all at elca.org/stewardship/EarthKeeping/earthkeeping%20300.pdf... or use the summer LWT for a backyard, park, or beach study. (*Throw Twwadi off the pier!*)

Have you looked at the covenant you received? Do, and share with your group. Do things differently around your house and your church.

Continue to keep Mary Muaura in your prayers during her struggle. As women, we can empathize with being separated from our children. She cannot return to her homeland, not even to bury her husband. Reportedly, she is doing better. If you'd like to write her, email me or Annette (markholtan@att.net), and we will give you her address.

The *Northwex*, the bimonthly publication of IN-KY Women of the ELCA Northwest Cluster, can be downloaded at iksynod.org. For questions, submissions, or comments, or to inquire about subscribing via USPS or email, please contact me at 219-886-0201 or maslivend@bcglobal.net.