



WOMEN

Bible study centers synod women

Board members of the Synodical Women's Organization are convinced—Bible study holds their lives together.

Spirit

Karen Peters, Zion, Clear Lake, explains what happens.

"Women choose a particular study and begin reading scripture, and all of a sudden the Holy Spirit increases knowledge and excitement. Bible study produces a depth of insight that draws together many viewpoints. Even when we're studying a few short verses, members offer a lot of input. The organization, Women of the ELCA, benefits from this Bible study unity."

Often it's the yearning for Bible study that draws

women to the organization.

Laurie Stauffer, St. John, Sumner, said, "While working full time and raising a family, I hungered to study the Bible but didn't want all the *work* that went

with a circle. I didn't want to make lunch and do projects that made more work for me. I told those in leadership that I would be the Bible study leader for the night circle of women that work but I didn't want any of the trappings that went with it. They were wise enough to let this small group meet for Bible study and not expect more from us. We were small in number but wished to learn."

Counsel

For Stauffer, the result was a sudden acknowledgment of the work of the Holy Spirit.

She said, "The Holy Spirit had been a part of me since my baptism and my days growing up in the church. I don't

remember *not* having the Spirit be a part of me. The Spirit was such a part of me that I had trouble recognizing the Spirit and the Spirit's work. I often gave myself the credit for the Spirit's work, help, ideas, and answers, because I didn't know life without the Spirit.

"It was a life-changing experience for me when I recognized the Spirit and how the Spirit leads and guides me. In fact, I was quite embarrassed when I

Bible study offers the opportunity to share thoughts and ideas and witness to our faith walks.

Syd Brinkman,
president, Synodical
Women's Organization,
St. James, Allison



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looked back at my life and remembered many times when I hadn't given the credit to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is drawing me even closer to Jesus. Now, praise is never far from my lips. I have my own private Counselor. It is awesome, and I am filled with the joy of the Lord."

Recently, Stauffer has been involved in Women of ELCA at the cluster, synodical, and local levels.

Perspective

When Vi Sullivan, St. John, Nashua, leads Bible lessons, she feels she gains more than she gives.

"Women who gather around God's Word hunger to learn more and gain several perspectives on a passage or story," Sullivan said. "As I grow in faith and experience its maturity, I realize that the Bible is the handbook for our lives. Although sometimes Bible study may suggest nothing new or dazzling, its truths are the same ones that led our ancestors to found a solid church. It will only remain solid if it's rooted in God's Word."

What the Bible teaches about the past is valuable to Mary Jane Averhoff (Dewar), St. John (Bennington), Waterloo.

"Women in the Bible had to live and struggle with their everyday lives," Averhoff said. "From them, we share and exchange ideas on how to live today."

Disciple

Enter discipleship.

Shirley Retz (Manchester), Peace, Ryan, said, "Each study offers a new perception—usually something I haven't considered before. It's most meaningful and creates a better understanding of discipleship. I see those who use Bible study living out their faith."

President of the Synodical Women's Organization is Syd Brinkman, St. James, Allison. She points out how Bible study encourages witness.

"The Bible study in *Lutheran Women Today*

speaks to the very core of Women of the ELCA. The organization is committed to grow in faith. Women achieve that by studying the Word of God and what the scriptures say to all people. Bible study offers the opportunity to share thoughts and ideas and witness to our faith walks. This creates support for each other and allows our differences to become a part of what makes us a community of women," Brinkman said.

Gloria Tollefson, Nazareth, Cedar Falls, said that Bible study is strengthened because many of the articles in *Lutheran Woman Today* relate to the month's Bible study topics.

"That makes it unique from many other studies that are available," Tollefson said.

Students

Bible study levels participants. All are students equally.

Brinkman said, "Through Bible study we can proclaim the Word of God and give all women who contribute in any way a voice to share their good news with others in and around themselves or to places far away. When studying the words of our God and Father, we are not so different. We are all just

servants in the study, none having a greater ability to lead the study than another. Women of the ELCA is truly blessed to have such wonderful Bible studies from which to learn and grow."

Brinkman thanks Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, for hosting an annual event each April that introduces women to the next year's Bible study.

She said, "As the author speaks, I gain so much insight into what is being said, different ways to approach the study, hints on setting the atmosphere for the study, and thought processes that look at the study with a new twist. Synod women appreciate the opportunity to gather so close to home and bask in the welcoming spirit of the seminary students. The seminary setting is inspiring."

Grounded

Bible study becomes an anchor.

As Diann Marten, First, Decorah, says, "I know I

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Act boldly!

Women of the ELCA's nine-month Bible study will begin in September and use the theme *Act Boldly in the Fruit of the Spirit*. It is based on Paul's exhortation to live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and through sharing personal experience and stories will encourage using God-given gifts.

Author is Rev. Susan Gamelin, an award-winning writer and gifted storyteller, who serves Emmanuel, High Point, North Carolina, with her husband, Tim.

Monthly topics are *Act Boldly with—*

- *Love*, September 2005
- *Joy*, October 2005
- *Peace*, November 2005
- *Patience*, December 2005
- *Kindness/Generosity*, January/February 2006
- *Faithfulness*, March 2006
- *Humility (Gentleness)*, April 2006
- *Self control*, May 2006

Special July/August Bible studies encourage *Boldness in my Community* and *Boldness in the World*.

The web site <www.lutheranwomantoday.org/discussion> offers a place to discuss the Bible studies, ask questions of others, and share thoughts, experiences, and ideas.



REV. SUSAN GAMELIN created the 2005-06 Bible study titled *Act Boldly in the Fruit of the Spirit*.

Northeastern Iowa Synodical Women's Organization board members share thoughts on Bible study



Mary Jane Averhoff (Dewar)
St. John (Bennington), Waterloo



Diann Marten
First, Decorah



Darlene Meyer (Calmar)
Springfield, Decorah



Karen Peters
Zion, Clear Lake

Women of the ELCA
mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ



Shirley Retz (Manchester)
Peace, Ryan



Laurie Stauffer
St. John, Sumner



Vi Sullivan
St. John, Nashua



Gloria Tollefson
Nazareth, Cedar Falls

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need to keep studying. The knowledge and meaning I get from the Bible is constantly changing thanks to authors of our studies, scholars, pastors, leaders, and other participants who share information about the historical or social context of the passages. Women want to understand God's Word and apply it to their lives. When the Bible is studied with other women, experiences and insight are shared, the message of the Bible in our changing lives becomes clearer, and we can be a comfort to each other."

Darlene Meyer (Calmar), Springfield, Decorah, said, "Bible study is a great way to learn and share God's Word and insight in our lives."

Stauffer said, "I notice that women who study the Bible are grounded. They are not swayed easily. They know who they are in Christ. They are stable and have a peace about them. In the midst of trials and chaos they hurt just like anybody does, but they keep centered in Christ. They use the Word in their daily life like Jesus used the Word in the wilderness when Satan tempted Him. They are willing to serve, and servanthood is second nature to them."

The Bible becomes that glue that holds life together.

—Elaine Main, coeditor of the STAR

OTHER board members are Lois Garms, St. Paul, Monona; Barbara Frieden, Elgin, Elgin; and Judy Kelly, St. John, Charles City.

Women of the ELCA 

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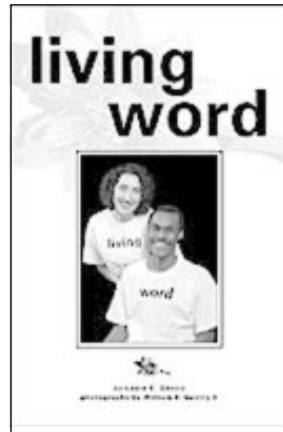
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110,000 churchwide subscribers
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3,250 synod subscribers
(4.5 percent of synod membership)

PEOPLE

PUBLICATION

Gentry, Rev. Laura, Waterville, Waterville, and Our Savior's, Lansing, is coauthor of *Living Word*, a book of photographs of people wearing T-shirts containing a word they chose to define themselves. Photographer is her husband, William, pastor of First Congregational Churches of Elkader and McGregor. Order the book, ISBN 1932043-32-2, for \$14.95 plus shipping, from Penfield Books, e-mail <penfield@penfieldbooks.com>, phone 800/728-9998. The Gentrys sign the book at events where participants choose their own *living word*, then participate in word games and mixers. To host an event, contact Gentry at e-mail <laurgentry@aol.com>, phone 563/538-4664.



CHAPLAIN

Iowa City chaplaincy needs funds

The Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach is a new nonprofit organization to fund the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics chaplaincy in Iowa City. This position had been supported by the ALC Iowa District and the LCA Iowa Synod, then Lutheran Social Services (later Lutheran Services in Iowa). Now, Iowa's ELCA members are asked to provide funding. The chaplain, Rev. Cindy Breed, is halftime during 2005. The hope is to return the position to full time.

On the board of Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach is Chaplain Gloria Strickert, Allen Memorial Hospital, Waterloo. Rev. Don Feuerhak, Fredsville, Cedar Falls, is on its funding and mutual ministry committees.

Send contributions to Lutheran Chaplaincy Outreach, 123 Market St., Iowa City, IA 52245.

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

Eight ways to follow the action

News from the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Orlando, Florida, **Monday through Sunday, August 8-14**, is available in a variety of formats.

- **Telephone hotline** Hear a recorded message by dialing 773/380-2477. It will be updated each evening during the assembly and daily through the end of August.
- **Web site** Go to <www.elca.org/assembly/05> for daily updates, news releases, and photos.
- **Webcasts** Use the schedule posted on the web site <www.elca.org/assembly/05> to locate times of plenary sessions that are webcast.
- **On-line site** Use LutherLink to sign up for the meeting *2005 CWA AT ORLANDO* and get updates, on-line reporting, and a way to ask questions and make comments.
- **Visit** If you will be near Orlando August 8-14, register as a visitor by calling 800/638-3522, ext. 2807, or going to <www.elca.org/assembly/05>.
- **Report** The Church Council's recommended actions will be mailed to congregations by August 1. Within a week after the assembly, a summary of assembly actions will be on the ELCA web site and mailed.
- **Magazine** The October issue of *The Lutheran* will cover the Assembly. Some magazine stories will be on the web by mid-September at <www.thelutheran.org>.
- **Speakers** To contact voting members who can speak about their assembly experience, phone the synod office at 319/352-1414, or ask by e-mail <boltec@neiasynod.org>.

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Send news for the September issue to Linda Hudgins by August 3.

Support organizations that build community

Each year, the local 4-H club uses an omelet breakfast to raise funds, and I had the Sunday morning pleasure of making omelets to serve their guests. The event was extremely well organized, including training for us *celebrity* omelet makers.

The fun was in the conversation with other chefs and with the customers who waited patiently to see how the ceremonial *flipping of the omelet* would go.

Some omelets were badly mangled at my station. They got blessed with extra cheese as a means of repairing and covering up the mistakes.

I was happy to help with the project because 4-H does a good job developing leaders for our

community and church. It is among those marvelous organizations that teach skills while instilling confidence in young people. Infused in the program is a commitment to make the world a better place through service.

Ruth and I go to the Iowa State Fair and visit the 4-H exhibits and livestock buildings. The hard work on display and the genuine effort and desire to do one's best seem to overcome disappointment that only one person can win the best of show.

I encourage you to support the civic organizations that share the commitment to build up the community. In whatever way you offer support—volunteering time, encouraging leaders and members, or contributing to the efforts of these organizations—you say thank you for their witness to God's renewing power in their ministry.

Besides...it's fun to see if you can flip that omelet with one toss!

—Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

RESOURCES

ELCA, Middle East information

Help members of your congregation broaden their sights to churchwide and global news by studying what's happening in the—

- **ELCA** Order the 2005 synod assembly video in which Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson answers questions about issues facing the ELCA from members of Ashburn Lutheran Church, Chicago. The video is on-line at <www.elca.org/co/mosaic/2005SynodAssembly>. Purchase a DVD for \$19.95 by phoning 800/638-3522, ext. 6009; or using the website <www.elca.org/mosaic>.
- **Middle East** A new flyer titled *A Wall Stands for Peace* tells about Israel's separation wall and the ELCA Church Council call to action. Order it at <www.elca.org/middleeast>. A 23-minute DVD titled *The Dividing Wall* can be borrowed from the Lutheran Resource Center, e-mail <lrc@netins.net>; phone 641/357-4451; web site <www.lutheranresourcecenter.org>.



BISHOP STEVE ULLESTAD shapes omelets with extra cheese when his flips require reconstruction or camouflage. Flipping omelets thanks 4-H Clubs and their supporters for helping to develop youth leaders.



SEPTEMBER

Two things to remember

Stewardship schedule

If your congregation is in the Mason City, Shechem, Shepherd of the Hills, or Water of Life Conference, you are asked to send representatives to one of these 90-minute meetings—

- **Mason City Conference**, *Trinity, Mason City*, 7-8:30 p.m., Thursday, September 8
- **Shechem Conference**, *Zion, West Union*, 7-8:30 p.m., Thursday, September 15
- **Shepherd of the Hills Conference**, *Norway, St. Olaf*, 7-8:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 13
- **Water of Life Conference**, *Lord of Life, Dubuque*, 7-8:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 20.

The 60 congregations of the **Bethany, Cedar River, Lake**, and **Riverside Conferences** will learn about synod ministries by scheduling a session with a synod visitor.

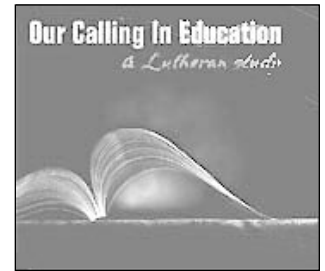
The synod will communicate by mail with the 60 congregations in **Prairie Grace, Upper Iowa River**, and **Wartburg Conferences**.

Social statement

Mail feedback on the ELCA education study in September so the task force gets it by **October 1**.

For a single complimentary copy of the study titled *Our Calling in Education: A Lutheran study*, phone the Division for Church in Society resource request line, 800/638-3522, ext. 2996. Or order ISBN 6-0002-0196-6, for \$3 plus shipping, by calling Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 800/328-4648. Or download the study at <www.elca.org/social/statements/education>.

Christi Lines, principal of St. Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly, is a task force cochair and will help set up a congregation study. Contact her by e-mail <christi.lines@stpaulswaverly.org>; phone 319/352-1484.



LINES