



Friends, Inc. (in Christ)

Newsletter of the Southwestern PA Synodical Women's Organization
Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
www.swpasynod.org

Volume XXXV No. 4

Fall 2023

President's Report

As I start writing this, I am 34,000 feet above the earth and heading to Phoenix to attend the Women of the ELCA 12th Triennial Convention. As I gaze out the window, with the puffy clouds below, it's a different perspective to God's creation. The variety in landscapes is amazing. The same can be said of all the voting members (and later attendees to the Gathering). What a variety of women will be there! And all are God's creation with the call to **Just Love**.

As with any convention, business must be taken care of: new churchwide executive board members are to be elected, a budget passed and many reports to be read. Then we also look ahead. Discussion will be held regarding our stance on land acknowledgment for the indigenous people of the United States, human trafficking, racism, immigration...

Not all is cut and dried, however – there is the joy of worshiping together (celebrating our diversity and unity), meeting women from all parts of the United States and reconnecting with women we haven't seen in awhile (or only talked with on Zoom meetings). What a blessing to be here!

I urge you, women of faith and sisters in Christ, be open to what God is asking you to do. Get out of your corner of our synod and **go** to a local cluster even (or another cluster event that suits your schedule), **go** to Lutherlyn for our annual retreat, **go** to the next Triennial Gathering in Des Moines, IA, **go** as a voting member to the next Triennial. **Just Go!**

Blessings,

Barb Guenther
President

Women of the ELCA 12th Triennial Convention Phoenix, AZ Sept. 19-21, 2023

Here are some highlights from the convention:

New Executive Board was elected:
President – Myrna Wells-Ulland
V. President – Loria Garcia
Secretary – Gwen Edwards

Treasurer – **Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer**

Members at Large – Jean Pishaw, Maria Lokensgard, Jennifer Ackerman, Julia Sabella, Sheena Foster, Anna Jetson, Tracy Williams, Yma Mulero, Ginger Cutrell, Joyce Brooks, Merrily Burmeister

The following resolutions were approved:

1. To end racism by participating in educational programs such as *“Now is the Time: A Study Guide for ELCA Declaration to people of African Decent”*
2. That synodical women’s organizations encourage women participants to use Truth and Healing resources and encourage all congregations in their synods, who do not have one, to create their own land acknowledgment

The 2024 W/ELCA budget was approved and passed

Other items of note:

- The 2023 W/ELCA Thankoffering Service is available online
- The 2026 Women of the ELCA 13th Triennial Convention and Gathering will be held in Des Moines, IA in July 2026

Our voting members, Barb Guenther, Vera Harencame, DaMisha McFarland-Pollock, Patty Newton and Helen Williams, were thrilled to be in Phoenix as your representatives!!!

Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering

Phoenix, AZ

Sept. 21-24, 2023

Once the Convention was completed, another 8 women from SWPA joined us to attend the Gathering at the Phoenix Convention Center. The mornings of Friday-Sunday had sessions all together with over 1100 Sisters in Faith listening to Bible studies, speakers, music, and devotions. After the opening worship on Thursday evening, there was a street party in downtown Phoenix!! Music, dancing, and food highlighted the night.

The afternoons of Friday and Saturday had a choice of several workshops: Practices for Sabbath Keeping, Preparing your Congregation for Leaders of Color, Writing Workshop, Katie’s Fund, Modeling how to Just Love & Just Love Connecting Women, Indian 101, Introduction to Truth & Healing, Book discussion on *“Love Without Limits”*, Love Transcends Borders and Talking Circle. There were also Servant Events in the Exhibit Hall: AAMPARO – Migrating Mother, Human Trafficking, Community building community (Building Beloved Community and House of Refuge [breaking free from homelessness]) and Raising Up Healthy Women & Girls. Hands-on activities included In-Kind gifts, quilting (with LWR), knitting and an earth lab (World Hunger). A Book store was also there with a variety of books and other gifts featuring “Just Love”.

Saturday morning was the 5K Run, Walk and Roll – benefitting Raising Up Healthy Women & Girls. Four of us from SWPA were among the participants.

The Gathering had a closing worship on Sunday morning with the Rev. Tiffany Chaney preaching and the Rev. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller presiding. The Rev. Chaney ended her sermon with these powerful words, “... if we practice Just Love, ...our actions will require unwavering stance for equity...our actions will continually reach for the margins and welcome all. Our actions may not add up according to the world’s calculations, but Jesus has not asked us to teach him accounting.”

We Continue to Pray

We continue to pray each week for the ministries of the Women of the ELCA and those who lead them.

Oct. 29-Nov. 4: Women Members at Hebron Lutheran Church in Leechburg

Nov. 5-11: Synodical Women's Organization of the Central States

Nov. 12-18: Barbara Guenther, Synodical Board President

Nov. 19-25: Myrna Wells-Ulland, Churchwide Board President

Nov. 26-Dec. 2: Cindy Novak, Managing Editor of *Gather* Magazine

Dec. 3-9: Women Members at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Jeannette

Dec. 10-16: Synodical Women's Organization of New Jersey

Dec. 17-23: Jeanne Christensen, Synodical Board Member

Dec. 24-30: TryLife in Lower Burrell, 2023 Designated Outreach Organization

Dec. 31-Jan. 6: Jennifer Ackerman, Churchwide Board Member

Jan. 7-13: St. Peter's Lutheran Church After School Program in Evans City, 2024 Designated Outreach Org

Jan. 14-20: Valora Staff, Churchwide Director for Discipleship

Jan. 21-27: Women Members at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Irwin

Jan. 28-Feb. 3: Synodical Women's Organization of Northwestern PA

Feb. 4-10: Janet Fishovitz, Synodical Board Treasurer

Feb. 11-17: Pastor Tracy Williams, Churchwide Board Member

Feb. 18-24: Elizabeth Hunter, Editor of *Gather* Magazine

Vice President's Report

Happy Fall everyone! This is my favorite time of the year!

In-person cluster meetings are slowly coming back. Clusters 1 & 6 held a cluster meeting on September 16 with the theme "Caring" based on Galatians 6:2. It was reported that there were 34 in attendance, representing seven churches. Cluster 4 is planning a morning of "Praise and Thanksgiving" on October 7. The time will be spent singing and hearing stories of some of our favorite hymns. The remaining clusters are planning in-person cluster meetings for the spring.

Contacts have been made with all Cluster Planners. Every cluster could use more helpers to plan cluster meetings. Cluster 2 and Cluster 3 are especially in need of helpers. These two clusters have only one planner for each committee. Please consider helping out to make these cluster meetings happen. Contact me at 724-433-2034 and I'll forward your information to the committees. Many hands make the load light.

Due to some scheduling overloads our Zoom Cluster Meeting for this fall will not happen. Plans are being made for one in January or February. We can spend the morning sipping hot chocolate as we Zoom together. Watch for more information in the next Friends, Inc.

In God's Service,
Linda Reed
Vice President

Stewardship and Finance Committee

*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another
With whatever gift each of you has received. 1 Peter 4:10 (NRSV)*

This time of year is my favorite. God's colorful creation, bright yellows, rich oranges and deep reds, can be seen in many flower gardens and fall decoration displays. The awesome sunrises and sunsets, with their gorgeous pink, orange, blue, and purple colors, remind us that God is a truly, talented artist. The songs of the crickets and locusts chirping in the trees tell us that the season is changing. And let us not forget the daylight is giving in to the darkness of night, our days are shorter, and the nights are longer.

During the fall many of our congregations hold their Thankoffering service so please remind your unit Treasurer that Thankoffering monies go directly to Churchwide along with Form B. Send the form and your Thankofferings directly to:

Women of the ELCA
Gift Processing Center
PO Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

Remittance forms are available and can be found on the website: www.womenoftheelca.org and may be copied as often as needed. Continue to send all other offerings along with Form A to the Treasurer, **Donna Petrell, 110 Bashford Drive, Moon Twp, PA 15108**. Checks should be made payable to **SWPA-SWO-W/ELCA**. Please remember to make sure your Cluster number is included on your remittance form; this is extremely helpful as there are numerous churches with the same name.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 724-457-9662. May God continue to bless each of you!

Sisters In Christ,
Donna Petrell
SWPA SWO Treasurer

Growing Katie's Fund for the next 100 years!

2122

The Women of the ELCA has kicked off a campaign to add \$1 million dollars to Katie's Fund over the next 3 years. Katie's Fund honors the life of Katharina von Bora Luther by supporting global connections, leadership development and living theology. The 2122 campaign for Katie's Fund is designed to support the organization into the next 100 years of mission and ministry. If you would like to make a pledge to the campaign, please go to www.womenoftheelca.org/katiesfund to download a pledge sheet. You can also give to the campaign through an estate planning gift. See the website and pledge sheet for more information on this option.

2023 Joint NW & SW Retreat Living Life to the Fullest Camp Lutherlyn November 3-5, 2023

Living Life to the Fullest is the theme for the NWP/ SWPA Women of the ELCA Retreat November 4, 2023. If you arrive Friday, November 3, 2023, cabin assignments will be posted on the door at Stewart Center. There will not be an evening meal Friday. There will be social activities for all participants Friday night.

Registration will begin at 8am Saturday in the hallway to the dining hall. Continental breakfast will be served until 9am in the dining hall. The day will begin with a worship service and Bible study. Workshops will include Intercessional Prayer through Art; Mental Health; and Social Justice. Fair Trade will also be there!! All women are invited to stay overnight from Saturday to Sunday; however, breakfast will NOT be served Sunday morning. There are several local restaurants where we can meet to share breakfast.

We will have an in-gathering of items for our Designated Outreach, TryLife of Lower Burrell. Suggested items are diapers, wipes, formula, new and gently used clothing for babies/children to age 3.

Registration deadline is October 21, 2023. We look forward to seeing everyone at the retreat!

God Bless,
Patricia Pluck
Retreat Planning Committee

Prayer Pals

If you have attended any of our retreats in the last few years, you may have received a prayer pal. Please remember to reach out to your prayer pal(s) throughout the year. Praying for our Sisters in Christ is a special bond we share with each other and God.

Social and Racial Justice

Seton Hill University presented a panel discussion on Human Trafficking Awareness on September 5, 2023. The Blackburn Center, Greensburg, sponsored this event. The panel was asked questions as to their experience with some of the problems they have observed when dealing with victims of human trafficking.

There are two types of trafficking:

1. Sex Trafficking
 - a. Sex trafficking victims are manipulated or forced to engage in sex acts for money.
2. Labor Trafficking
 - a. Labor trafficking victims are exploited for work through domestic servitude, debt bondage, or slavery.

In our country, there are 40.3 million considered to be in modern slavery. Human trafficking (sex or slave labor) is people using people for profit and is increasing in our country. Trafficking is hard to detect, as people who are traffickers use methods such as violence, manipulation or false promises of well-paying jobs or romantic relationships to gain and maintain control of their victims. A Red Sand project is being used to make people aware of the trafficking problem. Red Sand is spread in cracks of pavement to show how this problem is spreading.

Our SW Synodical Women do a superb job of feeding our immediate neighbors and certainly must continue to do so. We can have an even greater impact on those neighbors in need that we can feed nationwide by simply sending a letter to the "right" people.

Political activism is another woman's issue. In the newsletter there is a sample letter that can be sent to our congressional representatives in Washington DC that addresses the 2023 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is extremely important legislation in our anti-hunger mission. The Farm Bill will ask for increased funding for the Food Emergency Fund Assistance Program, Food Banks across the nation, the SNAP program, and food assistance for Native communities and Seniors. The Farm Bill is only addressed once every five years so what is determined now is what will be lived with for the next five years. Please copy the letter included in this newsletter and mail signed copies (and as many as you can get from others) to our Congressional Representatives in Washington DC. You may use the letterhead as is or change it to your church's letterhead. A personal note of concern would be a good addition to the letter. Letter writing campaigns are effective, so let's do it and help our neighbors who are hungry!

Pennsylvania Senators:

Robert Casey
393 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

John Fetterman
142 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

God Bless our feeding and being fed,
Jeanne Christensen
Helen Williams
Bonnie Altman
Fran Mazur

Action/Outreach Committee

Our designated outreach participant for 2023 TryLife in Lower Burrell continues to receive our support. Emmanuel Lutheran in Etna has supported TryLife with two carloads of diapers, baby food, wipes, and Pedialyte. We thank Edna Zimmerman and all the W/ELCA ladies of Emmanuel for their continued support.

The new designed outreach recipient for 2024, St. Peter's Lutheran Church After School Program in Evans City, was visited this summer by Barb Guenther and Patty Newton. We were very impressed with room space, the structure, planning of activities, and director, Heidi Beahm. Patty's church, Forks-Zion in Leechburg cleaned their cupboards of all craft markers, washable paint, crayons, and glue guns with sticks. These supplies were gratefully accepted.

In God's Ministry,
Linda Reed
Patty Newton
Angeline Schaefer

Mass Email Announcement

If you would like to receive announcements by email of any upcoming events, please send your email address to: swpawelca@yahoo.com. Once signed up, add the address to your email account so the emails do not end up in your spam email box.

Hope you are being safe, taking care & staying informed!
Your Mass Email Dispatcher
Karen Coates Gesalman

Save the Date!

2024 SWPA Women of the ELCA Convention

May 18, 2024

All Creation Praises and Sings

Make sure that you mark your calendar for the 2024 SWPA Women of the ELCA Convention. The theme is All Creation Praises and Sings. The theme verses are Psalm 148:3-5: *Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him you highest heavens, and your waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created.*

We will have Bible Study and Fair Trade. The location of the convention is still being discussed. More information will be coming. There is a save the date flier in this newsletter.

God Bless,
Patty Newton Vera Harencame
Patricia Pluck Linda Cunningham
Roberta Herrington, Registrar

Archives Committee

At the last Archives meeting, we decided that we update "In Your Light I Grew" which we composed with articles from you for the 25th Anniversary of the SWPA SWO. This was done in May 2013, and we thought 2024 would be a good year for "In Your Light I Grew II".

This booklet will be honoring the special women who have touched our lives. Women who have mothered, supported, guided, mentored, listened, advised and/or inspired us. If you have such a woman inspiration or if you have inspirational women that is fine – tell us about her in just two paragraphs – one paragraph about her (sort of a bio) and the second paragraph of why she is important to you and others. Submit to Rosie Henrickson, rosietheriveter2@verizon.net, or send to 5133 Lougean Avenue; Pittsburgh, PA 15207 by February 1, 2024.

God Bless,
Barb Frey Rosie Henrickson
Donna Davis Joan Orr
Linda Reed Karen Gessalman

Free to a Good Home

It is with a heavy heart that the women of St. Paul's Sewickley are giving up their 2 educational (but a lot of fun) programs.

The Lenten Fair – 18 booths, all about Lent and Easter, transitions, food, crafts, information.
Admission one hardboiled egg.

Fashions for Followers – costumes, accessories, and script. For rent to groups that wish to put on the "show".

For more information call Barb Frey 412-741-4522. Need to decide by Christmas.

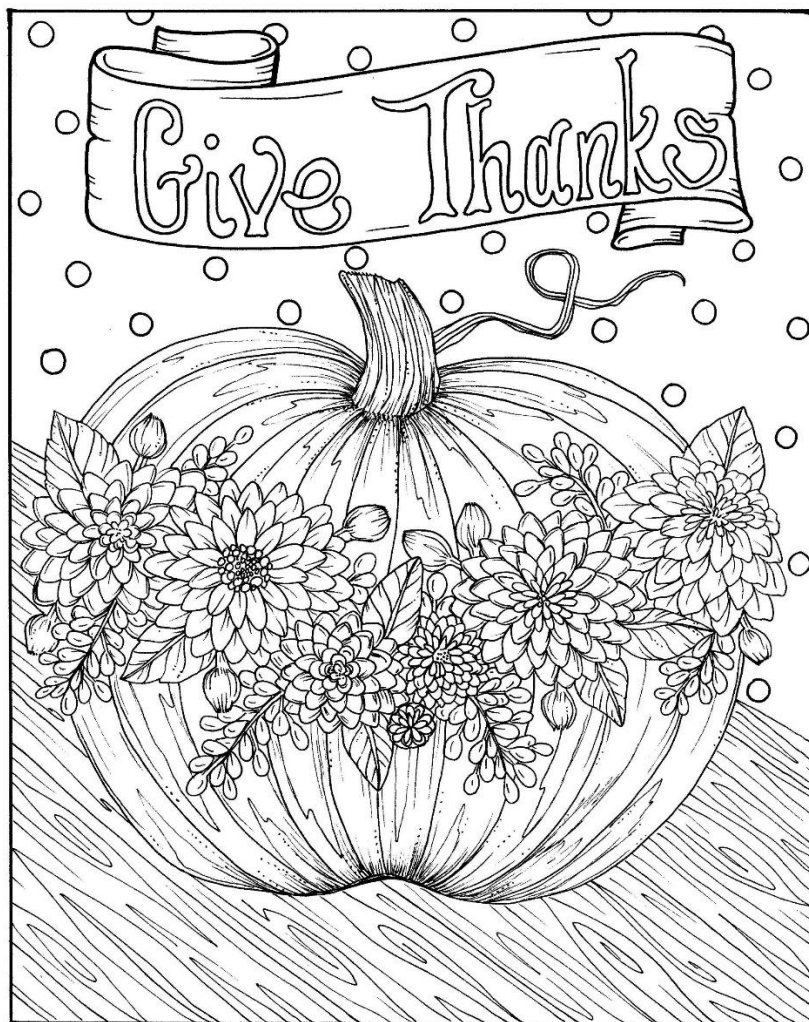
SAVE THE DATE!

2026 Triennial Gathering

July 16-19, 2026

Des Moines, IA

The next triennial gathering will be held July 16-19, 2026, in Des Moines, IA. Advance registration is open and is discounted at \$285.00 until October 31, 2023. The registration cost will most likely go up to over \$400.00 after October 31, 2023. Registrations are transferable to other people if you decide not to go. If you have any questions, please contact Barb Guenther or Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer. We hope that you will consider attending the triennial gathering as they are a life changing event.





SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

Dear Senator

Date:

As a constituent, I am grateful for the farmers, food banks, and others working hard to feed our country. But as grocery prices remain high and supply chain disruptions continue, hunger grows. In 2021, 53 million people sought charitable food assistance. That's 1 in every 6 people in the U.S. and a 33% increase since 2019.

As an anti-hunger advocate, I'm asking you to double down on our nation's commitment to ending hunger by strengthening critical anti-hunger programs in the 2023 Farm Bill. This includes:

- **Increase funding for food purchases through the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).** A steady, continuous stream of TEFAP foods is essential to help ensure food can continue serving everyone facing hunger in our communities.
- **Increase funding for TEFAP storage and distribution and continue funding TEFAP infrastructure grants.** These funds will help food banks offset the cost of storing and transporting USDA foods, especially in rural communities. They will help cover expenses like refrigeration and fuel.
- **Increase funding and streamline state participation in the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Program** by removing the state match and allowing states to prioritize projects for donated food or food purchased at low cost from local growers and producers.
- **Increase purchasing power for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** basing benefits on the Low-Cost Food Plan to bring benefit amounts in line with grocery prices and need.
- **Simplify and streamline SNAP eligibility and enrollment processes** to improve access for seniors, college students, immigrants and other groups who face barriers to participating in the program.
- **End SNAP's three-month time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents and adequately fund and improve state employment and training programs.** This will help ensure people have the food and training opportunities they need to get back on their feet.
- **Create parity in food assistance for U.S territories** by allowing them to transition from capped Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) block grants to full participation in SNAP.
- **Ensure sovereignty for Native communities** by allowing tribal governments to administer federal nutrition programs and allowing SNAP participants to also receive benefits through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.
- **Reauthorize and streamline reporting for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** to support the nutrition needs of seniors.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

SWPA WOMEN of the ELCA CONVENTION

May 18, 2024



SAVE
THE
DATE



ALL CREATION PRAISES
and SINGS

*³Praise him, sun and moon: praise him, all you
shining stars! ⁴Praise him you highest
heavens, and you waters above the heavens!
⁵Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he
commanded and they were created.*

Psalm 148:3-5



NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE IN CONTACT PERSON

Please complete this form when there is a change in your contact person.

Cluster # _____ *Effective Date of Change* _____

Name of Church _____

Address of Church _____

Present Contact Person _____

Address _____

New Contact Person _____

Address _____

Phone #: *Best* _____ *Alternate* _____

Please return this form to: Rosemarie Henrickson, Secretary
5133 Lougean Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15207

A copy of this form should also be sent to:

- 1.) Your Cluster Planning Committee Coordinator (CPC) **-and -**
 - 2.) Newsletter Editor: Jennifer Schaefer, 1210 Beech Drive, Latrobe, PA 15650
- Please copy on colored paper (other than white) if possible*

**PA Synodical Women's Organization
2023-2024 Officers and Board Members**

Officers:

President: Barbara Guenther

375 Glenda Dr., Beaver Falls, PA 15010

412-671-9456 swpaswopres@gmail.com

V. President: Linda Reed

193 Pittsburgh St., Derry, PA 15627

724-433-2034

Secretary: Rosemarie Henrickson,

5133 Lougean Ave., Pgh, PA 15207

412-461-8619

Treasurer: Donna Petrell

110 Bashford Dr., Moon Twp, PA 15108

724-457-9662 swpaswotreas@gmail.com

Treasurer Elect: Janet Fishovitz

136 Clearwater Dr., Ellwood City, PA 16117

724-494-5472

Board Members:

Jeanne Christensen, 3007 Glengary Dr., Greensburg, PA 15601

724-832-8588

Patricia Newton, 180 Newton Ln., Leechburg, PA 15656

724-845-2191

Joan Orr, 201 South 5th St., Youngwood, PA 15697

724-420-7864

Patricia Pluck, 15 Overview Dr., Greensburg, PA 15601

724-493-1431

Angeline Schaefer, 1210 Beech Dr., Latrobe, PA 15650

724-787-5235

Helen Williams, 30 Boulder Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15239

724-393-2395

Calendar of Events

2023

Nov. 2-3

Board Meeting at Camp Lutherlyn

Nov. 3-4

NW/SW Joint Retreat at Camp Lutherlyn

2024

March 7

Executive Board Meeting via Zoom

March 9

Board Meeting via Zoom

May 17-19

2024 SWPA Annual Convention

June 6

Executive Board Meeting via Zoom

June 8

Re-Organizational Board Meeting
at Zion's Luth Church in
Greensburg

Sept. 5

Executive Board Meeting via Zoom

Sept. 7

Board Meeting

Sept. 20-21

NW/SW Joint Retreat at Camp Lutherlyn

Nov. 2

Executive Board Meeting via Zoom

Nov. 4

Board Meeting

2026

July 14-16

Triennial Convention in
Des Moines, Iowa

July 16-19

Triennial Gathering in Des Moines,
Iowa

Newsletter Information

The SWPA Synodical Women's Organization Newsletter is published four times a year following Board Meetings. Each Board Member, Officer, Cluster Planning Committee Member, and Congregational Unit 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 December 15, 2023.

Subscription Rate: \$5.00 per year – All subscriptions begin September 1 each year. Checks for subscriptions and/or donations for the newsletter are to be made payable to: SWPA Synod Women of the ELCA and are mailed to: Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer; 1210 Beech Dr.; Latrobe, PA 15650

Please use this form to sign up for a subscription or renew your subscription. Form may be duplicated.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____

New _____

Renewal _____

Amount Enclosed _____

SWPA Synodical Women's Organization
c/o Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
1325 Mission Rd.
Latrobe, PA 15650

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Latrobe, PA 15650
Permit #173

Return Service Requested



Purpose Statement

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.

Mission Statement

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