

The Dilemma of Difficult Issues

by Maxine Stenstrom, editor

Life will indeed throw us curve balls. Things come at us out of left field that can be overwhelming. When trouble comes are you prepared? Apart from money, food, flashlights and disaster plans, moral decisions, at all levels of urgency, with all levels of lasting consequences require a special strength. Knowing the right thing to do when faced with difficult issues doesn't always come easy. As Christians, we develop our strength from listening, learning, doing, and sharing. We know that prayer works. We know we are not alone even when no one else is there. We sing of the comfort of God's sheltering wings. Comfort comes and answers come—eventually. That doesn't mean we just sit and do nothing when a situation calls for action. Having the right tools in our heart of hearts to guide our perplexing thought process is essential to knowing God's will—knowing how to listen when there is no sound and discerning what is the right thing to do. It can indeed be overwhelming.

Several years ago, Pastor Peg Schutz-Ackerson led one of our SWO retreats where she detailed how Scripture gives us directions to discern and also overcome (by understanding) roadblocks and pitfalls that cross our path while we walk through the discernment process. I wish her presentation was on YouTube so I could watch it everyday and refresh my sometimes discouraged spirit.

Connecting with others and drawing upon their collective wisdom is an example of Matthew 18:20 - *Wherever two or three are gathered, God is in the midst.* That's

not always easy either but if we know how to listen to who is in the midst, answers come. An example for me was when I was first diagnosed with cancer. I was freaked out, frightened and confused. I was bombarded by well-wishers with quick fixes, instant cancer cures, and a lot of information—some of it good and some of it no so good. I didn't know how to respond, I didn't want to offend my well-meaning family and friends. I truly struggled to know the right thing to do? Then the

voice in the midst prompted me to use one of the tools in my heart of hearts I had learned many years prior: *pick your path and stick with it.* It was clearly the answer. Just about that same time, I was directed to the American Cancer Society's book on alternative cancer cures. My path was to follow the ACS and stick with it. It served me well.



As much as we can, and as often as we can, we need to equip our heart of hearts with the tools that help us know God's will, tools that help us know the right thing to do, that refresh us and give us the strength of sound decision-making when faced with difficult issues.

And we are in 'luck' (thanks to March's Irish traditions??) to have Pastor Alexia Salvatierra who will be filling our heart of hearts' toolbox with God-inspired tools during her presentations at our **SWO WINTER GATHERING ON MARCH 26, 8:45AM - NOON VIA ZOOM**. It may even be recorded so that we can go back over and over and refresh our spirits when we are overwhelmed.

Registration info is on page 4 of this newsletter. Join in and become one of the two or three or even 50 of us gathered together to listen, learn, do and share. ■



A TIME TO HONOR, REMEMBER, CELEBRATE

As I think how February has shifted into March and how Winter is turning into Spring, how snow is melting, and flowers are blooming, an amusing thought comes to mind: “is it a false Spring?”

No matter what the groundhog predicts, when the sky turns blue and the sun shines warmly, I want to start planning for Easter. But then the rains return, the cold winds blow once gain, and I am reminded I am not done with the celebrations of Winter. February and March bring focus to heart-warming Valentine’s remembrances, patriotic presidential observances, a celebration of women-their global contributions and achievements, African American/Black history, Irish heritage, and yes, the coming of Easter with Ash Wednesday.

BOLD WOMEN'S DAY 2022

Women of the ELCA Bold Women’s Day—observed annually on the fourth Sunday of February—celebrates all Lutheran women who have acted or are acting boldly on

their faith in Jesus Christ. Some women are bold in their unceasing prayers. Other women are bold in their service to those in need. Still other women are bold in their advocacy or through their hospitality. Whether we live out our bold story of faith in the workplace, family home or community, our faith compels us to make a difference in the lives of others. It’s all about living out our baptismal call, about being a disciple of Christ.” (See Bold Women’s Day on WELCA website.)

Following this tradition of boldness, (defined on W/ELCA’s website as coming in many forms, some firm & quiet, some bright & loud) we want to help each other find that bold.

At our upcoming **SWO WINTER GATHERING ON MARCH 26**, we are going to think of Katie Lu-

ther in her boldness of inviting guests for wide ranging discussions having to do with theological principals applied to difficult issues of her day.

“While Katie Luther served at the table of her famous husband and their many guests, she also listened. She spoke. She asked questions. She was a theologian in that she thought about God. We are called to do the same at every table where we serve. We are called to consider how we think about God as we make decisions. We are called to be theologians.” (W/ELCA website “Called to Deal With Difficult Issues.) We are honored to have Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra as our study leader. She will help us think about how we can be theologians at our tables in our day of difficult issues.



I also want to lift up the lives of Black women in our country’s history who have paved the way by dealing with difficult issues in their lives. May we be inspired to carry on their examples of living boldly!

One of those women is Ida B. Wells (1862-1931). The following is a tribute to her written by Arlisha R. Norwood, NWHM Fellow | 2017.



Ida B. Wells-Barnett was a prominent journalist, activist, and researcher, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In her lifetime, she battled sexism, racism, and violence. As a skilled writer,

Wells-Barnett also used her skills as a journalist to shed light on the conditions of African Americans throughout the South.

She was born into slavery during the Civil War, lost her parents and infant brother in the yellow fever epidemic and was left to raise her brothers and sister. She took a job as a teacher to support the family and moved to Memphis where she continued to work as an educator. She used her journalist skills to write articles in the local newspaper to expose injustice. These articles enraged readers of the newspapers and forced her to move to Chicago where she married and had four children. She continued to be an activist as she also

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embraced motherhood. I was intrigued with Ida after reading about the suffrage movement and the marginalization of her by the white women in the movement. In spite of the fact that African American women did not get the right to vote at the same time as white women, she continued to fight for justice and rights. She was founder of the National Association of Colored Women's Club which was created to address issues dealing with civil rights and women's suffrage. What a struggle she endured in her life and yet she persisted! She probably never knew the impact she had on the history of women in our country. May we too continue to fight injustice and carry on the struggle to bring God's kin-dom on earth! ■



Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra 2022 SWO Winter Gathering Bible Study Leader

Rev. Dr. Alexia Salvatierra is the Academic Dean of the Center for the Study of Hispanic Church and Community at Fuller Theological Seminary and the Assistant Professor of Integral Mission and Global Transformation. She is the author with Dr. Peter Heltzel of *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (Intervarsity Press) and *Buried Seeds: Learning from the Resilience of Vibrant Marginalized Christian Communities* with Rev. Brandon Wrencher (Baker Academic, to be released 2022). She is a Lutheran Pastor with over 40 years of experience in congregational (English and Spanish) and community ministry, including church-based service and community development programs, congregational/community organizing and legislative advocacy. In addition to her academic work, she coordinates the Ecumenical Collaboration for Asylum Seekers and serves on the leadership team of Matthew 25/Mateo 25 (a bipartisan Christian network to protect and defend families facing deportation in the name and spirit of Jesus.) She is a consultant (training, facilitating, organizing and leading strategic planning) for a variety of national/international organizations, including World Vision, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and the Christian Community Development Association.

She has been a national leader in the areas of working poverty and immigration for over 25 years, including co-founding the national Evangelical Immigration Table in 2011, the 2007 New Sanctuary Movement, the Guardian Angels project for unaccompanied migrant minors in 2014, and Matthew 25/Mateo 25 in 2016. From 2011-2014, she served as the Director of Justice for the Southwest California Synod of the ELCA under Bishop Nelson. From 2000 to 2011, she was the Executive Director of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice—beginning as the director of CLUE in Los Angeles and then as the first CLUE-CA director. ■ **WOW!**



WORLD WATER DAY ZOOM EVENT Tuesday, March 22 Noon to 1pm

Join the Southwest California Synod Green Faith Team as we celebrate World Water Day with a program on **Faith & Science Collaborating for Responsible Choices.**

"On each side of the river is the tree of life." —Revelation 22:2a

Rev. Dan Smith and Peter Moyle are presenters at the event. Also included will be music, and discussion in reaction to the presenters. Access the link for this Zoom event through the Southwest California Synod website. ■



**SoCal Synod Women's Organization
invites you to join our Winter Gathering Zoom event
Saturday, March 26 • 8:45am -12 noon**

Now may the God of peace, . . .that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing God's will and may God work in us what is pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. —Hebrews 13:20-21 (NIV)

While Katie Luther served at the table of her famous husband and their many guests, she also listened. She spoke. She asked questions. She was a theologian in that she thought about God.

We are called to...do the same at every table where we serve.

We are called to...consider how we think about God as we make decisions.

We are called to...be theologians. Whether we are aware of it or not, our theology informs our decisions.

Pastor Alexia Salvatierra will walk us through a process that can help us navigate our conversations and decisions as we confront issues and people in our daily lives.

Our morning will consist of devotions by **Pastor Marta Salazar**, music, breaks with **Jane Krueger** and small group conversations.

Our offering, after expenses, will be divided between Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) and churchwide Women of the ELCA. Please mail checks made payable to Women of the ELCA to Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Ave., Port Huene-me, CA 93041

Register for this event with Julie Jensen at juliejnsn1@roadrunner.com

Give Julie your name, address, phone number and email plus your church and city. Julie will send you the Zoom link prior to the event.

HONORING FOUR BOLD AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN OUR HISTORY

from Valora K Starr, director of discipleship,
Churchwide Women of the ELCA



HARRIET TUBMAN: slave, abolitionist, humanitarian, armed scout, spy

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery, (c. 1815-March 10, 1913). At 22, she escaped. By 1860, she made between

13 and 19 missions to rescue approx. 340 enslaved people, family, and friends using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.

Tubman's faith was an essential resource. She spoke of "consulting with God," and she trusted that God would keep her safe. Abolitionist Thomas Garrett said of her, "I never met with any person of any color who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken directly to her soul."

"I always told Him, 'I trust to you. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I expect You to lead me,' an' He always did."
— Harriet Tubman



MARY FIELDS: freighter, cook, domestic worker, star route mail carrier

Mary Fields (c. 1832–1914) was born in Hickman County, Tennessee. At almost 60 years old, she was hired as a mail carrier because she was the fastest at hitching a team of six horses. She delivered U.S. mail from Cascade, Montana, to Saint Peter's Mission (unclaimed territory) in 1885. Her only partner was Moses, her mule (and her dog seen in this photo).

Mary lived with many families one of which was Mother Mary Amadeus, Mother Superior of an Ursuline convent in Toledo, Ohio. In 1884, Mother Amadeus was sent to Montana Territory to establish a school for Native American girls. When Mother Amadeus was stricken with pneumonia, Fields hurried to Montana to nurse her back to health and run the school.

"All I have is God, my hands and Moses." — Mary Fields



MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE: educator, stateswoman, philan- thropist, humanitarian, and civil rights activist

Born Mary Jane McLeod on July 10, 1875 (d. May 18,

1955), in Mayesville, South Carolina, she was best known for starting a private school for "colored students" in Daytona Beach, Florida. She attracted donations of time and money and developed the academic school as a college later known as Bethune-Cookman College. President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her as a national advisor to what was known as his Black Cabinet. Because of her commitment to better African American lives, she was known as "The First Lady of the Struggle."

"She gave out faith and hope as if they were pills and she some sort of doctor." —Journalist and newspaper publisher Louis E. Martin said upon her death.



OSEOLA MCCARTY: washerwoman, philan- thropist, humanitarian, and advocate

Oseola McCarty (March 7, 1908 – September 26, 1999) was born in Wayne County, Mississip-

pi. She was conceived when her mother was raped on a wooded path in rural Mississippi as she returned from tending a sick relative.

By the sixth grade, she quit school to take over tending to those sick relatives. Like her grandmother, she later became a washerwoman, a trade that she continued until arthritis forced her to quit in 1994. She learned to tithe and save from her mother.

In 1995, the University of Southern Mississippi learned that, upon her death, McCarty gave \$150,000 to the university to provide scholarships for African American students in need of financial assistance. This gift was approximately 60 percent of her estate.

On her first trip ever to a college campus, a student asked her, "Why aren't you spending this (money) on yourself? She replied, "I am." In 1998, the University of Southern Mississippi awarded her an honorary degree. McCarty never married or had children. She died from liver cancer in 1999.

"I can't do everything, but I can do something to help somebody. And what I can do, I will do. I wish I could do more." — Oseola McCarty

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NEWSLETTER

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INTRODUCING Julie Jensen SWO Treasurer

I'm one of those lifelong Lutherans you hear about every now and then. What a blessing that has been for me. My folks took us to church regularly; Mom attended circle meetings, taught Sunday School and was a good cook. I claim some of their attributes, wish I had learned more. I taught Sunday School once. That

is not one of my gifts. My first job after babysitting for years was in an accounting office. Numbers I can do. I'm currently treasurer at my church, Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Oxnard as well as your new SWO treasurer. I've been a member at Our Redeemer for 19 years now and was a member at Trinity, Ventura before that for 55 years. See what I mean – life long. I met my second husband, Ted, at Our Redeemer and we were married during a church service. It worked very well for us. He's been gone awhile now, but I stay busy with LWR quilting at church, water exercise, book group and signing checks. I know many of you and look forward to meeting many more of you. ■



LIRS

80 Years of Welcome

PEACE WITH JUSTICE

by Sharon Heck

For 80 years, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has offered welcome and hope to more than half a million refugees. Since 1939, LIRS has transformed lives, with the support of people like us, to welcome the most vulnerable to the United States — from sea to shining sea. Together we have supported, equipped and empowered these new Americans, while LIRS advocates for policy that protects all of God’s children.

The New York-based National Lutheran Council (NLC), founded in 1918 to respond to such post-World War I needs as immigration and refugee resettlement, set up a Welfare Department with an office for the “rehabilitation and placement of Lutheran refugees.” It helped 522 refugees in its first year of operations. Following the immediate aftermath of WWII, LIRS resettled 30,263 Displaced Persons from Germany and Eastern Europe.

The defeat of South Vietnam by North Vietnam in April of 1975 triggered a flood of refugees from Southeast Asia. Within weeks, LIRS transformed from a four-staffer operation to a crisis response organization with more than 100 staff members. By the end of the year, LIRS had overseen the resettlement of almost 16,000 refugees.

In 1980, LIRS hit the 100,000 mark in refugees resettled since World War II. In the same year, the American Homecoming Act granted U.S. admission to 10,000 Amerasian children fathered by U.S. citizens. The year also witnessed the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, which created a permanent and systematic procedure for the admission of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the U.S.

After 80 years of welcome, LIRS and its partners continue answering the call to sponsor and support immigrants and refugees with open doors, open arms, and open hearts. Today, Lutheran congregations support the work of LIRS by offering Circles of Welcome to refugees, assisting with Reception and Welcome for immigrants who have been released from immigration detention, and participation in projects such as Hope for the Holidays and Migrant and Refugee Sunday. Many of our Circles and congregations sent bundles of signed Christmas cards in December as part of Hope for the Holidays. Supporting LIRS is a very important benevolence we should all consider. Our SWO Winter Gathering on March 26 will be giving half of the offering to LIRS. Let us all give generously, and send those offerings to Julie Jensen, SWO Treasurer. Label them as Winter Gathering offerings and send them to her at: 921 Gill Ave., Port Hueneme, CA 93041. Think about how you can help! ■



The Kingdom of God

by Rev. Mark Allen Powell

MONTHLY ZOOM BIBLE STUDY
4th Monday • 7:00 – 8:30pm

Our SWO Board has learned during the pandemic that Zoom can work! We hear that some congregations do not have a Bible study group because they do not have anyone who feels the call to lead it. So how about a monthly Zoom study group for those who would like to do the study from the *Gather* magazine with others. Or if you miss your in-person meeting and want a chance to discuss, come join us on Zoom. Dianne Tillman will begin leading the study, but we would love to turn it over to someone else in the synod or beyond who loves leading these studies. **RSVP to dianne.tillman08@gmail.com for the Zoom link!**

WHAT'S NEWS

Women ^{of the} **ELCA** 
SWO • SoCal Synod

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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 soci-
ety, and the world.

Julie Jensen, 921 Gill Avenue
Port Hueneme, CA 93041

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



"Share your Passion"

Our Autumn Renewal Retreat will be
Saturday, October 22, 9:00am to 3:30pm
at the Episcopal Center in Echo Park.

It will be a hybrid event with both in person
and Zoom participation.

We look forward to a few sharing their passion with the
whole group and the rest of us sharing our passion in
small groups.

**Searching for our websites?
Here's a few that might help
you connect:**

SoCal SWO Facebook

www.facebook.com/swcawomenoftheelca

Southwest California Synod

www.socalsynod.org/ministries/swca-synod-women-of-the-elca

W/ELCA | Southwest California Synod

www.socalsynod.org/category/welca

W/ELCA Churchwide website

www.womenoftheelca.org

W/ELCA Churchwide Facebook

www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA