

A Message from the President: Boldness in Purpose

When you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, "This is the way; walk in it". Isaiah 30:21

Have you ever heard God speaking to you? I know that God speaks to me when I least expect it. Sometimes it is just a feeling inside of me that I get to do something spontaneous, like call a friend that I have not heard from in a while to check on them. It is a feeling of desires and dreams as to what I should do with my life at different stages. I hear Him through songs or other's encouraging words. There are so many ways that God speaks to us but most often, we are so busy with our lives that we do not stop to listen for his voice. Even sometimes we may feel his nudges but we choose to ignore them. God is sometimes very subtle when He speaks to us and then other times He hits us right upside our heads.

God speaks to us through our hearts and our heads. He gives us guidance and what we need to live out our purpose in life if we only allow him to.

During our recent VSWO Board Retreat, we used a WELCA Resource called *I Am She* for our retreat program. We reflected on where we have been and where we are going in our personal lives and as an organization. We quickly realized that in order to move our organization forward, we need women with a purpose and a passion for Christ and our organization. I pray every day for God to lead us in the path He wants us to go.

Do you know what your purpose is? Do you have a personal purpose statement? If not, I encourage you to consider creating your own purpose statement. The *I Am She* resource will help you through this process.

A purpose statement helps us make decisions and boldly step forward in faith. It brings what is true for our lives, and cuts away what is inauthentic. A purpose statement keeps us coming back to pray it into our lives and living it out. Our purpose statement is clearly and plainly reflected in everything we say or do. It affects who we are and who we will become.

What is your purpose? For me it is listening for God's direction on how to act on my passions. I have many pas-

sions in my life. One of my passions is serving women and children in poverty. However, another passion of mine has blessed me in so many wonderful ways. This passion is serving and participating in Women of the ELCA and the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization. Being part of this organization gives me so many ways to act on my passions. I truly feel that God has guided me to this place and has centered me here among all of you. My time as your president will be coming to an end this August at our next convention. Three years ago I had very little confidence that I would be able to be your president. But, with prayers and each of you supporting me and encouraging me I have been so blessed to be your president. Being your president has given me so many experiences that I would have never been able to do. I have met women and formed relationships all over the nation. I have grown in my faith and my abilities to do the job over the years. I have traveled to Chicago each year to be with all 64 Presidents for training. I attended the Triennial Convention in Charlotte. However, I also have mentors who help me when I feel weak. Jody Smiley, Judy Castele and all the women who serve on the VSWO board help me stay strong when I am weak. They give of their time and talents when I may not have certain abilities. I am never alone. Each of you lift me up and you love me unconditionally.

As I finish out my last year as your president I pray daily that God is speaking to and nudging your next president. As you reflect on your purpose think about what gives your life meaning. God is guiding your way and gives you tools to carry out the tasks He gives to you. Do you trust God to help you carry your purpose out?

Do you share my passion for leadership in the VSWO? Do you want to experience some of the greatest joys and blessings you will ever know? Please join me in daily prayer for God to call our next leader.

Listen.....is God calling you as our next President?

~Risse Snelgrove

Am I part of an Active Unit? *Helen Weaver*



The Spirit was surely part of our 2014 convention because it has led women at Muhlenberg Lutheran, Harrisonburg and St John Lutheran, Norfolk to form active units in the VSWO. We are excited about this news and want everyone to encourage their development and growth. The board members are ready to assist units in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us with your questions.

Now, you might be asking, **"What defines an active unit?"** Here are the guidelines from WELCA:

1. **Come together for study, support and action.** This encompasses a wide variety of activities and interests. Whatever best fits your particular group.
2. **Participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation.** Attend a conference gathering, the annual convention and/or Triennial. Subscribing to Gather, Interchange, or Café are also ways to participate in ministry.
3. **Support financially the total program of the Women of the ELCA.** Collect regular offerings and share a portion with the VSWO. Have a yearly Thankoffering service and send 100% of that to WELCA. Support dedicated giving programs of the VSWO and/or WELCA. Subscribe to WELCA publications. Purchase other resources produced by WELCA. Any of these actions fulfills this requirement.
4. **Designate leadership that shall be in communication with the synodical and Churchwide women's organizations.** One person in the unit acts as the contact for communication from the VSWO and WELCA. **When there is a change in this position, it is important to let us know!**

Please encourage women at other ELCA churches in your area to participate in our service project, come to your unit meeting or a conference gathering and attend the 2015 convention in Yorktown. Your enthusiasm for the VSWO will create ripples that may get them to start a unit in their home congregation. **Together Everyone Achieves More!**



The VSWO board met in early October. It was a great meeting and so nice to get to meet some new friends. One of the resources we used was from the Women of the ELCA resource called *I am She*. In the introduction it says "Boldness is a call to action. As Women of the ELCA, women are claimed and called by God, we believe that a life lived **boldly** is a faith-filled celebration and an investment in the world we want for ourselves and our children."

We used the first section of *the I am She* resource - Bold in Prayer. It says "Prayer is much more than words. It is an expression of the heart towards God. It is an experience, a relationship, not an activity. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that makes it possible for each of us to have access to God." How bold are you in your prayers? Do you give God praise and thanksgiving for the blessings he has given you? Do you ask for strength, for peace, for comfort for you or for others? Do you confess your sins and ask forgiveness? Do you yell at God because he didn't answer your prayers like you thought he would? That happened to me in the last year. I thought God was giving me signs that what I had asked for, what I had prayed so hard for, was going to happen. And then when it didn't, I was really mad at God. Guess what, we really do have a loving, patient and gracious God. He gave me the time to get over being mad and told me there is something else he has planned for me. I still am waiting to see what his plan is. But I thank him for loving me and understanding that I am so very human, always falling short. I was bold to think that what I had prayed so hard for would happen. I had to become bold and patient in waiting for what he has in store for me. Ok maybe I am having a hard time with the patient part again. I pray now more boldly that it be his will, not mine. I give me thanks for allowing me to be a bold women that prays out loud in church for those in need. To boldly proclaim the need to provide assistance for those in need. For boldly proclaiming my faith in Jesus Christ. For boldly loving my family and friends. It's ok to be a bold women. God needs us to bold women. Think about how you are bold. Pray boldly, love boldly and serve boldly.

That really isn't where I was going with this article, but this is where the spirit led me. The resource listed was some new ways to pray boldly. I would like to share this with you. On the previous page, you will see a photo of prayer pictures we did at the retreat. I think those of us there really liked that activity and enjoyed seeing each other's prayer paintings. I highly recommend it. Thanks Risse for bringing the paints and opening us to a new way to pray.

Here is a list of ways you might pray boldly. Try doing a different prayer idea every day or try one idea each week for 7 weeks.

- Invite a group of friend to pray with you (ask them to hold hands while you pray).
- Pray for something you think is completely impossible. Journal about it and record what happens.
- Prayer-walk your neighborhood. As you walk, look around at the houses you see and the people you pass. Pray for the people in your neighborhood. Prayer –walking is a great exercise all around – you get out and active, and your spirit gets moving boldly. (I love this idea).
- Try praying aloud in a big group setting, like your women's Bible study group or church.
- Try a new prayer posture. If you usually sit when praying, try kneeling. If you usually kneel try standing and raising your hands.
- Pray over a meal out – at school, work, or in a restaurant. Don't worry if others watch you; they may want to join you sometime.
- Share a song, a story or a joke with God as you pray. Or draw a prayer for God and color it beautifully! (Hang it on the 'frig)

(Based on an idea from Jane Cline Rubicini, Kitchener, Ontario (2000)).

So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive God's mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it. – Hebrews 4:16 (New Living Bible)

Conference News ~ Lisa Taglauer

Synodical Conference Coordinator: We are currently working to fill this position as one of our board members resigned. I will be helping Risse with some of these tasks. Listed below are convention responsibilities assigned for the 2015 convention.

Central Valley – Pages
Germannanna – Banner
Highland – Hotel Greeters/Hospitality
New River - Name Tags and Registration
Page – Communion Elements
Peninsula – Table prayers for all meals
Southern Valley – Table decorations and favors for Banquet
Richmond- Friday Worship Assistants
Tidewater – Friday Worship Greeters and Ushers
(Note: I just noticed Northern Valley was not listed. I will find out their assignment.)

Listed below are the Conference Gathering dates and Liaisons

Northern Valley - Date unknown	Liaison – Risse Snelgrove
Central Valley - To be determined	Liaison - Anna Barb
Southern Valley – October 19, 2014	Liaison – Sarah Barb
Southern – October 26, 2014	Liaison – Helen Weaver
New River – October 26, 2014	Liaison - Christel William
Richmond – November 8, 2014	Liaison – Iris Will
Highland – September 20, 2014	Liaison – not filled at this time
Page – Date unknown	Liaison – Lisa Taglauer
Tidewater – November 1, 2014	Liaison – Bonnie Mantta
Peninsula – To be determined	Liaison – Annette Griffith
Germannanna – March 29, 2015	Liaison – Carol Bailey

If you are a conference coordinator, please contact me – Lisa Taglauer, threetags@embarqmail.com, 540-778-1331. I will also be getting in touch with you.

Attention: Conference Coordinators ~Peggy Baseler, Treasurer

The ELCA provides accident and medical expense coverage for volunteers, delegates, and visitors attending SWO-sponsored gatherings. This applies to all VSWO board meetings, CONFERENCE OR CLUSTER EVENTS, conventions, retreats, and any other VSWO-sponsored event. The premium rate for this insurance is calculated on the basis of \$0.10 per day, per person. Twice a year, I will reimburse the churchwide women's organization for providing this coverage at prior events. Do NOT count Women of the ELCA Staff and churchwide executive board members.

All that I need from the Conference Coordinators is the NUMBER OF PEOPLE attending your Fall or Spring Gathering or any other Cluster Events and the DATE of the event. I will do the calculations.

You may include this information on the "Offering Form A" when you send your offering to me.

Thank you for your continued support of the VSWO.

What is human trafficking?

~Christel Williams

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to control victims for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or labor services against his/her will.

Sex trafficking has been found in a wide variety of venues within the sex industry, including residential brothels, online escort services, fake massage businesses, strip clubs, and street prostitution.

Labor trafficking has been found in diverse labor settings including, domestic work, small businesses, large farms, and factories.

Traffickers use violence, threats, blackmail, false promises, deception, manipulation, and debt bondage to trap vulnerable individuals in horrific situations. According to the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), severe forms of human trafficking are legally defined as:

Human trafficking occurs when a trafficker takes any one of the enumerated **actions**, and then employs the **means** of force, fraud or coercion for the **purpose** of compelling the victim to provide commercial sex acts or labor or services. At a minimum, one element from each column must be present to establish a potential situation of human trafficking. Situations of minors engaging in commercial sex are human trafficking, despite the presence of force, fraud or coercion. The presence of force, fraud or coercion indicates that the victim has not consented of his or her own free will.

Every year, human traffickers generate billions of dollars in profits by victimizing millions of people in the United States and around the world. Traffickers are estimated to exploit 20.9 million victims, with an estimated 1.5 million victims in North America alone. Despite growing awareness about this crime, human trafficking continues to go underreported due to its covert nature, misconceptions about its definition, and a lack of awareness about its indicators.

Why Trafficking Exists

Human trafficking is a market-driven criminal industry that is based on the principles of supply and demand, like drugs or arms trafficking. Many factors make children and adults vulnerable to human trafficking. However, human trafficking does not exist solely because many people are vulnerable to exploitation. Instead, human trafficking is fueled by a demand for cheap labor, services and for commercial sex. Human traffickers are those who employ force, fraud, or coercion to victimize others in their desire to profit from the existing demand. To ultimately solve the problem of human trafficking, it is essential to address these demand-driven factors, as well as to alter the overall market incentives of high-profit and low-risk that traffickers currently exploit.

Labor trafficking and sex trafficking of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals persist and thrive for a number of reasons, including:

Low Risk: Human traffickers perceive there to be little risk or deterrence to affect their criminal operations. While investigations, prosecutions and penalties have increased throughout recent years, many traffickers still believe the high profit margin to be worth the risk of detection. Factors that add to low risk include: lack of government and law enforcement training, low community awareness, ineffective or unused laws, lack of law enforcement investigation, scarce resources for victim recovery services, and social blaming of victims.

High Profits: When individuals are willing to buy commercial sex, they create a market and make it profitable for traffickers to sexually exploit children and adults. When consumers are willing to buy goods and services from industries that rely on forced labor, they create a profit incentive for labor traffickers to maximize revenue with minimal production costs.

Left unchecked, human trafficking will continue to flourish in environments where traffickers can reap substantial monetary gains with relatively low risk of getting caught or lost profits.

(National Human Trafficking Resource Center)

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