

## Welcoming our Sisters from PNG

It is hard to believe that in 2008 we started to raise money for our "Woman to Woman Papua New Guinea Project". The idea at first was to bring one woman to the Virginia Synod in 2011 and quickly it grew to the hope of having enough funds to have two PNG women be our guests. With God's help and your generosity that hope became a reality. In July, the women will attend the Eighth Triennial Gathering in Spokane, WA. A special thanks to the Women of the ELCA for hosting the women while they are in Spokane. They will be part of the international guests at the Gathering. After Spokane, they will be with us in Virginia for our convention and also visiting congregations across the synod.

The two women have been chosen. Their names are Miriam Muyambe and Mary Irasua. Diane Giessler has been working very hard to make sure everything is moving ahead. You can imagine there is a lot of preparation required before they even leave for the U.S.

Miriam is married and a mother. She lives in Kimbe, West New Britain Province and attends the Bethel Lutheran Church there. It is one of the larger and more modern church buildings. She holds a very responsible job with a palm oil company and is a good business woman. She serves as the Treasurer for the New Guinea Islands (NGI) District Women's Organization. She is a close friend to Rose Kidabing, who visited us a few years ago.

Mary is also married and has six children, all of whom are adults. She also lives in West New Britain Province. Mary shared this correspondence with Diane:

*"After being accepted into my current religion because of my marriage to a Lutheran husband, I started with organizing our women in the congregation for a weekly fellowship. And because I was a graduated health nursing sister, I began with teaching our women in general hygiene in the family and how to manage family life. In fact I am a recognized family counselor and continue to do this within the church and with the government organization. I am also a qualified trainer in HIV/AIDS awareness program in the*

*country. I was trained through the Lutheran Life Care Program, and eventually was recognized by the government and being used by them from time to time when ever there is training in these areas.*

*I am a member of the inter-denominational group known as the East New Britain Provincial women council of churches. I am also a member of the (WCTU) World Christian Temperance Union, and hold a executive position as a treasurer. I was assigned the task of coordinating social issues program within this organization in our province. I am also a member and advisor to the community women association in our local Government area. I hold couple of executive positions in our church. I am a congregation treasurer and have been doing this job since 2000. Every time when there is election to elect new office bearers after the normal term of two years expires, I seem to get a general approval to continue with this job. I am also the treasurer for the ENB circuit, and have been performing this job since 2008. I am also the women fellowship leader in our Parish, which cover 8 congregations. Also coordinate social concern program in the NGI District of the ELC-PNG.*

*Apart from these, various government agencies and Departments continue to use me to run a lot of social concern programs training; such as HIV/AIDS program, Safe motherhood, family counseling, Primary health Care, child abuse, and early childhood training. I am generally very much involved in the Women program both in the church and the Government also. In fact I lead our NGI women to attend most of the annual women conferences which are held every two years. The last conference which we attended was in September of 2010 in Simbu District of the ELCPNG.*

*Both Men and women in the Four circuits of the ELCPNG, NGI District call me as "Het Meri", as well as in the congregation and Parish level.*

**(continued on page 2)**

## What Brings You to Convention?

**Jody Smiley, VSWO President**

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As I ponder this question I remember the first convention I attended. It was held at Donaldson Brown on the VA Tech campus and Judy Ann Fray was VSWO president. I was in my first year as coordinator for the New River Conference. (Yes, I agreed to be a coordinator without ever attending a convention.) I came because I had a job to do, I had a responsibility. But I will have to say I had a wonderful time. You could feel God's love all around you. It was easy to see why women came year after year.

Today I can't imagine a July without being at a VSWO convention. I tell everyone what a great time they will have if they just give it chance. I talk about the fun, the fellowship, and of course the food at Roanoke College. But more than that convention can be a life changing experience. The effect of spending the weekend with so many women of faith is hard to put into words but easy to feel in your heart. As I said about my first convention, you know God's love is everywhere.

I am sure all of you have similar thoughts and stories to share about what brings you to convention. Share these with women in your congregation and conference. Encourage them to come and experience what the women of the VA Synod have to offer. This year's theme is "Renewal for the Soul". What woman doesn't need a little renewal. The board made a commitment at our last meeting to make a list of women we plan to personally invite to convention, women that don't normally attend. I ask you to consider doing the same. You can give them a copy of your Call to Convention or you can encourage them go to our website, [www.vsw.org](http://www.vsw.org), for information or to download the Call. If each of us could get just one first time attendee to come just think of what we could accomplish. This weekend could be a life changing experience for one of these women like it was for me.

Convention planning has a great deal for any of you that bring a "First Timer" with you. Submit your registration together and both **registration fees** will be reduced by 50%, two registration fees for the price of one! This applies only to the registration fee, not room and board costs. What a deal! Get to work and bring a "First Timer" with you to Roanoke College on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Who knows in a few years that woman could be president of the VSWO!

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### ***Welcoming our Sisters from PNG (continued)***

*Although I try to put in a lot of my personal time and effort in managing the social concern program in the church on a voluntary basis, I seem to be getting very little support both from the church and the government. I don't have a permanent base such as a District resource centre, where I can set up an office to coordinate all these activities. I am praying that one day the good Lord will bless me/us by providing necessary help to meet our needs."*

I wanted to share this with you because as I was reading it I realized that even though there are many differences between the women in PNG and the VA Synod there are just as many similarities. Mary (as is Miriam) is a wife, a mother, devoted to her congregation, dedicated to her women's organization, and a woman of deep faith.

We can still use your help. While Miriam and Mary are with us in Virginia we will need to provide them with a small daily stipend (about \$30/day) and there maybe some small expenses that will need to be covered. The stipend will allow them to have money to spend while they are in the US and for the trip home. You and your unit can still make a contribution. Please send your donations to Anna Barb and note on the check that it is for the "Woman to Woman Project."

Don't miss the opportunity to meet these remarkable women at this year's VSWO convention.

# Papua New Guinea: Our Companion Synod

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The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELC-PNG), a member of the [Lutheran World Federation](#), has its headquarters in the city of Lae. The largest Protestant church in Papua New Guinea, its membership is approximately 900,000, with congregations in all parts of the country. Pastors are educated in three seminaries. The ELC-PNG is divided into seventeen districts, each headed by a district president. Districts are comprised of circuits, parishes and congregations.

Evangelism, education and health services are three main ELC-PNG ministries. Since 1992, missionaries from Madagascar and the Philippines have served in Papua New Guinea as medical doctors and pastors. The church has departments for evangelism, education, ministerial training, medical services, finance, Lutheran development (human resources) and lands and property services.



Wall art at one of the local ELC-PNG congregations. The church has three seminaries for training pastors. Two offer instruction in Pidgin and one in English—Martin Luther Seminary in Lae, which offers more advanced programs. The church also has a teachers' college, eight high schools, and over 180 elementary schools.

The church is working hard to develop leadership for the future. Several pastors are studying either abroad or in Papua New Guinea. In evangelism, the ELC-PNG is active in developing a community approach. Pastors are trained to preach, lead worship, and distribute the sacraments. They are also taught agricultural skills, education, and basic health.

PNG Singing - a ceremony of culture and dance. The ELC-PNG has an active Woman's Department. In general conferences, leadership training schools, and girls' training, women are nourished in their faith and given instruction in hygiene, nutrition and child care. Tambourine bands are becoming popular. They give a new opportunity for self-expression as women and youth combine Christian songs with traditional dance movements.



Health care is an important part of the ministry of the ELC-PNG, especially in rural areas. The church operates several hospitals, numerous health centers, aid posts, and maternal and child health care programs. Lutherans work in several city hospitals as medical personnel and chaplains. A school of nursing has a national reputation for excellence.

Papua New Guinea is a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy that gained its independence from an Australian-administered UN trusteeship September 16, 1975. Over 5.4 million people inhabit Papua New Guinea. Pidgin is the official language while more than 700 indigenous languages are spoken, and 1-2% of the population speaks English. Indigenous beliefs (34%) represent the largest spiritual group, with large populations of Roman Catholics (22%) Lutherans (16%) and other Protestants (28%) as well. Lutherans are well represented in the Parliament, with 38 Lutherans among the 110 parliamentarians.

The economy is largely agricultural (especially coffee and copra crops). More than five million Papuans live by subsistence farming but farming for commercial trade is limited by the absence of a good transportation network. Copper, gold and silver mining are important, but are dwarfed by the potential of large, untapped oil reserves. The development of large-scale industry is hampered by the rough terrain, illiteracy and the number of languages spoken. Poverty and malnutrition are of concern.

## Here I am, Lord...

**Judy Castele, Contributing Editor**

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*"Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart." WOV 752*

In November 2009, I wrote a column in honor of my friend Susan, thanking her for lessons she taught me in life...about friendship, about faith, about love, about the power of prayer. Susan was very proud of that column and shared it with those close to her. She wasn't proud in that boastful sort of way, but pleased that her faith journey had been a blessing to others. Susan lived her Christian faith with every breath she took. She was an example to so many. I am among the fortunate ones whose lives she touched.

When I wrote that column 15 months ago, we both knew that the end of her life was nearing. She was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in August 2009. She had numerous rounds of chemotherapy trying to beat the disease and prolong her life. Susan trusted deeply in God. She didn't question his plan, but her earthly self wanted to squeeze every moment out of life to spend with her 15 year old son Colin. The 24th chapter of Matthew refers to the coming of Christ, but the verses are certainly applicable to mortality. *"No one knows when that day will come."* That day is near for Susan. As I write this column, I am keeping vigil by her bed. I have been here for 3 days. The end is near. Susan is sleeping, peacefully now, after a restless evening yesterday. Her breathing is shallow. Her heart rate is faint. Her limbs are cold as her circulation slows down. Her time has come.

At 1:15 p.m. on February 16, 2011, Susan Warinner Hogg left her earthly life and was welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven. Praise God that her suffering has ended!

Just as we don't know when the end will come for us, we rarely have any say in how that end will

will be played out. But, if Susan had any choice, I think she would have chosen this way to mark the end of her earthly life.

In her last days and hours, Susan was surrounded by four women who were virtually strangers. There was her sister Ruth; her college roommate, Laura; a church "angel" & dear friend Barbie; and, me. We were strangers until our love for Susan brought us to her side. During those last days, one of us (if not all of us) was always by her side. We held her hand, stroked her cheek, and comforted her when she doubled over in pain. We reassured her that we would make sure Colin was alright and we prayed that her suffering would soon be over.

About 12:30 p.m., her brother Doug called from Connecticut. At the end of their conversation, Ruth put him on speaker phone and we all laid our hands on Susan as Doug prayed for his sister one last time.

Knowing the end was near, we kept our hands on Susan and began singing hymns quietly. As the Hospice aide entered the room, we were no longer quietly singing but were in a resounding chorus of **I, the Lord of Sea and Sky.**

*"Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart."*

As she took her last breath, I made the sign of the cross on her forehead and commended her to God with the words, "Susan Hogg, you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

*Here I am, Lord* was a fitting send-off for my dear friend, Susan. She lived her life as a devoted follower of Christ, always ready to answer His call. Go in Peace, Susan. The Lord is waiting for you with open arms.

## **Renewal for the Soul: 2011 VSWO Convention**

**Chair : Imogene Ryman**

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Our 2011 convention plans are coming together! Our theme is “Renewal for the Soul.” Scripture is Isaiah 40:30-31. The convention hymn is On Eagles Wings. Bishop Mauney will conduct our Sunday morning worship. Our own Judy Castele, executive director of Project Horizon in Lexington, is our keynote speaker. Genie Brown and Erin Bain will serve as registrar and parliamentarian respectively. Our love offering (start collecting now!) will be given to Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance. We are planning another Young Women’s Gathering with 11 young women attending convention as our guests. The young women guests will work on a project for Micah’s Backpack, which provide nutritious meals and snacks on the weekends for children who qualify for the free lunch program. All attendees are asked to bring tuna and juice boxes for this project. Our awareness sessions will include Bible Study, Social Networking, Renewable Resources, Domestic Violence, and others. New this year: Bring someone new to convention and you both will receive a 50% discount on your registration. Looking forward to seeing you at Roanoke College July 22-24, 2011 for the VSWO Convention!

## **News from the Synodical Conference Coordinator**

*Janice Brown*

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While some of our conferences have Fall Gatherings, many are refreshed with Spring Gatherings. For more information, contact your local conference coordinator or unit leader. Spring Conference Gatherings include:

<b>Conference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Germanna	Resurrection, Fredericksburg	March 19	9:30 a.m.—2: 30 pm
Central Valley	St. Stephen, Strasburg	April 3	TBA
Highlands	Hungry Mother Retreat Center, Marion	April 30	TBA
Page	Details to be announced		

## ***Triennial Gathering In-Kind Gifts***

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In-kind gifts are a way for all women to participate in the triennial gathering, whether attending the event or not. You can make this a congregational unit project over the next several months or even involve your whole congregation.

**Health kits, school kits, gift cards and phone cards** will be used by Transitions, a Spokane ministry that fosters the personal growth and wholeness of women and children in need. Women's Hearth, one of Transitions' many programs, received Women of the ELCA grants in 2009 and 2010.

- ◇ **Support kits** will be given to Lutheran Community Services Northwest, which will distribute them to local hospitals for rape or domestic violence victims. In most cases a victim's clothes are taken by police as evidence, and the hospital often cannot provide clothing to the victim to wear home.
- ◇ **Quilt kits** will be used to make quilts on site that will be given to Lutheran World Relief.
- ◇ **White socks** will be given to Spokane ministries serving the homeless.

Send your in-kind gifts along with those attending the gathering or ship them for arrival between June 1 and July 1 to:

TG11 In-Kind Gifts  
 Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod  
 314 S. Spruce Street, Suite A  
 Spokane, WA 99201-5823

### **Health, school, support and quilt kits**

Please provide one of each of the items listed for a complete, unassembled kit. (Do not, for example, bring 24 toothbrushes.) Women attending the gathering will assemble the kits as part of the servant opportunities.

#### **Health kits**

Fill a gallon-size resealable plastic bag with:

- adult or children's toothbrush (in original packaging)
- toothpaste
- shampoo and conditioner
- bath-size bar of soap (in original wrapper)
- lotion
- wide-toothed comb
- deodorant (no aerosol cans)
- dental floss

Optional: one hand towel and washcloth (dark color)

#### **School kits**

Fill a gallon-size resealable plastic bag with:

- several #2 pencils with erasers, secured together with a rubber band
- box of 16 or 24 crayons
- a couple glue sticks
- washable markers

Bring separate from the gallon bag: notebook of wide or college-ruled paper approximately 8" x 10 ½" (spiral bound; no loose-leaf paper) and construction paper in assorted colors

#### **Support kits**

A pair of sweat pants and a sweatshirt tied together with a ribbon (S-4XL, solids only, no patterns or logos)

## ***Triennial Gathering In-Kind Gifts (continued)***

### **Quilt kits**

(No religious symbols, U.S. flags or military insignia.)

#### **Quilt kit option 1**

Fill a gallon-size resealable plastic bag with:

- twelve 21-inch squares of cotton fabric
- one spool Coats & Clark Dual Duty thread to match fabric
- ◇ one piece cotton fabric for backing, 2½ yards 60"-wide fabric or 5 yards 35" - to 45"-wide fabric

#### **Quilt kit option 2**

Fill a gallon-size resealable plastic bag with:

- two pieces fabric (2½ yards 60"-wide fabric or 5 yards 35" - to 45"-wide fabric)
- one spool of Coats & Clark Dual Duty thread to match fabric

Gifts cards, phone cards and socks

#### **Gift cards**

Gift cards are needed in any amount, with a minimum of \$10, from Target, Wal-Mart and Kmart. For Washington and Idaho participants: Grocery store cards from regional chains.

#### **Pre-paid phone cards**

Pre-paid phone cards are needed in any amount; purchase at national retail stores and grocery stores.

#### **Socks**

Fill a gallon-size resealable plastic bag with white socks of any size (children, women, men).

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## **See you in Spokane!**

*Ellen Bain, Triennial Gathering Promoter*

President Jody Smiley will lead our VSWO delegation to Spokane, Washington for the 2011 Triennial Convention. The Triennial Gathering will follow July 14-17, 2011 with the theme "Renew, Respond, and Rejoice."

*Will you be there?* It's not too late to register! So far, I know of at least 10 women who are attending from Virginia. We've been invited to join our companion synod, Southwest Minnesota, for an Ice Cream Social during Triennial. The cost is \$15 and is due to me at Ellen Bain, 2057 Twin Oaks Ave, Pulaski, VA 24301 by April 1. Checks should be made payable to the VSWO. (Enclose form found on back of Visions.)

Need more information about Triennial? Be sure and contact me at [ellenbain@gmail.com](mailto:ellenbain@gmail.com) so I can check in with you about special activities for women from the VSWO. Hope to see you in Spokane in July!

## Mission: Action

*Co-chairs: Lisa Somerville & Ellen Greene*

*Members: Barbara Atkinson & Lavelva Stevens*

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We are looking forward to the 2011 convention in July at Roanoke College. This convention we will focus on health for our workshop. Saturday morning we will have the opportunity to have Stephanie Gardner present a workshop on Healthy Shopping. Also our display table will have items that can be downloaded from the WELCA on Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls. All of us need to promote health and healing for all ages. Our well being benefits each individual as well as the faith communities we are a part of.

In addition to the workshop we are asking members to once again bring in a new children's book (elementary age group) for the Roanoke Mission. The books will be taken out to the Mission on Saturday afternoon.

Plans have been made but not yet made finalized about having a recycle station at our table for old cell phones. The ELCA has a program to recycle the cell phones and give them to women in need and senior citizens to assist them accessing 911. According to the ELCA, a half a billion cell phones could be recycled. More information on this program will be included in the forthcoming Call to Convention.

Please also bring a record of the items and activities your units have been involved in. If you have photos we can add the photos to our ongoing scrapbook. Please send your labels and box tops to your local schools and organizations. Bring along a tally of the totals so these can be announced to the assembly at the close of convention.

What a weekend we have in store for you!. With God's help we can accomplish so much for so many. We look forward to seeing old friends and making new friends this summer.

## Mission: Community

*Co-Chairs: Carol Bailey and Sherry Frye*

*Members: Nancy Tyler, Christel Williams, Jane Lane, and Kaarina Modiri*

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**“Here a LARCUM, there a LARCUM, everywhere a LARCUM.”  
What the heck is a LARCUM?!?**

**LARCUM** stands for **Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, United Methodist**; and people from all of these branches of Christianity met in Fredericksburg on December 3-4 to learn how we can best serve Christianity ecumenically. Pastor George Handley began the gathering with a history of Lutherans in Virginia. Muhlenberg, Smucker, and Hinkel, names we might associate with a modern college or food were woven into the history that we share.

Friday evening Bishop James Mauney spoke at St. Mary Roman Catholic Church on the topic of **“Planting”** as in planting the seeds of Christ ecumenically. On Saturday at the Fredericksburg United Methodist Church, Bishop Mauney encouraged us to move forward with ecumenism in his presentation entitled **“Growing”**. He made suggestions as to how we could plan to make ecumenism happen and how we could **“harvest.”** In small groups with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we took baby steps towards working throughout the Christian community to bring Christ to our neighbors. Whether ministering to school children or stocking food pantries, **we are better together.**

Each of the participants went away with the conviction that in the unity of the Holy Spirit, Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and United Methodists can spread the love of Christ more effectively.

## Mission: Growth

**Co-chairs: Sherrill Miller & Ellie Hirsh**

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Most of us at present are icicle covered and shivering from the winds and cold this winter. A great way to warm your day is spending some time with the one who has always loved and cared for you unconditionally, God.

Starting the day with a few moments in your devotional book or bible can't help but warm and strengthen the heart, mind, and soul. Where or how to fit this private time with God is some of what we'll be focusing on at our convention this year. When working on your schedule for the day or week don't forget God. It is from our relationship with God that we have the strength and wisdom to deal with our day. You'd schedule without hesitation a Dr's appointment when not feeling well. Why not schedule an ongoing Spiritual Wellness appointment with God!?

How you ask? Meet with Mission Growth at convention and examine the different ways you can connect with God through prayer, meditation, and reading. We will be examining various types of prayer and discovering what is your best fit. Wash away the guilt. Rejoice in the time knowing that this opportunity to RENEW will not only affect your life with God, but also in how these interactions can uplift your relationships with family and friends. Strong roots bring the greatest abundance of fruit to the tree.

Join us at convention and embrace the opportunity to RENEW yourself spiritually. We on Mission Growth look forward to seeing you there.

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## 2011 Love Offering

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance has been chosen as our 2011 convention love offering recipient. Judy Castele just completed 2 terms as chair of the Action Alliance's Governing Body. Judy will be our convention keynote speaker with the theme "On Eagle's Wings." The Action Alliance works to :

- Bring people together to build networks and to learn from one another in order to make Virginia safer.
- Educate individuals, communities, professionals, and legislators on how to stop sexual and domestic violence from happening and how to help those who have been hurt by violence.
- Make sure your community has necessary resources to respond effectively to sexual and domestic violence.
- Advocate for people affected by sexual and domestic violence to make sure they get the help they need.

To learn more about the Action Alliance, check out their website at [www.vsdvalliance.org](http://www.vsdvalliance.org) . Your love offerings can be brought to convention or be sent prior to convention to Anna Barb, Treasurer, at 5501 Alum Springs Rd, Edinburg, VA 22824 Be sure and clearly mark your check for the 2011 Love Offering



# VSWO Board | 2010-2011

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# Join us for a Sweet Treat!

What: Ice Cream Social with the Women of Southwest Minnesota  
When: Friday, July 15, 7—9 pm  
Where: Spokane, Washington (exact location TBA)



Sign me up!

Name/s \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send \$15 per person (checks made payable to the VSWO) to Ellen Bain, 2057 Twin Oaks, Ave, Pulaski, VA 24301 by April 1, 2011.

Virginia Synodical Women's Organization  
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