

The Women of the ELCA held their 35th Annual Gathering at LRU, June 23-25, 2023. This was the first in-person gathering in four years. The theme for the gathering was "Renewed Day by Day." The scripture verses were 2 Corinthians 4: (1, 8-10, 16), Psalm 103:1-5, Isaiah 40:29-31 and Matthew 11: 28-30.

Our keynote speaker was Amanda Held Opelt from Boone, who is an author, speaker and songwriter. She has written two books, A Hole in the World-Finding Hope in Rituals of Grief and Healing and Holy Unhappiness-God, Goodness, and The Myth of the Blessed Life.

Our gathering chaplain was Rev. Dr. Christy Lor Sapp who is the pastor of St. Andrew's in Hickory. She was our bible study leader.

Our churchwide executive board representative, Dawn Wicklund, came to us from Our Savior's ELCA in Superior, Wisconsin. She served by representing the Executive Board and bringing greetings from our churchwide women's organization. She also reminded us of the triennial gathering and convention for the Women of the ELCA held in September this year in Phoenix, Arizona. I will be one of eight voting members representing our North Carolina Synodical Women.

The meeting opened with our first session Friday at 7:00pm by our NCSWO President, Lisa Philbeck. At this session, we opened our gathering by reciting the Purpose Statement, hearing greetings from LRU and Lutheran Men in Mission, president. A vote was held for Vice-President, Robin Stuart from Sardis, Hickory was elected. A vote for Secretary was held, Anita Sharpe from Sharon, Statesville was elected. The churchwide representative gave her report. There was an offering of \$1159.00 and an attendance of 45.

The second session opened Saturday at 8:45am with bible study by Rev. Christy Lor Sapp. The keynote speaker, Amanda Held Opelt, gave her address. The offering was \$958.50 and attendance of 56. A new website will be launching in the next month for our NCSWO, [www.ncwelca.com](http://www.ncwelca.com). A vote was held for five board members with a two year term. These were the results-Karen Overcash, Mt. Moriah, China Grove; Leta "Rosie" Schieber, Calvary, Concord; Marguerite Taylor, Redeemer, Gastonia; Lorri Monterose, St. Mark's, Mooresville, and Karen Birkedal, Mt.Olive, Hickory, Pastor Birkedal's wife.

There were two people appointed to fill out a one year term-Linda Davis, Holy Trinity, Charlotte and Patricia "Patty" Schmid, St. Mark's, Mooresville. The third session was held after lunch and reports were given by the President, Treasurer and Board Members. The adoption of the Budget for 2024 was approved.

After this meeting, there was Awareness Session 1 in which you could choose to go to either "What is Lutheran Disaster Relief Carolinas" or "Justice-Renew Your Passion" for 45 minutes. Session 2 was either "Not a Scam!-Hope for Protecting our Young People" or "LED, Halogen, HID, Incandescent" for 45 minutes.

Our last session on Saturday was enjoying our entertainment, Amanda Held Opelt with many hymns, songs and praise music.

Sunday, a worship service was held with Susan Harris being the litergy and Pastor Tim Smith preaching at Grace Chapel on LRU. I chose to come home and attend our service at St. Mark's.

This gathering will not be held again until next year in June. I appreciate going as a voting member and seeing old friends and meeting new ones. This is an opportunity for all women. Each year, we send a voting member but any women may attend as a visitor.

Submitted by Tamarah Hefner,  
President of St. Mark's Women of the ELCA