



## Biographies for the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice: One in Christ (arranged alphabetically)

### Bruce Berg

Southwestern Minnesota Synod



I am a Lutheran pastor on leave from call in Marshall, Minnesota. I am married and have both children and grandchildren. My interest in the Women and Justice: One in Christ task force is grounded in my belief that all people are created equal: this includes women. While serving in the United States Navy for almost 30 years I was part of several efforts to ensure that women had equal access to every opportunity the men of the Navy enjoyed. In my off time I play tuba and euphonium and build in my woodshop.

### Diane Brauer

Nebraska Synod



I recently moved to McCook and am not currently employed. Prior to moving I was an administrative assistant in the executive suite of a regional hospital. I enjoy cross-stitching and jig saw puzzles in my free time. I am a member of Our Savior's, McCook, Nebraska. I served on the executive board of Women of the ELCA (2005-2011). Additionally, I served on the synodical board in MT and as synodical president Western North Dakota. I have served as Vacation Bible School director, Lutheran Youth Organization advisor, and played in hand bell choirs in previous congregations. My interest in women's issues grew over the years as I served on the board of the county's women's advocacy and abuse center, encountering the daily struggle many women face. Participation in global education and advocacy seminars with women from companion synods and in synodical events across all regions of the ELCA has impressed

upon me the concerns, issues, and difficulties women face throughout the world. While the concerns and problems are many, we share our hope for the future and our faith that God walks with us into that future.

My hope is to produce a statement that acknowledges the issues, seeks to make change, challenges the church to live out equality, and brings hope of an equitable and just future to all God's people.

### Darren Diggs

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod



I am a Solution Designer currently living in Philadelphia. I was drawn to taking part in the task force particularly because of my years of experience in the entertainment industry. I hope for a strong, clear and resounding statement. My hobbies include practicing martial arts and kettlebells. My favorite movies include *Amadeus*, *The Raid*, and *Inception*. I also enjoy reading—my favorite books include *Infinity*, *Under the Black Flag*, and *Things to Think On*.

### Bethany Fayard

Southeastern Synod



I am a member of Christus Victor Lutheran Church in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. I enjoy spending time with my family, reading, increasing social awareness of those around me, and traveling. The ELCA social statements were what attracted me to the church years ago and I feel very privileged to be a part of this current process. Our society's journey out of a patriarchal society has stalled and, in some ways, backtracked recently. It is my goal that the task force is able to create a strong and clear statement that raises awareness of continued inequities that women suffer in our society. I hope



that the social statement will lead to practices and policies in both the Church and society at large which will help lead to the eradication of these inequities.

**Fern Lee Hagedorn**

Metropolitan New York Synod



I have served on staffs and boards and in advisory capacities with organizations including the Lutheran World Federation, ELCA Multicultural Ministries and Global Mission, Lutheran Church in

America-Mission in North America, Lutheran World Ministries, ELCA Asian and Pacific Islanders Association, and the American Bible Society, where I headed the New Media research program. I was a founding member of the Asian American International Film Festival which began in NYC in 1978, and is still going strong. I am a local morning host on WJFF, an NPR affiliate station with listenership in the Catskills (NY) and Northeastern PA. As an active member of St. Paul's-Narrowsburg, NY, I serve on the church council, teach Sunday School, play the guitar, and bake for events. I co-chair an ad hoc coalition of Lutheran congregations in the Catskills. I am grateful for the work of this task force toward a social statement, and ask for the prayers of the people as we seek to articulate the voice of justice for the church.

**Erik Heen**

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod



I was born in Montana, raised in South Dakota, but have lived most of my life on the East Coast. I teach New Testament and Greek at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (LTSP), one of the 8 seminaries

affiliated with the ELCA. I am dedicated to helping emerging leaders of an increasingly ecumenical church discover their own voices in the interpretation of Scripture. This means bringing the best of current biblical study and theological reflection together. My on-going "academic" project seeks to articulate a biblical theology that is deeply Lutheran and helpful to the ELCA of the 21st century. In a life that is increasingly busy and detail-rich, it is important to find space to work for the

justice that God intends for all. I am thankful for the structure of the task force that provides me with the opportunity to contribute to this on-going work for women on behalf of all.

**Linda Herrera**

Grand Canyon Synod

I am 53 years old, born in a rural area of El Salvador, Central America. Thirty years ago, I came



with my two kids, 5 and 2 years old, without documents to the United States, after I was denied a visa, to save myself and my family from the civil war that

lasted 12 years and left at least 75,000 people killed. I worked very hard to support my family in the United States, as well as my family in El Salvador and, learning English and training myself to prepare for other types of jobs different from cleaning houses, elderly care, babysitting and janitorial work. In El Salvador I was working as a judge's assistant in First Circuit Court, studied at the National School of Commerce and got a diploma in Business Administration. I have been working with community organizations, non-profits, and I have also started and maintained my own computer networking business in San Francisco, CA. In Arizona, I dedicated myself to advocate for the undocumented community. I organized and help organize marches, protests, lobbying, media campaigns and all types of community education regarding the unjust persecution of the undocumented. I want to work towards a humane, comprehensive and just immigration reform, to stop the separation of families and the abuse in prison, hospitals and schools that undocumented families are victims of in Arizona and the United States. Human rights, workers' rights, civil rights and constitutional rights for all working families are important to achieve peace with justice. I am serving a second term as a council member of Faith Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona, where I currently live and continue my work as a community organizer.



**Sister Clare Josef-Maier**  
Northwest Washington Synod



I am a deaconess and mental health counselor, currently counseling students at Lane Community College in Eugene, OR. My education includes a M.A. in Pastoral Counseling from Seattle

University's School of Theology and Ministry and a B.A. in Religion and Women's & Gender Studies from Pacific Lutheran University. It is my great hope that this social statement be a truly prophetic and incisive voice in our current cultural climate, especially in challenging systems that perpetuate gender injustice and supporting the healing of those most deeply wounded by it. The road is hard, but full of joys as well. In the course of this work, I married my partner Ryan, who is a wonderful chef, and we enjoy our beautiful Pacific Northwest home with the recent addition of our daughter, Maeve.

**Lori Kochanski**  
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod



I have served the church as a pastor for 11 years in a variety of settings. Currently, I serve as an interim pastor and a spiritual director in Bethlehem, PA. I also work with the

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod's youth organization and spirituality team. I yearn for meaningful and creative engagement at the intersection where justice, sexism, racism and social inequalities meet. As a member of the task force I plan to sit in that intersection and listen to the multiple voices who speak of these issues through word and action as we build this living document. My hope is that work of the task force will lead us to speak from our place as Lutheran Christians as we participate in the ongoing dialogue with sisters and brothers throughout the world about what our role is in God's kingdom.

**Sherry Liske**  
Central/Southern Illinois Synod



I was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. After receiving my BA in Sociology from Blackburn College in 1978, I pursued advanced degrees in nursing from Rush University. I

have been a Certified Staff Nurse at the Center for Rehabilitation at Rush University Medical Center for over twenty years. I have taken my passion for healthcare abroad by participating in fifteen short-term medical missions to places such as Mexico, Panama, Nepal, and Cuba. I belong to Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Elgin, IL, and am also a current Church Council member. I also have a passion for travel, reading, and fitness. My goal as a member of this task force is to be able to contribute to the development of a faith-based provocative, yet practical, statement regarding social justice for women.

**Kit Kleinhans**  
Northeastern Iowa Synod



I am a lifelong Lutheran and a fifth-generation Lutheran pastor. Since 1993, it has been my privilege to serve as a member of the religion faculty at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, where I rejoice in

the opportunity to teach and mentor young people. My scholarly work focuses on the theology of Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, which I strive to apply meaningfully and faithfully in new contexts. I am the editor of *Together in Grace: Introducing the Lutherans*, the author of *Book of Faith Lenten Journey: Seven Wonders of the Word*, and a frequent contributor to *Living Lutheran* and *Christ in Our Home*. As the mother of two young adult sons, I pray and work for a world in which there is equality for all persons, since we are all created in God's image.





**Mary Lowe**

Minneapolis Area Synod



As a life-long Lutheran, I'm honored to have this opportunity to help develop new resources to address the damage that gender stereotypes and injustice inflict on women, men, families, congregations and our

broader society. Gender injustice impacts each of us in various ways, inflicting psychological, emotional, physical or theological damage and it prevents us from becoming our authentic selves. I currently serve as Associate Professor of Religion at Augsburg College, where my research and teaching focus on theology and the human person, images of God, doctrines of sin, LGBTQ and disability theologies, and the theology of Martin Luther. Born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, I've lived and studied in the Seattle area, Chicago, the Twin Cities, Berkeley, Holden Village and the southern African country of Swaziland, where I did my pastoral internship. I earned my Ph.D. in systematic theology from the Graduate Theological Union, with additional studies at Luther Seminary and Pacific Lutheran University. I am the author of *The Human Subject and Sin: The Anthropology of Pannenberg, Ruether and Fulkerson* and have also published chapters in *Transformative Lutheran Theologies: Feminist, Womanist, and Mujerista Perspectives*, and *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition*.

**William Rodriguez**

Florida-Bahamas Synod



I was born in Puerto Rico and raised in New York City. I studied at City University of NY, NY Theological Seminary and the Florida State

University, doing my PhD work in Philosophical & Religious Ethics. I specialize in Bioethics, War & Peace, Social/Economic/Political Theory, Human Rights and Feminist studies and teach Ethics, Christian Ethics, Theories of Justice, Africana Philosophy, and Philosophy of Religion at Bethune Cookman University. I co-wrote An Introduction to

Ethics, and have written a number of chapters in philosophy and popular culture. I have written about topics as diverse as the ethics of human euthanasia, film theory, and religious philosophy. Presently I am a member at Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church in Orlando where I work with our social justice group. I am a Hunger Specialist for ELCA World Hunger and work with my synod whenever we deal with social statements such as genetics and criminal justice. I am very concerned about the political, social and religious climate that seeks to oppress women and roll back the achievements and strides made in matters of family roles, women's reproductive freedom and equal compensation.

**Heber Rast, Jr.**

South Carolina Synod

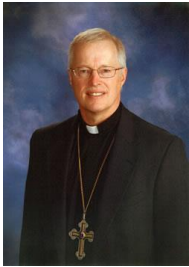
I worked as an engineer and retired as Senior Project Manager with the Jacobs Engineering Group. I recently retired as Executive Director of the South Carolina Lutheran Men in Mission, and I previously



served two terms as Churchwide President of Lutheran Men in Mission. Locally, I have served several terms on our congregation council, sing in the choir and chair the stewardship committee. I am also on the SC Synod Planting and Sustaining New Congregations Network and serve on the Evangelism Task Force. Personally, I am deeply concerned about violence toward girls and women, domestic violence and persecution and lack of opportunities for women in so many parts of the world. I hope that the outcome of this task force shows that our church really cares about these issues. My wife and I like the mountains, show skiing and both serve with our local volunteer fire department.



**Bishop John S. Roth**  
Central/Southern Illinois



I was elected as bishop of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod in June 2011. Prior to that, I was pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Illinois, a call I served for twenty-three years. I earned my Ph.D. in New Testament studies from Vanderbilt University, and did a year of graduate study at the University of Tübingen, Germany. I am the author of *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield Academic Press). Previous employment experience has included bussing tables and driving a forklift. My wife, Kris, and I have been married for 35 years. We delight to be the parents of Maria (Drew) Snodgrass, Laura Roth, and Sam Roth.

**Bishop Ann M. Svennungsen**  
Minneapolis Area Synod



I was elected February, 2012 as bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod. This historic vote made me the first woman to serve as bishop in any of the ELCA's six Minnesota synods. I have been a leader in congregations and church-related organizations for over 30 years. In 1996, I became senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, Minnesota, at the time the largest ELCA congregation to be led by a female senior pastor. In 2003, I was named president of The Fund for Theological Education, a national, ecumenical organization devoted to raising up the next generation of excellent and diverse ministers and scholars. From 2007 to 2010, I served as president of Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas; most recently, I was interim college pastor at St. Olaf College and held an appointment as Resident Scholar at the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at Saint John's University. I also founded and serve as director of The Presidents' Pledge Against Global Poverty—an initiative inviting university presidents to pledge five percent of their annual income to end global poverty. I am married to Rev. Dr. William Russell, a Reformation specialist. We are parents to Sarah

(Dan) Karlgaard, John Russell, and Mary Russell; and grandparents to John and Annika Karlgaard.

**Solomon Trimble**  
Oregon Synod

Youth Program Coordinator

**Viviane Thomas-Breitfeld**  
**Task Force Co-chair**  
Greater Milwaukee Synod



I am a pastor living in Brookfield, Wisconsin, the fourth woman of color ordained in the Lutheran Church in the United States. I am married to Pastor Fred Thomas-Breitfeld, who is also an ELCA pastor. We are parents of two adults and are blessed to have an adorable baby grandson. I have a passion for working for justice for all people, which I have expressed through being an anti-racist organizer with the Lutheran Church. I ardently believe in the power of God and God's preference for those in poverty, the dispossessed, and the least.

**Brad Wendel**  
**Task Force Co-Chair**  
Upstate New York Synod



I am a law professor at Cornell University specializing in legal ethics and tort (that is, accidents and injuries) law. My graduate work is in moral, political, and legal philosophy, and I sometimes dabble in theological ethics. I am humbled to have been asked to serve as co-chair of this task force, which is made up of such an amazing group of people. I hope this process can be open, inclusive, and healing, and that the finished product of the task force is accessible, thoughtful, informative, and rigorous. Through this group's work, the Church can bear witness to the possibility of genuine equality for all of God's people. My home congregation is St. Luke Lutheran, a vibrant place with ministries to the campuses of Cornell University and Ithaca College, as well as to the Ithaca community. I recently completed service as chair of the church council and was delighted to find that all of us were still friends at the end of each meeting. I am blessed to share my life with my



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God's work. Our hands.

wife, Liz Peck, and our two children, Ben and Hannah. In what spare time there is, I fly small planes, play drums, and enjoy cooking and eating.