A luncheon in San Diego last September 22, nine pastors’ wives celebrated 20 years of weekly gatherings (1,040, give or take a few), including times of sharing countless stories and photos, a few tears, and many cheers. Exactly 20 years before, on September 22, 1996, eight of them had first met together to discuss the possibility of a weekly Bible study/support group. They officially became “God’s Gals,” also known as the “GGs.”

In all those years, only one moved away and two others joined the group. Recently the group had to change from evening supper gatherings to luncheons in their homes to avoid driving at night. Three of the God’s Gals are in their 80s, five in their 70s, and a youngster is 67. One of the GGs lives in a senior citizen home, so she catches a ride to the meetings with another member.

All of them worked outside the home: three teachers, a school administrator, a library assistant, two travel agents, and an OB nurse. The youngest still owns her own tax service and also serves as treasurer for the LWML Southwest Pacific District board of directors. One of the women came to the group already widowed, and they have buried three precious husbands — two with long illnesses and one who went to heaven on a Saturday night while looking over his Sunday sermon. Three husbands were in the same class at the Seminary, and four served in the military as chaplains. In one of those wonderful Lutheran “coincidences,” one of the couples’ first date was at the wedding of one of the other couples.

All of them work inside the church. Their opportunities range from organist and choir director to wedding and funeral planner, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School teachers, school “grandparents,” congregation officers, lectors, altar guild, board members, LWML officers, and Bible class teachers as well as opening the doors on Sunday morning, starting the coffee pot, and locking up after it’s all over. (Please give your pastor’s wife a big hug and thank you next Sunday!)

They have traveled together (New York will never be the same), celebrated way too many birthdays together, emailed endlessly, worshiped together, studied Scripture and numerous Christian books together, wept in anger and in sorrow, and frequently laughed till their sides ached. Most often they pray and they give thanks to the Lord for all these opportunities to serve. They joyfully do it TOGETHER, as the Lord has blessed them beyond measure.

THEY ARE GOD’S GALS: Elma Aho, Diana Alexander, Thekla Bunnett, Ruth Molnar, Pat Reimnitz, Jan Rumsch, Lois Scheer, Bev Turner, and Judy Wyneken.
Ida Mall, LWML Past President, 2017 Albuquerque LWML Convention keynote speaker, and former board member of Lutheran Braille Workers, donated her time to record the New Testament portion of the Audio Bible Study Helping Blind People See Jesus. Matthew 19:26: Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Jan Fisher of Lutheran Braille Workers repeated this Scripture over and over again when speaking about the Audio Bible Study Helping Blind People See Jesus. By the grace of God, 11 LWML Districts, and the Lutheran Braille Workers, this 102-disc set (covering both the Old and New Testament) is made available free of charge to anyone who is visually impaired.

The challenge of finding narrators was surmounted by the generous donation of time of LWML Past President Ida Mall. Helping Blind People See Jesus is now in distribution throughout the United States, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, Congo, and Poland. What a great way to spread the Gospel throughout the world!

Mark your calendars! President Patti will have the honor of riding the Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) float at Pasadena’s Tournament of Roses Parade on Monday, January 2, 2017. To commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the float, “Celebrate Jesus,” will sail along the parade route, proudly displaying a replica of the Castle Church, Wittenberg, Germany.

President Patti was able to get a first-hand look as the LHM float was being built and test-driven last June; she will return in January to see the float fully decorated by the hands of 5,000 Petal Pushers volunteers. By God’s grace, this float will provide a powerful Christian witness and a message of hope in Jesus Christ to all who are able to see it. To volunteer, or for more information, please visit www.volunteer.petalpushers.org.

Elaine Wolters, author of A Peek into the Parsonage, chronicles the Wolters family’s journey when her husband, Mel, served as an ordained pastor. Reflecting on Mel’s preparation for the ministry, Elaine writes, “At that same time, we were getting more than desperate to find a way to move our few belongings from the seminary to our vicarage home in Montana. We didn’t have the $40 needed. We prayed. We knew it would take a miracle! We had only a few hours left to get the money before the trailer would be sold to someone else.

“God heard our need! Just minutes before the deadline, the mailman delivered our mail. In it was a check for exactly $40. It was a gift of support from some small un-heralded Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) and Lutheran Laymen’s League (LLL) groups within our larger church body that, quietly and without fanfare, supported and helped poor seminarians make it through the seminary.” To learn more about A Peek into the Parsonage or to contact Elaine, please send an email to gem@faithlink.net.

For the last 40 years, Zion Lutheran’s LWML in White, South Dakota (South Dakota District), has been hosting a salad luncheon where ladies of the church and surrounding communities gather to enjoy delicious food and fellowship. Everyone receives a personal or written invitation, the members of Zion provide all the food, and a speaker shares her personal mission experiences. This year’s theme, “Spring Clean Up for Heart and Soul,” featured Darcy Lee of DeSmet, South Dakota, who spoke of her medical mission trip experiences.
Southwestern Louisiana flood victims benefited from clean-up efforts of members of St. James Lutheran Church of Gonzales, Louisiana. Under the direction of Pastor Jonathan Kern and his wife, Adrienne, members of their church skipped their planned fishing trip, came alongside LWML members from other churches in their zone, and helped begin the enormous task of getting homes back into livable conditions.

The women of Zion Lutheran Church, Mora, Minnesota (Minnesota North District), have been working hard assembling and distributing quilts. More than 50 quilts were dedicated by Vacancy Pastor Polege this past April. Quilts were delivered to graduates, newly baptized members, fire emergency victims, Zion Preschool Supper Silent Auction, the Women’s Refuge, Lutheran World Relief, Veteran’s Home, and other community organizations.

To honor local veterans, the women of the LWML Atlantic District Suffolk Zone gathered and decorated 40 flowerpots as a small gesture for their service to our country. Following a worship service led by Pastor Brian Noack and a hearty brunch prepared by the Mary Martha Guild of St. John’s Lutheran Church in Sayville, New York, 18 women painted flowerpots that were filled with beautiful flowers, an American Flag, and a thank-you note. The finished pots were placed in decorative bags and delivered to the Veteran’s Place of Yaphank, New York, and the Harrison Hale Center of Middle Island, New York. Great work Suffolk Zone!

SUMMER 2017 THEME: COUNTER CULTURAL CHRISTIAN

NEWS! Please share your stories (and photos!) of joyful, mission-minded service to News Editor Linda Guteres at newseditor@lwml.org or 3 Timber Trail, Medford, NY 11763 by January 15, 2017. Include your name, address, phone, and email address.