

## Winter 2018 UPDATE: PV for Phebe is Done! Current for Curran is Next!



Giving thanks was the central purpose of my journey to Liberia as 11 of us traveled to be a part of the Nov. 30 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new solar panels at Phebe Hospital. I was able to attend with other Women of the ELCA representatives and the [RREAL staff](#) who oversaw the solar panel installation.

But your gifts of nearly \$600,000 made it happen. (Read below the names of those who traveled to Liberia and those who were guests of of honor at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.)

The completion of the PV (photovoltaics) for Phebe project is a testament to how Women of the ELCA can make a difference in our congregations, communities and world when we work together. The solar panels are expected to save Phebe Hospital about \$35,000 a year.

Fundraising efforts are underway for the second “Skip the Grid” solar project in Liberia: Current for Curran. Nearly \$20,000 of the \$200,000 needed by Easter has been raised for solar panels to be installed for Curran Hospital in northern Liberia. [Learn more about the Current for Curran project.](#)

It was exciting and humbling to experience how women can live out the mission of our organization: Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

## How it started

The seed idea for getting solar panels for Phebe Hospital began in 2012 when several women traveled to Liberia for the Women of the ELCA 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour. The global education trip was planned by Valora K Starr, director of discipleship for Women of the ELCA, to practice accompaniment and learn from our sisters in Liberia: The National Lutheran Church Women Fellowship of Liberia.



L-R: Eva James Yeo, Mary Kay Sloan, Mary Jo Mettler, Valora Starr

I was on that trip as well, and with our Liberian sisters, we discussed the future of women and girls, and we visited Phebe Hospital to learn about the effects of malaria.

The 2012 anniversary trip made an impression on two women who were the initial force behind the Phebe solar project: Mary Jo Mettler and Mary Kay Sloan of Minnesota. ([Read the article about the beginnings of the solar project here.](#)) Both women were at the ribbon-cutting ceremony last November.

After the 2012 trip, the Northeastern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization [brought a memorial to Ninth Triennial Convention](#) (2014) in Charlotte, N.C., asking for support with the solar project.

## Current at Curran

Last November, we traveled to Curran Hospital in rural northern Liberia, where we saw the hospital's need for solar-generated power. The hospital was built in 1924 and has 125 beds and outpatient services. It provides health care for 23 communities. Like Phebe did, Curran must use costly backup diesel generators when the electricity supply fails.

## Bold Women in Liberia

On our final day in Liberia, we gathered with the women at St. Peter's Lutheran Church for thanksgiving, songs of praise and prayer.

Mary Jo thanked the Liberian women for giving her courage to act on her faith and pursue the solar project. Valora asked, "What keeps you going as women of the church in Liberia? Most

agreed that meeting together for prayer and Bible study gives them the strength and support to serve others and God. They said they're committed to encouraging the next generation to get involved by asking them to plan social events, coordinate speakers on interesting topics, and provide leadership roles.

What keeps you going as a woman in Women of the ELCA?

*Eva James Yeo is director of membership for Women of the ELCA. Photo by Jason Edens of participants in the ribbon-cutting ceremony standing in front of the new solar panels*

**Those who went on the trip to Liberia included:** Mary Jo Mettler, Mary Kay Sloan and her daughter, Katie Trumble, Sue Ellwanger, Penny Hudlow, Janis Wegner, Roxanne Goelet, Valora K Starr, and me, plus RREAL representatives Jason Edens and BJ Allen. **Guests of honor at the ribbon-cutting ceremony included:** Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace laureate; Jensen Seyenkulo, bishop of the Lutheran Church in Liberia; Walter T Gwenigale, former minister of health, Liberia; Jefferson Sibley, medical director, Phoebe Hospital; and Naomi G. Ford-Wilson, general secretary of the Lutheran Church in in Liberia.

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