

Gretchen Leppke Papers 1954-2009

Creator: Gretchen Leppke (1927-2019)
Extent: 4.75 linear feet (8 boxes)
Language: English
Repository: Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago

Administration Information

Access Restrictions: None.

Usage Restrictions: Copyright was transferred to the Women and Leadership Archives.

Preferred Citation: Identification of item, date, box #, folder #, Gretchen Leppke Papers, Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago.

Provenance: The materials were donated to the Women and Leadership Archives by Gretchen Leppke on August 27, 2003, June 16, 2004, July 6, 2004, and May 4, 2010. Accessioned as WLA2004.17, WLA2004.37, and WLA2010.09. Material donated on August 27, 2003 was separated for the Women, Ministry, and the City records and accessioned as WLA2003.21.

Processor: Laura McDowell, April 18, 2008; Beth Loch, June 2012

Processing Information: Addendum incorporated and finding aid updated by Laura Berfield, April 2025.

Separations: 0.75 linear ft. of materials were removed from the collection including 0.25 linear ft. of duplicate music sheets, litanies, National Women's History Project posters, and articles and 0.5 linear ft. of Chinese brochures, journals, and magazines about women in third world countries.

See Also: Gretchen Leppke Collection at the University of Chicago; Women, Ministry, and the City Records at the Women and Leadership Archives

Biographical History

Gretchen Buenger (Leppke) was born on September 26, 1927, one of two daughters of architect Edgar Walter Buenger and homemaker Gertrude Weber Buenger. Buenger graduated from Rochester High School in 1945. Her high school accolades included membership in the honor society, and election to vice president of the student council. Buenger was active at an early age in candy striping, the Walther League of the Lutheran Church, and Republican politics. Buenger enrolled in the University of Minnesota where she became involved in Gamma Delta (Lutheran student organization), All University Council, Mortar Board, and Amity Among Nations. In 1949, Buenger was awarded the Order of the Gopher, an honorary award for leadership. In the summer of 1949, she traveled to Sweden with Amity Among Nations, deciding to live and work in Sweden after the trip from August 1949 to June 1950.

In September 1955, she married Delbert Max Leppke. Gretchen Leppke was a homemaker for nearly two decades, caring for her two children, Kevin and Karen. The family moved to Evanston, IL in 1966, and Gretchen remained an active member of the Evanston community for the rest of her life. During this time, Leppke continued her involvement in charitable and political organizations, calling herself “a professional volunteer. These organizations included the Lutheran Church, the Women’s Republican Club, Cub Scouts, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Her church involvement increased in 1972 when Leppke joined the Lutheran Women’s Caucus, the feminist branch of the Lutheran Church. At this time, Leppke also returned to school. She earned a Master of Arts in Urban Studies from Loyola University Chicago in 1974 and a Master of Theological Studies from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 1982. Leppke’s transition from her role as a homemaker to one as a scholar and activist organizer was inspired by the feminist movement. Leppke credits Betty Freidan’s book “The Feminine Mystique” as one important motivator. “I was shocked. I remember one time storming around the halls wanting to burn down the library for some of the stuff I read there about the weaker sex,” Leppke remarked.

Leppke served as national President of the Lutheran Women’s Caucus from 1979-1985. She became the administrator of Women, Ministry, and the City from 1983-1988 and served on the organization’s board until approximately 1993. Leppke also organized and ran the Women of Faith Resource Center from 1988-1994, an organization created after the conference “Women of Faith – Same Journey: Different Paths.” In addition to church and feminist activism, Leppke briefly worked on a proposed book of essays about Lutheran women during the 1980s. Gretchen Leppke’s intellectual and professional pursuits primarily included Lutheranism and feminism, both locally and internationally.

Gretchen Leppke passed away July 10, 2019.

Scope and Content

The original collection and addendum were consolidated and reprocessed to create the Gretchen Leppke Papers. This consolidation reduced redundancy and increased the level of access to the collection. These papers consist of four series and three subseries; they span from 1972 to 2004. The folders are arranged alphabetically within the series and folder contents are arranged chronologically.

Series 1: Autobiographical and Professional Information, 1974-2004, undated, Box 1

Contains papers written by Leppke about her life, general correspondence about religion, academic papers from graduate school, and materials relating to her proposed book about Lutheran women.

Series 2: Women of Faith Resource Center, 1987-1995, undated, Boxes 1-2

Contains the organizational papers of the Women of Faith Resource Center (called the Women’s Place Resource Center beginning in 1994). Included are promotional materials, correspondence, membership lists, documents relating to conferences and public program planning, and board meeting agendas and minutes.

Series 3: Subject Files, 1972-2001, undated, Boxes 2-5

Include secondary information relating to organizations Leppke belonged to. Secondary materials also include educational pamphlets. There are three subseries and each is arranged alphabetically.

Subseries 3.1: General

Subseries 3.2: United Nations

Subseries 3.3: Women and Religion

Series 4: Audiovisual, 1987-1992, undated, Boxes 5-6

Includes audio recorded lectures on the subject of power and religion as well as numerous photographs of Leppke, the Women of Faith Resource Center, the Women's Place Resource Center, conferences, and public programs these organizations were involved in.

Series 5: Addendum 1, 1954-2009, Boxes 7-8

This series contains Addendum 1, an accrual of materials that were processed but not incorporated with the series above. Similar and/or related materials listed above may also be found here. The materials reflect Leppke's involvement in liturgical services and the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. This series includes correspondence, newsletters, photographs, newspaper and journal articles, bookmarks, liturgical music, and digital materials. The series is organized alphabetically within each subseries.

Subseries 5.1: Liturgical and Women's Equality Materials, 1954-2008, undated, Box 7

Contains materials relating to liturgical celebrations and issues of women equality in religious institutions. There are articles about women's ordination, Biblical women, equality of language, and liturgical services. Correspondence, newsletters, liturgical music, and poetry are also included.

Subseries 5.2: International Women, 1974-2009, undated, Boxes 7-8

Includes materials related to international women. A majority of the material relates to the Fourth United Nations Conference held in China in 1995. Articles about China and women's rights abroad make up the majority of this series. It also includes two books, *Comparative Perspectives of Third World Women* and *Women in Changing Japan*.

Subseries 5.3: Photographs, undated, Box 8

Contains photographs of an untitled event at Agape House.

Subseries 5.4: Digital Materials, 1985-1995, undated

Consists of materials that are held digitally in the Women and Leadership Archives and are available to patrons on request. The materials include photographs of a needlepoint cross-stitching piece, an embroidered apron, and posters.

Subjects:

China

Feminism

Global Women's Activism

Leppke, Gretchen (1927-2019)

The Lutheran Church

United Nations

Women and the Church
Women of Faith Resource Center

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
		<i>Gretchen Leppke Papers, 1954-2009</i>	
		Series 1: Autobiographical and Professional Information, 1974-2004, undated	
1	1	Autobiographical Information	1980, 2003-2004
1	2	General Correspondence	1978, 1991
1	3	Academic Papers and Bible Study	undated
1	4	Proposed Lutheran Women Book: Plans	1980, undated
1	5	Proposed Lutheran Women Book: Correspondence	1974, 1979-1981, 1992, undated
1	6	Proposed Lutheran Women Book: Research, Henrietta Lund	undated
		Series 2: Women of Faith Resource Center, 1987-1995, undated	
1	7	Board of Directors: Correspondence, Agendas, and Minutes (1 of 3)	1988-1994, undated
1	8	Board of Directors: Correspondence, Agendas, and Minutes (2 of 3)	1988-1994, undated
1	9	Board of Directors: Correspondence, Agendas, and Minutes (3 of 3)	1988-1994, undated
1	10	“The Church and the Spirituality, Sexuality, and Socialization of Young Girls,” Report of the WOFRC	1993, undated
1	11	Conference: “Women of Faith – Same Journey: Different Paths”	1986, undated
1	12	Conference and Public Programs: “Weaving Women’s Stories”	1991-1993, undated
2	1	General Correspondence (1 of 3)	1987-1994, undated
2	2	General Correspondence (2 of 3)	1987-1994, undated
2	3	General Correspondence (3 of 3)	1987-1994, undated
2	4	Membership Lists	1987, 1989, 1994, undated
2	5	Organizational Information	1990-1992, undated
2	6	Public Programs and WOFRC Promotional Materials (1 of 3)	1988-1995, undated
2	7	Public Programs and WOFRC Promotional Materials (2 of 3)	1988-1995, undated
2	8	Public Programs and WOFRC Promotional Materials (3 of 3)	1988-1995, undated
		Series 3: Subject Files, 1972-2001, undated	

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Subseries 3.1: General			
2	9	Global Hunger	1977, 1979, 1985
2	10	Global Women's Work and Gender Awareness	1979, 1985, 1989, 1995
2	11	Liberation Theology	1972, 1980, 1982, undated
2	12	Philippine Women	1985, undated
3	1	The Sisterhood is Global Institute	1995-2000, undated
3	2	Women's Roles, Rights, and Resources	1973-1995, undated
Subseries 3.2: United Nations			
3	3	Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing (1 of 3)	1987, 1993-1996
3	4	Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing (2 of 3)	1987, 1993-1996
3	5	Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing (3 of 3)	1987, 1993-1996
3	6	Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing: Correspondence	1995
3	7	Nairobi Conference	1984-1986
4	1	United Nations Decade for Women	1980-1994, undated
4	2	UNIFEM	1994-1997
Subseries 3.3: Women and Religion			
4	3	Abortion and Reproductive Rights	
4	4	The Community of Women and Men in the Church	1979-1981
4	5	Gender Roles and Feminism in the Church	1980-1993, undated
4	6	Inclusive Language	1972, 1985-1987, 1993, undated
5	1	The Pentecost Partnership: Combatting Sexism	undated
5	2	Surveys	1973, 1979, undated
Series 4: Audiovisual, 1987-1993, undated			
5	3	Photographs	1988, 2000-2001
5	4	Negatives	1989
5	5	Parliament of World Religions Photographs	1993
5	6	Rush of a Mighty Wind Pentecost Celebration Photographs	undated
5	7	Weaving Women's Stories Photographs	1991, undated
5	8	Women of Faith Conference Pictures (1 of 2)	1986
5	9	Women of Faith Conference Pictures (2 of 2)	1986
5	10	Women of Faith Resource Center Founders Photographs	undated
5	11	Women, Ministry and the City Photographs and Negatives	1992, 1994
5	12	Women's Place Resource Center Photographs	1994
6	N/A	Bettenhausen Lecture: Audiocassette Tapes	undated
Series 5: Addendum 1, 1954-2009, undated			

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Series 5.1: Liturgical and Women's Equality Materials, 1954-2008, undated			
7	1	Biblical Women Articles	1991
7	2	Correspondence	1982, 2007, undated
7	3	"Creative Woman"	1988
7	4	Equality of Language Articles	1954-1981
7	5	Equality of Language Articles	1982-2008, undated
7	6	Handouts and Poems	1977-1995, undated
7	7	Language Guidelines	1977, 1989
7	8	Litanies, Liturgies, and Events	1983-2006, undated
7	9	Liturgical Music	1976-2006, undated
7	10	Newsletters	1994-1995, undated
7	11	Study Guide: Using Inclusive Language Guidelines	1981
7	12	"The Power of Language"	1975
7	13	Women's Liturgy Services: St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1995-2008, undated
7	14	Women's Ordination Articles	1970-2006, undated
Series 2: International Women, 1974-2009, undated			
7	15	Amity Materials	1991, 1995, undated
8	1	Articles on Chinese Women	1974-1997, undated
8	2	<i>Comparative Perspectives of Third World Women</i>	1980
8	3	Fourth United Nations Conference on Women Materials	1995
8	4	Religion in China Articles	1988-1995, undated
8	5	United Nations Materials on Women	1984-1995
8	6	"Women: Builders of Communities" Bookmarks	undated
8	7	<i>Women in Changing Japan</i>	1976
8	8	Women's Rights Articles	1989-2009, undated
Series 3: Photographs, 1991			
8	9	Agape House	1991
Series 4: Digital Material, 1985-1995, undated			
--	--	Apron: "Woman's place is in the House...the Senate"	undated
--	--	Needlepoint: "Women's Work Is Never Done"	undated
--	--	Posters: Africa	1985, undated
--	--	Poster: Middle East	1985-1995, undated
--	--	Poster: National Women's History Project	1992
--	--	Poster: Kenya	1985-1995, undated
--	--	Poster: Tibet	1985-1995, undated
--	--	Posters [9 posters]: 4 th World Conference on Women	1995, undated

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--	--	Posters [2 posters]: Educating Women	1995
--	--	Posters [4 posters]: International Women	1985-1995, undated