

Women of the ELCA

Newsletter for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Northwest Synod of Wisconsin – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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"I wish for those I love this New Year an opportunity to bring into the lives of those about them some measure of joy, to know the satisfaction of work well done, and to end the year a little wiser, a little kinder, and therefore a little happier."

Eleanor Roosevelt

—Eleanor Roosevelt

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greeting Lutheran Women of NW Wisconsin!

My greeting will never be “happy holidays,” so I do want to wish you a huge, “Merry Christmas!” With my family having so many in-laws and out-laws as well as being spread geographically, celebrating together becomes a planning extravaganza. Somehow, we still do that, even if the calendar says January.

Merry
Christmas

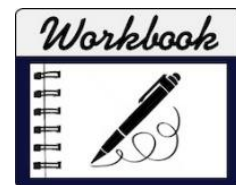
We had a wonderful vacation to the Buffalo NY area for the national gathering of *Cherish All Children*. The conference was a great learning experience, Niagara Falls was spectacular, and our little Mitzi (“she’s” a tiny red car) got 47 mpg. The main presenter at the gathering was Rev. Sue Engh, formerly of the Twin Cities area but now employed at church-wide in Chicago as the director for community organizing. I didn’t realize there was so much to know about the right and wrong ways to approach and work with people and other organizations, especially when it comes to coordinating stuff. Guess we’re never too old to learn new things. Rev. Amy Hartman, the national director for *Cherish All Children*, will present workshops at the Triennial that you won’t want to miss. Also, a portion of the Triennial offering will go to support that ministry to make churches safe for children as well as to prevent any abuse or trafficking of children. Their focus is through “Prayer, Education, Connection and Action.”



Our Lake Superior Conference Gathering at Peace Lutheran Church in Poplar went well and we had more women present than we expected. Yeah! The ladies served a wonderful brunch, Sherry DePolis Thompson sang and shared beautifully, and we all agreed to do this again sometime! One of the churches is checking out the possibility of hosting us in February. Brave women, those northern ladies!

I reported it at our Leadership Day in September, but many of you weren’t there - Bethany Lutheran in Rice Lake has officially agreed to host our convention April 27 & 28, **2018**. We will have our business meeting on Friday night and gather all of W/ELCA for a one day convention on Saturday. And even better news, Barb Garling (Heart of the North Rep from Cumberland) and Phyllis Beastrom (former SWO President and Treasurer from St. Croix Valley Conference) have agreed to be convention co-chairs. We’ll wait until after the Triennial to make plans, but you can mark the date on your 2018 calendars.

The latest news from my house concerns a new “assignment,” thanks to Rev. Laurie Skow-Anderson. I have been asked to join Marcia Lindseth and Mary Meierotto as one of many Process Builders nation-wide that are promoting and/or leading studies toward the up-coming Social Statement being prepared by the ELCA. We need to meet with as many groups as possible using all or portions of the 7-module Bible study workbook the Task Force has prepared on women and justice issues facing us today. Each person who participates at all is asked to fill out a short response to be sent directly to the Task Force. In fact, you don’t have to wait for us to get around to doing something about this topic. Every church has been sent a copy of the workbook that has leader guidelines included, so it is something you can consider doing on your own with a W/ELCA group, adult Sunday School class, pastors’ ministerium, neighborhood coffee club, or whatever is convenient for you. This study phase concludes in August of 2017.




I love getting cards and especially those with the newsy letters, even though some people think they are politically incorrect. It warms my heart to keep in touch with friends and family and to write my own goofy Christmas letter. I choose a new “theme” every year that sometimes works well. This year it will be names of cars! So, I now *Escort* you to the end of this writing, and bid you a Happy New Year!

Sincerely, Sue Saarem, SWO President

From the VICE PRESIDENT

Advent greetings to all of you.



It was Christmas Eve over ten years ago, I was sitting with the church choir looking over the congregation as they worshiped on that holy night. My thoughts wandered to the people I saw in the pews. There were my friends whose 40-year old son had just been diagnosed with cancer. A member of the congregation recently watched their son enter the county jail after being charged with a felony. Another friend was facing possible kidney dialysis, and our own son was going through a divorce. I felt the heaviness of my own anxiety as well as the suffering of those around me.

And then the lights were dimmed, the pew candles lit, and we began to sing “Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright.” There in a pew sat my three-year old grandson, his eyes sparkling in the candlelight, completing the verse, “Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.”

It was like a weight lifted from me as I watched Jacob sing. I realized we were not alone in our anxiety and uncertainty in life. A little child had brought me the message that the Prince of Peace was with us to give us hope and comfort and a future.

May you also experience this Prince of Peace in this Advent and Christmas season and throughout the year.

Dawn Olson
SWO Vice-president

Discipleship

Have you ever thought what discipleship means as a woman of the ELCA? Webster’s dictionary defines discipleship as, “a follower of Jesus Christ”. As women of the ELCA there are many ways to be his disciples. According to the Women of the ELCA website there are seven ways that we can practice discipleship: praying, studying, worshiping, inviting, serving and giving.

In many of the leadership training sessions I have participated in with our conference, one of the questions that always arises is how can we get more women to participate. We understand that many of our women are busy with families, full time jobs, being a caretaker of a loved one, dealing with illness, children active in sports and other family commitments making it hard to add one more thing to sometimes a busy schedule. In looking at these seven practices maybe we need to redefine how we look at our women’s group. One thing I think we forget is that all women are members of Women of the ELCA whether they are associated with an “active group” or not. Even though they may not be active in your women’s group they may be active in other ways.

Encourage and uplift all women in your congregation through your prayers. Maybe you may wish to connect with those who may not be a current participant and select them as a prayer partner for a year to help support them in their daily walk. Encourage all to study Christ’s word daily, not only in your monthly group Bible studies by inviting them but also in your own personal daily life. In our electronic age with computers and smartphones we have access to many wonderful daily devotions and Bible study materials. Encourage all to worship. Here many of our young women are willing to help teach Sunday or Vacation Bible School or be worship assistants and serve on council, thank them for their willingness to participate in these areas. Invite them to participate in your quilting sessions, or encourage families to help put together a health, school or layette kit as a family. Encourage those who may knit or crochet to participate in your prayer shawl ministry. Many are willing to provide food for an event. Choose a special women’s offering throughout the year that all may participate by giving to.



If you are looking for more ideas for either yourself or to share with your group check out the Women of the ELCA website under Discipleship and see the many materials that are available to help with your discipleship journey as a group or individually. www.womenoftheelca.org/discipleship. These materials are a free download.

Barb Garling, Heart of the North Conference representative

STEWARDSHIP

I was asked to submit a short article on stewardship for the Northwester. Creatively weaving words together is not my strong point. I love to read and appreciate the talents a good writer possesses. In preparation, I've been reading about stewardship and this quote by Kathy Fiscus, Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis sums up how I feel. "Stewardship is a matter of the heart.



My stewardship practices are a response to the boundless love God first showed me. It means that I am grateful for all that God has generously entrusted to me. As a faithful steward and child of God, I understand that (the) decisions I make, in all aspects of my life, reveal my priorities. It is a privilege to share time, talents and finances, to care for God's earth and to serve my neighbors. Being a good steward has brought me great joy and has helped me grow spiritually. I am blessed to be a blessing."

Carol Lekies, Chequamegon Conference Representative

JUSTICE

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. I gather with my family that I only see a couple of times during the year. We go to church and give thanks to God for our many blessings; every year those items multiply! Have you tried writing a "Gratitude Journal"? You will be amazed at your list.

While we gather around tables laden with the best food and desserts, there are many who struggle to put food on the table. In America, there are **14 million** people, including more than **15 million children** who struggle with hunger, according to information from *Feeding America*.

Hunger in America is not seasonal, it is a year-round issue. When kids are out of school, there are no free or reduced breakfasts, and no lunches that are provided during the school year. The parents have to provide those meals at home. Also during the school year, some of those same children are given weekend meals to help out, but during the school breaks and during summer that food is not provided either.



Hunger affects people of all ages, families with children and senior citizens. They are forced to choose between paying their utility bills and buying food for their families. Heat or Eat... people should not have to make that choice in the richest country in the world.

My home church, Trinity Lutheran in Eau Claire serves a Thanksgiving dinner for the community. We usually serve about 500 guests at this annual event. We also have a Food Pantry that serves 700 guests a month. In addition, we also provide meals to both the Beacon House and Sojourner House, the homeless shelters in Eau Claire. The city of Eau Claire also provides meals 365 days a year, anyone and everyone is welcome at the table.

As we prepare our hearts to receive the Christ Child, let's remember those who are hungry. Buy extra groceries while you are doing your own shopping and donate the additional food to your local Food Pantry.

Use an Advent calendar and make each day an opportunity to care for someone who needs a helping hand. Get active legislatively, write to your Representatives and Senators regarding hunger issues. Be pro-active, join the fight to beat hunger!



Wishing you a Blessed Christmas,
Phyllis Grohn, Chippewa Valley Conference Representative

TREASURER'S NEWS

At our Fall Leadership Workshop, we distributed a Treasurer's Guide Chart which listed several types of offerings and where and when they should be distributed. It can be found on our synod women's website at www.nwswiswo.org. There will be links on the right column for the chart and links to FORM A and FORM B which is the form for THANKOFFERINGS and other special offerings. If you don't have a computer, ask your church secretary to find the website for you to print off the information.

We would appreciate units sending in YEARLY \$30 for the Convention Expense Fund. The purpose of this fund is to help defray the expenses of a convention and keep the cost low. With the move away from a hotel in Eau Claire to a church for our next convention in 2018, we will be able to even lower the cost so that more women will find it affordable.

The financial year for SWO ends on January 31, 2017 so all offerings sent up to that date will be credited to 2016. We encourage units not to save their treasury monies for a rainy day but put them to work to spread God's love where it is needed. Have you considered supporting our Bible Camps, Lutheran Social Services of WI, LWR quilt shipping fund, Katie Luther's Fund, ELCA World Hunger, or local needs?

We presented 14 partial scholarships to the Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis recently which we purchased at the last Triennial. We will give out seven \$100 Lay School scholarships and up to eight Seminary Scholarships of \$500 each in the coming months. This reflects a change in our policy from up to 10 scholarships to 8 Seminary scholarships.

Our offerings are down from last year so our board had to adjust the 2017 budget downward to reflect a possible decreased income. The board adjusted the budget from \$27,845 passed at the convention to a \$23,535 budget. Mileage being a big budget item will be an option for board members if needed, at a rate they can determine up to \$0.40/mile. The W/ELCA churchwide also reports decreased offerings which stresses their budget. So we ask for your faithful support of Women of the ELCA through your offerings.

Have a blessed Christmas,

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nwswoTREAS@gmail.com SWO web site: www.nwswiswo.org

The m&m Christmas story



As you hold these candies in your hand
And turn them, you will see
The "M" becomes a "W"
And an "E" becomes a "3".

They tell the Christmas story –
I'm sure it's one you know...
It took place in a stable
A long, long time ago.

The "E" is for the East,
Where the star shone so bright.
The "M" is for the Manger, where
The Baby Jesus slept at night.

The "3" is for the Wise men,
Bearing gifts, with which they came.
"W" is for worship,
Hallelujah! Praise His Name!

So, as you eat these candies,
Or share them with a friend,
Remember the meaning of Christmas
It's a love that never ends.



LOCAL UNIT NEWS

Photos of the Fall Retreat of the Apple River Conference, Women of the ELCA at Luther Point, Grantsburg



Trinity Lutheran Church Women in Eau Claire held an Advent Tea on December 5th, 2016 from 1:30 until 3:30 in the afternoon. Approximately 100 women attended. Fourteen women from the group shared their [Christmas](#) dishes, each one hosting a table of eight. Most attendees brought either holiday cookies or tiny sandwiches to share. (Extras were taken to two Eau Claire Homeless Shelters - the Sojourner and Beacon Houses after the event.) Devotions, music by the Madrigals from Memorial High School and Noah's Ark Preschool, many related poems and sign a-long hymns were sung. It was truly an afternoon of worship and fellowship that we all shared and it made this Advent Season a very special one.



Triennial Update



January 7, 2017! That's the date to get your registrations in at the lower rate. You can still register after that but you will pay the full price. And we are looking to take a couple of buses to Minneapolis that would get us there [Thursday, July 13, 2017](#) and bring us back [Sunday, July 16, 2017](#). Now, there are a couple of trips you can sign up for on [Thursday](#) that leave at 12 noon. The buses will get us there by noon so you can sign up for the trip. If you are not going on one of those trips, then my suggestion is to take your luggage to the hotel room and even if you can't check in yet, you can check your luggage at the hotel and leave it there. Then go for lunch, go to the Convention Center, get registered and head to the Exhibit Hall because you're going to want to spend some time there and you will be pretty busy the rest of the time.

We are looking at having buses stop in Spooner, Rice Lake and St. Croix Falls for our more northern route, and then stop at Medford, Osseo, Eau Claire and Hudson for the more southern route. We are hoping we get enough women signed up so the bus trip will only cost about \$50 per person and that is round trip. It will be so much cheaper than parking there, but just remember: The buses are only bringing us there on [Thursday](#) and bringing us back on [Sunday](#). They will **not** be around to take us places on [Friday](#) and [Saturday](#).

We are planning on using churches as the bus stops where we can get picked up and leave our cars. Please let me know when you have registered and if you want to take the bus. I need to know, especially if you want to take the bus, so if we can plan accordingly. We want to fill up those buses!! You have to let me know if you want to take the bus by [March 1, 2017](#), then we can figure out if we have enough for two buses (or if we need more!). And then you will be required to pay for the bus by [April 1, 2017](#).

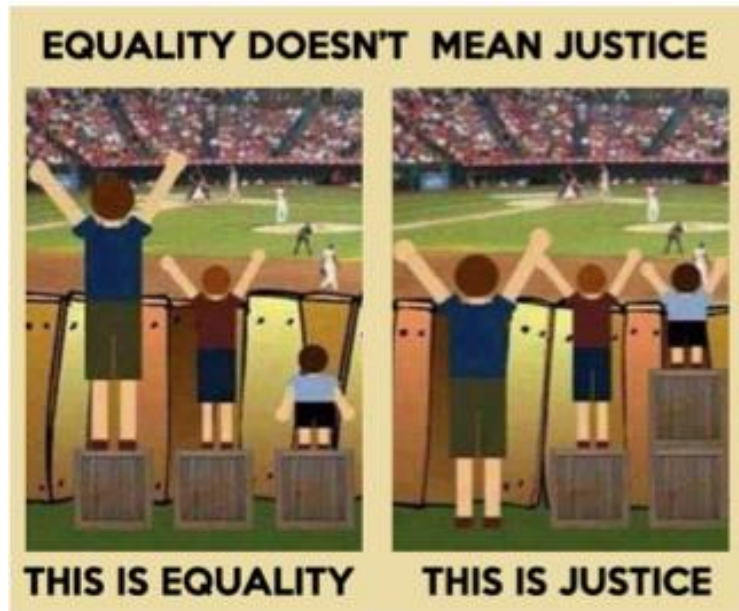
Once again, the Triennial doesn't get any closer than this! And you will never, never, ever regret going.

Blessings,
Roberta Bitler
edbert@sirentel.net
715.349.5908



After the family had sung some Christmas carols, five-year-old Jimmy said, "Wasn't it good of the Shepherds to put on clean clothes when they went to see Jesus?" "What do you mean?" his father asked. Jimmy replied, "Well,, we just sang '*While Shepherds washed their Socks by Night*'...."

Today's Dream: Tomorrow's Reality



You Need Us Now, More than Ever!

NW Synod of Wisconsin SWO Racial Justice Advocacy Team
Racial Justice Presentations available for your unit, your church,
your conference, your community.

Contact us for more information or to schedule a presentation:

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Marcia Lindseth, St. Croix Conf., 715-262-3498, mlindseth@centurytel.net

Gail Lando, Apple River Conf., 715-689-2437, gailk@grantsburgtelcom.net

Pastor Angie Kutney, Apple River Conf., 715-825-2453, angkutney@gmail.com

Diane Kaufmann, Chippewa Valley Conf., 715-579-1731, dikaufmann@yahoo.com

MARK THESE DATES!

- Feb 25th, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm, Metropolis, Eau Claire. Cross-Generational (High School and Adults) Racial Justice workshop sponsored by the Synod Youth Board with assistance from the TD:TR (Today's Dreams: Tomorrow's Reality) Trainers listed above. **This will be a great way to connect with the young adults from your congregation!**
- March 18th – Walking Together – UWEC-Davies Center. Of special interest will be a 3-session workshop led by Inez Torres-Davis, director for justice for Women of the ELCA, and assisted by the synod's TD:TR (Today's Dreams: Tomorrow's Reality) Trainers listed above.

“The Perfect Mistake”

My mother's father worked as a carpenter. On this particular day, he was building some crates for the clothes his church was sending to the orphanages in China.

On his way home, he reached into his shirt pocket to find his glasses, but they were gone. When he mentally replayed his earlier actions, he realized what had happened; the glasses had slipped out of his pocket unnoticed and fallen into one of the crates, which he had nailed shut. His brand new glasses were heading for China.



The Great Depression was at its height and Grandpa had six children. He had spent \$20 for those glasses that very morning. He was upset by the thought of having to buy another pair. “It’s not fair”, he told God as he drove home in frustration. “I’ve been very faithful in giving of my time and money to your work, and now this.”



Months later, the director of the orphanage was on furlough in the United States. He wanted to visit all the churches that supported him in china, so he came to speak one Sunday at my grandfather's small church in Chicago.

The missionary began by thanking the people for their faithfulness in supporting the orphanage. “But most of all,” he said, “I must thank you for the glasses you sent last year. You see, the Communists had just swept through the orphanage, destroying everything, including my glasses. I was desperate. Even if I had the money, there was simply no way of replacing those glasses. Along with not being able to see well, I experience headaches every day, so my coworkers and I were much in prayer about this. Then your crates arrived. When my staff removed the covers, they found a pair of glasses lying on the top. The missionary paused long enough to let his words sink in.



Then, still gripped with the wonder of it all, he continued: “Folks, when I tried on the glasses, it was as though they had been custom made just for me! I want to thank you for being a part of that.”

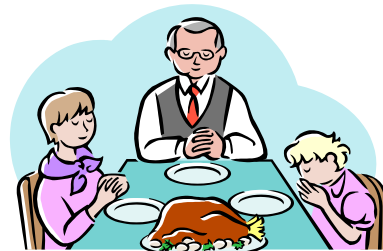
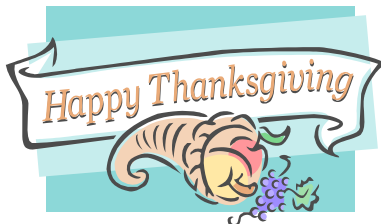
The people listened, happy for the miraculous glasses. But the missionary surely must have confused their church with another, they thought. There were no glasses on their list of items to be sent overseas.



But sitting quietly in the back, with tears streaming down his face, an ordinary carpenter realized the Master Carpenter had used him in an extraordinary way.

There are times we want to blame God instead of thanking Him. I have to remember this in these times of trial in our nation and our world, and those times in my own family.

May God bless you in the coming months and remember to keep looking for the ‘perfect mistakes’.



2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



FEBRUARY

- 17-19 – Synodical Presidents meeting in Chicago
- 25 – Cross-Generational Racial Justice Workshop, Metropolis Hotel, Eau Claire, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

MARCH

- 4 – SWO Board Meeting – tentatively at Big Drywood Lutheran, Cadott
- 18 – “Walking Together”, UW-Eau Claire Davies Center

APRIL

- 1 – Chippewa Valley Conference Day of Renewal
- 1 – St Croix Valley Morning of Renewal, Gethsemane Lutheran, Baldwin

AUGUST

- 10 – St Croix Valley Retreat, Zion Lutheran, Woodville
- 16-17 – Chippewa Valley Conference Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek

SEPTEMBER

- 16 – SWO Conference Leader Training, Our Saviors Lutheran, Chippewa Falls

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

- 4 – Advent Tea, Trinity Lutheran, Eau Claire

2018

JULY

- 10-13 – 10TH Triennial CONVENTION of the Women of the ELCA, Minneapolis, MN Convention Center; where the *business* of the Women of the ELCA is conducted. [Monday to Thursday].
- 13-16 – 10th Triennial GATHERING of the Women of the ELCA, Minneapolis, MN, Convention Center; the theme for this Gathering is “All Anew”. [Wednesday to Saturday].

2018

APRIL

- 27-28 – SWO Convention, place to be announced



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NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The Northwester is published four times a year by the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Women's Organization. Local units are encouraged to subscribe for all of their officers, including the president and your pastor.

Subscriptions to the newsletter are **\$8.00 per year.** The due date of your subscription appears on the address label. Reminders are not sent, so please watch your label for your expiration date and renew.

Address changes and questions concerning subscriptions should be addressed to Eleanor Johnson, Editor, at the address below. *[Or email at hdjebjohnson@tds.net. If you are emailing, please include Northwester or W/ELCA or subscriptions in the subject line].* This newsletter may be photocopied.

DEADLINE for the next issue of *The NORTHWESTER* is **MARCH 1, 2017**



Enclosed is payment of **\$8.00** payable to:
WOMEN OF THE ELCA, Northwest Synod (SWO)

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