NORTHWEST SYNOD OF WISCONSIN

Women of the ELCA

The Northwester

Newsletter for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Volume 26 - Issue 4 – December 2013

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
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Greenwood, WI 54437-0027

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WAITING, WAITING....

December is a month of waiting... waiting in traffic, waiting in checkout lines, waiting to get the Christmas tree in the house, waiting for the family to arrive, waiting to gather around out tables filled with our favorite foods, waiting to open packages... waiting, waiting, waiting.

We need to be reminded that Christmas is a celebration of waiting for something that is so much more important than our holiday traditions.

Advent is our season to prepare ourselves for a new beginning, a chance to start over with a new church year, a fresh start to remember the reason Christ came to earth in the form of a baby. To remember that we are waiting, as the Israelites waited for the Messiah.

But we are not the only one who waits. God is also waiting, waiting for us to see God's love, to receive forgiveness and to repent. As we wait for God's second coming, God also is waiting for us... to admit that we are lost without faith, that we need to learn patience and forgiveness.

As we make preparations for our Christmas season, baking cookies, wrapping gifts, trimming the tree; we also need to include time for prayer and meditation on this season of Advent.

We pray that your season of Advent is filled with joy, mystery and a sense of peace in the knowledge that Christ indeed will come, maybe arriving unexpectedly in our midst as he did once in Bethlehem.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you in this meaningful season of Advent and Christmas. On December 1, the first Sunday in Advent, my W/ELCA unit at my Joy Lutheran Church in Prescott, held their annual Advent Tea. Emilie Horken, a member of Joy's WELCA Steering Committee and a board member of the St. Croix Conference WELCA gave devotions. The thoughts she shared with us were so good that I asked her if I could share them with all of you through our December *Northwester*. She consented and thus I share them with you:

"Today we lit the first candle on the Advent wreath and somehow that signals for many or most of us the beginning of four weeks of running and trying to accomplish more than we know is humanly possible. Every year we hear ourselves saying we can hardly believe that Christmas is here. It seems like only a short time ago since we put away last years wrapping, and burned last year's Christmas tree. Now it is time to start all over again. There are gifts to buy and wrap, cards to send, houses to be decorated inside and out, cookies to be baked, big meals to prepare, parties to attend and parties to host, and the list seems endless. Every year I hear myself commenting that if I could get as much done all year long as I do the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I would have no problem whatsoever keeping everything in order at home. But there just doesn't seem to be that same spark the rest of the year that we all have right now. It is a spark that is kindled by the retail community and seems to start just a little earlier every year.

But is Advent just a race? Advent comes from the Latin word "adventus" which means a "coming." The period is to serve as a reminder to Christians of the coming of Christ. It should be a time of preparation, but just what should we be preparing for? If our hearts and eyes are not open to the world around us, if we become so self-centered in our preparation, Christmas, as well as Advent, can become a real let-down, and even a disaster. We need to be mindful at this time that we are responsible for our brothers and sisters within God's great family and that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive.

In our world today, how should we as Christians go about preparing for Christmas? How should we spend our Advent period? Why, with all the preparations we go through, do we not feel ready when Christmas gets here? And, doesn't the day even seem like a let-down to many of us when it does arrive? The day comes and goes and we hear ourselves saying "Is this all there is?"

We fail to really get ready for Christmas because we have lost the spirit of expectancy. We have become so conventional and worldly about the Feast of Christmas that we do not expect Jesus to be present at his own birthday party. A little refugee boy five years old was taken by his foster parents to the toy carnival of a huge department store. It was his first visit to the enchanted land. His eyes popped open wide and glistened with excitement. After a while, he began to look under the tables, and search behind the counters. His foster parents and the store clerks wondered what he was looking for. Then he stammered, "Where is the baby Jesus?" Thousands of eager shoppers visited that store daily. How many of them expected to see Jesus there?

Advent and Christmas will lose their meaning for us if we have lost the spirit of expectancy. We cannot prepare our hearts for an observance. We need to prepare for an experience. Christ is the source of the Christmas spirit. God gave us the greatest gift of all, His son, and when He is received; His unspeakable gift will go on forever."

I pray that during this busy season of Advent and Christmas you will live in a spirit of expectancy and take time to thank Almighty God for His wondrous gift of Salvation, for his wondrous gift of Love.

Your Synod Women's Organization (SWO) Board met with your Conference Coordinators on November 23rd to discuss the business and activities of your SWO. Please take note of these, discuss, and support them in your local units.

- The SWO is completing its 2013 initiative to support Lutheran World Relief's Quilt Campaign. We are doing our part to help LWR collect 500,000 quilts in 2013 – quilts that will keep people warm and help them to know they are cared for by our churches. **Thank you to each unit that has participated in this year's quilt challenge!** I've been hearing some great "quilt stories" as you share about the fellowship you've enjoyed as you've made quilts, about the different ways that you have constructed the quilts, and how you have even surpassed by large quantities the number of quilts you have made in previous years. **Now is the time to report how many quilts were made in your church in 2013! Please send that number, by December 20, to either your Conference Coordinator or to the Conference Rep on our SWO Board. She, in turn, will send me the final numbers by the end of the year and we will gladly be reporting that number in the March *Northwester* or earlier on our new SWO website.**

- Our SWO is doing its part to help the Women of the ELCA grow the Katie's Endowment Fund to $1,000,000 by July 24, 2014. To accomplish that goal, the W/ELCA need $100,000 more. **The SWO Board would like each unit and conference to donate at least one offering this winter or spring to the Women of the ELCA's Katie's Fund.** Also, please encourage your local women to make a special offering to Katie's Fund. These offerings may be sent directly to the Women of the ELCA churchwide office. Why not send a monetary Christmas gift to Katie's Fund in honor or in memory of a loved one?

- Remember that the **SWO Biennial Convention is coming up on May 2-3, 2014 at the Plaza Inn and Suites in Eau Claire.** I hope that many of you will join us for an exciting program of speakers, workshops, music, worship, prayer, collection of in-kind gifts, and, of course, fellowship with other synod women. Please take note elsewhere in the *Northwester* more information about this convention. In addition, each unit should remember to send to the SWO Treasurer your $30.00 yearly donation for the SWO Convention Expense Fund. Note also that we are offering scholarships to cover registrations costs. See the application elsewhere in the newsletter and apply by March 15th if you're interested in a scholarship.
- Remember also that the **Ninth Triennial Gathering will be held July 24-27, 2014 in Charlotte, North Carolina. We hope to have a big delegation from our SWO at that Gathering.** Have you checked out the website to find out about all the fabulous speakers and other activities that we can share in? The website is www.welcatg.org. Look elsewhere in this newsletter for more information or contact our Triennial Promoter, Roberta Bitler at 715-349-5908 or edbert@sirentel.net for more information. Our SWO approved fourteen scholarship recipients who will each receive $200 towards their registration costs. Why not ask one of your loved ones to give you, as a gift this Christmas, the registration fee?

- **Nominations are needed for new SWO Board members for 2014-16.** Ellie McMahon, SWO Board Vice-President, will convene a Nominating Committee in January. We would like one person from each conference to be on the Nominating Committee. If you are interested in serving on the Nominating Committee or are interested in being nominated for a position on our SWO Board, please contact Ellie.
- **Thank you to all the women who participated in the SWO's Leadership Workshop on September 28th and thank you to Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, for hosting us!** We shared a lot!
- Note that the **Women of the ELCA gives several grants to non-profit organizations** that support healing and wholeness of all women of all ages through affirmation and advancement of women's emotional, physical, and spiritual health. They **also give individual scholarships** for Lutheran Laywomen, for Administrative Leadership, for Ordained Ministry, and for ELCA College and Seminary Leadership. Applications are now being accepted. Look on the womenoftheelca.org website for more information. Proposals and applications are due on February 15, 2014.

Again, I wish you Advent and Christmas blessings. May you find joy and peace as you celebrate the greatest gift of all – the gift of Jesus.

In His Service,
Marcia Lindseth, SWO President

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Today I bring you greetings of Christmas now and in future years. I pray that each one of you can grow closer to God through prayer and devotion. Love is what it's all about, what living is all about, whether that love be the perfect love of God or the imperfect love of human kind. Pain and hurt will come to us all whether we love or not. Pain and hurt will afflict us all, whether others love us or not. They came to Mary, they came to Joseph and they came to Jesus. Will that pain have any meaning or make any sense???

People unfamiliar with our God, wonder at the sign of his love that we display. They marvel and

wonder at the cross, a symbol of suffering, yet also a symbol of so much more. That cross signifies that God loved us so much that he gave his only son so that we might not perish. The cross signifies that God loved us so much that he walks with us into the worst that life can deal out, and helps us to overcome it.

When we say yes to God's love we say yes to that which will change our lives, give to them meaning, and purpose. When we say yes to God's love we say yes to that which will transform our lives and give to them a radiance that transforms others.

Christmas, as most people know can be a very difficult time of the year. It is a time when we feel we are supposed to be happy and joyous, a time in which we and the world around us, so it seems, puts upon us this expectation that we should be full of good cheer and at one with all of our family and with all of our friends. We can really lay a trip on ourselves and allow others to lay a trip on us also during this season.

It is so hard when we see others full of joy and expectation and we have in ourselves little but a sense of pain and loss; it is so hard to really embrace what this season is truly about which is nothing more than making room in our lives for God's love. We must say yes to the wonderful gift that God offers us through Christ our Lord.

When you are invited to serve as an officer or conference representative on our SWO Board for the 2014-15, prayerfully consider asking God to guide the path you should take. You need not wait for a formal invitation. You may volunteer. Please contact Ellie McMahon at 715 835 8000 or email at tomelliemcmahon@yahoo.com and I'll submit your interest to the Nominating Committee.

The following positions are available: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Lake Superior Conf Representative and Heart of the North Conference Representative. These positions are opening May 01, 2014 because most have served for a period of six years, which is the limit on the SWO Board.

World Day of Prayer – Friday, March 7, 2014

World Day of Prayer, held throughout the world on the first Friday of March, promotes justice and equality for women through prayer, partnership, service and celebrations. The World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year, and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service. It is a movement initiated and carried out by women in more than 170 countries and regions. It is a movement that brings together women of various races, cultures and traditions in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the year. Through World Day of Prayer, women affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world. The motto of the World Day of Prayer is "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action".

Announcing - World Day of Prayer 2014! The WDP Committee of Egypt, who invites us to search out "Streams in the Desert", prepared materials for World Day of Prayer 2014. Go to the website http://wdp-usa.org to learn more, order materials, and download items. You may also sign up to receive the WDP newsletter to learn more, share ideas for worship services, and connect with the WDP community. Why not plan a WDP service for your whole community?!

DISCIPLESHIP

On November 23rd the SWO Board met in Barron with the conference coordinators. What a day! If you did not know anything about discipleship before a meeting such as that, you would know by the end of the meeting. That is a group of very dedicated Christian women who share their faith with others so freely.

THE LWR Quilt Campaign
1 YEAR • 500,000 QUILTS

We talked about the LWR campaign for the quilts and other ministries such as: families putting LWR and Global Health kits together; Prayer Shawls for new babies and newlyweds (not just for illness); making cards and sending to congregation members (illness, birthdays, anniversaries etc); giving Christmas gifts out of the Good Gifts Catalog. There were many other ideas, but I neglected to take notes on all of them. There are as many ideas as there are people.

On Thanksgiving Day, a family (parents and grown children) from our congregation served the holiday meal to the public for free. They have done this for a few years now. The family, plus some community members, donated the food. Some people insist on paying for the meal and this money is given to either Operation Christmas or toward sponsoring a family for Christmas. They also play games, so it is food, activity and fellowship. What a way of showing discipleship!

I find that it is truly amazing what our women and congregations do for others. Unit presidents have been calling me with the numbers of quilts for LWR plus other items they have made and donated to LWR and other places. So far, the Apple River Conference has made 995 quilts for LWR; 256 school kits; 145 baby care kits; 126 personal care kits; 1 box of soap plus 43 bars of soap; 4 fabric kits; 5 graduation quilts; 8 quilts to Community Referral Agency (women's shelter); 4 quilts for fire victims; 2 quilts to silent auction for quilt funding; 9 quilts to Serenity Home (Salvation Army) and 26 Christmas Shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, Samaritan's Purse. This is only a partial list as about half of the units in our conference have not reported as yet. It will be interesting to see the final tally. This is discipleship and stewardship – giving to others to make their lives better. Jesus showed us the way and we are following His lead.

Blessings to you this Advent and Christmas season.
Carol Johnson
Discipleship
Apple River Conference Representative

JUSTICE

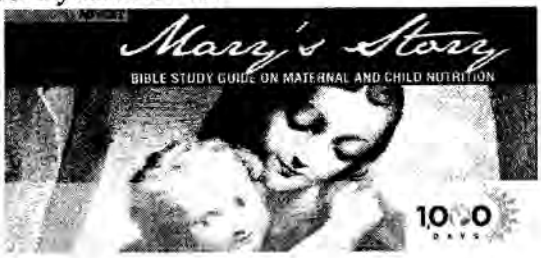
This is the time of year we all reflect on what we are thankful for. All of the privileges and advantages we have living in a free country. As I was thinking of all I am thankful for, I started thinking of all of the women in the world who do not have our advantages and freedoms; many of them living in the United States. There are many women who do not have a voice or the freedom to make choices as to the direction of their lives and the lives of their children. They are victims of human trafficking. At the last Triennial Convention, delegate passed resolutions asking Women of the ELCA to provide support for families of special needs children, to address commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking and to advance the health of women and girls.

I was exploring the updated ELCA website and discovered a link to a training program by the Department of State's TIP office in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security. This Human Trafficking awareness Training: "TIP 101" is available online to anyone. To catch the link, go the www.elca.org and click on Our Work > Publically Engaged Church > Justice for Women and select the Social Issues tab. At the bottom of the article select the Human Trafficking link. This article will give you some startling facts. (Human trafficking is now the second largest illegal trade grossing 32 billion dollars per year, just behind drug trafficking and ahead of illegal drug and weapon sales.) The article also gives ways for you to take action. Under the **Read** heading is the link to the State Departments "Trafficking in Person Report" or TIP report.

If you do not want to explore the ELCA website or finding the link seems like too much work, you can go directly to the State Departments website at www.state.gov/j/tip/. The left side bar gives the links to the annual TIP report and the TIP 101 Training. This is a great tool to share with your congregation. I took the TIP training and it is a good way to get a basic understanding of how human trafficking works and to educate ourselves and those around us. I challenge you to increase your awareness and the awareness of those around you to human trafficking.

I would like to remind you that December 15th is an important date for grants and scholarships. This date is the Women of the ELCA start accepting grant proposals and scholarship applications. The deadline for grant and scholarship applications is February 15, 2014. Get your grant proposals and scholarship application in, February 22nd will be here before you know it.

There is a new resource available on the Women of the ELCA website called Mary's Story that is perfect for Advent. It explores the relationship between Mary and Jesus in the light of the movement to improve nutrition for women and children in the 1000 days window.



I wish you all God's blessing and a wonderful Christmas season.
Dawn Wicklund

A Reminder….

- **Bold Women Sunday – Sunday, February 23, 2014 (or any other Sunday more convenient for you)**

Honor and celebrate the bold women in your congregation and community on Bold Women's Day, Sunday, February 23, 2014. Be bold, take risks on account of the gospel, but believe more boldly still in Jesus, said Martin Luther. And that's what we celebrate through Bold Women's Day: women who are bold, women who take risks on account of the gospel, women who believe more boldly still in Jesus. Go to the www.womenoftheelca.org website and download a flyer to promote this day with your congregation. Use the Bold Women's Day resource to plan your celebration. Download two special Bold Women's Day litanies: A Litany of Boldness and A Litany of Thanks for Bold Women. Download Bold Women's Day certificates to share with the bold women in your congregation. - See more at: http://www.womenoftheelca.org/bold-women-s-day.

Treasurer's Notes

"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" is among my favorite Christmas carols. Each verse calls us to rejoice with heart, soul, and voice to celebrate that Jesus was born to save. We have been set free from sin and are called to serve God and those around us. One opportunity of serving is through our offerings. Offerings received whenever women meet for Bible study, meetings, quilting or other projects, are to be shared with the Synodical Women's Organization (at least 50%). The Synodical Women's Organization also sends 50% of offerings received to churchwide. Your offerings not only support local ministries, but also ministries within the synod and throughout the entire church. I know many units will be sending additional financial gifts for Women of the ELCA during December and we thank you for your faithful and continued financial support for the ministries of Women of the ELCA.

A **chart to guide treasurers** in their responsibilities is available on our NW Synod of WI SWO website http://www.nwswiswo.org/ or you can contact me and I'll send you a copy. This chart lists several types of giving and to whom that offering is to be sent – whether it be to me as the Synodical treasurer or to churchwide. My contact information is in the box on this page. **Links for the NEW** Offering Forms A & B are on our website and they are in the 2013-2014 Stewardship Guide so you can copy them. You may use the old style forms as well.

I also want to remind all treasurers that **YEARLY** each unit **shall send $30** to the SWO treasurer **for the convention expense fund.** This purpose of this fund is to help defray the expenses of the convention and to keep the convention registration fee low enabling more women the opportunity of attending. This $30 can be sent to me in February, March, or April.

On May 2-3, 2014, our Synodical Women's Organization Convention will be held in Eau Claire. Unit offerings for the SWO Convention are to be sent to me in March or April or brought to the SWO Convention. More details will be coming designating the offering recipients. In July 2014, the Triennial Gathering will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina. I will provide information in the March Northwester on submitting your unit's offering for the Triennial Gathering.

CONGREGATIONAL UNIT TREASURERS

Send your unit offerings, convention expense funds, and SWO convention offerings to:
Phyllis Beastrom
SWO Treasurer
W6244 410th Avenue
Ellsworth WI 54011

715-273-5847 (evenings)
nwswotreas@gmail.com

TREASURERS –Has your unit considered **subscriptions for the Northwester** for all your officers? The Northwester has lots of information about the ministry of Women of the ELCA in our synod and throughout the church. This is a great way to keep connected as to what's happening!

We thank and praise God for the active, faithful, and joyful stewardship of Women in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. It is **you** and **your offerings** that support many ministries in our synod and throughout the church.

Phyllis Beastrom
SWO Treasurer

After the family sang 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 baby Jesus?" "What do you mean?" his father asked. Jimmy replied, "Well, we just sang, 'While Shepherds Washed Their Socks by Night.'"

Because we always hold our convention in Eau Claire, gifts in kind have been going to Eau Claire charities. This year we have decided to do something different—we'll divide the gifts between our conferences. Conference Boards can decide who gets the gifts—and they will take them home from the convention. Here is a suggested list of gifts to bring with you to be distributed...

Gifts in Kind for the SWO Convention

Paper Products	Hygiene products (travel or small sizes)
Toilet paper	Toothbrushes
Paper Towels	Toothpaste
Paper Cups	Razors
Napkins	Deodorant
Kleenex	Shaving Cream
Ziploc Bags	Hand Cream
	Bars of Soap
Cloth Items	Sanitary Napkins
Socks	Hairbrushes/Combs
Underwear	Nail Clippers
Washcloths	Diapers
Towels	First Aid Supplies

SCHEDULE - FRIDAY, MAY 2

12:00	Exhibit Setup
3:00-4:00	Board Meeting
4:00-8:30	Registration Opens
4:00-10:00	Exhibits Open
4:00	Burgundy's Restaurant Opens
4:15-5:15	Board Dinner—Terrace Room
5:30-5:45	Gathering Music in Crystal Ballroom
5:45-6:45	Opening Session
7:00-8:00	Delegates meet
7:00-8:00	Awareness Sessions
8:00-10:00	Prayer Room Available
8:00-8:30	Program for the evening—Mood Swings—Crystal Ballroom. These women sing a cappella and are guaranteed to boost your spirits and put you in a festive mood for the convention—and perhaps for days afterwards.
8:30-10:00	Reception & Exhibits

SCHEDULE - SATURDAY, MAY 3

7:30-9:30	Registration Open
7:30-Noon	Exhibits open
7:30-Noon	Prayer Room Available
7:45-8:00	Gathering Music
8:00-8:45	Opening session, Communion, Offering
9:00-10:00	Awareness Session
10:00-10:30	Morning Coffee Break and Hotel Checkout
10:30-11:30	Awareness Session
11:30-11:45	Assemble in Crystal Ballroom for lunch
11:45-12:00	Piano Music & Gathering Songs
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:15	Wiggle Break (Could be earlier if lunch is finished)
1:15-2:15	Patti Kachel, Keynoter (Could start earlier if lunch is finished)
2:30-3:00	Closing Remarks and Installation of new SWO Officer

Women of the ELCA
Northwest Synod of WI-S.W.O. S-H

SYNOD WOMEN ORGANIZATION'S CONVENTION
MAY 2 - 3, 2014
PLAZA INN & SUITES (Block #8247)
1202 W. Clairemont Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701
715-834-3181

Theme: Too Blessed To Be Stressed

Bible Verse: "You, Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you." Isaiah 26:3

Registration Fee: $50 early (or $60 after April 14)
Room Rate: $89 - (for up to 4 women - includes continental breakfast)

SPECIAL GUEST: JENNY MICHAEL, PRESIDENT WELCA
Friday Night Entertainment – Mood Swing Singers
Saturday Keynote Speaker: Pati Kachel with
"A Patchwork Quilt of Heartwarming Stories"

Awareness Sessions:

- Freedom Of Forgiveness; A Lesson From Mary's Story
  - Barbara Swant & Ruth Anderson
- Too Blessed to be Stressed - Penny Lien
- Legal Assistance for Victims of Domestic Violence - Nancy Kraft
- Good News Jail & Prison Ministry - Chaplain Stephen Norlander
- Didn't Racism End in 1964?—Kimberly Schafer & Gail Lando, Racial Justice Advocates
- Teaching Children About God - Janet Pingel
- BEAT IT! Cancer Survivors' Panel - Support Group Members
- Hagar International, Human Rights Abuse - Roberta Joern
- Energizing Your Congregation's Unit – Jenny Michael, President of the WELCA
- Heart to Heart - Jennie Childs, Thrivent

Prayer Room with Attendants: Ilene Chapman and Sue Saarem for quiet meditation
Exhibit Hall: filled with enthusiastic exhibitors (and even shopping opportunities)

Join us for fellowship, Communion, learning opportunities, and more!!

For updates watch the Northwester, go online, or contact jallison@bloomer.net
For registration information, contact Brenda Wheeler, swosecretary@centurylink.net
The SWO webpage can be found at http:/www.nwswiswo.org

SWO BIENNAL CONVENTION
REGISTRATION FORM

WOMEN OF THE ELCA
NW WISCONSIN SYNOD CONVENTION
MAY 2-3, 2014

Where: Plaza Hotel & Suites, 1202 W Clairemont Ave, Eau Claire, WI

Fees: $50.00 Until April 14, 2014 (No refunds after April 1)
$60.00 Late registration and same Day Registration
Registration is transferable but not refundable after April 1, 2014

Registration includes: Conference, Friday night reception, Saturday coffee break, and lunch

Registration Check-in will be in the Ballroom Corridor
Begins: Friday, May 2 @ 4 PM-6PM
Saturday, May 3 @ 7:30 AM-9AM

Please send check (payable to Women of the ELCA) to:

Brenda Wheeler
P. O. Box 603
Webster, WI 54893-0603

Telephone: 715.866.4724
swosecretary@centurylink.net

Please detach and mail section below

Name _____ ***Delegate** ___**Non-delegate**____
*(Each unit is entitled to one voting delegate)

Address -Street and City _____
Telephone _____ E-mail _____
Conference you are in _____
Congregation _____ Church Address _____
_____

Plaza Hotel Reservations are made by calling the Plaza Hotel and Suites, 1-800-482-7829 or 1-725-834-3181 - Ask for the ***Women of the ELCA Block No 8247*** for the reduced rate of $89 per room, 1-4 per room. **Bring a copy of your congregation's tax-free certificate to leave with the hotel.**

CHIT-CHAT OVER COFFEE

[A Convention Skit]

Reader #1 "It's been a long time since we've had a cup of coffee together. I'm happy you could make it."

Reader #2 – "Oh, I wouldn't have missed it. I've been wanting to call you anyway. Besides the coffee, I want to hear more about the upcoming Synodical Women's Organization Convention."

Reader #3 – "I can help you there. It will be on May 2-3, 2014 at the Plaza Inn & Suites in Eau Claire. Their theme is: *"Too Blessed to Be Stressed"*. Have either of you sent in your registration?"

Reader #2 – "No, but with this information you are giving me, I'll be sending it soon! Is there an 'early bird' special again?"

Reader #1 – "Definitely! The 'early bird' fee is $50 if you send it by April 14. After that, the fee is $60, and the fee includes the delicious noon luncheon. I've always been amazed that they could do it so reasonably."

Reader #3 – "Don't forget about the scholarships the SWO is offering! *Two* $50 scholarships will be awarded per conference, and preference will be given to *first-time attendees."* There are forms in the December issue of *The Northwester* for that as well as a Registration form. Ask your local unit president for a copy if they don't have them available at church on the bulletin board."

Reader #2 – "Do you have any information on who the speakers or what the Awareness sessions will be?"

Reader #1 –"Oh yes, they've announced that the keynote speaker is Pati Kachel, a story-teller and humorist who has entertained groups all over the Midwest. The Awareness Sessions sound really interesting too. Barbara Swant and Ruth Anderson will present a session on the the Freedom of Forgiveness, taken from their book *Mary's Story.* There will be panels discussing cancer survivors and Racial Justice, along with several other programs that the Women of the ELCA support.

Reader #3 – " Isn't there also a session on 'Teaching Children about God' and one based on the theme "Too Blessed to be Stressed"? There will even be a Prayer Room for quiet meditation for the participants.

Reader #2 – "That sounds really interesting. Do you think we could attend the convention together? Maybe we could even room together."

Reader #3 – "That's a great idea! The Plaza even allows up to 4 women in a room for the same price. We can even save the room taxes if we bring along our church tax-exempt number."

Reader #1 – "Oh I can get that from our church secretary, I know she is always encouraging women to attend the SWO Conventions." I'm really getting excited about going; I have to get my scholarship forms and registration forms and get them filled out!"

Reader #2 – "I'm so glad you invited me for coffee and conversation; I've enjoyed visiting with you and getting information about the SWO Convention. Maybe we can get even more women from our church to attend, what do you think?

Reader #3 - "That's a wonderful idea, lets start promoting the SWO Convention May 2-3, 2014, it sounds like fun!"

News from our Companion Partner – NE Pennsylvania

Every Synod Women's Organization in the Women of the ELCA has been assigned a Companion Partner Synod. Our Companion Partner is the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod. At their summer convention, they elected a new President. Her name is Marilyn Mazsa and she lives in Allentown, Pennsylvania, but she has a connection to our state of Wisconsin in that her granddaughter is living in Darlington which is in southeast Wisconsin. She writes that she follows our weather. Then she writes, "Why do I do that? Well, I'm not sure but it does remind me to pray for you all." Please remember Marilyn and the SWO Board and all the women of the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod.

At their convention, many of their women wrote notes to our women of Northwest Wisconsin. Some of them are printed below. Our own NW Wisconsin SWO Board wrote notes back to them also. Please remember these sisters from Pennsylvania in your prayers.

Dear Sister in Christ,
Greetings from the Northeast Pennsylvania Synod Women of the ELCA and Nativity Lutheran Church W/ELCA in Reading, PA. I am currently serving as president of my church council and my unit of W/ELCA. Women of the ELCA has been such a wonderful organization for me, providing so many opportunities to grow and to meet interesting and very spiritual women. I hope that you have had a similar experience. May God continue to bless you and your sisters of the Northwest Wisconsin Synod in your ministry.
Your sister in Christ, Gladys Rentschler, Reading, PA

Greetings from NE Penn Synod! "On Wisconsin!" I'm originally from Thief River Falls, MN so I understand the weather up there. Uffda!!
Your W/ELCA friend, Joyce Wallace

Greetings: Pennsylvania is bursting with spring and rushing to summer, but most importantly we are "rushing toward TRIENNIAL!" May the blessings of our Lord keep you safe . . . and bring us together next year at Triennial. Marilyn

Ladies of Northwest Wisconsin,
As our sister synod we have thought of you and prayed for your synodical group during our convention. As the Triennial Gathering Promoter, I look forward to meeting some of your ladies in North Carolina. Everyone is busy with their lives and it is increasing difficult to keep our local groups "up and running." Hopefully your area is having no trouble in this area. I would love to know about what your units are doing and how you all are. Yours in Christ.

Dear Friends in Christ,
We may be miles apart, but we have many things in common. Our great country which still, in spite of its faults, is the greatest. Our interest in WELCA gives us an interest we also can share. I'm secretary of our unit and have been a member for many years. Somehow, being part of this group brings a friendship we might otherwise not have. I hope you are enjoying your association with WELCA and that you have made many friends. Elsie Frey

Dear Sister in Christ,
I hope this note finds you well. I am attending my first gathering of WELCA. So much is happening and I am slightly overwhelmed by it all. But one thing I know I can do is to pray for others so, as I write this "hello," know that prayers for you have been said. May you find God's peace today. JoAnne

Greetings from our 24th annual convention! I hope this finds you all well. I just signed up for the Triennial Gathering. Hope to see some of you there. God be with you all. May he bless you and yours! Amanda Rarick, NE PA Synod

To my sister in Christ at our Sister Synod of Northwest Wisconsin,
Having attended our 24th convention of Women of the ELCA, it is good to know we are together as a world sisterhood led by God the Father, Christ our Savior, and His Holy Spirit. In Christ, Rae Grow

Greetings from NE PA! Being a Woman of the ELCA has been the best part of my life. I finally have realized that it has been a fifty year hobby! So I'm writing to wish you the same joy. Keep on working, but more importantly, keep on enjoying. God's blessing on all that you do. With Love and Joy, Gale James, Allentown, PA

(Look for more greetings from our Partner Synod in PA in future issues of our *Northwester* newsletter!)

25th Anniversary Parties

Mary Segerstrom pictured put on a wonderful program of the history of W/ELCA in a very humorous but informative way. We had our program on a Saturday morning and invited several area churches. Everyone there had a good time.
Karen Deetz, Trinity of Norden W/ELCA President

Local unit news

We're tooting our horns!

The women of New Hope Lutheran Comforters of Sand Creek are celebrating with joy and thanksgiving the completion of 1,000 quilts this calendar year.
Yes, that is one thousand!

Every Monday morning anywhere from 16 to 28 women gather to assemble quilts and kits after completing our "weekly homework." We rip apart, iron, cut pieces, and have two tying tables, and two machines stitching around quilts. When we think that we're running out of materials, God miraculously supplies our needs.

We are blessed to be a blessing! We didn't meet the goal set by Churchwide to increase our number of quilts by 25%, but last year we made 901, so we did increase our number.

Making quilts is a community project. On any given Monday about one third of the women who help create these quilts are not members of our church. We have coffee at 10:00AM, and there are lots of recipes shared as well as interesting conversation. Come join us on Mondays--everyone gets a job, man, woman or child.

TRIENNIAL – 2014!!

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. Isaiah 58:12

TRIENNIAL UPDATE

The countdown has started for the early bird registration. January 6, 2014 is the deadline for the special discounted rate. You can still register for Charlotte after that, but it will cost you a little bit more. Our Northwest WI SWO had a block of rooms at the Westin, if you're interested in trying to get in with those of us who booked our hotel room earlier. I've mentioned the main speakers in an earlier issue of the "Northwester." There will be an interactive mural project in the exhibit hall, which sounds very interesting. The exhibit hall is just a fun place to hang around and check out exhibits, do a little shopping, and see all the prayer shawls and in-kind gifts women have brought from around the country. There will also be a couple of films to watch, workshops to attend, servant projects to work on, worship services to attend, and fellowship and fun with women from around the world.

In addition, the scholarships have all been applied for and granted! Hooray!! I don't know if every SWO in the country does this, but I think it's wonderful that we here "Up North" do our part to help women attend. You can register online at welcatg.org, or give me a call at 715.349.5908. I still have some registration booklets that I could mail to you. (I just started a job three days a week, Wednesday through Friday, so call me Monday and Tuesday afternoons or in the evening the other days. You can also call me on a weekend. Leave a message and I'll get back to you. Or email me at edbert@sirentel.net.)

Triennials are such a wonderful experience. You don't want to miss it!

Blessings,
Roberta

Billy Graham Library

Entrance to Charlotte Convention Center

Downtown Charlotte

Triennial Gathering Scholarships

Kathleen Tweet, Pleasant Valley, Eleva, Dairyland Conference
Kathy Sommers, Joy, Prescott, St. Croix Valley Conference
Audrey Severson, Our Savior's, Beldenville, St Croix Valley Conference
Brenda Wheeler, Lakeside, Webster, Heart of the North Conference
Marie Sanborn, Trinity, Rice Lake, Heart of the North Conference
Carol Lekies, Our Savior's, Medford, Chequamegon Conference
Donna Olson, Our Savior's, Greenwood, Chequamegon Conference
Eleanor Johnson, Our Savior's, Greenwood, Chequamegon Conference
Carol Johnson, Milltown Lutheran, Milltown, Apple River Conference
Margot Nelson, Milltown Lutheran, Milltown, Apple River Conference
Julie Riemenschneider, First, Amery, Apple River Conference
Susan Saarem, Balsam Lutheran, Amery, Apple River Conference
Carol Medchill, First, Cushing, Apple River Conference
Phyllis Grohn, Trinity, Eau Claire, Chippewa Valley Conference
Mandy Bernick, Joy, Prescott, St Croix Valley Conference – [full scholarship donated by Roberta]

A Note Concerning In-Kind Prayer Shawl Offerings for the Triennial Gathering

At each Triennial Gathering, special in-kind offerings are collected and then distributed to various places near the site of the Triennial – places that have special needs. One of the in-kind offerings for the Ninth Triennial Gathering will be **prayer shawls.**

At the 2011 Triennial Gathering, over 2,200 prayer shawls were collected. We hope to collect even more shawls at this Triennial Gathering! So, now would be the time to start making those prayer shawls – all of you who knit or crochet. Those of us going to the Triennial will be happy to take your prayer shawls with us and give them as a donation from our NW Wisconsin Synod Women. Thanks to **Stephanie Rumstick**, Dairyland Conference Representative on our SWO Board, for already making and donating four lovely prayer shawls! Stephanie also hand-crafted about 35 beautiful cards to affix to the shawls so if you make a shawl, please know that we already have a card to send with your shawl. The cards say:

It is our prayer that you will use this shawl as a mantle of love. Wrap it around you as you go about your daily activities, when you go out, when you feel down, when you sleep, whenever you feel a need for love. Always remember that its maker wove prayers for God's love and healing into this shawl to create a vessel for God's mysterious presence in the life of the recipient – YOU! Loving hearts and hands from the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin – Women of the ELCA made this prayer shawl for you. We are sharing this simple gift for those who suffer in body, mind and spirit. Our prayer is that this shawl might comfort you and remind you of God's healing presence with you.

Women of the ELCA, Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

As we know, prayer shawls have been used throughout generations – our ancient Israeli ancestors used prayer shawls to remind them of God's constant presence. Prayer shawls help people know that someone has been, and continues to pray for them. Prayer shawls encourage people to know that God is with them every step of the way, every day.

Let's do our part to take many prayer shawls to Charlotte, NC with us in July! Contact your Conference Coordinator, Conference Rep, Roberta Bitler, or Marcia Lindseth if you have a prayer shawl to donate. We'll see that it gets picked up from you, the special card that Stephanie made affixed to it, and then taken to Charlotte in July! Thanks for your help with this important project!

What is this??

http://www.nwswiswo.org/Menu/NewsEvents/Newsletters.html

NO, it's not some strange, mysterious set of letters, it is the web address of the *Northwester!* Diane Kaufmann is our webmaster and she has been hard at work getting the website up and running. You can check out the entire site by using the first set of letters: http://www.nwswiswo.org

Diane encourages you to submit articles, news events, photos and anything that would be of interest to the people of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. Help her make it a useful source of information. Any articles and submissions can also be sent by mail to her at 5207 – 70th Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729-5742.

2014 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

25th Anniversary of Women of the ELCA officially begins. Celebrate for the year and beyond!

2014

MARCH
- 22 – SWO Board Meeting, Bone Lake Lutheran, Luck, 1101 255th Avenue, Luck

APRIL
- 5 – Heart of the North Conference Day of Renewal, New Scandinavia, Dallas
- 5 – Spring Day of Renewal, Apple River Conference, Luck Lutheran, Luck

MAY
- 2-3 – Synodical Women's Organization Convention, Plaza Inn & Suites, Eau Claire

JULY
- 22-24 – NINTH TRIENNIAL CONVENTION, Charlotte, North Carolina
  Our Delegates: Dawn Wicklund & Rhonda Cummings – First-time attendees
  Avalene Swanson, Phyllis Beastrom, Carol Medchill, Marcia Lindseth, Audrey Severson, and Carol Johnson
  Alternates: Diane Campbell, Gail Lando, Mary Lou Wold, and Kay Shager.
  Kay Shager is also alternate for first-time attendee

- 24-27 – NINTH TRIENNIAL GATHERING, Charlotte, North Carolina

AUGUST
- 11-12 – Heart of the North Conference Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
- 16 –Fall Retreat, Apple River Conference, Luther Point Bible Camp, Grantsburg

OCTOBER
- 25 – Leader Training Meeting, Apple River Conference, Balsam Lutheran, Amery

Are YOU going to the Ninth Triennial Gathering
at Charlotte, North Carolina - July 24-27, 2014?

JULY 24-27, 2014
Ninth Triennial Gathering
of many generations

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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***.

The SWO board trusts that local units will help them be good stewards of the offerings that are sent to them by helping to offset the cost of publishing *The Northwester.* Subscriptions to the newsletter are **$6.00** per year. ***- - - And Yes, you may renew for multiple years! - - -***

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.

All address changes and any 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, 2014**

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Enclosed is payment of **$6.00** payable to: ***WOMEN OF THE ELCA,*** **Northwest Synod (SWO)**

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