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 27 - Issue 4 – December 2014
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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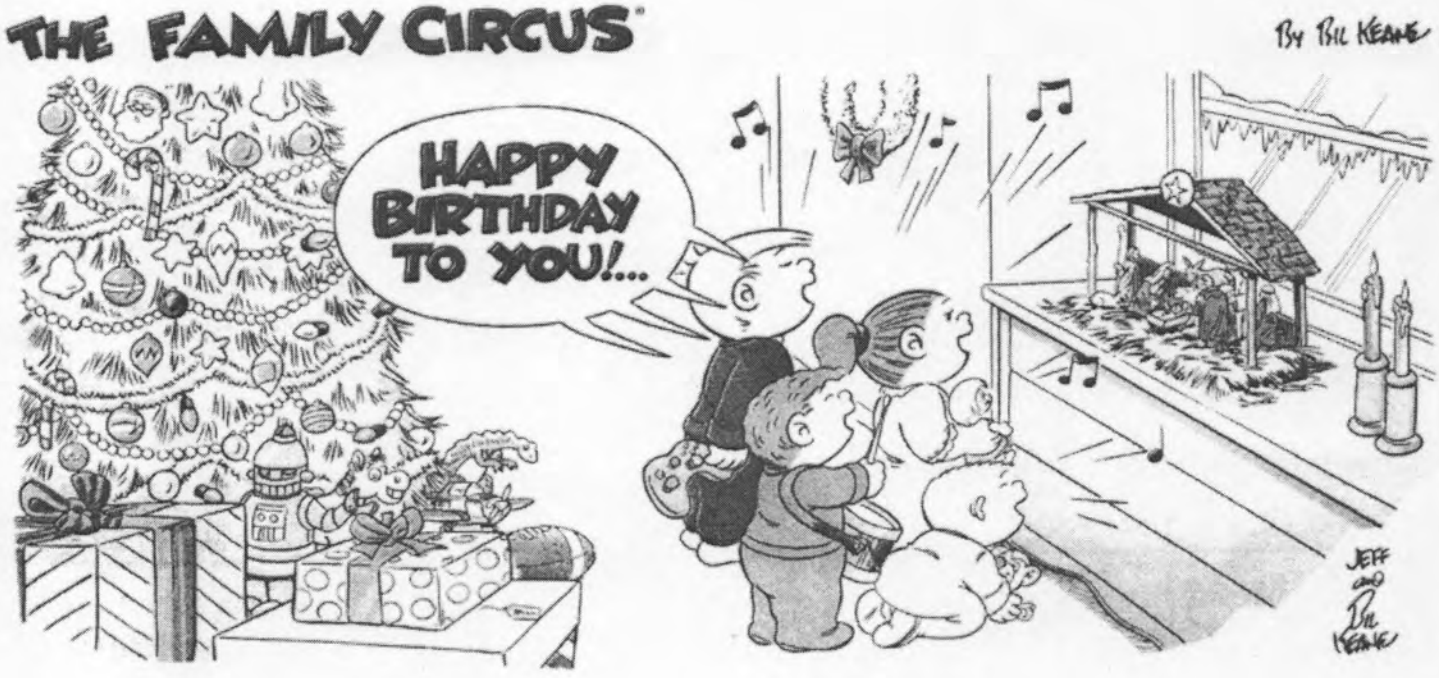

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

"...the joy of the Lord is my strength" from Nehemiah 8:10 was the theme verse for the Synod Women's Organization Board Meeting held at Shepherd of the Hill in Elk Mound on November 15. What a great day we had with their super set-up, great soups, and great servers. Conference Coordinators and SWO Board Members helped share the joy. I hope you had opportunity over the Thanksgiving holiday to share joy with a few people that are important in your life.

We heard reports from Kimberly Schafer on her trip to the Sojourners Convention in Washington D.C. last spring and from Dawn Wicklund regarding some of the networking and committee work she has been doing with the sex trafficking and safe children issues. We will be doing a lot more with these in the future.

Because of the huge savings prior to the end of this calendar year, we voted to purchase fourteen scholarships for the 2017 Triennial Convention in Minneapolis. In another financially related matter, we voted to drop the amount of mileage reimbursement for ourselves to 40 cents per mile from the 56 cent government rate, which is significantly higher than the 14 cent charity allowance rate. We think this will still cover our gas expenditures for meetings and SWO work.

I issued a challenge to the Board members and Conference Coordinators to each submit one name to me for the initiatives and committees we have been mandated to work. I also asked them to submit an article or a picture quarterly to either the Northwester or the website so Diane and Eleanor have current information with which to do their work. I challenge each of you to provide them with names, information, pictures or whatever you have so they can really do that!

Information shared at our Board Meeting that may be helpful to projects in your churches: Thrivent Action Teams. This is different from the matching funds, because any Thrivent member can apply twice a year for the $250 seed money. You will receive a gift card for that amount to be used for getting a specific project started, such as buying meat for a fund-raising dinner that will give scholarships for camp. And you get a bunch of great t-shirts for your team to wear. One person only per event, applied for 3 months to 21 days prior to the event date because the powers that be do need to approve it first. And the ONLY way to apply is on-line! Instead of tracking people and hours, you are asked to write a story for Thrivent within 2 weeks after the event. If you have questions, they can be answered at the Thrivent fraternal office 1-800-847-4836.

LSS *Lutheran Social Services of the South*

Another reason for the above explanation: I am hoping some of us can use these funds to help with our "Drop Your Drawers Here!" campaign. IF YOU CAN DO THIS FOR YOUR SPRING DAY OF RENEWAL, COORDINATE IT WITH ME SO WE AREN'T TRYING TO DOUBLE UP!! With 57,000 unaccompanied minors at our southern border, Lutheran Social Services of the South has undertaken the humongous challenge of trying to help these mostly teen immigrants. I have been in contact with the director of the 3 sites where they are trying to provide services, and the need is great for toiletry items and clothing, so we will be doing much more than collecting "drawers" like we did for Malawi!! I think we're all getting tired of groups wanting money every time we turn around, so let's buy the stuff they desperately need and get it down to them! I think we can fill a truck by accumulating things to bring to our Spring Days of Renewal. First Lutheran in Eau Claire will set aside a room to "warehouse" and they have wheeled carts and an elevator to facilitate getting the items to that space. After our Thanksgiving dinner, my son-in-law offered to help us get everything shipped via the truck connections he has for his business at considerably reduced rates, so that means we will need some money to cover shipping costs. Please use the charts at the end of this article to start purchasing things especially when they are on sale at reduced prices. The director did state that used clothing of like-new quality could also be accepted.

These projects we are supporting are wonderful! But they take many hands to make them happen. We need the following list of volunteers to get us started. Please pass the word to people in your W/ELCA and at your church or we'll never again get anyone to serve on the SWO Board if those gals have to do everything themselves!! Let's share the joy!!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO SERVE:

- A snowbird who visits the McAllen/Mission, Texas, area who could take pictures of the refurbished hospital site there that we are planning to assist. Provide us with any other helpful information. Contact me if you can do this – Sue Saarem (contact info on last page of this Northwester).
- Three or four people in the Eau Claire area who would be willing to coordinate the organizing of our room at First Lutheran with the stuff we accumulate for the "Drop Your Drawers Here!" campaign so we aren't sending them a mess!! It would entail finding boxes and putting things together in such a way to make sense when it all gets to Texas. Talk to Phyllis Grohn 715-836-7055.
- Someone to make "Drop Your Drawers Here!" signs to mail out with the letters that I will write to be sent to every church in our Synod explaining the campaign to meet the needs for LSSS in Texas as they serve the unaccompanied minors at the border. This should happen in early January. Contact me – Sue Saarem.
- One person from The Chippewa Valley Conference who would be willing to serve on the committee for women's literacy in Malawi headed by Avalene Swanson – contact her at 715-246-6296.
- Two or three people to serve on the auditing committee for the SWO books in February or early March. It will take a morning or afternoon of your time. Contact our Treasurer, Audrey Severson – her info is on the officer page of this Northwester.
- Dawn Wicklund has a couple of people willing to help her with the sexual trafficking information she has already started working with. Contact her if you are willing to join them to learn and help dispense information to our W/ELCA's and churches. Her info is on the last page.
- The Phebe Hospital in Liberia is in need of solar power due to the lack of electricity at the hospital because of the collapsed infrastructure in the whole country after 14 years of war. We need a handful of women who can do some research and provide information to our churches so members will know how any donations are being used. Funds for this will go through the SWO treasury to Chicago. Again, if you would like more information or can serve in this way, contact me – Sue Saarem.

I look forward to working with you on our projects. I will be waiting for my phone to ring or my e-mail to be busy with questions and volunteers!!

The charts for collecting items for Lutheran Social Services of the South to dispense to the border children are below. They are *NOT* the same as kits put together for LWR.
Toothbrushes, toothpaste and soaps should be left in their packaging! A toiletry kit for Texas CAN be put in a plastic bag.

CLOTHING ITEMS:	SIZES:
T-shirts or Polo Shirts	Unisex, small & medium
Warm-up Top or Jacket	Unisex, small & medium
Bras	32 A&B, 34 B&C, 36 A,B,C, 38 C
Women's Jean Pants	Junior sizes 0, 1, 3, 5
Women's Panties	small and medium
Men's Jean Pants	26, 28, 29, 30, 31 waists, 30" lengths
Men's Jean Shorts	26, 28, 29, 20, 31 waists (sm., med.)
Men's Undershorts	small and medium
Warm-up Pants	Unisex, small and medium
Socks	Unisex – sizes 6-9
Athletic Shoes or Sandals	Unisex – sizes 5-10

TOILETRY KIT ITEMS:
large bath towel
wash cloth
reg. size bar soap
shampoo
large toothed comb
toothpaste
toothbrush

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Are you ready for Christmas? Have you sent your cards? Baked your cookies? Done your shopping? Wrapped your gifts? Planned the menu for dinner? Invited your guests? Cleaned your house? Decorated your house? Well, there are probably more things that organized people do to get ready for Christmas, but…

…have you prepared for the BIRTHDAY PARTY? With all the planning, we need to remember that we are really celebrating a very special birthday! Yes, the music, pageants, family traditions, etc. are all important BUT IT'S A BIRTHDAY PARTY and we need to put that event front and center.

At our house, after dinner and the gift exchange, we have birthday cake complete with candles. This tradition started at our house when our first grandchild joined our family. I bake a cake in the small cake pans from the play kitchen. It is decorated with candles and other birthday cake decorations. We sing "Happy Birthday" and generally close Christmas day with the reminder that JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

Merry Christmas!

Janet Allison, SWO VP

STEWARDSHIP

According to our resources, stewardship reminds us that it is a careful and responsible management of money, property and resources that God has entrusted to us: providing for the ministries that God has entrusted in our care.

In this season of giving, let us remember those who are less fortunate than us. This can be with a monetary gift or with a personal gift. So much can be given, just with a phone call, visit or help with shopping, just for a few. Being a care giver can be so rewarding. Assisting with household chores when someone is unable to do their own may seem trivial, but to the receiver it is great. Often we are doing stewardship without being conscious of it. The Lord is working each and every day within all of us to continue providing for the ministries of the ELCA.

Remember to pray for those in need. We all know the power of prayer. Sometimes I feel that I really do not know how to phrase an adequate prayer, but God says to just talk to him and he will hear. It is simple when put that way.

I just found a book on hymns and boy, what a find! Several of them are new to me, but one that I wish to share is "I must tell Jesus". I do not know the music and will be searching for it, so, in the meantime I will cherish the words. "Ï must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone. I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone." Let us embrace these words as we spread our joy and help to all we can at this wonderful "Christmas" season. Share these words with those around as a reminder that there is someone to help.

Merry Christmas!

Marian Nernberger Chequamegon Board Representative

TREASURER NEWS

Being a good steward of money is an important task for all of us. I took over being treasurer of the Synodical Women's Organization on July 1, 2014 after being elected at the SWO Convention. It is an awesome job to open envelopes and see your generous donations every week.

It has been a steep learning curve to maneuver around the computer program and all the accounts we hold. SWO has invested in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund that can be used for loans to churches. We need to keep up our SWO equipment for computers and software, so 1% is set aside for this purpose each year. I keep most of the conference accounts also. One-half of your unit offerings that are sent to me are retained by our Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) to support such things our scholarships for conventions, lay school of ministry, and women seminary students; Northwester expenses over the subscription price; our leadership seminars; and our Malawi partnership. The other half I send to Women of the ELCA Churchwide in Chicago. When our expenses are paid at the end of the fiscal year, we decide how to spend down our treasury to benefit the many ministries in our synod. I hope that your conference and unit will also not retain excess funds, but put them to work to show God's love.

You will find the **Stewardship Guide** for 2014-2015 on the website womenoftheelca.org. There you will also find offering Forms A & B that you can download, or the carbon copy set can be ordered from the ELCA Resource Catalog for a shipping cost. It will be very helpful to me as a new treasurer for you to include your ***conference name*** and ***church ID number*** on Form A. I am unfamiliar with the location of some of the churches, and need to look up your conference name if it is not on the form in order to give credit your church unit. To keep our synod convention costs low, each unit should send $30 to the SWO treasurer for the convention expense fund yearly on Form A.

The Churchwide W/ELCA reports that offerings were down at the half-year mark. If this trend continues, they will be forced to cut staff again or cut services. We are hopeful donations will come in the second half of the year.

Another way to donate to Women of the ELCA is through **Thrivent Choice Dollars**. If you have insurance policies through Thrivent, you can allocate these also to WELCA/CW in Chicago. We thank and praise God for the wonderful stewardship of women in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. May you have a blessed holiday season.

Audrey Severson, Synod Women's Organization Treasurer

CONGREGATIONAL UNIT TREASURERS!

Please send unit offerings to:

Audrey Severson

N6059 530th Street

Ellsworth, WI 54011-5107

715-273-5019

nwswotreas@gmail.com

Please indicate your conference and your church ID number on your form.

JUSTICE

"What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?"
Micah 6:8

This is my first article for the Northwester. I am the new Chippewa Valley Conference representative to the SWO Board. I am very interested in Social Justice issues. I currently volunteer at both the Sojourner House and Beacon House in downtown Eau Claire. The Sojourner House serves single homeless men and women and the Beacon House serves homeless families.

A headline in the November 17, 2014, *Leader-Telegram* newspaper caught my attention. "Report: Homeless Kids in US at All-time High." The article stated that one child in every 30 are homeless. The high numbers are blamed on the nation's high poverty rate, the lack of affordable housing and the impact of pervasive Domestic Violence.

In 2013, the National Center of Family Homelessness calculated that nearly 2.5 million American children were homeless. The number is based on the Department of Education's latest count of 1.3 million homeless children in public schools. That number does not include homeless pre-school children not counted by the Department of Education. California has one-eighth of the US population but accounts for more than one-*fifth* of homeless children. However, we also have homeless children right here in Wisconsin.

Last week at the Adult Forum at my church [Trinity Lutheran in Eau Claire] we had a speaker from the Eau Claire School District. She spoke of the increasing number of homeless children in that district.

These numbers were shocking to me! Now, that I am aware of the seriousness of this situation, What can **I** do about it?

- **Pray, Get Informed** – find out what the needs are and step up and *DO* something about it! I'm sure I have extra blankets or quilts that I am not using that a family living in their car would appreciate. I also could buy extra toiletries and donate them to a shelter.
- **Make a plan** – Take action, share your knowledge with your local unit or write a news article for your local newspaper or your church newsletter or the Northwester.

We are required to act. I hope that 2015 is a year of looking at social justice issues, praying about them and taking action to help correct them.

Phyllis Grohn, Chippewa Valley Conference representative

Mark Lowry, who wrote the lyrics to the Christmas song, "Mary, Did You Know?", says he's always been amazed by Mary's silence at the cross as her son was getting crucified. He wonders, was she was remembering back to that first Christmas, when she counted Jesus' fingers and toes?

"I wonder if she realized then that those were the same fingers that had scooped out the oceans and formed the seas. I wonder if she realized those were the same feet that had walked on the streets of gold and been worshipped by angels. Those little lips were the same lips that had spoken the world into existence. When Mary kissed her little baby, she wasn't just kissing another baby' she was kissing the face of God."

Mary silently watched her son die 33 years later, Lowry notes – not just for the world, but also for his own mother. 'The baby boy she had delivered on that first Christmas was now on a cross delivering her."

From the *Sonlight*, a newsletter of the Northwestern Ohio Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA

Human Trafficking

Many of you know that during our Triennial Convention, all of the 64 synods were directed to form committees to provide education on human trafficking. We all need to take part in the effort to help prevent human trafficking. Recently I was asked if I wanted to be involved in a group to educate and advocate for trafficked children. My answer was 'of course'!

This new group has the Lutheran Office for Public Policy (LOPPW) and Cherish All Children (CAC) working together for change in Wisconsin.

Here is a little background on each of these organizations.

The Lutheran Office for Public Policy (LOPPW) – In faithful response to God's love, we engage people of faith in the ministry of advocacy for policies that support peace, justice and care for all of God's creation.

Advocacy is:

- Getting to the core of the issue.
- Speaking with and on behalf of the needs of another and seeking to influence public policy toward justice and the common good.
- Becoming aware of people's struggles and roots of problems; educating others – holding forums.
- Strategizing about solutions
- Writing letters to the editor; writing letters to and calling legislators and visiting legislators and their staff.
- Connecting with other groups such as LOPPW and CAC.

LOPPW is part of the ELCA Advocacy Network and State Public Policy Office.

Cherish All Children (CAC) is a national Lutheran ministry of prayer, education, relationship-building and action to prevent child sexual exploitation.

You will hear more about this effort in the coming months. One of the first things we would like to do is provide some education on trafficking in our region. We also want to connect with others who are interested in helping with this effort. We will need to have contacts that can help communicate what is happening and what can be done to help. Please prayerfully consider what your role may be in this effort.

In the meantime, if you would like to find more about either of these organizations, please look them up on the internet. LOPPW's website is www.lop-pw.org. Cindy Crane is the director and she can be reached at cindyc@loppw.org or by phone at 608-270-0201 ext. 109. Cherish All Children's website is www.cherishchildren.org. Amy Hartman is the national director and she can be reached by e-mail from a link on the web site or by phone at 612-280-1259.

To learn more about human trafficking visit www.polarisproject.org. The site is full of information about all types of human trafficking. If you suspect someone is being trafficked, you can call the National Human trafficking Resource Center hotline at 1-888-3737-888.

I wish you and your family a blessed Christmas season. May God bless you in all of your efforts.
Dawn Wicklund

Local Unit News

Bonnie and Phillip Pederson of rural Colfax, built a shop in 2011 for making their mission quilts. Their basement was overtaken by their sewing materials and their Christmas decorations.

Bonnie, her sister Hattie and Bonnie's son Terry, work together on quilts. They have made 175 quilts each year since then. Their quilts are sent in the fall with the quilts that the local unit have made during the year.

The Pedersons have also made other special quilts for family and have made quilts to be auctioned at Luther Park. In addition, they spend Tuesday s at Big Elk Creek Lutheran Church, Elk Mound, with the quilters there, helping make more quilts! God has blessed them indeed, with the talent to put the smallest pieces of fabric together to create beautiful quilts.

Virginia Ives submitted this article and said that besides being a very active quilter, Bonnie has been an officer in several positions in their local unit and has also been active on the conference level.

Frankincense and Myrrh

Frankincense and Myrrh, two of the gifts the Three Wise Men brought to the baby Jesus. But, what are they?

Frankincense – Mary & Joseph would have appreciated this gift of frankincense as anointing oil for newborn sons of kings. They would have rubbed it all over Christ's tiny body. They understood that this oil is a healing oil good for almost anything from cuts and bruises to the common cold. They would have understood it as a gift for them to use throughout the infancy of Jesus to help protect him and keep him strong and healthy.

Myrrh Oil – it was one of the first gifts given to the baby Jesus and one of Jesus' last. The Wise Men did not have to explain the use of myrrh oil to Mary. She knew that the myrrh was an antiseptic and should be placed on the navel of the newborn child so that there would be no infection with the sloughing of the umbilical cord. Later on, it would protect her child from coughs, sore throats, thrush, ringworm, and gum infections. It would also soothe and heal little cuts and bruises. For Mary, myrrh could heal scar tissue and remove the stretch marks of pregnancy. The scent of myrrh also promotes spiritual awareness and is emotionally uplifting. When rubbed on her body, as a breast feeding mother, it would communicate a sense of security and well-being to both her and her child.

Jesus was anointed with myrrh 3 times [twice on his feet and once on his head] as a symbolic preparation for Jesus' imminent death. Just before Jesus was nailed to the cross, he was offered a mixture of wine/vinegar and myrrh. When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came to prepare the by God to be an ingredient in both the holy anointing oil and the holy incense.

Information from *Healing Oils of the Bible* by David Stewart, Ph. D, CARE Publications, 8th Printing, 2012.
As seen in the *Sonlight,* the newsletter of the Northwestern Ohio Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA

Additional Triennial Wrap-up News

The Ruth Circle of the Women of the ELCA at First Lutheran, Amery, decided to raise money for the In-Kind Gifts that were taken to the 9th Triennial Gathering in Charlotte, North Carolina.

They served coffee and treats after worship services for four Sundays, and received $240.00 in donations and were able to purchase 12 - $20.00 gift cards at Wal-Mart.

In this way, all of the members of the church could participate in the Triennial but were unable to attend in person. Julie Riemenschneider, a member of the Women of the ELCA and the Ruth Circle went to the Triennial Gathering and took the gift cards with her. Their W/ELCA had also donated 2 prepaid AT&T telephone cards that were worth 800 minutes to the users.

Submitted by Mary Lou Wold

2017 TRIENNIAL IN MINNEAPOLIS!!!

Pre-registration for the Triennial in Minneapolis ends December 31, 2014 and, at *just* $280.00 – it is quite a savings! More than 500 women have already pre-registered. Join us – Minneapolis is just a hop, skip and a jump away!

It's a wonderful, life-changing experience; you won't want to miss it.

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LET'S HELP OUR MALAWI SISTERS LEARN TO READ

"I want to be able to read my Bible.'

This is a new initiative the Women of the ELCA of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin are undertaking to help our sisters in Malawi read their Bibles.

You or your local unit can forward donations to the SWO Treasurer, Audrey Severson, N6059 530th Street, Ellsworth, WI 54011-5107. 715-273-5019 apseverson@gmail.com

If you are sending a check, please put "Malawi Literacy" on the memo line.

If you have questions, please ask a woman listed below – they are part of the Malawi Literacy Liaison

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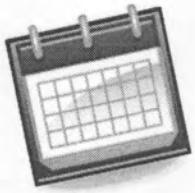
Sue Saarem, SWO President, 1315B 120th Avenue, Amery, WI 54001-4800 pnssaarem@yahoo.com 715-268-5586

2015 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



2015

FEBRUARY
- 20-22 – Conference of Presidents, Chicago, IL

MARCH
- 1 – Deadline to submit articles for March issue of the Northwester
- 6 – **World Day of Prayer** by the Women from the Bahamas.
  "Jesus said, 'Do you know what I have done to you?'"
  Start making your plans now!
- 14 – Women's retreat at Milltown Lutheran, Milltown
- 28 – SWO Board Meeting, Elim Lutheran, Range, 1277 60th Street, Amery

APRIL
- 11 – Chippewa Valley Conference Day of Renewal, Trinity Lutheran, Boyceville
- 11 – St Croix Valley Conference Day of Renewal, Trinity Lutheran, Hammond
- 18 – Apple River Conference Day of Renewal, at Faith Lutheran, Balsam Lake
- 18 – Heart of the North Conference Day of Renewal, Chetek Lutheran, Chetek

MAY
- 30-31 – Northwest Wisconsin Synod Assembly, Eau Claire

AUGUST
- 10-11 – Heart of the North Conference Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
- 11-12 – Chippewa Valley Conference Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
- 13 – St Croix Valley Conference Retreat, Redeemer Lutheran of Burkhardt, rural Hudson
- 15 – Apple River Conference Retreat, West Immanuel Lutheran, Osceola

SEPTEMBER
- SWO Leader Training, - - Date and time to be Announced

OCTOBER
- 4 – Heart of the North Conference Leader Training, Lakeside Community Lutheran, Webster. Begins @ 8:15 am
- 24 – Apple River Conference, Fall Leader Training Meeting, Milltown Lutheran

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