

NORTHWEST SYNOD OF WISCONSIN



The Northwestern

Newsletter for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

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

ORGANIZATION

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings dear Sisters,

To say that your SWO Board has been busy would be an understatement! Your synod reps and conference coordinators met with the Executive Board in October to discuss what is going on in each of our (seven) conferences. To start the conversations, I asked each coordinator to address the following:



1. Name the biggest accomplishment in their conference since the last joint board meeting;
2. Explain what is being done in their respective conferences to encourage participation of all ages;
3. Name the biggest obstacle they face as a coordinator; and lastly,
4. What is their (conference) action plan for the next 12 months.

Now stop for a moment and pretend you and I are having a conversation and I asked you to address each of these areas. What would your responses be? Please give this prayerful thought as I will be asking.

For many, the biggest accomplishment was the annual retreats and Days of Renewal. Having served on our retreat planning committee, I know how much work (and prayer) it takes to have a successful and meaningful retreat. For those of you that have worked or are working on these types of get-togethers – God Bless You!

Several discussed what they have done to encourage participation; however, their responses focused on the retreats. Most mentioned that aging members and perceived lack of interest or unwillingness to get involved from “younger” women were the biggest challenges.

As women of the ELCA, I ask each of you, regardless of your age or whether or not you have a so-called title on the organization’s board, what are you doing to grow in faith; to affirm your gifts? What are you doing to support one another?

The elected leaders of our organization will be meeting again in January to address/develop/draft action plans for the next 12 months. I pray that you will participate in the development. This is, after all, your organization.

Now onto other items:

- Dates for the 2020 Convention have been changed. Please mark your calendars for April 17 & 18, 2020. For your planning purposes, the business meeting will take place the evening of the 17th. The convention will resume on the morning of the 18th. Once the location has been confirmed you will be notified.
- Dawn Wicklund will be joining our leadership team as our new Webmaster and Facebook Administrator. She and Diane K will be working together as we transition to a new program that is more user friendly, sustainable, and affordable. Dawn’s contact information can be found elsewhere in this publication.
- I had an energizing and productive meeting with Bishop Laurie. Our discussions focused on strategic thinking, open dialogue, and where she sees the greatest need for our involvement. More information will be forthcoming as details / plans develop.



As we prepare for the Christmas season, let us be mindful that we live in a time where people are searching for hope in their lives – for peace in their communities – for strength to face whatever challenges come their way.



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Let us focus on the beautiful gift of hope we have through the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ! And let us remember to be the good in the world.

Merry Christmas,

Lori Wells, SWO President

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

One of the first fears a young child often has is darkness. It was a real comfort for me to have my mother keep the hall light on in my bedroom before I went to sleep at night. That light kept me safe from all the nightly creatures that might have been hidden under my bed. As I grew older, I could actually walk alone outside with the yard light on or a flashlight in my hand, but it was always a relief to get safely in the house again.



Even now light is just as precious to me. We have no curtains in our house located in the woods of northern WI. I love the sunshine coming in the windows all hours of the day. I need the light to keep me hopeful and encouraged. In this winter season the battery-operated LED flickering candles glow in my night windows bringing warmth and comfort to me as I sit reading in my living room. The night lights in our hallways keep us safe when we get up in the middle of the night. And in this Christmas season we eagerly look forward to the candles glowing in the sanctuary darkness of Christmas Eve as the congregation sings, "Silent Night."

Part of our need for light is fear of what is unknown or what bad thing could happen to us in our darkness. Light won't prevent scary things from happening, but it will bring us comfort, especially the comfort of God's love for the world. Jesus is God made man who brought to the world the "light of life to all people" (John 1:4). He is "the light of the world." Those who follow him will "not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). Those are encouraging words for me and for you.



One of my favorite hymns is "O Day Full of Grace." It summarizes what light means to believers:

O day full of grace that now we see appearing on earth's horizon,
bring light from our God that we may be abundant in joy this season.
God, shine for us now in this dark place; your name on our hearts emblazon.

O day full of grace, O blessed time, our Lord on the earth arriving;
then came to the world that light sublime, great joy for us all retrieving;
for Jesus all mortals did embrace, all shame and despair removing.



Yea, were ev'ry tree endowed with speech, and were ev'ry leaflet singing,
they never with praise God's worth could reach though earth with their praise were ringing.
Who fully could praise the Light of life who light to our souls is bringing.

(Christopher E.F. Weyse, 1774-1842)

--Dawn Olson, SWO Vice-president



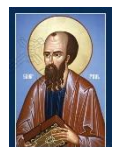
A little girl from the Twin Cities came home from church with a frown.

"I'm NOT going back there anymore," she announced.

"I don't like that Bible they use in Sunday school."

"Why not?" her astonished mother asked.

"because the Bible they use is *always* talking about St Paul,
And *never* mentions Minneapolis," she said.



From the Treasurer



“Good Christian Friends Rejoice” is among my favorite Christmas carols. Each verse calls us to rejoice notes with heart, soul, and voice to celebrate that Jesus has saved us and blest us through salvation. We have been set free from sin and are called to serve God and those around us. One opportunity for 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.

At the Day of Enrichment events, I presented information about Women of the ELCA units, the Synodical Women’s Organization and the Churchwide Organization as well as how our offerings support these ministries. This presentation is available on the SWO website and I will gladly mail it to anyone requesting it. The SWO website is www.nwswiswo.org

Also available on the SWO website is the Treasurers Guide which lists several types of giving, what form to use, and to whom that offering is to be sent – whether to me as the SWO treasurer, to churchwide or elsewhere. Offering forms A & B are also available on the SWO website. If you don’t have a computer, ask your church secretary to print these forms and this guide for you.



Reminders:

1 - Many units will be sending their year-end or 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. The SWO fiscal year ends January 31, 2019 so you can also mail those gifts in early January.

2 – Does your unit have extra funds at the end of the year? If so, put those funds to work spreading God’s love where it is needed. There are so many needs – Bible Camps, Lutheran Social Services of WI, LWR shipping fund, Katie’s Fund, ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Disaster Relief or local needs such as the food pantry, homeless shelter, organizations that provide services for those in domestic or trafficking crisis. Consider sending an extra gift to Women of the ELCA churchwide. Eighteen months ago, they had to lay off two people because of decreasing funds. Provide financial and prayer support for Women of the ELCA churchwide.

3 - YEARLY each unit shall send \$30 to the SWO treasurer for the convention expense fund. The 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.

4 - Has your unit considered subscriptions for the Northwestern for all your officers? It can be received by mail or e-mail. The Northwestern has lots of information about the ministry of women in our synod and throughout the church. This is a great way to keep connected as to what’s happening! The Northwestern is also available on the SWO website.

5 – Please make sure your treasurer has the information in this article, so she has the current information for sending offerings to the proper place.

It is with grateful hearts that we thank and praise God for the active, faithful, and joyous stewardship of Women in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin. It is you and your offerings that support the many worthwhile ministries of your community, the SWO, and churchwide Women of the ELCA. Thanks be to God.

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Discipleship

Turning Around at Christmas...

I am an avid baker and totally in my element when I am in the kitchen with several projects in front of me. I especially love the Christmas season with the chance to bake for church events, family, and friends. Cookies are my favorite as I try to find the right combinations of flavors and colors to make those delicious confections.

I happened upon a recipe for a gingerbread cookie.

When I made the gingerbread boys the ordinary way, I got some lovely cookies looking like this:
But when I turn the cookies around, I got this:



Wow, how could simply turning around make such a difference? How could the outcome be so drastically changed?



Jesus spoke many times of turning: from sin, from temptation, from that which will take your eyes and heart away from God. Turning around has been a central theme in our Gather magazine bible studies these past few months. Turning ourselves to God, turning to others, turning our Church to the world. First, turning to God is the most important. When we face God, all your concerns/problems are behind us. Our cleansed heart gives us the ability to shine His light through the world. When we then turn to others, we see them with clear eyes and a loving soul. God's perfect creation in each one of us. As our Church turns to the world, we are able to face the conflicts and hurts happening today or remembered from many generations ago and do our part to offer or ask for forgiveness. Turning brings healing and healing brings hope.

Advent is here – the time for waiting and preparing; preparing our hearts to receive the baby Jesus. Advent is the perfect time to practice daily turning. When driving, turn off the radio and talk with God. When shopping, and checking out, turn on a smile for the clerk no matter how long the line has been. When parking, turn the trek from the farthest parking spot (last one) in the lot, to a prayer of thanksgiving for being able to walk. When cooking, turn from thinking it is a daily grind, to a thankful prayer for having nourishment for us and our family. And my favorite, baking. Turning each roll of dough into our own private thanks to God for all our blessings. Can turning and facing God make a difference? Absolutely. God sent us Jesus to show us how to turn and be healed so we can share Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. A Christmas message for our family, friends, church and community. Get ready for the Baby. He's on His way.



God's blessings to each of you this Christmas Season. Oh, and try a new cookie recipe.



Kathy Rewalt, Board Member
Lake Superior Conference

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil and Jeff Keane



"Then the three wise men came to
baby-sit Jesus so Mary and Joseph could
finish Christmas shopping."

from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com*
Reprinted with permission of Bil Keane

Additional Discipleship

As Women of the ELCA our mission statement states that we are to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. I wish to share a story of one woman who boldly acted on her faith in Jesus Christ to bring hope to women and young girls in Malawi.

Ann Knutson's journey began in 2003, when she read an article in the Lutheran magazine talking about the famine in Malawi which caused thousands of deaths. She could not get the article out of her heart. Verses such as Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the love of Christ" ... how could she bear another's burdens in a country on the other side of the world, she would ask God.

Then in 2004, The Northwest Synod published a video on the feeding stations at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi. They were feeding 50 of the most vulnerable children and women at the station; while outside the fenced area many, many children were hungry or simply starving. So, because of one article and one video, that was what called her to discipleship in Christ.



Through her many travels to Malawi over the following years, Ann formed a deep, loving, relationship with Mphasto Thole and Mabel Madinga. Through them, she learned of the deep poverty and low self-esteem which affected women and young girls. Through their vision, prayers and hard work, Masomphenya Women and Girls Empowerment was formed in 2014, empowering Malawian women living in poverty, to be afforded a better way of life.

If you would like to learn more about this mission, you can check out their website at www.mwgef.org or to hear more about their story, you can contact Ann at 715-458-0414. She would very much like to share their work with Malawian women and young girls, at your church, unit programs or conference gatherings.

Barb Garling

Heart of the North Conference Board member



1st Corinthians 13 - (A Christmas Version)

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at a soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata, but do not focus on those I love the most, I have missed the point.

... In other words,

Love stops the cooking to hug a child,

Loves sets aside the decorating to kiss the spouse.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful there are there to be in the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust.

But the gift of Love will endure.



Unit/Conference News



Lake Superior Conference

Lake Superior Conference has a new banner!

Finding out that our old banner was misplaced and could not be found, I took the problem to my W/ELCA group at Our Savior's in Iron River.

One of our talented quilting ladies, Sandy Rau, took on the project. The finished product was beyond my expectations. She even applied small gem/buttons on the map where each of our Conference churches are located.

We would also like to thank Dairyland Conference for supplying us with the banner stand.

We are anxiously waiting for the next Synod gathering so we can bring our new banner to hang along with all the other lovely conference art pieces.

Love, love, love the SWO!

Kathy Rewalt, Board Member



Pleasant Valley Lutheran Church is located in the beautiful rolling green hills south of Eau Claire, northeast of Mondovi and northwest of Eleva. Our congregation is small and made up of people from these three communities and the surrounding rural areas. We have wrestled with how to make our church known in our area and it's a challenge to figure out how to connect with our neighbors. The first Sunday in October, we hold our annual Fall Bazaar which features a grilled chicken dinner, crafts and bake sale, raffles and music. This event usually brings in people from our neighboring communities as well as people who are new to our church.

In past years, we have set up a booth at nearby Cleghorn's September Fall Festival to sell raffle tickets for our Fall Bazaar. This has had mixed success, so we decided to try something new last fall. Instead of focusing on ticket sales, we chose to use the booth as a way to connect with people who were attending the Cleghorn Festival.



We set up games that kids were invited to play, at no cost, and could receive little prizes for. While the kids were playing the games, it gave us a chance to introduce ourselves to parents. We had flyers about our October bazaar to handout as well as refrigerator magnets that included our church contact information. It seemed to be successful in that we connected with many, many people who wouldn't usually just stop by our booth to buy tickets; it gave kids a chance to have fun at no cost to their family; and it was a teambuilding activity for our congregation members. As an added bonus, we sold over 100 tickets for our Fall bazaar raffle.

We learned that the success of this activity was not measured by how many tickets we sold for our Fall bazaar, but by the connections we made with people we met. It is important for our congregation to find new ways to build relationships with people in the communities around us. Pleasant Valley Lutheran is not a church building--it is a group of people called by God to serve our neighbors.

Kimberly Vlcek
Church Council President
Pleasant Valley Lutheran, Dairyland Conference

It says in Isaiah 52:7. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God Reigns!’” (NRSV)

How many times as a Woman of the ELCA have YOU been the one to bring the Good News? At almost every meeting or event that we attend, the question comes up..." why aren't women (especially the *young* women) joining Women of the ELCA as before?" "How can we be expected to 'bring the Good News' to women who are not there?" There are several reasons, (and probably many more) than those listed here.

ONE, more women are employed outside the home;

TWO, there are increased family activities which require more time from wives, mothers, and grandmothers – how many of us – when we were in school [a long, long time ago 😊] – had the opportunity to participate in organized sports activities? Were there Drama



Clubs, Forensic Clubs, Spanish or other foreign language clubs, pep clubs, cheerleading, pom pom groups, 'Spirit' clubs, Agriculture clubs, Girl Scouts or any of the many others that young women have to choose from now? The equal opportunity act opened up a whole new point of view for the females of today.

How many of you, as grandmothers have been asked to come to 'Grandparents Day'? Our children/grandchildren want their parents/grandparents to attend their programs and concerts like we wanted our parents to. However, if one works outside the home, one does not usually have the good fortune to be allowed to be away from the job for those events.

A **THIRD** reason might be that more women are caregivers for aging parents, many for a longer period of time than in the past.

FOURTH. It is a fact that women's attendance at church is declining, and **LASTLY**, more women are serving in leadership positions in the church and *beyond* the Women of the ELCA. This last political election showed that many more women are involved in their city, school, county, state and higher governments. A study found that women are NO longer willing to invest their time and talents to *any* organization unless it holds sufficient value for themselves and those they serve.



SO, how do we change to meet the challenges of this new environment? First and foremost, we *must* promote the Spiritual Growth of women and provide a structure for them

to minister to others. We need to recognize that there are NEW types of leadership and organizational arrangements. Maybe it is time to look at our won local units and their structure. For some women, working together as a team, rather than the traditional officer arrangement works better. We need to remember that **each** woman has her own spiritual gifts and they are abundant – **but they are NOT the same in everyone!** The gifts we all have are needed in large and small measures – and working **together**, we up the tapestry that is our Women of the ELCA. We need to be



better at recognizing, affirming and nurturing the gifts of each woman. We need to provide the opportunities and the support for women to develop their spiritual and leadership skills.

Our Purpose Statement says that ‘we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, and support one another in our callings’. Only by being inclusive can we do this.

Do you know that some women think that we are a ‘select’ group? We must find ways to involve the women who aren’t involved. Have you *invited* new members to your Bible studies (and offered to pick them up)? Or, do you say... ‘well they know when we meet, why don’t they simply join us’? Do you know how *hard* it is to join an already close-knit group? Maybe, for some, it is like meeting you prospective in-laws for the very first time. Maybe we won’t measure up to the group’s expectations, or maybe they will think that we really don’t know much about Bible study, or maybe they will ‘put us on the spot’ by asking something we don’t know. [I come from a large family, and do not always remember that we can be ‘intimidating’ to someone who does not know us.]

We need to look past what went on before in each woman’s life or their current situation and be more sensitive about our differences and celebrate **each** woman’s diverse background experiences.

We must also have good communication with the women in our congregation. This means two-way interaction. It is essential that we *listen* to the needs of the women of our congregation. Do you know that research has shown that something must be communicated SEVEN times before it is remembered by those people we want to reach? That is why it is so important to use different means of communication.



Your next question might be “Is revitalizing the Women of the ELCA group with the time and effort?” Yes, because it is one way that women in our individual congregations, our conferences and our Synodical Women’s Organization can communicate and come together as a group. It can be inspiring and rewarding.

We have been ‘...called to discipleship...’ and ‘**we commit ourselves to grow..., affirm..., support..., engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world**’. We must take what Women of the ELCA has taught us and pass it on; probably in a new fashion – but without one another’s support and encouragement we cannot be what our Lord has called us to be. God has promised that the Holy Spirit will empower us as we engage in the ministries of Women of the ELCA, and we need to hold on to that promise.

Lord, I don’t need enough faith to move mountains... [I can get dynamite and bulldozers to do that].

I pray for enough faith to move ME....



2019

2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



2019

APRIL

- 6 – Chippewa Valley Conference Day of Renewal, New Hope Lutheran, Downsview
- 14-15 – Chippewa Valley Conference Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
- 17 – Dairyland Conference Morning of Renewal, Our Saviour's Lutheran, Whitehall

2020

APRIL

- 17-18 – SWO Convention, Location TBA

**"Jesus can turn water into
wine, but he can't turn your
whining into anything."
—Pastor Jim Haupt
United Church of Canada
Chesley, ON**



JOY

"Jesus, Others, Self"

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Articles/photos of your W/ELCA activities
are encouraged.

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NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The Northwest 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 Northwest or W/ELCA or subscriptions in the subject line].* This newsletter may be photocopied.

DEADLINE for next issue of *The NORTHWESTER* is **March 1, 2019**

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

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