

Spring 2026

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Psalms 136

REGISTER TODAY!

37th Annual Saint Paul Area Synodical Women's Convention

April 25, 2026
St. Mark Lutheran Church
One North Road
Circle Pines, MN 55014
Phone: 763-784-2558

You and your church women are cordially invited to attend our annual convention where we:

- conduct the business of the Saint Paul Area Synodical Women's Organization (SWO), elect officers and Board Members, approve the budget and set direction for the future
- experience community in renewing friendships and making new friends
- revitalize our faith through inspiring speakers and workshops

May we experience God's enduring love as we gather together in Christ's Name.

To VIEW/DOWNLOAD CONVENTION PACKET (details and mail-in forms) - [click here](#)

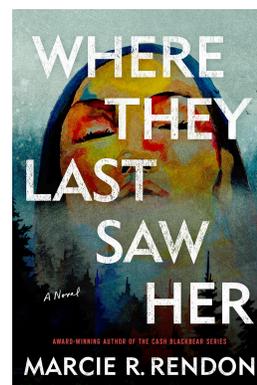
To REGISTER ONLINE, click on the following link: <https://saintpaulareasynodicalwomen.regfox.com/2026-saint-paul-area-synod-women-of-the-elca>

Registration deadline: April 16, 2026

President's Corner

by Becky Maier, President

This edition of Bridges contains the **registration packet for our 2026 convention** and gathering. We so hope you will be able to be there. The convention committee has once again put together an excellent lineup of speakers, with the keynote speaker being Marcie Rendon. Marcie is an indigenous woman who has written several books. One of those books is *Where They Last Saw Her*, about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. I hope you will read it and then come and experience what she shares with us.



Recently, I took part in the Conference of Presidents where we had **presentations on *Racial Justice* and on *LGBTQIA Language, Meaning and Faithful Curiosity***. These two presentations were chosen because of questions and inquiries the churchwide staff has received from women. Both presentations were well received by the presidents and if anyone would like more specific information about those, please be in touch with me and I would love to have coffee with you to share some of what I learned. It would be way too much to include in a Bridges publication. But I will share two books that were suggested as being excellent reading: *See Me, Believe Me: A Guide to Allyship With Congregational Leaders of Color* and *God's Holy Darkness*. I also learned that to date there are 26 from the Saint Paul Area Synod who will be attending the **Triennial Gathering**. I am quite sure that none of us will be disappointed. It's not too late to register; go to www.welcatg.org and join us. We will be carpooling to Des Moines so there will be a ride for you.

I would encourage each of us to spend some time looking at all of the online information that is on the **website of Women of the ELCA** (www.womenoftheelca.org). There is a wealth of information to be found there, from areas of ministry and action to resources for Bible studies and retreats to general information about Women of the ELCA. There are publications such as *Gather Magazine* and an on-line magazine designed by and for young women called *Bold Cafe*. There is a blog and there is *Daily Grace*, a daily meditation for our journey. You will no doubt find something there that is of special interest to you.

And now we are in the time of year where we wait for spring, for the flowers to peek out of the soil and the trees to bloom once again. I wish each of you a spring full of joy and happiness. And I look forward to seeing many of you in the upcoming months.



Photo by Ales Krivec on Unsplash

Treasurer's Note

by Robin Kieffer, Treasurer

As of this writing, the SWO has received a total of \$1850 toward **Resolution 25-1 for Lutheran Disaster Response – wildfires**. Our resolution hopes we can donate \$3000, so we have a ways to go in order to meet that amount. A huge thank you to those who have already donated to the resolution.



Four Triennial Gathering scholarships have been awarded to first-time attendees. The Gathering this summer in Des Moines, IA will be a wonderful opportunity for worship, fellowship and learning. In addition, our Saint Paul Area Synodical Women’s Organization (SWO) will be giving an offering at the Gathering. If you would like to participate in this offering, please send me a check made out to St Paul Area SWO and put **“Triennial offering”** on the memo line.

Another way to help support the day-to-day operations of the churchwide women’s organization is by donating to **SALT (Share Abundance, Love and Thanks)**. These donations will allow Women of the ELCA to continue our women’s ministries, anti-racism efforts, *Gather Magazine*, *Bold Café*, scholarships, grants and so much more. To donate to SALT, please send me a check made out to St Paul Area SWO and put **“SALT”** on the memo line.

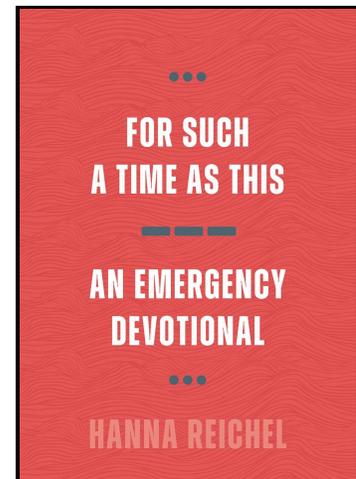
Robin Kieffer, SWO Treasurer
13555 Elkwood Dr
Apple Valley, MN 55124

Book Corner

For Such a Time as This: An Emergency Devotional by *Hanna Reichel*

Review submitted by **Vernita Kennen**

Where do you turn for devotional help when the world becomes overwhelming? And in these days of political polarization and an eroding democratic system, help rooted in faith is needed more than ever. Hanna Reichel, professor of systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, provides that help in her book *For Such a Time as This: An Emergency Devotional*.



Through meditations on scripture, reflections on historical precedents including the Confessing Church’s resistance to Nazi Germany, and portraits of inspiring figures who maintained their integrity in the face of oppression, Reichel guides readers toward their own Christian response to today’s present moment. This book is written specifically for ordinary believers and reads well and while acknowledging that some of us are called to public witness, **all of us** must face the daily challenge of living faithfully.

This book is written in four parts according to the liturgical order of a worship service: gathering, listening and responding, communion, and sending. A “First Aid Kit” indexes the meditations by themes and the study guide has thoughtful reflection questions, prompts for action plus resources for further reading. One of our small groups at Incarnation is using this in their time of sharing and discussion together; it has been a wise and well-received choice. You might want to offer to lead a group yourself or recommend this title to whoever leads small groups in your congregation.

Have you read a good book and want to share it with other Bridges readers?

Please send the book title, author and a short description of the book to Bridges Editor, Kathy Frost, at kathyafrost@gmail.com. We will share it in a future issue of Bridges.

Stewardship: Time, Talents, and Resources as Trusts from God

by Glenda Schnirring, Board Member

As found in a recent “Google” search, “Stewardship in our times involves the intentional faithful management of our time, talents, and resources as trusts from God, rather than personal resources.”

How boldly did we see the explosion of what I’ll call “secular stewardship” exhibited by an estimated fifty thousand Twin City and suburban residents during the arrival of three thousand Federal agents called ICE in the recent “Metro Surge”? Men and women alike headed into the coldest of January’s days to peacefully protest the manner in which neighbors and fellow workers were being sought out and detained because of the possibility that they were making our community less safe. I immediately saw the activity as an act of stewardship’s three pillars: time, talent and treasure. **On their own time, with handmade signs, playing instruments, and singing original songs, followed by the forwarding of cash for food, rides, and unpaid rent and utility bills, people demonstrated acts of accelerated stewardship in real time.** It was solidarity and kinship among like-minded people in what could be called an outpouring of unsurpassed public response, seldom witnessed.

The Saint Paul Area Synod made it easy for us to respond which we did, and still are.

I’ll shift my stewardship message now to a need shared by SWO president, Becky Meier, in Bridges’ winter edition.

The “Women of the ELCA” organization, Chicago, is in a state of financial shortfall caused in part by the pandemic. It finished 2025 with a financial gap of \$250,000. Executive Board member, Julie Hong Sebella, has provided \$50K as a MATCH to gifts given to help WELCA close the gap, and be able to pay its operating obligations namely salaries, postage, insurance, technology and whatever else makes its service to us, vital and in place. *Gather Magazine*, *Bold Cafe* along with scholarships and small grants are also in play as the shortfall persists. There has been no better time to help than now.

The program is called **SALT** which stands for **Share Abundance, Love and Thanks**, a reminder to season our gifts with an additional level of help which will keep the heartbeat of our valued Church-wide office of WELCA in service to the ministries which reach around the globe. Send individual or unit gifts payable to Women of the ELCA to SWO treasurer, Robin Keiffer, [13555 Elkwood Drive, Apple Valley, MN 55124](https://www.google.com/maps/place/13555+Elkwood+Drive,+Apple+Valley,+MN+55124). Thank you very much.



Justice: Healthcare as a Sacred Responsibility

by Kathy Hogenson, Board Member

While deciding what to write for this edition of Bridges, I spent ten hours in the M Health Fairview Hospital emergency room with my 95-year-old mother. During our long wait, my mind kept returning to the crisis of healthcare access in America and our communities. I couldn’t help but think how fortunate my mom and I were to have health insurance, access to physicians, and a nearby hospital when we needed it.



What became overwhelmingly clear to me is this: the need for medical care is not a mere budgetary matter or something that should be reduced to political soundbites – healthcare is essential to human life and dignity.

Looking around at the packed emergency room waiting area, I saw a scene that would have been shocking to medical professionals decades ago. The emergency room has gone from a place to treat literal emergencies – severe injuries, heart attacks, and bleeding wounds – to a place that is the primary source of care for patients of all ages.

The Real Cost of Ending ACA Subsidies

The [expiration of the Affordable Care Act's expanded subsidies](#) on December 31 has resulted in a sobering reality:

- According to the Congressional Budget Office, [the number of uninsured people is estimated to rise to 3.8 million](#), on average, each year from 2026-2034.
- More people than ever are using emergency rooms as their primary healthcare provider, driving up costs significantly due to emergency visits being far more costly than scheduled clinic appointments.
- Emergency rooms are becoming overwhelmed and understaffed – a recipe for dangerous delays in care for patients with critical, life-threatening conditions.
- Hospitals are faced with mounting unpaid bills for services provided to uninsured patients.
- [Rural hospitals are being forced to close or drastically reduce services](#) due to Medicaid cuts and decreased revenue, leaving rural patients facing longer drives to receive medical care.

As you can see, government policy decisions on healthcare have far-reaching consequences that affect real people in our communities. This leaves us with an important question to answer: is healthcare access a benefit reserved for the wealthy or a right for every American?

What Our Faith Tells Us

God calls us to take compassionate action toward the sick, viewing care for them as service directly to Him:

- "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." – James 1:27
- "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" – 1 John 3:17
- "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." – Proverbs 19:17

As people of faith, we are called to ensure that every person – regardless of income – has access to the healthcare they need.

Photo by Erik Mclean on Unsplash

Empathy and Discipleship:

by **Linda Hayle, Board Member**

Empathy is part of Christian discipleship and is a vital Christian virtue. While the word may not appear in the bible, there are many references to compassion, humility, kindness, etc. Jesus demonstrated empathy because he understood the pain and sorrow of others. Empathy is entering into someone else's pain and experience.



After the death of my brother in November, I experienced sympathy from friends and relatives. However, I was also blessed to experience empathy from others. They listened to me, confirmed my pain and sorrow, and helped me to understand that I was not alone. A simple hug or

acknowledgement of someone else's pain helps to ease the pain. **Empathy doesn't offer solutions, instead it offers comfort that helps to heal.**

Jesus showed compassion and empathy when he healed the sick, wept with mourners and taught parables illustrating compassion. In [Matthew 25:35-40](#), Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in." This teaching underscores the importance Jesus places on empathy and compassion as integral to the Christian life.

Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026 SWO Convention

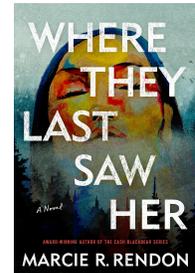
Saturday, April 25, 2026

St. Mark Lutheran Church

Circle Pines, MN

Keynote speaker: Marcie Rendon, author of [Where They Last Saw Her](#), a book about missing and murdered indigenous women

**See first article in this issue of [Bridges](#) for details and registration information.*



2026 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering

July 16-19, 2026

Des Moines, Iowa

Inspiring Speakers, Fun-Filled Comradery, Spiritual Reflection!

All this can be yours at the WELCA Triennial, July 16 from 8:00 AM - July 19 at 5:00 PM in Des Moines, Iowa.



July 16-19, 2026 | des moines, iowa

The theme for the 2026 Triennial Gathering is "I am Worthy"

focusing on Psalm 139:14 "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

This proclamation reminds us of God's promise to always be with us, even during times of devastation and division. Repeating the phrase "I am worthy" helps us recognize the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in our lives. This practice of self-affirmation creates opportunities for healing and repair within ourselves, the church, society, and the world. When we declare, "I am worthy," we align ourselves with God's promises. There is great power in our resolve.

Click on the link below to see the complete itinerary, including bios on the speakers, registration info, and more. Hope to see you there!

www.welcatg.org

If you have questions or are interested in carpooling or sharing a hotel room with another attendee, please contact:

Jacque Bieber, SWO Vice-President / Triennial Promoter; 651-238-1685 or jqbieber@gmail.com

If you are a first-time attendee, scholarships to cover \$475 of the registration fees are still available. To request a scholarship, please contact:

Becky Maier, SWO President; jbmaier@hotmail.com

SPECIAL NOTE:

Those of us attending the Triennial from the Saint Paul Area Synod wear straw hats with a yellow ribbon on them which helps us be easily identified as well as to make it easier for us to find others from Saint Paul. Along with that, we make little straw hats as pins to share with others attending from other synods. This is a tradition at the gatherings and a fun way to share ourselves with

others we are meeting. We will be gathering in advance of the convention to put together the straw hat pins on Wednesday, May 6 at 1:00 pm at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 700 Snelling Ave S, St. Paul (in the Mississippi Room).



Notes from the Bridges Editor:

Unsubscribing and Resubscribing

The Saint Paul Area Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) uses a single email list to send out all communications to our contacts. If you choose to unsubscribe from our email list, please note that you are unsubscribing from **all** communications we send out, including Bridges. It's easy to resubscribe by clicking on the Update Profile link at the bottom of any email you have received from SWO or by contacting the Bridges Editor. Thank you!

Always be aware of email scams!

SWO Board members will NEVER send you an email requesting that you send money or gift cards. These kinds of emails are always a SCAM. Please be alert to such requests and inform a Board member if you ever receive such a request. Thank you!

2025-2026 Saint Paul Area Synodical Women's Organization (SWO)

[2025-2026 SWO Leadership chart \(click here\) - REVISED 8/26/2025](#)

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Bridges E-Newsletter, a quarterly publication of SWO

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Submit articles & event listings for Summer 2026 issue.

Deadline: May 28, 2026

Email Bridges Editor: **Kathy Frost**, kathyafrost@gmail.com

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Click on **Update Profile** found in the footer of this email and all SWO emails.

Encourage your church to post Bridges to their website.

Women of the ELCA Mission Statement

Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Women of the ELCA Purpose Statement

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

Saint Paul Area Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA | [105 University Ave W | St Paul, MN 55103 US](#)

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