



Winter 2025-26

IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to the length of the Bridges E-Newsletter, some email systems (like Gmail) will initially display only the first portion of the newsletter and require that you click a button to view the entire email. Watch for messages at the bottom of the email to be sure you are seeing the complete E-newsletter.

President's Corner

by Becky Maier, President

I hope that each of you had a blessed and thanks-filled Thanksgiving. And now we are approaching the Christmas season. We each can remember that the magic of Christmas is not in the presents but in His presence. May you have the gift of faith this Christmas and many blessings through the New Year.



We hope that you will join us at the **Triennial Gathering** in July in Des Moines, IA. I want to remind you that there is a scholarship for you to help with the expense. All you need to do is send me an email (jbmaier@hotmail.com) letting me know you would like one. You won't regret it. The price will go up on January 5, so now is the time to get yourself registered. You can check out the

Triennial website (WELCATG.org) for an updated list of speakers and workshops. If you plan to attend and need a roommate, you can let Jacque Bieber (jqbieber@gmail.com) know and she can link you up with others who are also needing a roommate. I have been to nearly every Triennial Gathering since they began, and it always leaves me inspired.

There are a couple of other things the churchwide organization is doing that you should know about. There will be a **Blue Christmas service** at 7:00 pm CST on December 21. The link for this will be found at WELCA.org/events. In addition, there is a 15-minute **morning prayer** each morning at 10:00 am CST. The zoom link for that is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87829538438>

And please, please, please do not forget about our own **2026 convention**. It will happen at St. Mark's in Circle Pines on April 25. Our keynote speaker will be Marcie Rendon, an indigenous woman who wrote *Where They Last Saw Her*, a book about missing and murdered indigenous women. I have read this book and found it to be helpful in learning about this subject as well as other issues that affect the indigenous community. I highly recommend that you read it as well.

The **Nominating Committee** will soon begin their task of finding women who would consider serving on the Synodical Women's Board. Personally, I have always found it to be rewarding and I have so many connections and friendships with so many women throughout our synod because of my involvement. I challenge you to take the risk to step up.

And now I send you happy Christmas wishes. May you always know the love of God in your life.

Becky

Photo by James Coleman on Unsplash

Treasurer's Note

by Robin Kieffer, Treasurer

So far this Fall, there have been four cluster meetings.

Generous offerings were taken for the projects that presented:

- educating women about pregnancy and parenting options (Options for Women received \$540)
- helping women who are special needs caregivers (The More Than Project received \$300.50)
- learning about youth homelessness in Dakota County (The Link received \$375, toiletry items and \$410 in gift cards)

Two food shelves also received donations and ½ of all offerings were designated to the SWO.

As of this Fall, the SWO has received a total of \$550 toward Resolution 25-1 for Lutheran Disaster Response – California wildfires. Our resolution hopes we can donate \$3000, so we have a way to go in order to meet that amount.

Also, two Triennial Gathering scholarships have been awarded to first-time attendees. There are more funds available. Each scholarship covers the cost of the Gathering registration (\$475) if you register by the end of this year. All you have to do is ask. Contact Becky Maier, president of the Saint Paul Area SWO (jbmaier@hotmail.com).

Photo by Daniel Andrade on Unsplash



SALT Appeal

by Becky Maier, President

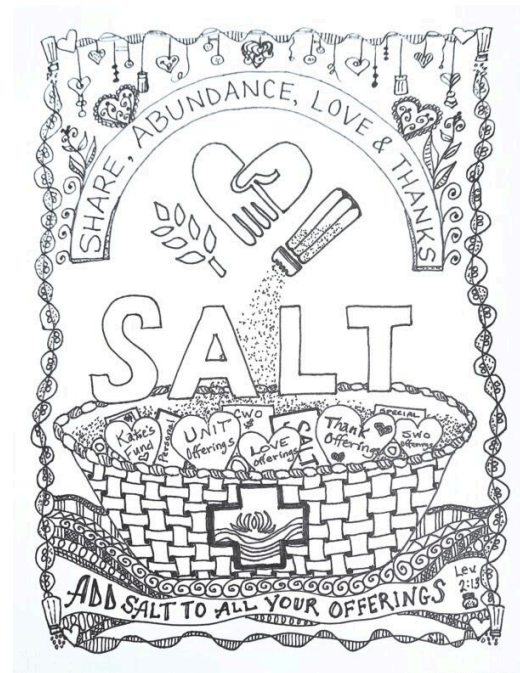
“Add salt to all your offerings.” Leviticus 2:13

Women of the ELCA’s fundraising team has launched a new appeal to close last year’s \$250,000 funding gap. The appeal’s name, SALT, comes from Leviticus which gives instructions on how to season grain offerings made to God and it gives this important message: We are not just called to give our “first fruits” but to offer them with seasoning.

We define salt as a verb:

Share Abundance, Love, and Thanks! (SALT)

Consider adding a little SALT to your donation to Women of the ELCA. Your generosity supports our day-to-day operations (salaries, insurance, postage, technology, rent) and allows us to continue our women’s ministries, anti-racist efforts, Gather magazine, Bold Café, scholarships, grants, and so much more!



Stewardship: So Much More Than Asking for Money

by Karin Vukich, Board Member

Hearing the word Stewardship often brings me back to early childhood. Being a Pastor’s Kid, I remember lots of sermons by my dad, temple talks by the council chair or the Stewardship committee asking for support. As a kid, I generally associated Stewardship with frankly, just needing more money.

But I missed the full message. Stewardship is so much more than asking for money.

Being a good Steward is giving of your gifts and talents, your time, support and funding. But it also includes taking care of these items and using them responsibly and in the best interest of all.

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines Stewardship as “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.” This is the definition I like.

We read in Psalm 24:1 – The Earth is the Lord’s and everything in it. The world and all its People belong to him.

We are the caretakers of this earth and we must take care of it: the land, the seas, the animals and each other. This past month, I spent time with the confirmation class at our church and together we assembled Blizzard Bags for our local Meals on Wheels (MOWs) recipients. These bags contain shelf stable food that they can eat should the weather be bad and it is unsafe for volunteers to deliver hot meals. I explained to the group how they were being good stewards of God’s gifts by packing these bags for our MOWs friends. They are always so excited to help with this project, and I feel confident that they are learning that Stewardship is more than just asking for money!



Photo by Anne Nygård on Unsplash

Book Corner

Love Big: The Power of Revolutionary Relationships to Heal the World by Rozella Haydée White

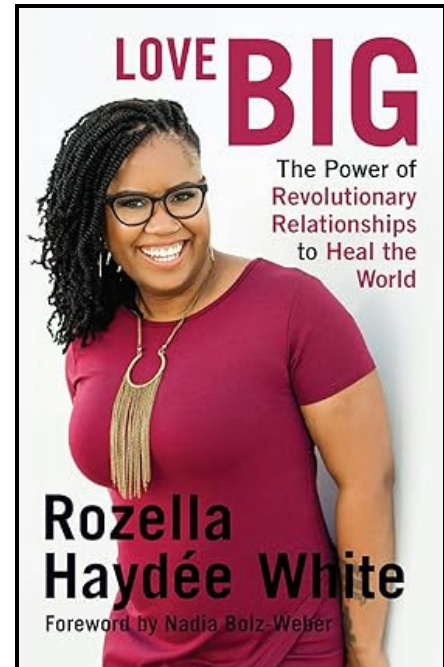
Review submitted by Vernita Kennen

Love Big: The Power of Revolutionary Relationships to Heal the World by Rozella Haydée White is neither a brand new book (published in 2019) nor an especially long book (200 pages) but it says a lot. And in a world desperately in need of healing, it is an excellent book for us to consider during the shorter days and longer nights of the winter ahead.

White quotes Mother Teresa in reminding us “we have forgotten that we belong to each other”. The loss of that memory has led us to the fear and fractured world of deep divisions in which we live today. We find ourselves disconnected from each other and even from ourselves. Sadly, this seems more true today than even in 2019 when White wrote this book!

Reminding us of the love of God and remembering God as “a lover”, White helps us look at relationships that can heal across divides of race, gender, religion, orientation, ability, identity, and class. That’s a big ask - luckily our God is big enough and loves enough to enable us to live into those revolutionary relationships. Focusing on love, connection and abundance, we can help heal ourselves, our relationships, and our world.

(You may have noted this title was recommended in the Gather Bible study, summer 2025.)

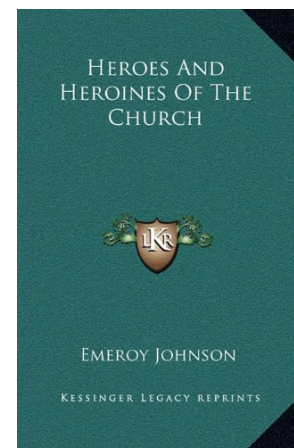


Discipleship: Heroes and Heroines

by Virginia Collier, Board Member

Several years ago my 96 year old Aunt Ruth fell and broke her hip. She recovered well, but it was time for her to leave her home and move to an assisted living facility. I helped pack her things and took several boxes home and put them in a closet.

Recently, I looked through a box of her books that I had been storing and found books she kept from her youth. One of the books, *Heroes and Heroines of the Church* by Emeroy Johnson, had been given to her by her Confirmation teacher in 1939. It was published in 1931 and contained short stories of men and women who had preached the Word of God around the world. The pages are yellow and the print is small but it is interesting to read.



The preface states:

“The men and women who have done great things for the church were filled with courage. They were not afraid of any foe. They dared to do what was right.

It takes courage to be a Christian in our day also. Perhaps we will not need to face the kind of dangers as the heroes of old had to meet. Our greatest foe is sin, and we are not heroes if we lose the battle against sin.

Only Christ can give us courage for this struggle. Through Him we also can be heroes and heroines of the Church.”

PERPETUA was a young woman from Carthage, a city in Africa, who had begun to learn about the Savior. Many people in Carthage were heathen, including her own family. She desired to be baptized. The pastor instructed her to study the Bible before her baptism so she would know what Christ wants of her. Before she could be baptized, she was arrested for being a Christian and was to be put to death. Shortly before her death, the pastor came and baptized her, telling her, “You have fought the good fight of faith. The Lord will surely give you the crown of life.”

ST. MARTIN was a soldier in the Roman army. He was a brave man but did not want to kill anyone. “I am a soldier of Christ, the Prince of Peace.” Upon leaving the Army he went to France, told the people about Christ and was one of the first missionaries to France. Martin wanted to be by himself to pray, but the people wanted him to be a Bishop. He became a monk and lived with other Christian men. They lived for God and served Him. St. Martin lived and died a true Christian.

ANSGAR traveled from Germany to Sweden with plans for meeting the king. Upon meeting the king, Ansgar said, “I come as a friend. I come to bring you the gospel. The good news of Christ. I ask permission from you to preach in your country.” The king replied that he had heard of Christ and God, and that Christ teaches men to love one another.

Ansgar preached throughout Sweden in homes and in the countryside as there were no churches. He became the first Christian missionary in Sweden and is often called the Apostle of the North.

JOHN CALVIN lived at the same time as Martin Luther although he was younger. Calvin had read some of Luther’s books and felt that Luther was a wonderful teacher. Many people came to hear John Calvin preach about the Word of God, about Christ and how he lived on earth and died for our sins. Some people did not agree with Calvin so he was forced to move from city to city to escape being killed. Calvin found friends in Geneva, Switzerland. He was a great teacher, showing the people how to live upright, useful lives. He became a pastor and because of his leadership, Geneva became a city of God-fearing people.

In this book, there are stories of twenty-one people whose discipleship made a difference in many lives leading them to love and believe in Christ. The stories above are but a few of these faithful caring leaders.

Social Justice: Who is ISAIAH?

by Patty Todnem, Board Member

Recently, at our Adult Forum at St. Philip’s Church, Hastings, we had Ben Whalen from ISAIAH speak to us. Who is ISAIAH?



ISAIAH is a multi-faith, multi-racial, and statewide non-partisan organization made up of congregations, mosques, small businesses, child care centers, manufactured home parks, and neighborhood teams all striving together for racial and economic justice in Minnesota.

This faith-based social justice organization takes its name from the biblical prophet Isaiah. The project has a Biblical meaning: The Hebrew name **Yeshayahu**, from which Isaiah is derived, means “the Lord is salvation” or “God saves”.

The prophet Isaiah was known for challenging the powerful, speaking out against injustice and oppression, and calling for righteousness and social justice. This message aligns with the organization’s focus on addressing racial and economic inequality.

As a biblical name, it has significance for Christians and Jews, and the prophet is also revered in the Muslim tradition. This helps connect the multi-faith communities that make up the organization.

Some of the policies and accomplishments of ISAIAH are listed below.

- **Strongest Homeowner Bill of Rights in the U.S.** (post-2012): In the wake of the foreclosure crisis, ISAIAH worked with state legislation to protect homeowners from predatory subprime lenders.
- **Child Tax Credit and childcare investments** (2023): ISAIAH and its “Kids Count on Us” coalition campaigned for a Child Tax Credit, which is expected to cut childhood poverty in Minnesota by a third. They also secured permanent funding to better compensate childcare workers.
- **Increased minimum wage** (2014): In partnership with other groups, ISAIAH advocacy helped pressure lawmakers to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50/hour and index it to inflation.
- **Voting rights restoration for formerly incarcerated people** (2023): As part of the Restore the Vote MN coalition, ISAIAH successfully advocated for a new law that restored voting rights to more than 55,000 individuals on supervised release.
- **Criminal justice reform**: Through its Barbershop and Black Congregation Cooperative, ISAIAH has worked for police accountability, civilian oversight of law enforcement, and other reforms to reduce disparities in the justice system. Specific wins include banning private prisons and reforming clemency laws.

On **Saturday, December 13, from 11 AM-6 PM**, thousands of ISAIAH and Faith in Minnesota leaders from across the state will come together for the ***Light in the Storm*** event at the Minneapolis Convention Center to launch their agenda through 2027. The purpose is to plan a path in this moment to protect our state, neighbors, and families in the face of rising authoritarianism. Together we are going to make Minnesota a place where families across Race, Place, and Religion can thrive.

Sources:

- ISAIAH website under Organizing / Our Issues: <https://www.isaiahmn.org/our-issues>
- Flyer: Isaiah and Faith in Minnesota Presents A LIGHT IN THE STORM, Dec. 13th in Convention Center in Minneapolis.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE for our 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

2026 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering

July 16-19, 2026

Des Moines, Iowa

Ready or not, here we come...to DES MOINES, IOWA, July 16-19, 2026! It's not too early to make your Gathering reservation and also your hotel reservation. If you have not done so yet, here's the link with all the details:

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/new-triennial-event-page>

You can scroll down on the registration screen and you'll come to the **hotel registration** portion on this site. There is a **special rate for WELCA members**. Please make your hotel reservations sooner than later, so that there is a preliminary count for our discounts.

For your convenience, I've also included the Des Moines hotel links below. While you can book a hotel room from July 13-20, the formal Triennial Gathering is July 16-19.

Book a room under the WELCA rate at the Hilton:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/womenoftheelca-triennialconvention2026/>

Note: While the link says 1 king-sized bed, you can get the discount for 2 queens, if you request it.

Book a room under the WELCA rate at the Marriott:

<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1746657730172&key=GRP&guestreslink2=true&app=resvlink>

Notes: The Marriott is less expensive, but it is several blocks from the Events Center where most activities will take place. Scroll down, if needed, to get to the spot to check availability on this one.

If you have questions, please contact:

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



july 16-19, 2026 ✨ des moines, iowa

2026 Triennial Gathering Scholarships

Your SWO Board is offering scholarships for those wishing to attend the 2026 Triennial Gathering. The Board hopes that there will be many from the Saint Paul Area at that gathering since it is in nearby Des Moines, IA. There will be carpools to get us there and it will be so worth it to take advantage of this opportunity.

Your SWO Board is offering \$475 Scholarships for first-time attendees.

To apply for a scholarship, send your name, address, cell number (or email address), and a short statement on what you hope to gain from attending to Becky Maier, SWO President, at jbmaier@hotmail.com or by USPS mail to:

Becky Maier
663 S Broadway
Stillwater, MN 55082

In Case You Missed It...

East & North Central Clusters Meeting

by Linda Hayle, Board Member

The East Central/North Central Cluster Meeting was held on Tuesday, October 7, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Bayport. There were 36 attendees and the offering was \$701, of which half will go to *The More Than Project*.

The guest speaker was Kate Swenson who spoke on the "Secret World of Autism". Kate is a mother of three including her autistic son Cooper. Families of autistic children are often isolated with 24x7 caregiving responsibilities.

In 2021, during the heart of the pandemic, Kate co-founded a nonprofit called *The More Than Project* that brings free mental health counseling to caregivers in need. Since its launch, her focus has turned to in-person retreat-like events for hundreds of female caregivers twice a year to come together to laugh, cry, share and learn.



Kate is also the author of “*Forever Boy: A Mother’s Memoir of Autism and Finding Joy*” and coauthor of “*Autism Out Loud*”. Her writing speaks to the secret world of autism, the day-to-day wins and struggles, and the joy that comes from it.

Material offering of 216 pounds of food and paper products were collected for the local food shelves. A donation of \$55 was given to St. Croix Sacred Ensemble who provided music for the meeting.

Pictured (l-r): Char Nun, Ann Hagestad, Lynda Keeney, Gayle Nason, Kate Swenson (guest speaker), Debby Dellis, Virginia Tietel, Meridee Hable

South Cluster Gathering

by Robin Kieffer, Treasurer



The South Cluster got together on Saturday, Oct 18th at Grace Lutheran Church in Apple Valley and heard about youth homelessness in Dakota County.

The Link serves homeless youth in the Metro area. Of the people experiencing homelessness, 40% are children and youth. Over 1300 youth between the ages of 18 and 24 experience homelessness.

The Link has a drop-in center at Grace Lutheran Church.

We collected \$410 in gift cards, toiletry items and an offering of \$375 for The Link to help in their work with homeless youth.

Thank you to Grace Lutheran, St Philip’s Lutheran and Easter Lutheran for organizing the program and for providing treats.

North Cluster Meeting

The North Cluster met on Saturday, September 27, at First Lutheran Church in Harris. The program speaker was Barb Herzog from [Options for Women/Chisago County](#). This organization provides free services including free pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, classes on pregnancy, parenting and life skills, diapers, wipes, infant clothing and more.

Southeast Cluster Meeting

The Southeast Cluster met on Saturday, October 11, at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church in South St. Paul. Sue Doyscher, owner of [Poppy & Wonderments Design House](#) in West Saint Paul, spoke on how "God Answers Prayers" as He guided and directed her from the concept to the completion of her dream.

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

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

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.

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[Click here for Subscription Form](#), print the form and mail with payment of \$6.00 to cover printing and postage for 4 issues (one year). For subscription questions contact: Robin Kieffer, [13555](tel:13555) Elkwood Drive, Apple Valley, MN 55124 or email Robin at rlkieffer60@gmail.com.

Submit articles & event listings for Spring 2026 issue.

Deadline: **February 28, 2026**

Email: **Kathy Frost**, kathyafrust@gmail.com

Help us keep your contact info up-to-date.

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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Matthew Mitchell <matt@trinitylindstrom.org>
Draft To: Karen Seaver <seaver.karen@gmail.com>

Sat, Jan 10, 2026 at 3:10 PM

Sounds good! I will add it to the website and make those other changes next week.

[Quoted text hidden]



Matthew Mitchell
Technology Director

