

The Western Whirlwind

Western North Dakota Women of the ELCA

September 2025

From the President's Desk

by Michelle Lauckner

Let's Mobilize and Let's Be "Active"!

Do you recognize the word "mobilize" above as a significant word related to WELCA? I hope you do...it's part of our Women of the ELCA Mission Statement:

"Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ." I'm highlighting this action word and want to encourage our western ND women and church units to be and remain "active." Maybe not altogether *physically* active, but active in the life of our churches, our clusters, our synod, and our women's organization.

Our WND Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) has gotten requests from individual church's women's units across our half of the state to become "inactive." And I am putting out a plea to discourage this step. Our current leadership is working hard to reflect the present climate of our church and ELCA women of faith. Structural changes are reflected in the updated [Synodical Leader's Guide](#) (March 2025). Find the guide at www.welca.org/toolsforleaders

Being part of WELCA provides a support system for women seeking to grow in their faith and understanding of the Bible. It offers opportunities for learning, sharing, and connecting with others who share similar values and goals. I KNOW you are busy with so many things, but how many of those things support your faith life?!

Our active units contribute to significant causes such as human trafficking, racial discrimination,

environmental improvement and feeding families in need. By adding our smaller contributions to the greater churchwide work, we can make such a greater impact.

Active units ensure that women have a voice in the organization. The more active units our region has, the more voting members we are allowed at events like the Triennial Gathering, allowing for greater representation and influence in the work of WELCA.

How to Stay an Active Unit?

I suspect it is much easier to stay active than anyone realizes.

1. Regular Meetings: Hold regular meetings, whether monthly or annually, to stay connected and engaged.

2. Financial Support: Collect offerings and submit a portion to the synodical organization to support the churchwide organization, even if that is only once yearly.

3. Designate a Contact Person: Have someone in the unit who can communicate with the synodical and churchwide organization. No large board is required if that is not possible – we need just one person as a contact.

Can your church unit provide these few things to remain active? The lament that "*there are so few of us left*" suggests to me that your group is exactly the type of unit that NEEDS to remain a member of a larger organization that is here to support you and your church. I am here to



help! Please reach out to me or any of our SWO & cluster board members anytime!

Mission Statement of the Western North Dakota Synodical Women of the ELCA Newsletter "The Western Whirlwind"

To inform Women of the ELCA in Western North Dakota about happenings within their Churchwide and Synodical organization and Clusters, and to provide readers with stories and articles that interest, inspire, and encourage them in their faith lives.
Adopted March 1999

Western North Dakota Synodical Board

President: Michelle Lauckner
5601 27th Ave SE
Minot, ND 58701
701-720-7406
michellelauckner@gmail.com

Vice President: Shirley Teske
Box 392
Fessenden, ND 58438
701-412-1245 (cell)
shirley_teske@yahoo.com

Secretary: Helen Grant
6050 Old Hwy 2
Berthold, ND 58718
701-453-3218 or 340-8083 (cell)
grants@srt.com

Treasurer: Linda Hanson
7853 139th Ave NW
Zahl, ND 58856
701-694-4621 or 705-0065 (cell)
linmart@nccray.net

Badlands (co): Jennifer Hanson
5705 151 Ave SW
Bowman, ND 58623
701-206-0551 (cell)
jhanson@loggingcampranch.com

Badlands (co): Debbie Patterson
1717 Bridgeport Dr Unit 1
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-523-6482 (cell)
alonzo@ndsupernet.com

East Missouri: Connie Isaak
5300 Plainsman Road
Bismarck, ND 58503
701-391-2825 (cell)
jisaak@bis.midco.net

Heart River: Sharon Heilman
411 Live Oak Lane
Bismarck, ND 58504
701-425-3761
tsleheil@bis.midco.net

Lonetree (Co): Marilyn Saueressig
841 Center Ave N
McClusky, ND 58463
701-363-2961 or 460-1415
jmsauer@westriv.com

Lonetree (Co): Rev Shirley Teske
Box 392
Fessenden, ND 58438
701-412-1245 (cell)
shirley_teske@yahoo.com

Turtle Mountain: Taryce Olson
1239 77th St N
Upham, ND 58789
701-768-2578 or 833-1216 (cell)
ronolson@srt.com

Upper Missouri (co): Brenda Ekness
23 9th Ave SE
Crosby, ND 58730
701-641-6050
gifarms@nccray.com

Upper Missouri (co): Nina Williams
PO Box 867
Crosby, ND 58730
308-539-3313
Ninaw99@hotmail.com

Western Prairie:
Judy Jarmin
3010 46th Ave NW
Minot, ND 58703
701-263-5560
jjarmin@yahoo.com

WND Synod Liaison:
Rev. Tera Kossow
Director of
Evangelical Mission
701-248-6898
tera@wndsynod.org

APPOINTED non-board POSITIONS

Vice Treasurer: Marcia Wilber
8583 39th St NW
New Town, ND 58763
701-627-3508 or 421-1089 (cell)
mtwilber55@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Cheryl Lacey
4111 85th Ave NW
New Town, ND 58763
701-898-3358 (cell)
mclace@restel.net

NOTE: The unit President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer receive a free copy of the *Whirlwind* IF we have correct addresses. Please submit your Unit Update Form annually or whenever there is an officer change.

Church Offices

Western ND Synod/ELCA
1000 Tacoma Ave, Suite 300
PO Box 370
Bismarck, ND 58502
701-223-5312
email: info@wndsynod.org
web page: www.wndsynod.org
To have updates made to the synod web page, email: joel@wndsynod.org

Women of the ELCA
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4189
1-800-638-3522, ext. 2730
email: women.ELCA@elca.org
web: www.womenoftheelca.org

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Lutheran World Relief
www.lwr.org

WND SWO WELCA Facebook page
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Women of the ELCA

Views from the Vice President “Treasures”

By Shirley Teske

The Book of Genesis tells us of the night when the Lord brought Abraham outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And Abraham believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. So, the people of God are like stars, each one precious, each one unique.

The Book of Daniel tells of a time to come. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3.) So, the people of God will be like stars, each one precious, each one unique. *Well what kind of star are you?*

Jesus said it straight up: **“Don’t lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth...”** (Matthew 6:19) So, what part of this do we not understand? It’s as plain as the nose on your face: Don’t lay up for yourself treasures on earth! Why is this so hard to do?

I can think of two reasons: One, Jesus’ teaching runs contrary to the world in which we live. All our lives we’ve been taught to make and save and invest and accumulate as much as we can. It’s the American way: “The one with the most toys wins!” And two, I think we’re afraid if we don’t lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, we’ll run short. We won’t have enough to get by.

**“Don’t lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth,
where moth and rust consume,
and where thieves break through and steal;
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consume,
and where thieves don’t break through and steal;
for where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.”**

So, how do you lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven? The answer is simple – you learn the art of giving. The only treasures you get to keep are those you give away. When you give with a generous spirit, and when you receive nothing in return except the joy of giving, then your gifts become lasting assets – treasures in heaven – that can never be taken from you.

I would like all of you women to shine like the brightness of the sky because you are generous, kind and loving to everyone you meet. Of course, one of the greatest gifts you can ever give or receive is the gift of faith. Think back to the time when you first began to hear the Good News, and to think of yourself as a child of God, and to know in your heart that Jesus Christ is Lord. Who was it that helped you come to faith? Was it your mom or dad ... your grandparents ... a Sunday School teacher ... a minister? Perhaps it was a neighbor or even a total stranger. Whoever helped you come to faith gave you a priceless gift; and in seeing you come to faith, received a lasting treasure in return. Your heart is where your treasure is; so, ladies where is your treasure? I know it is in our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us on the cross.



Have a good day Ladies.
A Sister in Christ,
Vice-President, Shirley Teske

where is your
treasure?

Secretary's Notes



By Helen Grant

"Offerings"

Remember when we got money to put in our Sunday School Offerings. Pennies to put in the Church Bank for our birthdays, and then getting money to put in the offering plate as it was passed through the pews during church. Offerings! And of course, we would sing a song of thanks and praise to God after each offering – and Happy Birthday! An offering is that which is freely given to do the work of the Lord in our churches, community and world. Our Women also participate by offering their services by serving for various occasions, cleaning, painting, and helping with projects wherever help is needed. We are certainly Bold Women and our churches, communities, and world are very blessed.

With our Fall Cluster Gatherings coming, a lot of discussion goes into the 3 Offerings we take and distribute. It gets confusing and I've heard why do we have to do all these offerings? Our Purpose Statement explains the importance and meaning of each of these offerings.

"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 (Love Donation), the Society (Roll Call Offering) and the World (Worship Offering)"

These Offerings help our Community (**Love Donation**), the Society (**Roll Call**) and the World (**Worship Offering**). One half of our **Worship Offerings** always goes to WND Synodical Women of the ELCA to continue supporting the work of the SWO Board including covering convention costs and expenses such as the printing and mailing of this publication the quarterly Western Whirlwind. The recipient of other ½ of the offering is chosen by the Cluster Board (Bible Camps or a cause presented by a guest speaker for example.) This monetary offering is given by individuals and units.

The **Unit Roll Call Offering** is also chosen by the Cluster Board and gives us the attendance count along with a gift from each Unit to share with another group usually outside of the local place of the Gathering. This offering is given by the Units (*although individuals are welcome to support these offerings also!*)

The **Love Donation** is chosen by the Host Church of the Gathering to help an activity of their church or a local organization. This is collected as you enter the Gathering--- donations are from individuals, although some units chose to do this also.

Any of these offerings can be monetary and/or specific items needed by the groups chosen. Suggestions are usually given in the Gathering Information sent out by the Cluster Board before the Gathering.

In one day of the Gathering just think what a blessing we are to so many places. **Thank You God!** – we have learned how to be servants to do our work. Bless Us Indeed!

Attend your Cluster Gathering this Fall – Songs, fellowships, food, offerings, giving, training, and Fun will be happening – something to inspire and bless us all.

Enjoy Every Day – God Bless Us All!

#

Editor's Note: In April 2013 Holy Cross in Powers Lake was hosting the Western Prairie Cluster Spring Gathering. When the women of Bethel Lutheran in New Town received the letter with the gathering information, we saw that the requested Unit Roll Call was a Prayer Shawl. We all looked at one another in confusion...we had never heard of prayer shawls! One of our members said she would do some research and was able to finish her first shawl in time for the gathering and Bethel's prayer shawl was one of 57 collected that day for the hospice program in Minot. Since then Bethel & Bethlehem churches of New Town have formed a Joint Prayer Shawl Ministry that meets monthly and have donated many shawls to congregation and community members, the Minot Hospice program and others needing support. We also have presented a program about this ministry at the Mountrail Bethel Nursing Home in Stanley for several years gifting residents and staff with pocket size knitted or crocheted squares featuring a cross in the design. (*see link on page 11 for more information on starting your own Prayer Shawl Ministry*)

Treasurer's Reflections

"Thank You"

By Linda Hanson



"Thank you."

Two simple, little words. Important words that are so often not expressed.

"Please" and "Thank you" are some of the first words that children are taught to use in many homes. I have often heard parents prompt their young children to use these words after the child receives a gift or when wanting a toy, a drink or something to eat. This same behavior is not always encouraged as the child gets older, and children may not see their friends, neighbors and parents use these words in daily interactions with others.

I don't know who started the practice or how long the practice has been exhibited but win or lose at the end of their football games, our local team lines up in front of the stands and thanks the crowd for coming to the game. What a great example for all to witness!

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 reminds us to "*Rejoice always, pray constantly, **give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*"

Give thanks...it is easy to do when things are going well yet not so easy when things aren't going our way. I take so many things for granted. I have a nice home, plenty of food, I can pay my bills, I have clean water, the air is usually good to breathe, I wake up each morning, I have friends and family that love and care for me...the list goes on and on. I am thankful for each of these gifts, yet I don't always express my thanks to God and

to those who help to make it all possible.

Thank you for being Bold Women. Thank you for being leaders in the communities where you live. Thank you for being willing to give your time and talents, for being examples of how we should live. . .the things you do are noticed by others and you don't always get thanked for what you do. Thank you for your service.

REMINDER: All checks sent to me, Linda Hanson, synodical treasurer should be made out to:

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Use the memo line to indicate the designation, such as WISE, Whirlwind subscription, Katie's Fund, CAR Rebuild and Recovery, etc.

Thank you to all units and individuals for remembering the ministry of Women of the ELCA in your gifts and prayers.



A reminder for all who receive the Whirlwind by mail.

If your mailing address changes, please notify Cheryl Lacey, the Whirlwind editor. (contact info on page 2). Once the time limit for forwarding to the new address has been reached the Post Office will send a notice of *Forwarding Expired* and charge us \$.90 for each piece of mail.

You may also request to change to free email delivery of the Whirlwind (for all issues or only the winter months) by contacting Cheryl.

From the Cluster Presidents/Reps

Lonetree

By Marilyn Saueressig



Summer is moving into August already. It has gone by quickly with many things happening in my life. I love my quilting projects so when the opportunity arrived to go on an adventure to Missouri Star Academy in Hamilton, Missouri I jumped at the chance to attend this event. Two of my quilting friends went with me, and my friend's husband did all the driving. It was a very wonderful experience.

Enough about my summer and on to telling you about **Lonetree Cluster Fall Gathering which is tentatively set for October 11 in Velva**. The speakers will be the youth group from Our Saviors in Mercer and St. Olaf, Turtle Lake. They went on a mission trip. It will be fun to hear what the youth tell us about our adventure.

The metaphor of the shepherd is used sixty times in fifty-four verses of the Bible. It speaks of God's compassion – how God provides for our needs, protects us from danger and steers us along safe paths, and how, in his mercy, God seeks us out when we go astray and brings us back to the fold.

"Yahweh is my shepherd". This brings up the first question we ought to ask ourselves as we consider this great passage: Is the Lord your shepherd? Are you willing to follow his lead and seek his will, or are you determined to chart your own course.

Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Now, there are two ways of understanding wants. One is having what you desire, and the other is being content with what you have. The psalm doesn't say that God will satisfy our greedy appetites; only that God will give us the things we need for a full and abundant life. *"He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul."* The truth is, God's grace will sustain us through the difficult days of our lives, and all we have to do is lean upon his everlasting arms. The psalm goes on to say, *"He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."* As Christians, when we fail to live up to our calling as children of God, we give the Lord a bad name. But when we keep his commandments and share his love with others, we reflect the image of God in which we are created, and his name is glorified through us.

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

We don't know the answers, but we do know that it's an individual experience. Others can be with us and hold our hand and

assure us that we're not alone, but they cannot share the experience of death with us. It's between us and God alone. Those who've walked through the valley of the shadow of death tell us that it's precisely at these moments that we come the closest to knowing that we're not alone. God is with us. His grace is sufficient for our needs. The psalm continues,

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." We all have enemies. If not, people who don't like us, we have enemies such as sickness and aging and declining health. God's promise is that, through faith, our enemies will not prevail against us. They won't have the last word. On the contrary, in the face of our enemies, God throws a party in our honor. We're able to feast on the riches of God's grace, even as our minds fade and our bodies grow weak and frail.

"You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over." In the Bible, anointing refers to the practice of sealing a covenant and bestowing a blessing. God has made a blessing with us his children.

"Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in Yahweh's house forever."

And this is the bottom line: God did not bring us into this world to abandon us and put us out on our own. God created us in his image and bestowed upon us the gift of life in order that we might live in a loving relationship with God and each other. God is love, and the love of God is from everlasting to

(continued on page 9)

From the Cluster Presidents/Reps

Western Prairie

By Judy Jarmin



Are you ready to bring the house down? That is just what we plan to do at our Fall Gathering. The Western Prairie Cluster Fall Gathering will be held on Saturday September 13, 2025, at Zion Lutheran Church in Berthold, ND. The board is working very hard to make this a great Gathering and the ladies of Zion Lutheran are seasoned pros at hosting the Western Prairie Cluster, so you can expect great things.

We are so very happy and honored to have Sue Hamilton as our guest speaker at our Fall Gathering. If you have had an opportunity to hear her you know she will bring the house down. Sue will be speaking on the Heritage of Women. I quote from her session, *"uncover the legacy women can leave for the next generation through their skills, talents, and godly characteristics. Delve into the stories of both the good and bad women from the Bible, exploring how women can shape and influence the generations to come"*. I for one see the need for learning how to pass on my Christian Heritage. I see young people setting

aside their faith journey in this busy, busy life they lead.

Don't miss this opportunity to hear Sue at our Fall Cluster Gathering. The Theme verses for the Gathering will be Jeremiah 17: 7-8. *"But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit"*.

The Zion Lutheran Ladies have chosen to give our Love Offering to the Carpio Lutheran Church to help with the repairs needed following the flooding that occurred in the church.

The Board has chosen the Berthold Food Pantry to receive the Unit Roll Call offering. Food items are needed as well as monetary gifts.

In the Fall our Worship Offering is divided between the Western North Dakota Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) and The Western Prairie Cluster Scholarship Fund.

The Fall Cluster Gathering will also include a short Officers Training Session for anyone holding an office in your congregation.

Way back in January a member of Christ Lutheran Church in Minot issued a challenge to all the members to read through the Bible in a year. I accepted that challenge and although I have read through the Bible before, I realize how little of it I remember. We read 3 or 4 chapters each day and one Psalm. Once we completed the Psalms, we started it again. We will have read through the Psalms 2½ times by the end of the year. One morning during my daily reading I came upon a verse I really liked, and I thought to myself I should go

downstairs and get this little book I write my favorite verses in. Often, I think there should be a perfect verse to tell someone, but I can't remember it, so my little book helps me find it. One moment I was too lazy to go get it, but the next moment I decided I had to go get it. I now know it was the Holy Spirit moving me to go down into my lower level because once I got down there, I quickly realized I had a water break somewhere and my ceiling was caving in. A pipe was damaged when my new baseboard flooring was put in, and it had been this tiny drip for about 2 weeks. It was all fixable, but once again I realized how God works in my life and sends help when I need it. *God is truly my help and salvation.*

See you at the Fall Cluster Gathering at Zion Luther Church in Berthold ND on September 13th and get prepared to be moved by Sue and your fellow women of faith!

Facebook users check out the Western Prairie Cluster Facebook page. www.facebook.com/westernprairiecluster

WND SWO
WELCA webpage:

www.wndsynod.org/synod-women-of-the-elca

WND SWO WELCA
Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/WELCAWND



From the Cluster Presidents/Reps

Turtle Mountain

By Taryce Olson

Greetings from the Turtle Mountain Cluster! We are still actively looking for a leader for the Cluster. We have not yet discussed a Fall Gathering.

I am here to brag about an event that occurs in the Turtle Mountain Cluster every summer. For decades the Women of the ELCA have supported Metigoshe Ministries through fund raisers they have used to provide camp and retreat accommodations. The last project we supported was the "kitchen project." We assisted with the funds to provide a kitchen for the retreat space in the Christian Center.

To honor this amazing partnership with Women of the ELCA, Camp Metigoshe invites women to a "WOMEN'S DAY OUT" program every summer. The day is dedicated to showing their appreciation and giving all of you a chance to witness Metigoshe Ministries in action. The theme is *Adventures Anchored in Christ*. This event takes place out at Pelican Lake, it usually is scheduled from 9:30am-3pm. It offers an opportunity to connect with one another in nature. You worship together with Camp staff and campers and see firsthand the excitement that is Camp Metigoshe! Everyone should experience the worship songs and the special worship chapel Koinonia, hopefully it brings you back to a time when you were a camper. You will get a tour of the camp, and you will be offered a delicious lunch from the building that was moved over from the original campsite on Lake Metigoshe and served me as a camper in the 70's! You will get to explore MetiGrowshe garden that is planted and overseen by the Camp Director's wife. She will walk you through all of the areas of the garden and she even lets you sample herbs and raspberries. This garden cuts the costs of feeding the staff and campers, and any excess produce is given to area programs.

I have had the opportunity to take a pontoon ride out on Pelican Lake in the afternoon, to view the cabins and actually see the territory of the camp. You get to see where the campers participate in the Christ Hike and go for their Polar Bear plunge every morning if they choose. I have also had the opportunity to tour the Christian Center and all its renovations and unique theme rooms. It is a day you will enjoy!! Please keep an eye out next July for the Women's Day Out announcement. And if you don't see anything, contact me and I will get you in touch with the program coordinator.



*It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing,
That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it,
You spread His love to everyone. You want to pass it on.*

The Western Whirlwind

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From the Cluster Presidents/Reps

East Missouri

By Connie Isaak



A BIG thank you to the women from Peace Lutheran (Lincoln), Sunne Lutheran (Wilton), Trinity Lutheran (Steele) and Faith Lutheran (Bismarck). In lieu of a spring cluster meeting, it was suggested that the cluster participate in community projects. In July, volunteers from these churches met at Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center in Bismarck to assist the Chaplains and the Activity Director. We helped with bringing residents to the Chapel, serving communion and also visiting with the residents as we brought them to and from the service. Many volunteers enjoyed helping residents play Bingo. Another highlight was visiting with folks on the patio during an ice cream social. The fall cluster meeting is scheduled for Saturday, October 11 at Peace Lutheran Church in Lincoln. Invitations will be sent to all the cluster churches. Let's plan for a great time of fellowship with our ELCA sisters. Mark your calendars and come join us at Peace Lutheran Church!

Heart River

By Sharon Heilman



Heart River Cluster Fall Gathering will be hosted by Zion Lutheran Church in Beulah on Saturday October 11. Program will be Brenda Owen, CEO of Summit Counseling.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of volunteering and serving others through verses that highlight the virtues of generosity, compassion and selfless giving. 1 Peter 4:10 *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."*

If you go out and make good things happen you will fill the world with hope and you will fill yourself with hope.

Why does God want us to volunteer? All of us are made in His Image so every one of us was created to selflessly serve others with the talents, time and other resources that God has entrusted to us. And volunteering gives us the chance to represent a God who voluntarily chooses to pour out blessing on all who are in need.

The 3 T's of volunteering are Time, Talent and Treasure.

Women of the ELCA spend many hours volunteering their time, talent and treasures making quilts, preparing school kits, baby care kits and personal care kits for people in need. This spring, Heart River Cluster shipped 424 quilts, 33 Baby care kits, 65 school kits and 91 personal care kits to LWR.

Thanks for all you do.

(VP continued from page 3)
everlasting. Wherever the Spirit leads us, however long we live, we have the assurance of God's blessings along the way. What's more, we have the promise of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lonetree Cluster Co-President
Shirley Teske



Embracing the Beauty of Autumn

Dear Lord,

As the leaves turn and the air cools, we thank You for the beauty of autumn.

Help us to embrace this season of change, reflecting on the lessons of transformation and gratitude.

May we find joy in the vibrant colors and the crispness of the air, and may our hearts be filled with appreciation for the gifts of nature.

Amen.



From the Cluster Presidents/Reps

Upper Missouri



By Brenda Ekness & Nina Williams



"Yay! There's a rummage sale!" Are you like us and get excited when you see the summer garage sale signs posted, or a sign on a building declaring that it is a thrift store holding treasures to search through? It's fun to look for things to be repurposed into something else- it is amazing how a little paint can give an item a whole new look (*"The old has become new!" - Spring Cluster 2025*) ! Although this particular pastime of discovery shopping can be fun and exciting, it also holds real possibility of collecting "a lot of stuff"! And let's not even talk about what a great sale at a store like Hobby Lobby can do! But having a lot of stuff often produces frustration and a feeling of being overwhelmed. Living with less material possessions and focusing on essentials can create space for prayer, reflection, and focusing on what is important in your life.

Jesus frequently spoke about prioritizing spiritual wealth over material possessions, encouraging a simple, uncluttered life focused on God and service to others. He emphasized that true happiness and fulfillment come from within, not from accumulating worldly goods. Jesus used various parables, like the parable of the sower and the seeds (Matthew 13) to illustrate the importance of focusing on what truly matters and to not be distracted by worldly "stuff".

Our Fall Cluster gathering is going to center on this concept with our theme being:
"Tis A Gift To Be Simple, 'Tis A Gift To Be Free!"

Ladies of Upper Missouri, the details for our **Fall Cluster Gathering** are as follows:

- Date:** Saturday, October 4th
- Hosts:** Women of Grace, Grace Lutheran - Wildrose
- Location:** Firehall, located on the south end of Wildrose's Main Street Registration
- Time:** begins at 9:30 - Event will be from 10 AM to 2 PM
- Scripture:** Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."
- RSVP:** Nancy Lervik 701-641-8962 or Karen Jacobson 701-641-9006 by September 27th
- Love Offering:** Adult and children hats/stocking caps, gloves/mittens, scarves, and socks to be given to Social Services in Divide, Williams, and McKenzie counties. *Both new and gently used items will be welcomed.*

Speakers will be on hand to share their ideas and information on how they downsize or organize, how they have found that less is more, and the importance of simplicity for our mental and spiritual health. Also being planned is special music to inspire us or put a "little pep in our step".

In closing, "Simple is good!" Haven't we all heard that? Well, whoever penned that phrase was definitely on to something! Any questions, comments, or concerns about our upcoming Cluster should be directed to either of us, Nina or Brenda, and our contact info is listed on page 2 of this Whirlwind's issue. We would love to hear from you! More information will be arriving to UM unit presidents soon. Many thanks to the gals of Women of Grace for hosting our gathering! God is good all the time!

Abundant Fall blessings to you,
Nina and Brenda

Badlands

By Jennifer Hanson



"Blessings"

What a unique summer we have been experiencing in Southwestern ND. We usually pray for rain most of the time. This year started out the same way, needing moisture. We were blessed with rain, but it came a little late for a good hay crop, however, we are now trying to hay in between rains.

This situation has motivated me to take a closer look at my "thinking" about, *BLESSINGS*.

The term, blessings, has always stirred up good things in my mind and heart, but why do I think that way. When I consult the dictionary, it says the word blessing means God's Favor and Protection, a beneficial thing for which one is grateful; something that brings well-being.

The Bible gives us examples of God's blessings. In Genesis 12:2. God blesses Abraham by making him a great nation. In Jeremiah 17:7 it says, "*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord*", and we can't forget about the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. Also, in Psalms 103 and 104, David blesses God.

All of this helps develop our

thoughts about the word "*blessings*", so how does it make us feel?

We may feel blessed when our prayers are answered, or when a person gives us a nice gift. We may feel blessed when someone gives us words of encouragement or takes time to listen.

It blesses me to know that our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He wants to give us our needs and wants good things to come our way! I also know that when I ask God to Bless You, I'm quietly asking Him to look upon you with His Favor and to protect you and your family.

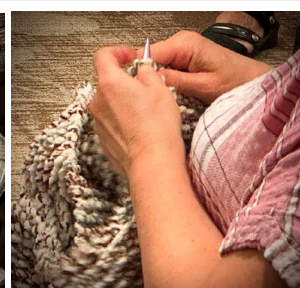
May we be mindful of all our blessings and may
God Bless You All.

The Badlands Cluster's Fall Gathering will be Saturday, September 20th with the Belfield

Lutheran Church WELCA hosting. The theme of the gathering will be "*A Season of Change*" Registration with coffee and rolls begins at 9:00am with the business meeting following 9:30-10:30.

The Cluster Board is working to book an inspirational speaker for the event. More information will be available once arrangements are finalized. The speaker would be advertised with the public welcome to attend for a minimal fee to help offset the cost.

After lunch there will be another business session. All ladies in the Badlands Cluster please plan to attend as important decisions need to be made regarding the future of the Badlands Women of the ELCA Cluster. Your voice matters!



Prayer Of Blessing (*blessing for a completed shawl*)

By: Janet Severi Bristow - 2000

www.shawlministry.com

May God's grace be upon this shawl...

warming, comforting, enfolding and embracing.

May this mantle be a safe haven... a sacred place of security and well-being...

sustaining and embracing in good times as well as difficult ones.

May the one who receives this shawl be cradled in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace, and wrapped in love.

Blessed Be!

Stewardship (Mission Action)

Stewardship of His Creation

By Connie Isaak

So many times, when we hear the word stewardship, we automatically think of money and hear pleas about the need to give more. But of equal importance is being good stewards of God's creation. Genesis 1:1 tells us that *God did create the heavens and the earth*. Then in Psalm 24:1 we hear *that the earth is the Lord's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein*.

We are accountable to God for how we treat the earth and all who live within.

How can we be better caretakers of the animals, the environment, and its people?

What a difficult task has been assigned to us!

Maybe it starts with a "song of thanksgiving" as stated in verse one of the hymn -- *Let All Things Now Living*. "Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving to God the creator triumphantly raise, who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us, who still guides us on to the end of our days." (Katherine K Davis, the composer of this hymn, studied and taught music until her death in 1980. She is famously known for the song, the Little Drummer Boy.)

Another song comes to mind -- *This is My Father's World*. Verse 3 brings me comfort. "This is my Father's world, oh, let me not forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet. This is my Father's world, why should my heart be sad? The Lord is King, let heaven ring, God reigns, let the earth be glad!"

The Lord is King, let heaven ring, God reigns, let the earth be glad!

Follow this link to read SWO President Michelle Lauckner's annual report for Western ND Synod Assembly:

<https://irp.cdn-website.com/ad5fccc5/files/uploaded/2025+WND+SWO+Report+to+Synod+Assembly.revised-21316c90.pdf>

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EVERYONE LOVES GETTING GIFTS!

We enjoy giving the "perfect gift" for our friends & loved ones.

What gifts are inside this Silver Box?

How are we using the gifts God has given us?

Are your words and actions a gift to others?

***This is the theme of the 2026 Western North Dakota
Women of the ELCA Biennial Convention.***

Watch for more information coming to you soon!

Justice (Mission Community)

by Taryce Olson

Justice-(noun)

a: justice is faith in action; it addresses inequities in political, economic and social systems.

b: justice is equity and impartiality, mercy and compassion, justice includes serving God in ways that bring healing and wholeness to the church, the society and the world.

Women of the ELCA justice initiatives include combating commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and supporting families with special needs through online resources. We advocate for racial and cultural equity through our training. Women active in the Women of the ELCA also work for justice by supporting organizations who lift up women and children.

Suggestions for building relationships locally:

1. Visit Domestic Violence Centers
2. Visit Assisted Living Facilities
3. Assist members not able to attend services/shut ins
4. Start a Prayer chain
5. Join the Quilters
6. Attend Ecumenical activities
7. Reach out to new members
8. Suggest Women of the ELCA resources

Share Gather Magazine, Christ in our Home, Church worship schedule, Church newsletter, Rides to church, share video services, Subscription to the Western Whirlwind, attend community events, invite people to attend church functions, use online resources on the Women of the ELCA site.

Regional community opportunities :

1. Support the WISE fund to assist women in seminary education from your local areas
2. Support Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, Bridges of Hope,
3. Support Great Plains Food Bank
4. Support your local food pantries with donations or volunteer your time
5. Support the Dream Center

Global Mission community opportunities:

1. CAR (Central African Republic)
2. Katie's Fund

Justice by Robert Longley

There can be no justice
If we sit idly by
There can be no hope of change
If people do not try

This is not a task for one group
It affects both black and white
The same is true in policy
On the left and on the right

We must grow beyond labels
We all must stand as one
This is a time of challenge
And much work must be done

I know we can be better
We all must rise above
If we are to find true justice
First we must find love

Discipleship (Mission Growth) by Brenda Ekness

When Jesus was walking around the back country of Israel, He was proclaiming: “God’s kingdom is here!” Through His own life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has made available for us life in God’s kingdom like the life He had lived. This is the Good News of the Gospel – that ordinary people, like us, can begin to live everyday life like Jesus—and this is the best kind of life there is...the good life! It’s a life of conversation with God, joy that never stops, forgiveness of anything and everything, peace instead of anxiety, trust over fear, hope that will not fail, and love for others that never gives up – just for starters. A life radically different than anything you’ve ever known.

But you may have noticed the “gap” between the everyday life that Jesus made available to us with the kind of life we are actually living. Maybe you really believe what Jesus said, but beyond that you feel like not much has changed, except maybe how you spend one hour on Sunday morning. Many of us are simply not living the everyday life like Jesus, and we probably wouldn’t know where to start even if we wanted to try. We get stuck in the same everyday habits, and begin to wonder if the life Jesus is making available to us is actually possible. But what if it is?

Jesus didn’t just proclaim the gospel and then walk away. He invited us to follow Him – in other words—to be disciples. Discipleship is learning to live everyday life like Jesus. An ongoing lifelong process that lessens the gap between the life each of us are currently living, to the life Jesus envisioned for us. And here’s how to do it: “Gather”, “Train”, “Go”. First, we gather at church, at our monthly WELCA meetings/bible studies, our Cluster gatherings, or simply with Christian friends over a cup of coffee. Another way is to gather together in service projects doing God’s work with our hands as discipleship is a community project, not a solo effort.

And finally, we go. Whether it’s within our church, to your neighborhood, or across cultures, each of us is called to join in God’s mission. No matter what you’ve done or where you’ve been, you’re invited to be a disciple of Jesus. He’s ready to meet you right where you are. Discipleship doesn’t end with you. Living everyday life like Jesus isn’t complete unless you are helping others to learn to live like Jesus as well. Our discipleship to Christ begins when we hear those two words and obey them: “Follow me.”

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20



Being a Christian is like being a pumpkin.

God picks you from the patch and brings you in. (John 15:16)

Then He washes all the dirt off you. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

He opens you up and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, fear, hate, and greed. (Romans 6:6)

He carves you a new smiling face (Psalm 71:23)

And He puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see. (Matthew 5:16)



2026 WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING



july 16-19, 2026 ✨ des moines, iowa

Women of the ELCA 13th Triennial Gathering

July 16 - 19, 2026

At the Iowa Event Center Des Moines Convention Center
Des Moines, Iowa

The Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering takes place every three years and gathers 1500-3000 women leaders, participants, and newcomers for four days of worship, inspiring speakers, workshops, service projects, and more!

We invite you to join with our ministry as we seek to nourish women's faith and love and to inspire women to proclaim their identity, intent, and actions.

The theme for the 2026 Triennial Gathering is **"I am Worthy"** focusing on Psalm 139:14 *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* Psalm 139:14

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 us, 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.

Thursday, July 16, 2026

Registration

Opportunities for walking tour of Des Moines and State Capitol

Opening Remarks

Welcome

Plenary Address

Worship Service with Bishop Amy Current preaching

Opening Reception

Free Time for Fellowship

*Late Night with Boldcafe Event
after 8:00 p.m.)*

Friday, July 17, 2026

First Time Attendee Breakfast

Plenary Bible Study with Rev. Martha Ambarangu

Mini-Learning & Information Sessions

Workshops on Storytelling, Leadership, Images of God,

Body Positivity, Supporting Women Clergy and more

Servant Leadership Opportunities

Exhibit Hall Open - 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 pm

Quilting Exhibit

Silent Auction

SWO Leaders Reception

Saturday, July 18, 2026

Run, Walk, and Roll 5K event for Raising up healthy women and girls

Plenary Address

Workshops on Fundraising, Gender

Roles, Healthy Relationships, and More!

Servant Leadership Opportunities

Exhibit Hall Open - 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Quilting Exhibit

Silent Auction

MAWTH (Many Awesome Women Telling Her Stories!) Sharing Time

Sunday, July 19, 2026

Closing Worship

Optional Walking Tour of Des Moines

Quilting Exhibit and Silent Auction Pick-up.

Please register no later June 21, 2026

For more information go to:

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



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**Change Service
Requested**

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.

Please pass along (or copy) to the leadership of the Women of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in your church.