

NORTHWESTER

NEWSLETTER



Looking Forward with Hope

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ~ Jeremiah 29:11

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. ~ Romans 15:13

We have celebrated the end of the church year with Christ the King Sunday and now we anticipate Advent, Christmas and, yes, Epiphany. There is so much to look forward to in the year ahead, even as we are grateful for things/people we already have in our lives.

In 2026, the women of our synod will have many events to attend if we choose. Several of our conferences annually hold a Day (or Morning) of Renewal, usually in April. Our annual WELCA retreat at Luther Park Bible Camp will be held on Monday and Tuesday, June 29-30. Pati Kachel will be our guest speaker. Of course, there will be free-time activities and the chance to enjoy the natural beauty of the camp and time to fellowship with friends old and new. Please note that this is a change from our typical Wednesday-Thursdays retreat and different dates from what had previously been announced.

I am looking forward to the 2026 WELCA Gathering that will be held July 16-19 in Des Moines, Iowa with the theme I am Worthy. I would love to have enough women wanting to attend that we can take a bus from our Synod to Des Moines.

Registration and other information may be found at WomenoftheELCA.org/TG.

Some other exciting opportunities for us:

- Women of the ELCA's fundraising team has launched the SALT Appeal to close last year's \$250,000 funding gap. Julia Sabella, executive board member, has offered a \$50,000 matching gift! Now, every dollar you donate toward the SALT Appeal will be doubled. Give today to double your impact and help us reach our goal! More information appears elsewhere in the newsletter.

- You are Beloved. WELCA's Campus Ambassador



program. We are looking to connect students on college or seminary campuses with a) a congregational WELCA group and b) a girl aged 7-12 in an ELCA congregation. The goal is to have 10 such ambassadors and so far six have already been found! If you know of a college student you think would be a good fit, click on the link to find applications! Visit: welca.org/beloved.

Lastly, one more cool thing that can be found at WELCA.org is a section called Daily Grace. These are short daily devotions ending with a prayer that only take a few minutes out of your day. Daily Grace is also available as an app on your phone, which is how I read it most often.

I wish you peace this season.

Faithfully yours,

Joan Moe, SWO President
NWSWI



Joan Moe's porch pot

What a Beautiful Year 2025 and Looking To 2026

Where has this year gone?? Time flies fast, even faster when you get older, and you look back at what has happened and how fast it did happen. I don't think I thought this when I was younger but as I see my family grow up so fast and all the changes, I am glad that God is with us walking by our side.

Christmas is coming and wow, so many wonderful things we can do. Places to see and family and friends to be with.

I have been looking into the Christmas music and then I thought, "What does the Bible say about music in our church?" So, I went into my computer and looked it up and found we have 30 scriptures that tell us about the importance in our church music and how we sing in prayer, talking to our Lord for help and forgiveness, strength in going ahead with our thoughts and choices. But most of all, how beautiful our Christmas music sounds, and the words are wonderful.

I do hope you all will enjoy The Birthday of Our King and sing with your hearts.

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Did anyone have deer hunters? Well, I did and I

prayed for their safety out hunting and coming home.

I wish you all a blessed Christmas and New Year.

Carol Medchill
Vice President

♪ Notes from your Treasurer ♪

Lately, on several of the checks I have received, the memo line says "dues". **We do not have "dues"** in Women of the ELCA. **Your local treasurer is sending your offering which is an expression of gratitude and stewardship.** Please do not refer to offerings as dues.

We have been 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 at other times, 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.

If you are not receiving the Northwester newsletter, please send your name, address, and e-mail to Joan Moe so you can be added to the e-mail list. Joan's e-mail is on the back page of this newsletter.

Reminders:

- Thankofferings can be received any time throughout the year. Those funds are sent in full to

Women of the ELCA on [Form B](#) (the address is on Form B.)

- Many units send their year-end offerings for Women of the ELCA during December. Thank you for your faithfulness and continued support for ministries of Women of the ELCA. January 31 is the SWO fiscal year end so please mail your offering by mid-January so they can be recorded in this fiscal year's activity.
- 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. Consider sending an extra gift to Women of the ELCA churchwide on Form B or to our Bible Camps, Lutheran Social Services of WI, LWR shipping fund, ELCA World Hunger, ELCA Disaster Relief or local needs such as the food pantry, homeless shelter, organizations that provide services for the homeless or those in domestic or trafficking crisis.
- We will have a synodical women's convention in the fall of 2026. Yearly each unit is to send \$30 to the SWO treasurers **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 along with your unit offerings – be sure to use Form A.
- If you need offering forms [A](#) or [B](#) or the [Treasurers Guide](#) which guides you as to which form to use and where to send that offering, e-mail or text me and I can e-mail them to you.

It is **with grateful hearts** that we thank and praise God for the active and faithful 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.

May you have a Blessed Advent and Christmas.

Phyllis Beasrom
SWO Treasurer



LOOKING AHEAD...

**DATE CHANGE –
SAVE THE NEW DATES**

Monday and Tuesday
JUNE 29-30, 2026

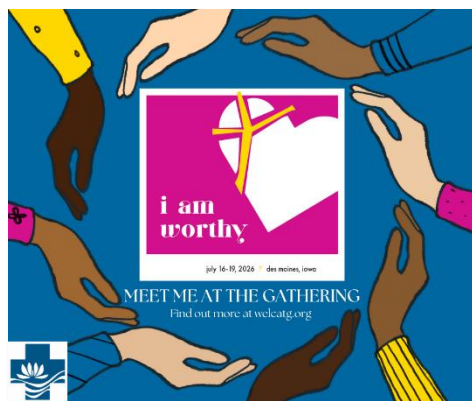
WELCA Summer Retreat
Luther Park Bible Camp

Pati Kachel is our speaker

More information in early spring!

SWO of the NW Synod Biennial Conference

Our synodical WELCA biennial convention will be held Saturday, September 26, 2026 at Bethany Lutheran, Rice Lake. We will be electing new board members. The theme for the gathering and more details will be announced.



Triennial Gathering in 2026

You are worthy. Come to the WELCA Triennial Gathering and invite the women and girls in your life to join you in Des Moines, Iowa, July 16-19, 2026.

Share your love for the Gathering!

If you have experienced a Triennial Gathering and found it life-changing, invite five women from your congregation to attend. Start a lemonade stand-themed fundraiser to help support their participation. [Click here to learn how to get started.](#)



CONFERENCES

Chippewa Valley

Submitted by Joan Moe
Mark your calendars to attend the Chippewa Valley Conference Day of Renewal on Saturday, April 11, 2026. Spirit Lutheran, Eau Claire will host the event and the theme is "Caring for God's Creation."

Heart of the North

Janice Ahneman, Conference Rep.

The Heart of the North Conference Day of Renewal was held at Bethany Lutheran Church in Rice Lake on Saturday, October 11, 2025. Ladies were encouraged to bring a friend for free—a two for one registration fee. Many took advantage of the deal and quite a number of ladies who had never attended a Day of Renewal before were there with a friend.



As the ladies arrived, they were offered coffee and snacks and greeted in a meeting space decorated with many colorful aprons. The ladies also came wearing aprons. The aprons carried special memories and meaning for the wearers. The gathering was blessed with the Bible Study lead by Pastor Jenny Hatleli, a very joyful and energetic speaker. She currently is lead pastor at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Black River Falls. Luther Park Bible Camp Program Director Abby Vander Laan spoke to the group with an inspiring message of the work the camp does with the youth our member churches sponsor. An offering was taken for the park, and it was generous indeed.



Guest speaker Priscilla "Perky" Backstrom came all the way from Maddock, North Dakota. She entertained and inspired the listeners with stories and reminiscences about times when women always wore aprons. The many different types of aprons: some frilly and decorative for serving weddings, some with multiple pockets for collecting eggs, some that covered completely and plain ones and decorated ones: the many uses those aprons served; keeping clothing clean, useful potholders, carrying things, drying tears and wiping noses. The morning concluded with worship including communion. A delicious lunch with soup and sandwiches was served by Cookin' Up a Storm of Rice Lake. The HON Board women provided dessert.

Next Year's Day of Renewal will be Saturday, October 10, 2026. Put it on your calendars now and SAVE THE DATE!

Dairyland

Submitted by Karen Franson

The Annual Prayer Breakfast hosted by Immanuel Lutheran Church in Strum will be held on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, a change from past years when it's been held in March. This is to accommodate our guest speaker is returning to Wisconsin from Papua New Guinea. We will welcome back Jamie Halverson and

his family to his hometown, some might remember Jamie from 2020. Jamie is one of two Kodiak airplane pilots until the beginning of December, when another will return from home assignment.

Another pilot is due to return as Jamie and his family head for home in January. His home assignment is starting early next year, Lord willing. They will be in Washington from end of January through mid-April, and then again in June and July, with a short stay in Wisconsin from mid-April through May.



*Jamie & Lisa Halverson
Thad, Thea, Zeke & Ziah*

Jamie works for the Wycliffe Bible Translator through aviation, flying translators and supplies in and out of isolated areas. Jamie gave an excellent presentation 5 years ago and is excited to join us again. We are looking forward to welcoming him and his family home.

St. Croix Valley

Anne Janda, Conference Rep.

Our 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."

I have had the opportunity to visit several church groups during the past year and have met some remarkable women. One thing I know: We have very strong groups of women in our churches. Not all of the groups call themselves "WELCA," but they are committed to their churches and to their communities. Every one of them, called WELCA, the Women's Group, or the Women of "name-of-your-church" adhere to this purpose statement.

I did not come from a Lutheran background, so I wasn't real "up on" the Book of Concord. WOW! If any of you want to know more about "why we do what we do," I really recommend looking at the Northwest Synod Lay School of Ministry.

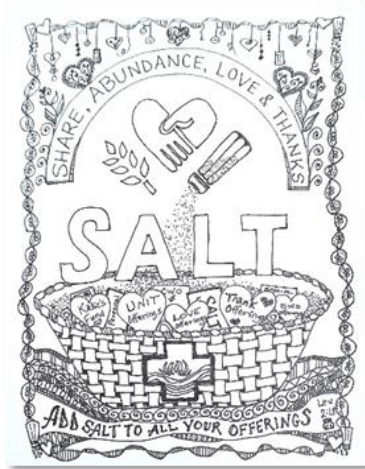
Luther puts into words the very purpose statement that we read at our meetings.

- WE are the way God's love flows into the world and through community.
- Our stations and offices, locations, and responsibilities help us see who our neighbors are and what they need.
- The primary way we are involved in ministry is through our specific roles and the actual place we find ourselves.
- The way we love our neighbor is through ordinary moments and activities of our life.
- In most cases, our callings are imposed on us by our life situation - not by what we chase after or what professional decisions we make.

- The starting point for ministry is not the church. It is the place we find ourselves every day.

One of the churches that I visited is Cross Lutheran Church in Roberts. This incredible group of women is hosting our Morning of Renewal in April. Save the date: Saturday, April 18, 2026. Posters coming soon.

Thanks for a good year. I look forward to meeting more of you in 2026.



Share Abundance, Love, and Thanks! (SALT)

Women of the ELCA's fundraising team has launched the [SALT Appeal](#) to close last year's \$250,000 funding gap. Julia Sabella, executive board member, has offered a \$50,000 matching gift! Now, [every dollar you donate toward the SALT Appeal will be doubled](#). Give today to double your impact and help us reach our goal!

Why "SALT?" Scripture reminds us in Leviticus 2:13, "Add salt to all your offerings," with an important message: we are not just called to

give our "first fruits" but to offer them with seasoning.

[Visit the SALT page for more details.](#)



Let's Learn Spanish!

A small group of people from the Synod spent two days in November learning to speak Spanish. Instructor Lidix Montoya began teaching how to pronounce vowels. What's cool about Spanish is, unlike English, each vowel only has one sound. Once vowels were mastered, the lessons moved to consonants, which are more complex. For example, the letter J is pronounced like H, the letter H is silent, etc. Students practiced their skills by reading poetry and short stories.

Trinity Lutheran in Eau Claire hosted the class, and around midday, the group went to La Luna Market y Restaurant on London Road. Upon arrival, the group moved to the restaurant in the back of the building. The assignment for the class was to order from the menu using newly learned Spanish skills. The waiter was very gracious and provided much needed assistance with the menu. Everyone was able to order something they like and fully enjoyed a wonderful meal. After lunch, the group returned to the church for further lesson.

Three people from the local Spanish-speaking community joined the class on the second day. They

were partnered with class members and assigned to shop for recipe supplies on another trip to La Luna Market. Returning to the church, everyone worked together in the kitchen to follow the recipes to make several items for lunch including tortillas, guacamole, and Horchata. The lunch was delicious!

For the final lesson, class members were assigned parts of the liturgy to read in Spanish during the Misa de Adviento (Advent Mass) at Immanuel Lutheran Church on December 6.

The class will be offered again on January 15-16, 2026. Check the [flyer](#) later in this newsletter for more details. Click [here](#) for online information and registration.



The new [WELCA Campus Ambassador Program](#) seeks to connect students on college and seminary campuses with women active in WELCA and a girl age 7-12 in an ELCA congregation. Our goal this School year is to have 10 Campus Ambassador locations and send students to the [Triennial Gathering in Des Moines this July!](#) Read the [proposal to learn](#) more. [Visit: welca.org/beloved](#).



NORTHWEST SYNOD OF WISCONSIN

Synodical Board Members
(Officers and Conference Reps)
2024-2026

PRESIDENT

Joan Moe
1483 Truax Blvd.
Eau Claire, WI 54703-1471
C-715-533-3820
Hope Lutheran, Eau Claire
presidentnswiswo@gmail.com
moejoan@gmail.com

**VICE PRESIDENT**

Carol Medchill
2364 250th Ave
PO Box 772
Cushing, WI 54006
715-648-5817
First Lutheran, Cushing
medchill@lakeland.ws

**SECRETARY**

Deanna Lear McGinnis
2705 5½ Ave
New Auburn, WI 54757
C-715-642-3713, H-715-237-2592
Chetek Lutheran, Chetek
Deannamcginnis@gmail.com

**TREASURER**

Phyllis Beasom
W6244 – 410th Avenue
Ellsworth, WI 54011-3000
H-715-273-5847, C-715-821-5847
Bethlehem Lutheran, rural Ellsworth
nswotreas@gmail.com
beasom@redwing.net

**LAKE SUPERIOR Conf #1**

Vacant

APPLE RIVER Conf #2

Suzanne Grill
2269 – 211th Street
Luck, WI 54853-2030
H-715-825-4100, C-612-598-8197
North Valley Lutheran, Centuria
sk_grill@yahoo.com

**HEART OF THE NORTH Conf #3**

Janice Ahneman
1070 11th Ave
Cumberland, WI 54829-9110
H-715-822-4475 C-715-671-8154
Augustana Lutheran, Cumberland
tjahneman@gmail.com

**ST CROIX VALLEY Conf #4**

Anne Janda
612 Oak Knoll Ave
River Falls, WI 54022
C-612-644-2648
Ezekiel Lutheran, River Falls
annejanda81@gmail.com

**CHIPPEWA VALLEY Conf #5**

Vacant

CHEQUAMEGON Conf #6

Barb Krug
883 Brucker St
Medford, WI 54451
C-715-965-5696
Our Saviour's & St. Paul's, Medford
barbkrug@charter.net

**DAIRYLAND Conf #7**

Amelie Lindberg-Livingston
W1980 50th Avenue
Stockholm, WI 54769-8707
C-218-340-1102
Sabylund Lutheran, Stockholm
ajl55810@msn.com

**NORTHWESTER NEWSLETTER Editor**

Kimberly Vlcek
715-577-7198
vlcekk@yahoo.com

WEBMASTER & FACEBOOK Editor

Dawn Wicklund
H-715-394-2507, C-218-348-8557
dawnwicklund@gmail.com



Website
<http://www.nswiswo.org>



Facebook
www.facebook.com/WomenoftheNorthwestSynod/

The NORTHWESTER

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of the NORTHWESTER. This digital publication continues to be a work in progress and your ideas and comments are welcome! Submit individual comments and ideas, as well as news and photos from your conference, congregation, or women's group to Kim Vlcek at vlcekk@yahoo.com.

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

**Women of the ELCA**

Our Mission – Mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Purpose – 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.

Women of the ELCA -- Northwest Synod of Wisconsin -- Synodical Women's Organization
CONGREGATIONAL UNIT CONTACTS FOR YEAR _____

NAME OF CHURCH

Conference

Location, if different than mailing address

Mailing address of Church

Church Phone Number

Email address

CONTACT PERSON AND/OR PRESIDENT

Name

Address

Phone

Email Address

TREASURER

Name

Address

Phone

Email Address

PLEASE return with current information electronically at your earliest convenience:

- **Your CONFERENCE Representative**

Apple River- Suzanne Grill, 2269 211th Street, Luck, WI 54853-2030 sk_grill@yahoo.com

Chequamegon- Barb Krug, 883 Brucker St, Medford, WI 54451 barbkrug@charter.net

Chippewa Valley- Vacant

Dairyland- Amelie Lindberg-Livingston, W1980 50th Ave, Stockholm, WI 54769-8707

ajl55810@msn.com

Heart of the North- Janice Ahneman, 1070 11th Avenue, Cumberland, WI 54829-9110

tjahneman@gmail.com

Lake Superior- Vacant

St. Croix Valley- Anne Janda, 612 Oak Knoll Ave, River Falls, WI 54022

annejanda81@gmail.com

- **SWO Secretary:** Deanna Lear McGinnis, 2705 5½ Ave, New Auburn, WI 54757

Deannamcginnis@gmail.com

- **SWO President:** Joan Moe, 1438 Truax Blvd, Eau Claire, WI 54703-1471

presidentnswiswo@gmail.com

Thank you!



Let's LEARN Spanish!

A two-day Interactive Language Learning Class

January 15 & 16 + 9:30-2:30
Trinity Lutheran Church + Eau Claire, WI

Schedule:

Day 1: Basic Grammar through poetry, readings, and more.

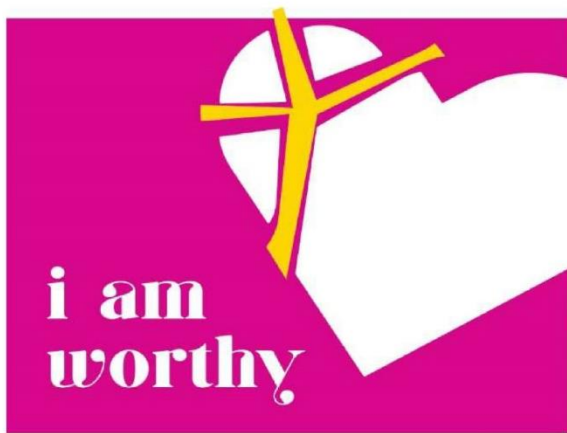
Day 2: Be ready to go grocery shopping, cook a Mexican meal, share food, and learn Lutheran liturgies - Todo en ESPAÑOL!



Registration:

Registration Limited to 12
\$100 per participant
<https://nwswi.org/neighbor-to-neighbor>





july 16-19, 2026 ✦ des moines, iowa

Women^{of the} **ELCA** 
welcatg.org

2026 TRIENNIAL GATHERING THEME

In 2017, Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize recipient, challenged gathering participants to reclaim space and place for women and girls. Finding our voice and using it gives way to the light we possess. The world has worn women thin by defining for us who we are, what we can do and be. We use these two words to introduce ourselves and establish our identity in the public square. “I am” is how disciples proclaim their identity, intent, and actions.

I AM WORTHY continues our journey with Jesus through the lingering effects of the brokenness this ***community of women created in the image of God— called to discipleship*** and the world have endured.

Acknowledging what we have been through is the beginning of healing. These words are both an affirmation for the community of women as disciples. This proclamation reminds us of God’s promise to always be with us, and God is always with us, through devastation and division that will surely be present. God is a gifted power in claiming who we are and whose we are.

I AM WORTHY is the very basis of our spiritual nature. Repeating “**I AM WORTHY**” can reprogram our subconscious mind by reminding us of who God is and the Holy Spirit’s continual work at challenging negative daily chatter. The practice of this self-affirmation creates pathways for the opportunity to repair and bring healing to us, the church, society, and the world.

The ancient Japanese art of kintsugi embraces brokenness and restoring what is broken as gift— the opportunity to repair. The art of kintsugi uses gold to repair broken pottery. Using gold, the very best to beautify and strengthen redeeming the pot to better than it was. This symbolism of healing and resilience is exactly what Christ did for us on the cross.

When we say, “**I AM WORTHY**,” we align ourselves with God's promises. And there is power in our resolve—

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” **John 1:4-5.**

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made” **Psalms 139:14 .**