

NORTHWEST SYNOD OF WISCONSIN



The Northwester

*Newsletter for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
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Northwest Synod of Wisconsin – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

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The Jewish festival of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, comes 50 days after Passover. Originally it celebrated the gathering of the wheat harvest. Later, it became a celebration of God's giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In the Christian church year, Pentecost celebrates the day the Holy Spirit was given to the followers of Jesus, so that they had the power and courage to preach the good news (see Luke 24:48-49; Acts 2). This is why Pentecost is sometimes called the 'birth-day' of the Christian church.

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Do you ever have days where you are overwhelmed with what you have on your “to-do” list? When you ask yourself – why did I say yes to one more committee, to one more shift at work, to one more carpool obligation, to one more volunteer commitment? I haven’t met a woman yet that doesn’t experience this feeling.



Truth be told – that’s how I’ve been feeling lately. Between my obligations to this organization, to my family, to my church, my friends and my community – let’s just say – it’s been a bit much. Or at least that is what I told myself. But I was wrong. So very, very wrong.

I usually thrive on having a lot to do. I’m pretty particular about schedules and have the lists to prove it. However, I haven’t been able to stay on track lately and I didn’t know why. I was able to enjoy some quiet time over the weekend and that’s when I had an “ah-ha” moment. I realized that I’ve been so consumed by daily busy-ness that I’ve neglected my spiritual needs. I haven’t been having my daily conversations with God. I haven’t been focused on my devotions. I’ve gone through the *motions* of prayer. I haven’t been focused on what He has been trying to tell me. I’m embarrassed to admit it; however, I share this with you as I’m confident the same is, or has been, true for many of you.



It seems that God likes to grab my attention when I’m brushing my teeth or making the bed. This morning as I was making the bed, I literally heard – “Fear not, for I am with you”! Seriously – I HEARD IT. You and I both know that He was reminding me that He is my God and that if I trust in Him, I will be strengthened. (Isaiah 41:10) Another “ah-ha” moment – this is one of my go-to bible verses that I obviously haven’t gone to in a while. Shame on me. Just remembering those words has lifted a self-imposed weight from my shoulders and for that I say – Thank you Jesus! Amen! I’m ready to get back on track.

I pray that if you are experiencing some of these same feelings you too will be strengthened by His words.

“Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Now on to business (and I don’t mean busy-ness).

Updates on Human Trafficking bills:

Reverend Cindy Crane, Director of Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin, sent us this update:

Team,

Hello! Thank you for your amazing advocacy! We have received over 2,000 postcards. We are delaying the delivery of some of the ones we most recently received after speaking to Rep. Jill Billings' office this morning. Although one of the bills, AB 22 relating to driver education instruction on human trafficking is scheduled to be voted on by the assembly, Safe Harbor (AB 41) is not yet.

Billings' office said that they are still in dialogue with some other legislators about bringing Safe Harbor to the floor and this is not a good time to push too hard. However, that could change tomorrow, and her office is thrilled that so many of us are ready to act! We will strategize doing a combination of targeting legislators and then advocating more broadly and include the delivery of the remaining postcards into that strategy. At any rate, it is best to hold off sending in any additional postcards, but if they are on the way we will certainly plan a time to deliver them.

The Senate still has to hold a public hearing on Safe Harbor (AB 41), and then vote it out of the Senate committee and then it would need to be scheduled to go to the floor. AB 22 has had a public hearing on the Senate side and now needs to go to the floor but hasn't been scheduled.

Both houses have until the spring of 2020 to bring bills to the floor, although the assembly side sometimes ends as early as Feb.

Thank you again for everything you're doing. We'll keep you updated.

Peace,

Cindy

To summarize:

Bills AB-34 Prostitution Surcharge and AB-22 Trucker Education has passed through both committees and needs to go to the floor for vote. Bill AB-41 Safe Harbor for Trafficked Youth has passed out of Assembly committee. Senate needs to hold a public hearing on the bill; if passed through committee will need to go to the floor for vote.

I want to thank everyone throughout northwest Wisconsin for your commitment to this worthy cause. Of the 2000+ postcards received in Madison, well over 1400 came from our part of the state. We have a voice and we will continue to use it. I will share additional information as it is received.

As I mentioned during my participation in the Days of Renewal programs and in speaking to your congregations, the Women of the ELCA are more than making quilts and serving Jell-O. I have made a conscious decision that we will focus our energy and our talents towards justice issues faced by many in our synod.

I am pleased to see so many of you willing to do your part in these efforts. I'd particularly like to recognize the efforts underway by the women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Black River Falls. They are working with local law enforcement, elected officials and others to provide a community awareness forum regarding Human Trafficking on Saturday, June 29th, at their church. I look forward to being a part of that event.

Are you, your unit or your church involved in any such activities? Do you feel the calling to do something but don't know where to start? If so, I highly recommend that you read the latest discussion guide from Cherish All Children entitled "My Neighbor is Not for Sale."



This guide brings you the facts, figures and stories of the insidious world of sex trafficking of children and youth in our country. It also represents the first collaboration between Cherish All Children and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Minnesota.

Jodi Harpstead, CEO of LSS Minnesota writes: *"It has been a shock to so many of us to learn that, what we used to call prostitution, has been quietly and creepily replaced by an Internet-driven industry of luring kids into phony relationships, controlling them, and selling them in the sex-trade right under our noses in communities everywhere."*

"The images we grew up with of adult women on the corners of the "red light district" soliciting men has been replaced with an invisible web of adults preying on children and youth. Our new awareness has also made us question whether those women of the "red light district" ever really had many choices in life themselves.

Over the past couple of years, the State of Minnesota has contracted with LSS and others to offer "Safe Harbor" services in several communities that reach out to youth trapped in trafficking, help them escape the life, and support them in getting back into strong and healthy lives, utilizing our ears of experience working with homeless youth."

I will be honest – it isn't light reading. However, if it will educate us and our children, if it provides for the tools for ministry groups and congregational outreach and a focus on helping our children and youth protect themselves from trafficking by teaching them to beware of the signals that they are being lured into the danger zone – it will be worth it.

From Safeguarding God's Children:

Message of Hope: If every adult can protect just one child, they will forever change one life. If we can all change one life, together we will make a difference in this generation of children.

To obtain a copy of this resource, go to: <https://www.lssmn.org/get-involved/church-partnerships/resources/studies/my-neighbor-is-not-for-sale>

Faithful Innovations Network (FIN)

One of the concerns I hear all over our synod is that we can't get 'young' women to participate in W/ELCA; giving is down both in our church and in our unit, making it difficult to support mission work; people don't want to get involved in organizations anymore. And the list goes on and on.



In truth, the organizational structure and way business is conducted for the Women of the ELCA has not changed since it started back in the mid-80's. So, is it any wonder that 30+ years later people are questioning the relevance of our organization? Now don't get me wrong, I believe that the ministries we do are important – more so now than ever before. But we cannot continue this “we've always done it this way” mentality any longer.

For that very reason, the board has made the decision that our ministry organization will be a part of this year's **FIN** process. It's exciting that we will be one of the first ministry groups involved.

What is **FIN** you ask? It is a process through which we will **LISTEN**, **ACT** and **SHARE**. We will listen for God's voice; we will experiment with new actions and we will share with others to discover what being W/ELCA today is all about.

Our learning group will be comprised of your synod board members and conference coordinators. They will share more information about the process as we go along.

Plans for this year's Days of Enrichment are well underway. Watch for registration forms!

In closing I want to share the following verse –

The best kind of people are the ones that come into your life and make you see sunshine where you once saw clouds.

The people that believe in you so much you start to believe it too.

The people that love you simply for being you. The once-in-a-lifetime kind of people.

Let us be those people. God's blessings to all.

God's blessings to all,

Lori Wells

SWO President

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Recently I attended a worship service in a former parish in ND. The message that morning was from John 10:22-30: “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.” **VOICE** became the theme of the message. The student intern went on to tell her faith story of how she initially heard the voice of God calling her to ministry when she was a teenager at Bible camp. She ignored that voice through college, marriage and motherhood until she heard it again through her pastor at a synod convention where God was tapping her on the shoulder saying, “Jaime, have you ever considered becoming a pastor?” At that moment she began taking the call seriously. She is now beginning her seminary training to become an ordained pastor in the ELCA.

Jaime's story was captivating and beautiful. It was the story of how God uses people, situations, scripture, events, even nature to call us to follow him. “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

Maybe your calling is to help a neighbor or to serve on a committee or in a position of leadership in your church or community. Perhaps you are hearing a voice telling you of a career change. Or like Jaime, you have ignored God's call to attend Lay School of Ministry or seminary and you need to respond to God's tap on the shoulder. Perhaps you will hear a voice in 2020 to consider service on your conference board or the SWO board.

Whatever the case, be confident that when you hear that voice, God has recognized you as a person who is a capable and trustworthy to answer that call.



Dawn Olson, SWO Vice President

Editor's note: Because of time/space constraints, this issue is smaller than normal, The SWO Board page will be back in the next issue.

Stewardship/Discipleship

As children of God we have been appointed as stewards. In the very beginning God gave Adam and Eve dominion over every living thing and placed them in the Garden of Eden with instructions to tend and care for it. Throughout the Torah, God's laws given to Moses, there are laws, rules and regulations to guide the Hebrew people in giving tithes, offerings, conducting business and living their lives in accordance with God's plan. Jesus talked about giving to God what belongs to him and about being good stewards. In Paul's letters we are asked to use the gifts God has given us for the good of the whole body, the church.



One definition of a steward is 'one employed in a large household or estate to supervise servants, collect rents, keep the accounts and generally manage domestic concerns'. Another definition is 'a fiscal agent' and a third is 'one who actively directs affairs, a manager'. Following on these, stewardship is defined as "the conducting, supervising, or managing of something, *especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.*"

Although we likely don't often think about it as stewardship, we as women live out these roles every day. How many of us manage our household's domestic concerns and keep the accounts? How many of us direct and manage our family calendar making sure everyone gets to where they need to be and arrives on time with everything they need to bring along? Many of us also do these sorts of tasks as employees or as volunteers on a church committee, our local or area women's organization or some community organization. We have all learned to carefully and responsibly manage the things that have been entrusted to our care and we have learned to be generous givers of our time, our attention and our money to those things that are important to us.



So, when you're occupied with the many tasks of your daily life, take a moment to thank God for what He has entrusted to you. Know that He has uniquely equipped you to be a good steward of the responsibilities and gifts that He has given you. He is walking with you every step of the way ready, willing and able to support you and fill you with His peace and joy.

Carol Hajicek

St. Croix Valley Conference Representative

* * * * *

'Wo'phila! Or "mange tusen takk" from all us Scandinavians!! How I wish you could have seen the beautiful table decorations in Prairie Farm at our Day of Renewal. It was fabulous!

Approximately 20 baskets of goodies had been made by the women. One on each table and a few on the counters. Laundry baskets full of towels, soap, etc., cake pans with mixes and utensils, kettles full of items. It was GREAT!



Also "wp'phila thanka" for the offering. My middle daughter and I went shopping and bought over \$50 of cleaning supplies, at Dollar Tree and 3 hand mixers 2 toasters, 3 crock pots, 5-7-piece skillet sets and 4 pillows at Wal-Mart! On the Day of Renewal, the churches brought quilts, dishcloths, dish towels, spices, utensils and crock pots. In addition, 1 microwave, 1 sewing machine, complete settings of dishes and serving pieces, books, coloring books, etc., the Thrift store in Barron donated over 100 jars of spices and another thrift store sent us 7 boxes of materials for sewing and crafts. And one gentleman donated baseball bats and balls, who could say 'no' to that? What a varied list of gifts!



The local Lions Club will transport the 80+ boxes from Trinity Lutheran in Rice Lake to Pine Ridge, SD. Why Pine Ridge? It is the poorest county in the US, only the country of Haiti is poorer. The average income is \$4,800/year. The life expectancy for men is 48 and women 52 years of age. There is a high rate of tuberculosis, diabetes and alcoholism; there is very limited agriculture and manufacturing opportunities on the reservation. After the extreme cold this winter/spring, the worst flooding in March, which wiped out homes, roads, electricity and other basic needs, We are working with the Lions Foundation that established the "Families Working Together" program in 2013. They fit eyeglasses and deliver needed supplies there. Recently, Gunderson Clinic in LaCrosse began working with the staff on the reservation.



Thank you to everyone who prayed, gave, served and continue to be God's Hands!

Marie Sanborn, Heart of the North Conference

FROM THE TREASURER

My husband has planted his garden and nearly every day he checks it. But for all his care and attention, we know he's not the one who makes the garden grow. Through light, water, earth and air, God is transforming the tiny dry seeds that were planted in rows into a bounty of beautiful, delicious, nutritious vegetables. All my husband has to do is tend the garden and harvest its riches, while God, through nature, does the rest.



Yes, God quietly brings forth abundance every day in our gardens and in our lives. Everything we have—our gardens, our food, our families, our money, our lives, *everything*—comes from our endlessly generous and loving God, who is always at work in our gardens, in our lives and all around us.

We can't possibly pay God back for this unending generosity—but because God is the giver of all that we have, including our money, we, out of gratitude, return a portion to God through our gifts to our church and through Women of the ELCA.

In our purpose statement, we commit ourselves to “grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings....” When we “support one another” we are supporting our community of women in its three expressions – local, synodical, and churchwide.



- Thank you for giving an offering whenever you gather for circle, quilting, Bible study, and unit gatherings. From those generous offerings, 50% is retained by your unit to be used for your unit's missions, and the other 50% is sent to me, the Synodical Women's Organization treasurer. The synodical women's organization keeps 50% for its ministries and shares the remaining 50% with our churchwide women's organization. Your offerings support many ministries in your congregation and community, in our synodical women's organization, and at churchwide
- *Thank you* for submitting the yearly \$30 for the Convention Expense Fund to help defray the expenses of the SWO convention, enabling a lower convention registration fee and encouraging more to attend. If your unit hasn't sent this yet this year, please submit with your next offering submittal.
- *Thank you* for hosting a Thankoffering service where women have the opportunity to give in gratitude for blessings. Lutheran Women have been carrying out this tradition for 100 years. The Thankofferings received are sent entirely to Women of the ELCA on Offering Form B. If your unit does not host a Thankoffering service, please consider hosting one yet this year. If you have questions or concerns about the Thankoffering, please call or –email me.



Thank you, faithful women, for your commitment to “grow in faith, affirm our gifts, and support one another.” Thank you for your generous offerings and Thankofferings given joyfully to thank and praise God for all that God has done and continues to do in our lives.

Please share the information in this newsletter with your unit officers and especially your treasurer. If you're unsure of where to send offerings and which form to use, request an offerings summary page from me.

Please send your unit offerings, questions, and requests to me, your SWO treasurer:

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On Pentecost Sunday in my church - while the Lesson from Acts 2 was being read in English - three other voices read the same verses [at the same time], one in Spanish, one in German and the third in Finnish. It gave our congregation a similar experience as the people who were gathered to hear the 12 disciples speaking in their own languages in Jerusalem.

Eleanor Johnson, Editor

2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



JULY

18 – St Croix Valley Conference, Summer Retreat, First Lutheran, New Richmond-speaker-Betty Berglund

AUGUST

12-13 – Heart of the North Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
14-15 – Chippewa Valley Conference Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
15-16 – Dairyland and Lake Superior Conferences Retreat, Luther Park, Chetek
17 – Apple River Fall Retreat, Bone Lake Lutheran, Luck
19 – Joint SWO Board Meeting, location, TBD

SEPTEMBER

14 – Chequamegon Conference Retreat, Zion American Lutheran, Granton
21 – Dairyland Conference, Day of Enrichment, Osseo Evangelical Lutheran, Osseo
28 – Heart of the North Conference, Day of Enrichment, Long Lake Lutheran, Sarona [Tentative]

OCTOBER

5 – Faithful Innovations Network Workshop, Christ Lutheran, Menomonie

2020

JANUARY

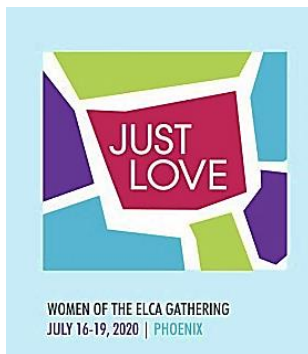
11 – Faithful Innovations Network Workshop, Christ Lutheran, Menomonie

APRIL

17-18 – SWO Convention, Bethany Lutheran, Rice Lake

JULY

14-16 – Eleventh Triennial Convention, Phoenix, AZ
16-20 – Eleventh Triennial Gathering, Phoenix, AZ



The palette of deep purple and bright green in the new gathering logo is reflective of the scenery of the valley in the Phoenix area. Along the streets of this city, dusty earth tones are punctuated with bright purple flowers and vibrant green cacti. The turquoise color connects to the history of native cultures in Arizona and the southwest region. Red signifies love. The shade of red in our gathering logo is not one of fire or caution, but rather one of joy.

Watch for information about registration on welcatg.org



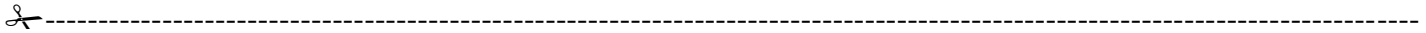
NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The Northwester is published four times a year by the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Women’s Organization. Local units are encouraged to subscribe for all their officers, including the president and your pastor.

Subscriptions to the newsletter are \$8.00 per year. The due date of your subscription appears on the address label. Reminders are not sent, so please watch your label for your expiration date and renew.

Address changes and questions concerning subscriptions should be addressed to Eleanor Johnson, Editor, at the address below. [Or email at hdjebjohnson@tds.net. If you are emailing, please include Northwester or W/ELCA or subscriptions in the subject line]. This newsletter may be photocopied.

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



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