

SNOW Newsletter

Letter from our President

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Active WELCA Groups at
Battle Lake and Bagley
Seminary Stipend Fund
Leadership Training
Global Engagement—
Part of the Healthy
Women and Girls Project
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Dear Sisters in Christ,

What a wonderful time of year, enjoy, as we all know what follows fall!

Thank you to all of you who attended our annual convention at First Lutheran Church. While things were a little off schedule on Saturday afternoon, our closing worship was very inspirational. A special thank you to our host church for the use of their facility and the hospitality extended to us while there. I would be amiss if I didn't mention the wonderful silent auction items that were donated. We had over 100 beautiful baskets and items! Proceeds from the auction are directed to offset costs for those who will be attending the Triennial Convention in Des Moines next July.

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During the plenary session your voting members elected Pamela Bowman from Fergus Falls as our First Time Voting Member to the Triennial and Gretchen Henrikson from Detroit Lakes as our second voting member. Marlene Block from Mentor will serve as our alternate. We also voted to approve two resolutions. The first of these two is entitled the SALT appeal. In Leviticus we are reminded to "add salt to all of your offerings". We recognize this as God's message that we are called not to just give our "First Fruits" but to also offer them with seasoning, with SALT: **Sharing, Abundance, Love, and Thanks**. Our generosity will help to support the day-to-day operations of the Women of the ELCA and allow the ministries of the organization to continue. The second of the resolutions encourage each of us to become a Faithful Friend. Funds from Faithful Friends supports Women of the ELCA's general fund making it possible for the organization to act quickly and flexibly in response to any need that may arise. Faithful Friends is a way for you to help Women of the ELCA be ready for whatever God has in store. Contributions to Faithful Friends are made by automatic electronic donations. Additional information on both funds is available on the Women of the ELCA website. Our convention keynote speaker was Jennifer Hockenbery, Interim Executive Director of the Women of the ELCA, who provided us with a very informative, inspirational message. We were blessed to have Amy Palazzolo, President of our Sister Synod in New Jersey with us for the duration of our convention and shared news from their synod. A special thank you to those of you who completed an evaluation form at the conclusion of the convention. Your comments help us to plan for our future conventions, speaking of which, mark your calendars now for next year's event at Trinity Lutheran in Crookston on September 18th and 19th, 2026.

Registration is now open for the Triennial Convention in Des Moines, IA, entitled "I Am Worthy". The convention portion of the Triennial (July 13 & 14th) will be conducted via Zoom as a cost saving measure, however the Gathering portion is in person from the 16th to the 19th of July. It may be some time before the Triennial is held this close to us again so it would be a great time to take advantage of the opportunity to attend. We have a few individuals who are scheduled to attend the Gathering portion of the event for the first time! We will be contacting the leadership of the NE MN Synod to determine if they have an interest in renting a bus for transportation if there is sufficient interest. Early bird registration at a discounted rate is open until January 5th. You can register on-line from the Women of the ELCA website.

Make plans now to attend the Leadership Training that will be held at Concordia Lutheran Church in Fertile. The guest speaker for the day will be Pastor Jill Steichen. The day will also feature a creative activity led by Linda Stromstad. This day is designed for anyone in a leadership position, be it in your local unit, your conference, or on the synod level. There is no charge for this event, however you are asked to RSVP to marleneb@gvtel.com or 218-289-4046 for planning purposes.

Blessings to all,

Carol Balk, NWMN SWO President



2025 Mary Magdalene Award Recipients



Janet Lian

Left to Right: **Mabel Sacrison**, Our Saviors Lutheran, Barnesville, Conference 5; **Brenda Halvorson**, Calvary Lutheran Church, Perham, Conference 6; **Marcia Guenther**, Esther Lutheran Church, Parkers Prairie, Conference 8; **Bea Runnigen**, Peace/Grue Lutheran, Ashby, Conference 8; **Carol Hedlund**, Shalom Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Conference 8; Jodie Olson receiving for her mother **Janet Lian**, who passed away this spring, from Grace Lutheran Church, Grygla, Conference 2; Seated: **Clarice Amundson**, First Lutheran Church, Bemidji, Conference 4; **Betty Sodnak**, Christ the King Lutheran, Moorhead, Conference 5.

Not pictured: **Diane Hurner**, North Buffalo Lutheran Church, Moorhead, Conference 5.



John tells us that after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene and instructed her to "GO TO MY BROTHERS AND TELL THEM" (John 20:17). In response, Mary Magdalene went to the Disciples with the news, "I HAVE SEEN THE LORD!" And she told them that He had said these things to her. (John 20:18) At our 32nd annual convention we honored women from our conferences with our Mary Magdalene Awards. These special and treasured women were given a rose, a certificate, and a monetary donation to a charity of their choice that is associated with the Women of the ELCA.



Well Done Good and Faithful Servants



2025—2026 NW MN SWO Board Members



Left to Right: Vice President, Luella Thom,; Julie Paulson (4); Bonnie Wagner (2); Treasurer, Janet Olson (1); Tracy Buchholz (7); President, Carol Balk (5); Gretchen Henrikson (6); Secretary, Pamela Bowman; Nola Smith (8); Marlene Block (3)



St. Hildegard of Bingen (whose feast day is September 17th) was called at age 43 to become a preacher of the Gospel in an age (the 12th century) and in a place (Germany) where the church did not believe women were allowed to preach or teach. She was scared. Like Jonah, she hid. Like Jonah, she was grabbed by God and put in a dark place. In deep illness, she heard God say to her, "Arise! Cry aloud and say what is revealed to you with divine help. God brings a joyful vision of justice that will last." So, she timidly, told her confessor who told her she better do as God commanded. She wrote books, she preached sermons, she wrote letters to the Pope and the Emperor, she made demands to stop smelting weapons near the rivers, she made demands for women's health care and for the poor. She made wine, wrote cookbooks and created medical journals to help women live healthier lives. She changed the world. Or as she would say it, God used her, a miserable woman, to make the world a better place.

To celebrate Hildegard this month consider adding a touch of nutmeg (her favorite spice) to some cookies or a coffee, and listening to God's call for you.



Active WELCA Group at First Lutheran of Battle Lake, MN

For the last 3 years our WELCA circles have worked together with assistance from the First Lutheran Men's club to hold a rummage sale. Our sale coordinates with the, "Battle Lake All Town Rummage Sales". All items are donated with proceeds of \$3,000.00 to \$5,000 a year donated to local charities.

We also host a fall festival every October. This year it will be held Saturday, October 11th from 9:00am. to 1:30pm. The proceeds from the fall festival, fund our many projects and donations throughout the year. Last year over \$4,000 was raised.

Come, visit us, and look for our "Beehive"! This is an area in the church stocked with donated home crafted items that are for sale year round. A great place to buy gifts. New items are continually added, so check us out. The money raised helps us help our community.

Thank you to the many volunteers who make these events successful.



Active WELCA Group at Faith Lutheran, Bagley, MN



When the WELCA group from Faith Lutheran Church in Bagley learned that the Salvation Army could no longer continue its backpack program for children, we saw an opportunity to serve.

We contacted Bagley Public Elementary School to obtain the school supply lists for grades Pre-K through 6. With support from our congregation, Thrivent Action Team funds, and a generous donation from the Bagley Rotary Club, we gathered the necessary supplies.

In total, we packed 98 backpacks filled with grade-specific school supplies, including headphones. Publicity for the event included radio announcements, a local newspaper article, and posters displayed throughout town.

Parents were able to pre-register by calling the church or using a QR code to register online. We scheduled designated pickup days and times, and it was heartwarming to see so many smiling faces as children received their backpacks—ready to start the school year off right!

Submitted by: Gladys Luecken,
Mission Program Coordinator



Seminary Stipend Fund



Give a gift of **Love** in 2025

We are encouraging you to show support of the women in the ELCA seminary, treating them with a gift of money to use as they desire! Donations will be collected throughout the year and then divided equally and given to the women seminarians in 2026. This is a gift; it is not for any service rendered.

Donations can be sent to the SWO Treasurer Write "Seminary Stipend for Women" on the memo line or use the Offering Form A

Send to: Janet Olson
PO Box 567
Warroad, MN 56763



Saved to Love, Serve & Teach!

EMBRACE YOUR MISSION,
WOMEN OF FAITH!

LEADERSHIP TRAINING DAY

SAT. NOV. 1, 2025 9:30-3:00
CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH
100 JEFFERSON AVE. SW
FERTILE, MN 56540

GUEST SPEAKER: PASTOR JILL STEICHEN
CREATIVE ACTIVITY: LINDA STROMSTAD

IF YOU ARE IN A LEADERSHIP POSITION IN YOUR UNIT,
CONFERENCE OR SYNOD...THIS DAY IS FOR YOU!

JOB DESCRIPTIONS WILL BE REVIEWED SO THAT YOU
WILL BE BETTER INFORMED ABOUT YOUR
RESPONSIBILITIES.

FREE OF CHARGE!
LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

RSVP BY OCT. 15TH TO:
MARLENE BLOCK (SWO BOARD MEMBER)
marleneb@gvtel.com or 218-289-4046

Global Engagement Travel to Tanzania

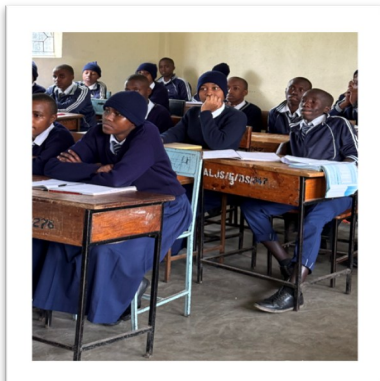
Nola Smith was honored to be one of 15 women and teens from the United States, Tanzania, and Cameroon selected to participate in the Global Engagement trip to Arusha and Meru, Tanzania, held from July 11–20, 2025. This initiative was part of the Healthy Women and Girls Program through the Women of the ELCA, aimed at advocating for education and mentorship opportunities for women and girls in a camp setting at the foot of the majestic Mount Meru.

The mentoring component is part of the African Girls Scholarship and Mentorship Program (AGSMP), founded by three ELCA International Women Leaders—Naomi Mbise (Tanzania), Dora Houma, and Marina Fomgbami (Cameroon)—during their studies at ELCA colleges amid the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, seven young women have received scholarships covering tuition, books, and fees for one academic year. For the Fall 2025 semester, Tumaini Able and Heavenlight Daudi were awarded scholarships.

The group visited Ailango and Makumira Junior-Senior schools, met with the Assistant to the Bishop at the Synod office, worshiped and shared a meal at the Maasai Ngereiyani Parish, went on safari in Tarangire National Park, and toured the Arusha Lutheran Medical Center, founded by Dr. Mark Jacobson, a medical missionary. There are many stories to tell from this adventure. Witnessing the Lord's work in the lives of the young women and the communities we visited, as well as the beauty of Tanzania's landscape, was truly awe-inspiring.

To learn more about Nola's story, feel free to contact her: Nola Smith 703-835-3925 or email: nola529smith@gmail.com

Funding is essential to continue this impactful work. To contribute: Make checks payable to Women of the ELCA, include "RUHWG" in the memo line. Mail to: ELCA Gift Processing Center, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, Virginia 22116-8009



Lutheran World Relief Pick-up Sites

1. Wadena -June 2nd-6th and December 7th-13th

The drop off location is:

Polman Transfer Inc., Office hours- 8 AM-5 PM,
Monday-Friday, Phone # 218-631-1753
63425 Hwy 10
Wadena MN 56482

2. Fargo- October 20-24th, 9AM-5PM

Midwest Motors Express
314 27th St. N
Fargo ND

3. Grand Forks- October 23-24th, 9AM-5PM

Midwest Motors Express
2215 N. Washington
Grand Forks ND 58203

4. Osakis—Oct. 29th, 8-10:00 AM

28 East Main St.
Osakis, MN 56360

5. Roseau-Nov. 7th, Noon-2:30

In parking lot east of the Post Office
USPS-114 Center St E
Roseau MN 56751

6. Thief River- Nov. 8th, 8AM to Noon

604 Atlantic Ave N
Thief River Falls, MN 56701



**Mark Your
Calendar**

**SNOW Newsletter
Deadline**

Dec. 31, 2025

Conference 3 will not be holding a Fall Gathering this year. A letter will be sent to the churches looking for a church to host the Spring Gathering. Please Contact Lori Walters, Conference 3 Coordinator at 701-730-0768 if interested.





Happy Lemonade Day!



As summer ends, lemonade stands—complete with hand-made posters, pitchers, and coolers—will soon disappear from neighborhoods as the new school year begins.

A child's Lemonade Stand is most impressive when a community of neighborhood children gather with one goal in mind: Make money and have fun doing it. We're adapting this Lemonade Stand concept for our fundraising: Our target is to raise up to \$15,000 to fund 5 women from each congregation that participates to attend the triennial gathering in Des Moines, Iowa, July 16-19. Of course, each congregation can set its own goal.

Raising money for this effort is not new. Elysia McGill, president of the Synodical Women's Organization in Nebraska, described how her Synodical Women's Organization hosts events like Saved to Serve to fund scholarships for attendees. Elysia describes the triennial gathering as "life-changing." In her synod, the main challenge isn't raising money; it's increasing awareness among women about the event. Although her SWO, Region 4A Nebraska, has a tradition of offering these scholarships, Elysia noted that women often don't apply. She speculates this may be because some think scholarships are only for newcomers or first-time attendees.

Jane Winge, President of Region 4D from Texas, stated: "At NT-NL SWO, we host silent auctions, sell SERRV products, and raffle quilts, baked goods, and other items to raise money for our scholarships. As of May, we have accumulated almost \$3,400."

On Lemonade Day, August 20, we're launching a lemonade stand fundraiser focused on helping your group raise \$15,000 so 5 women from your congregation can attend the Triennial Gathering in Des Moines.

Ready to make a difference? Here's how you can join the fundraiser and spread the lemonade stand spirit in your congregation and SWO: Here are ways to get started! Set a clear goal of raising \$15,000 to support 5 women by covering the cost of early bird registration, travel to and from Des Moines, hotel, and meals.

1. **Plan a Lemonade Stand in your congregation.** On Sunday during announcements, invite congregation members to stop by your "stand" to learn more about the Gathering. Promote the website <https://welcatg.org>. Synodical Women's Organizations will receive "I am worthy" pins, coasters and cards in English and Spanish for their conventions. Visit the promote section of the Gathering website when promotional items become available!
2. **Create Lemon-themed events:** Host a tea with lemon scones and cakes, a lemon-themed bake sale after Sunday services, or auction lemon-inspired gift baskets (soaps, SERRV fair trade). Sell tickets to a lemon-themed craft event or painting project. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8G6Xjgv-EY>
3. **Invite Campus Ambassadors to help you spread the word.** Do you know women on campus that would help you promote the gathering with this idea? The new Campus Ambassador program is live for this school year—all college students can apply and we are hoping to bring four Campus Ambassadors to Des Moines! [Learn more and get connected.](#)

August 20 is Lemonade Day so celebrate by getting into lemonade-themed fun this year and bring 5 women from your congregation to Des Moines!



Northwestern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization of the ELCA

NW MN SNOW Newsletter

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UP COMING EVENTS

COME AS YOU ARE & JOIN OVER A THOUSAND LUTHERAN WOMEN IN DES MOINES, IOWA, JULY 16-19, 2026 FOR WORSHIP, ADVOCACY, INSPIRATION, SISTERHOOD & MORE!



VISIT: [WELCATG.ORG](https://welcatg.org)

2026 WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING



july 16-19, 2026 ✨ des moines, iowa