

Northern Highlights

Spring 2020
Volume 23, Number 1

Northern Illinois Synod WELCA

SAVE THE DATE!!!

WELCA Spring Retreat

April 18 at LOMC

We have heard you say that it is getting expensive to attend, so the NISWO Board has lowered the price – from \$40 to \$30! Details will be coming via email to your church secretary, so be sure to ask her for it and get registered as soon as it arrives. Don't forget there are scholarships available, and they are not necessarily based on financial need. This year, we will have a sing-along with favorite hymns, a Bible study, and share communion together. This year, we will put together personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief. See the Board meeting minutes on page two for what in-kind gift your Conference is to bring to help complete these kits. This is always a great time and we can't wait to see you there!

President's Message

It seems that my grandchildren were just asking "Is it here yet?" referring to Christmas, to "Is it over already?" the day after! And the answer to that is No! It's just the beginning of the celebration of God is with us! God is with us as we enter this new decade as we make our resolutions to become better in a variety of ways, to improve on our past and to trust the future as we live to the fullest in the present. We also shift into Epiphany where we now know that God is alive and with us in everything if we just have our eyes open to see the ways in which God appears.

It is now the time when we, as women of the ELCA, gather again to study God's word, often with the *Gather* magazine leading our discussions- and to plan our year's activities. I had the opportunity to join with some of you during the Christmas season for your fellowship gatherings. I shared the season with the ladies of Trinity, Mt. Morris and St. Paul's, Dixon and Our Saviors, Rockford where all who attended their Advent Inspirations program were treated with guest program providers Kent and our own board member, Ann Terry. These were each very special opportunities for me to get to know more of you in your own church settings. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the upcoming two years of my term as your president.

I often hear you wishing your units were larger, "like they used to be." Many of us feel that way but we don't want to be wringing our hands about

this. I am most thankful for each of you who are part of an active WELCA unit in our Synod. It is because of your generosity, as well as your presence at our programs, that our Synod's WELCA is surviving. Our Synod WELCA board will continue to address your concerns, so please let your conference representative know your thoughts on how we might improve. In the meantime, please look at new ways you may be able to involve other women in your congregation's WELCA events.

I will be attending the Conference of Presidents in February and hope to gather some new and interesting ideas for us in Northern Illinois.

Another event coming up in our Synod is the CRE (Congregational Resource Event) on March 14, at Kishwaukee College in Malta (just west of DeKalb). Please plan on attending our WELCA forum on Human Trafficking. A very special guest will be there, ELCA Bishop Eaton!

And finally, our Spring Retreat will be on April 18, at LOMC in Oregon, Illinois. More details will be coming out soon. Mark your calendar.

Until I see you again, God's blessings to each of you.

Connie Seavey

NIS WELCA President

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

Carol Sauter, Secretary

The NISWO Board met at St. John's Lutheran Church, Ashton, Illinois, on Saturday, January 25, 2020. President, Connie Seavey, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Devotions: Devotions were shared by Mary Shull.

Following devotions, President Connie Seavey presented as a suggestion that we intentionally acclimate new Board members to their positions and procedures of participating on the board prior to the first board meeting. Discussion was held. No motion was made at this time.

Old Business:

Secretary's Report: Minutes from the NISWO Board meeting of November 9, 2019, were presented and approved as written. Packets for new members of the board have been updated and were given to the new members present. Questions were asked about the new printer approved for purchase at the last board meeting. Carol Sauter, Secretary, reported that a new printer had been purchased with a trade-in of the old printer and an "on sale" discount. The new printer is up and running. President Connie Seavey recognized that birthdays had not been included in this year's directory. These will be added.

Treasurer's Report: Pennie Miller presented the Treasurer's Report for 02/01/2019 to 01/24/2020, at a balance of \$23,500.50. Convention room reimbursements were discussed, and payments made. Discussion and clarifications were made concerning the disbursement of funds to organizations we are supporting, resulting in Pennie thoroughly explaining the working budget of the Treasury Report. A motion was made to pay February 1, 2019, to January 31, 2020, regular conference offering at 65%* of income received. (*After this was decided, it has been learned that the 78% donation was passed in our September 2019 Convention so that amount will be honored if at all possible.) The board has been hearing concerns about the \$40 registration fee for the Retreat. A motion was made to set the April 18, 2020, Spring Retreat registration fee at \$30 per participant.. A thank you was given to Pennie for her diligent work of the treasury. The treasurer's report was placed on file.

New Business:

President's Report: Connie Seavey distributed her report to the NISWO Board and presented an explanation of each section. She spoke of efforts by the CWO to make changes regarding the Triennial Gathering. They are suggesting each Synod sponsor the cost of one voting member and one guest to the amount of \$6,000. We will be having discussions about this subject. To do this, we will need to be creative and work together. Articles on the many events for 2020, and discussions over the results of distributing

Northern Highlights by email. You will be hearing more about these subjects in the future. . Nancy Rice will be attending the Presidents' Meeting. The President's report will need to be approved at the next meeting.

Retreat: Mary Shull gave a report of the Spring Retreat "Faith Along the Winding Road" to be held April 18, 2020, at LOMC. The verse John 16:33 will be the scripture to guide the retreat. This year, in the afternoon, we are planning on making care kits. We are requesting conferences to bring care items for the kits as follows:

Central and South – bars of soap

East and North – nail clippers

Southwest and Northeast – toothbrushes

Northwest and West – large-tooth combs

The NISWO will provide the towels, made possible by Pam Wohlrabe and Pennie Miller securing Thrivent Action Team Dollars to purchase the towels.

The registration fee will be \$30.00.

Convention: Pennie Miller reported the convention will be Saturday September 19, 2020, at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Freeport. The theme will be "LOVE" to coincide with the CWO Convention "Just Love." It was suggested that entertainment provided by the group "Don't Worry," be pursued.

Nominating: Elections this year will be for a Vice President, Treasurer, and representatives for Central, Northwest, Southwest, West, and North Conferences.

Stewardship: Ann Terry gave a written report on the changes that may be happening to CWO and NISWO. These changes will be discussed at the Triennial Convention. We are all working to keep the organization alive and thriving. One challenge that Ann gives to all of us is to "be creative in whatever funds you can to donate to our Triennial guest and voting member fund."

Northern Highlights: Kelli Impens presented a proposal to send out subscription option cards to make our NIS women aware that there are options of how to receive the *Highlights*. The cost of this effort would be approximately \$50. This would be covered by the gift from Polly Wollersheim.

Justice: There was no report for Justice.

Next Meeting: May 2, 2020, at 9:30 a.m., at St. John's Lutheran Church in Ashton

Devotions: Cindy Wildermuth

JUSTICE

Joan Soltwisch, NISWO Justice Advocate

Ruthie Fairchild Day

NISWO members were invited to join The Eighteenth Annual "Celebrating Dreams" event on January 19, that was dedicated to the Memory of Ruth Fairchild and titled "Where You Will Go, I Will Go." The event was sponsored by Zion Lutheran Church in Rockford, and held at the Patriots Gateway Community Center next door. Our recently passed resolution, Ruthie Fairchild Day: January 20th, A Day of Remembrance, Service, Advocacy and Action, was read by our NISWO past president Kim Choin and current president Connie Seavey. Joan Soltwisch spoke on Ruth's service and connection to her unit, synod and churchwide organization. We listened to Martin Luther King Jr's, "I Have a Dream" speech and excerpts from "A Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Gospel Jamboree music was played by Jodi Beach and Jim McDowell, gospel singers performed, hymns were sung, and of course, prayers were offered. After the celebration, we were invited to the cafeteria for a "Ruthie's Kitchen" meal. Sandy Carter, Carol Sauter, Laura and Leon Choin, who were also present with us, enjoyed the event. We look forward to joining next year, invited or not!! Thank you to Janice Forrest and Pastor Michael Thomas for the invite!!

The True Cost

NISWO members partnered with the Department of Diversity, and JCAST Chicago, Jewish Women Against Sex Trafficking, to bring the traveling theater, "The True Cost," to the University of St. Francis, Joliet January 26, 2020. The Sister's of St. Francis, Women Religious, sponsored the event for their 100-year anniversary, in celebration of their active part in the social justice ministry of the college. The play combined stories of the many dimensions of human

trafficking. This live performance was written by Jenny Magnus, directed by Kelly Ann Corcoran, and performed by Katherine Bellantone, Debbie Banos and Nate Smith. This is a Still Point Chicago Theater production. The panel discussion that followed addressed the definition of the problem and resolutions. The performance and discussion left attendees emotional and compassionate, truly feeling for the victims. We left ignited with the energy to work together to end Human Trafficking.

Congregational Resourcing Event (C.R.E) March 14th Kiswaukee College, Malta.

Kim Choin, past NISWO president, and I will host a panel discussion on human trafficking at both session B and C. The panel will be based on "The True Cost," addressing Monetary Cost: Health care, Criminal justice cost, Emotional toll: Brain health, Not-for-profit agencies, Federal government cost; and, Social/ Societal Cost: associated with the spectrum of issues surrounding Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking. Criminal Justice Professor, David Deeds, will moderate this panel. Other faith-based professionals will join the panel. The session will include a trailer of "The True Cost" performance, as well as a response to the "cost" in each one of the above areas. Join our NISWO as we push forward with our WELCA Churchwide's commitment to end Human Trafficking. We are looking for a large turnout at CRE as our churchwide Bishop Elect Elizabeth Eaton will be the Keynote address speaker. Please sign up early to support us and our Synod, as this year's registration may fill up early!! You may find the enrollment form, for this event, on the Northern Illinois Synod's website.

STEWARDSHIP

Ann Terry, South Representative

I recently emptied a pitcher of change from my kitchen counter in the change machine at the bank and was given \$34.23 in cash. Somehow receiving this "change" started me thinking about the "change" that is being requested this year by Churchwide with regard to the Triennial Gathering. They are requesting that each synod sponsor the cost of one voting member and donate the expense for one triennial guest. This amounts to about \$6,000. That's a whopping amount of change! This seems quite staggering when one considers that the number of our active units keeps decreasing and the women who are involved in WELCA activities at our churches seems to becoming a smaller number all the time. I feel our Synod can be a leader in promoting the idea of change and revitalization of our women's organization. There are some constitutional structural changes that will be voted on at the Triennial in July. These include allowing SWO boards to include members who are not in congregational units and allowing SWO boards to include two members from the same con-

gregation. Another change would allow SWO board meetings to be conducted with Zoom or other virtual meeting technologies. I would like to challenge the women of the Northern Illinois Synod to be creative in coming up with whatever funds you can to donate to our Triennial guest and voting member fund. I plan to donate the "change" from my change pitcher to this endeavor, along with a donation from my church. I propose that we send whatever we collect and include our "change for WELCA" support statement along with our "change" for the Triennial guest and voting member. I strongly feel our board is ready to support any change that will help keep our organization alive and vibrant. Please keep supporting our NISWO, and please don't neglect your Thankoffering donations in order to redirect funds to the "change for WELCA" donation. I know there are women out there who are ready for the changes that can help Women of the ELCA survive through this next decade. Thanks for considering your donation to "Change for WELCA" !!!

TREASURER'S REPORT

Pennie Miller, Treasurer

| Beginning Balance (2-1-2019) | | | | \$12,708.64 |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Budget | Carry-over 2/1/2019 | Income | Total |
| INCOME | | | | |
| Regular-Conference Offerings | \$21,800.00 | | \$17,387.82 | \$17,387.82 |
| Convention Offerings | \$3,500.00 | | \$2,398.00 | \$2,398.00 |
| Convention Registrations | \$2,500.00 | | \$2,120.00 | \$2,120.00 |
| Convention Booklet | \$300.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Retreat Registrations | \$3,100.00 | | \$2,820.00 | \$2,820.00 |
| Retreat Offering | \$0.00 | | \$392.00 | \$392.00 |
| <i>Northern Highlights subscriptions</i> | \$350.00 | \$0.00 | \$220.00 | \$220.00 |
| Triennial Scholarships | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Triennial Offerings | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Computer Fund | | \$1,146.89 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Coffee/Tea/Chocolate | \$50.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Prison Ministry & LSSI Story Book | \$200.00 | | \$76.00 | \$76.00 |
| Rocky Boy | \$300.00 | | \$150.00 | \$150.00 |
| Tanzania Women - crafts | \$0.00 | \$987.15 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Tanzania North Central Diocese Woman's Dept | \$2,700.00 | | \$2,776.00 | \$2,776.00 |
| India-Arcot Women's Desk | \$2,000.00 | | \$59.50 | \$59.50 |
| NIU Campus Ministry | \$300.00 | | \$77.00 | \$77.00 |
| Katie's Fund | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| World Hunger | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Justice | \$0.00 | \$540.40 | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Triennial International Guest FY20-21 | \$1,200.00 | | \$545.00 | \$545.00 |
| Triennial NIS Delegate FY20-21 | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Donations - board expenses | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Ruth Fairchild Zion Lutheran Project | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Rooms- Convention Expense | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| India Craft Purchased to Sale | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Tanzania Nursing School | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Harvard Food Pantry | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Convention Scholarship | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Convention Expense | \$0.00 | | \$70.00 | \$70.00 |
| Thank Offering | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Interest | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | \$0.00 |
| Balance from old checking account closing | \$0.00 | | \$4,520.56 | \$4,520.56 |
| Total Income | \$38,300.00 | \$2,674.44 | \$33,611.88 | \$33,611.88 |

Please note: "Disbursements" shown for the following line items are for the year 2018-2019: Regular Offering to CWO, Church Women United, Prison & LSSI Story Book, Rocky Boy, Tanzania Women – Crafts, Tanzania NCD Women's Department, India-Arcot Women's Des, and NIU Campus Ministry.

The NISWO Executive Officers will be meeting to review the financial records and to determine "Disbursements" of funds received during 2019-2020, with those disbursements showing on the next Treasurer's Report.

| DISBURSEMENTS | Budget | Carry-over | Disbursed | Total |
|---|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Regular Offerings to CWO (78%) | \$17,000.00 | | \$6,525.00 | |
| Convention Offerings to CWO (50%) | \$1,800.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Convention Expenses | \$3,500.00 | | \$1,752.54 | |
| Convention Scholarships | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Retreat Expenses | \$2,500.00 | | \$1,660.67 | |
| Retreat Scholarships | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Retreat Offering | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Leadership - Units | \$200.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Nominating Committee | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Board Expenses | \$3,350.00 | | \$1,339.24 | |
| India Craft Purchased to sell | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Financial Records | \$100.00 | | \$28.52 | |
| ELCA Insurance | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Communications | \$200.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| <i>Northern Highlights</i> | \$1,200.00 | | \$897.98 | |
| Triennial Scholarships | \$400.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Triennial Offerings | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Triennial Promoter | \$50.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Triennial Gathering | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Triennial Guest | \$1,200.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Discipleship | \$50.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Justice | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Stewardship | \$50.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Church Women United | \$50.00 | | \$100.00 | |
| Computer Fund | \$200.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Coffee/Tea/Chocolate | \$50.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Prison Ministry & LSSI Story Book | \$200.00 | | \$200.00 | |
| Rocky Boy | \$300.00 | | \$300.00 | |
| Tanzania Women - crafts | \$300.00 | | \$987.15 | |
| Tanzania North Central Diocese Woman's Dept | \$2,500.00 | | \$2,500.00 | |
| India-Arcot Women's Desk | \$2,000.00 | | \$2,000.00 | |
| NIU Campus Ministry | \$300.00 | | \$300.00 | |
| NIS Assembly Annual Offering | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| WELCA Presidents' Meeting Offering | \$100.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| NIS Assembly Exp.-President's Registration | \$0.00 | | \$354.48 | |
| Total Disbursements | \$38,300.00 | \$0.00 | \$18,945.58 | \$18,945.58 |
| Total Income less Disbursements | | | | \$14,666.30 |
| Special Funds Holding Account | | Carry Forward 2019/2020 | | |
| Triennial Scholarships | \$1,200.00 | | \$1,200.00 | |
| Computer Fund | \$1,146.89 | | \$1,146.89 | |
| Justice | \$540.40 | | \$540.40 | |
| Tanzania Women - crafts | \$987.15 | | \$987.15 | |
| Triennial Guest | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Triennial Offering | \$0.00 | | \$0.00 | |
| Total Special Funds | \$3,874.44 | \$0.00 | \$3,874.44 | |
| Balance in Account | | | | \$27,374.94 |
| Less \$ Allocated for Special Funds | | | | \$3,874.44 |
| Ending Balance 01/24/2020 | | | | \$23,500.50 |

CENTRAL CONFERENCE

Pam Wohrabe, Central Representative

Greetings to each of you from your new Central Conference representative. I am Pam Wohrabe, and I bring you greetings from my home church in Compton, The Heart of Illinois parish. I have been working on making sure I have current information about your units. We are required to annually complete a form that lists your home church information, as well as the information regarding your unit. I realize that many units do not have a full set of officers, but I really need the demographic information on what woman I can contact to see what is happening in your congregation's unit. Even if you don't have an active WELCA unit, I would like to have a contact to be able to let others know what the women of your church are up to. Thanks for your help in this matter.

Also, I have a "Save the Date" for you. Our annual spring brunch will be at St. Paul's, Dixon on May 15. This year the program sounds very valuable as the local president of PFLAG will be our speaker. She will be sharing lots of valuable information for us to take back to our local churches. All details will be available by April.

Lastly, our NIS Spring Retreat this year is April 18. Be sure to read about that on page one in our *Highlights*. In the afternoon, we will have the opportunity to work together on LWR personal care kit assembly. Each conference is

asked to bring something for the kit. Our Conference is assigned bars of soap. Please help us out by bringing as much as you can. Any extra bars of soap can also be sent to LWR so it can be given to the recipients to replace their original supply. It's always needed!

St. John's, Ashton will be sponsoring a Bunco afternoon mid-February for families to have a day of this fun game. They will also be organizing the collection of personal care kits during Lent.

Trinity, Mt. Morris is working on their annual Valentine treats for the residents of LSSI/Nachusa. Such a worthwhile gift for these kids to be remembered at a time other than Christmas!

Bethesda, Morrison has been busy hosting a Sunday School Christmas program luncheon and Christmas bags for the children. They've also sponsored a pizza supper at church for their church council as a thank you for their year of service. And, they sponsor a boy in India through Child Fund. Their quilting group made 292 quilts, 120 school bags and 17 sewing kits this year—busy hands!

EAST CONFERENCE

Joan Soltwisch, East Representative

Plattville, Minooka These NISWO women are busy planning their offering budget. I am outlining their format because of their organized attention to detail and budgeting, much of it developed many years ago, and still used today. It works!! They have three ways of gathering income: Baking Days - the sale of kringla/potato cakes, (2 of their biggest orders this year were 20 and 17 dozen!), Circle Offerings, Thankoffering, and Stone Soup luncheon. They also collect a Mission Partner offering during a service, which disbursements are divided between Arcot Women's Desk (India), Groundwork (Joliet's domestic violence shelter), and Friends of Mwangaza's Nursing Project. Thankoffering collected during a regular service in November, goes directly to Churchwide WELCA. Circle offerings are gathered solely for local missions which are collected monthly. They are labeled as January, parish projects, that fund the yearly quilt supplies, school kits, personal care kits, etc.; February's collection is sent to LSSI storybook; March goes to Streator's Ralph Plumb House; April, Under His Wings; May - Lutherdale Scholarships; June - Ephatha hearing ministry; July - Oblong Children's Home; August - Grace Place Northern Illinois University's Campus Ministry; September - Morning Star Mission; October - Dixon Prison Ministry's LSSI storybook; November - Navajo Lutheran Mission in Arizona; and, December - Illinois Valley Industry. Some of

the local mission appeals have changed over the years as new connections are made and others discontinue. Baking Days proceeds bring in the most revenue and those funds are used for our NISWO and Triennial offering or dispersed for shortages when monthly offerings fall short. They are also used for "We Care" boxes for college student's away from home, sent out the Sunday closest to Valentine's day. They are filled with soup packs, homemade goods, popcorn, a bulletin, and a *Christ in Our Home* devotional, which are donated, but funds are used for the postage.

Resurrection, Channahon will be developing their new budget. They are starting a mother's club, using the *Cafe* Bible study. The Wednesday morning Bible study uses *Gather* magazine weekly. They will develop their WELCA group around Resurrection's mission statement to enhance both men and women service projects, such as the youth group's personal care kits, kits for homeless, community and nursing home outreach projects, to name a few.

Faith, Joliet Women at Faith are continuing to use the *Gather* Bible study and they look forward to meeting us at Spring Retreat!

NORTH CONFERENCE

Sandy Carter , North Representative

The North report this quarter includes what was done, what is being done and what will be done. The Women of the North were, are and will continue to be busy. A question has been sent in asking for our help. What are some ideas for a successful and interesting Spring Event? Send your responses to me at skc636@comcast.net. I will compile a list and email it to all. This is another way that Women of WELCA serve – by helping each other. Thanks in advance for your answers. *Sandy – North Rep*

First, Rockford continues to meet on the third Thursday of each month at Katie's Cup on Seventh Street using the Bible Study in *Gather* magazine. All are welcome to join us.

Our Saviors, Rockford is collecting children's books for LSSI's Prisoner and Family Ministry. This January project is being done to honor Ruth Fairchild. The book will become a gift from the parent to their child after they are recorded reading it so the child can listen to their voice while enjoying the book. Also, planning is under way for our Spring Brunch at 9:30 a.m. on April 25th. The program will be a free OLD TIME RADIO PROGRAM led by Charmel Jacobs of the Rockford Rescue Mission.. Clients of Rockford Rescue Mission will perform and tell their stories. This will be followed by a Brunch – reservations with payment will be needed. More information will be sent at a later date.

Shepherd of the Valley, Rockford WELCA is overseeing a collection of warm gloves from our congregation to be donated to Carpenter's Place and Miss Carly's in Rockford. Thrivent Action Team funds are being used to help with this project. Cover Girls meet monthly to make blankets for the kids at Rock House Kids. And, several women volunteer monthly at Laundry Love, providing friendly help during laundry time. We collect quarters in empty candy containers which helps offset the cost of this ministry.

Zion, Rockford Highlights of 2019 from the Women of Zion include collecting scarves from the congregation and made available for those eating at Ruthie's Kitchen to take. Our Chicks With Sticks group made many of the scarves for this successful outreach project. We also collected monies for Laundry Love, and our very own Phyliss Campbell, an award winning quilter, shared her story and showed her quilts to us! Perrie Dralle, our new intern, shared her life's journey that now has brought her to Zion.

NORTHEAST CONFERENCE

Representative Needed

Nativity, Wonder Lake held their Annual Thankoffering and NISWO collection the Sunday before Thanksgiving and collected \$238 to share with the churchwide WELCA and NIS WELCA.

Grace, Richmond New Year has begun and with it new officers set out to continue the good work of our church's women's group. Led by their newly elected President, Lynn Jambor, they met in January to plan the spring events. On February 9 — "All Hearts Turn to God" Bake Sale with a Valentine's Day theme, and April 18 — what has become an annual event, our Craft & Vendor Fair.

A heart-felt thanks to retiring officers Sandy Messick, Ann Katzenberg and Joan Rzonca. Thank you for your years of devotion to our church family.

First, DeKalb Prelude Bible Study meets twice monthly utilizing *Gather* magazine's Bible Study. The offering goes to NISWO. In April, First Lutheran's Annual Garage Sale is a benefit to donors needing to clear away STUFF, especially those moving or downsizing. The money earned has been donated to NISWO for the Tanzanian women and children's ministry for several years.

Northeast Conference Rep is needed for the NIS Women of the ELCA Board. If you know of someone that would be a good representative, please contact Pennie Miller or Joan Soltwisch on the nominating committee. Contact information is on page 7.

Editors Note: This is your newsletter and we want to feature You! Send us your pictures and they just might show up in the next issue. Contact information for your conference rep is on page 9, or you can send them directly to me with a note including church name, activity, date, and names of people pictured (if available). Thanks!

NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

Greetings to all the Northwest women! I want to introduce myself, as this will be my first newsletter article since being appointed at the November Board meeting to represent the Northwest Conference. I am a member at Trinity Lutheran, Derinda, a small country church outside of Eliza-beth. *(They have asked me to invite everyone to our Annual Chili Supper, coming up on March 1!)* After retiring from my job in the Chicago suburbs, I moved full-time to our farm and became active with our WELCA unit where I served as secretary for many years. Then a few years ago, I served as Board Secretary which gave me an opportunity to see first-hand the work accomplished by our Organization. I am excited about getting to know more of the women in our 19 congregations. I still have more contacts to make, but everyone I have talked with so far has been *amazing and positive and involved and knowledgeable!* In many cases, the traditional units that existed for so many years continue to transform themselves, so that they can remain active and vital both in their congregations and in their communities. My hope this year is to encourage and assist each woman in our Conference to find their place, grow in God's love, and share the gifts He has so graciously given to each of us.

Monica Groezinger, Northwest Representative

In very general terms, what I have learned so far about our Conference:

First, Pecatonica and **First, Freeport** and **Good Shepherd, Lena** and **St. Paul, Warren** and **Trinity, Lanark** and **St. John's, Pearl City** and **Trinity, Derinda** and **St. Johns, Massbach** and **Lord of Love, Galena** all meet regularly for Bible Study. Many of these same women are actively involved in either a quilting or knitting ministry, and in supporting and volunteering at their local food pantries.

We all continue to be touched by the needs we see, and we are dedicated to helping in our communities.

I had the opportunity to meet with our Conference Coordinating Committee as they were planning our Spring Assembly Meeting. It is scheduled on March 28, at First Lutheran in Freeport. Registration opens at 9:00 a.m. Our speakers from DOW House will share their Doors Open Wide program. Brunch and program from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Please join us!

May God bless the work He has called us to do!

SOUTH CONFERENCE

Hello fellow Lutheran women! My name is Sherry Morris and I am the new South Conference Representative. I will tell you a little bit about myself... I am 66 years old, married and have a grown daughter and a mostly grown-up granddaughter. God has blessed my life in so many ways; the most unique way is that I am legally blind. It sounds funny to consider blindness a blessing, but He has done so many amazing things in my life, things that would not have been possible if I could see. (The Lord and I sometimes

Sherry Morris, South Representative

argue about my capabilities, but He always wins!!) I am very excited to be the Representative for the South Conference on the Board. I look so forward to meeting and/or talking to many of you. I want to hear what you think and what works for your church, and also what problems you have and seeing if we can find creative ways to solve them. I believe God has a plan for each of us, and how exciting it will be to discover what those plans are. I hope to be in touch with each of you very soon.

WEST CONFERENCE

Trinity, Moline At Christmas time, one of our circles adopted a family and bought gifts for four children and gave them a food basket, also. Our ladies continue to do quilting once a month. Recently, we got together and made soup for the soul. The soup will be delivered to people who are sick, or after they have surgery or birth of a child. This was well attended, so hopefully we can continue it. Our Lenten brunch will be February 29. We will have a couple of our youth leaders for the speakers this year. This year at Trinity, we will be uplifting our youth to grow the programs. We are also trying to get more women involved in different activities. Have a great spring!

Cindy Wildermuth, West Representative

First, Moline had a busy fall with the annual cookie walk and craft bazar. We had a record number of cookies, candies, and bread offered this year. Money raised went to numerous benevolences. With the holidays behind us, our craft group continues to meet twice a month for work and fellowship. The quilting group will start in February. This past year, 158 quilts were completed. Mary-Martha circle will meet starting in March. We have a great group of women who are actively involved in church activities.

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TRIENNIAL 2020 NEWS

Following Jesus is messy. Loving one another is justice. We are not perfect. We are one body in Christ. Please join us in Phoenix, Arizona, July 16-19, for our Gathering 2020, and live your faith in love that leads to justice.

Some of the events planned for the Eleventh Triennial Gathering at the Phoenix Convention Center, include fabulous guest speakers, insightful workshops, and life-changing servant events.

Consider participating in the Run, Walk and Roll. This event supports our health initiative "Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls." It is the primary means of funding grants for churches that wish to change the lives of thousands of women and girls. You will enjoy an early morning walk, run, or roll through the beautiful Cesar Chavez Park.

Before or after the event, you can learn more about the Phoenix and surrounding areas through specially curated tours offered exclusively by Women of the ELCA.

Register online at womenoftheelca.org, for just \$375 (scholarships are available). If you need assistance registering, please contact Sandy Swanson (contact info is in the left column). All the details, including travel and lodging information, can be found on the website, as well

We hope to see you there!

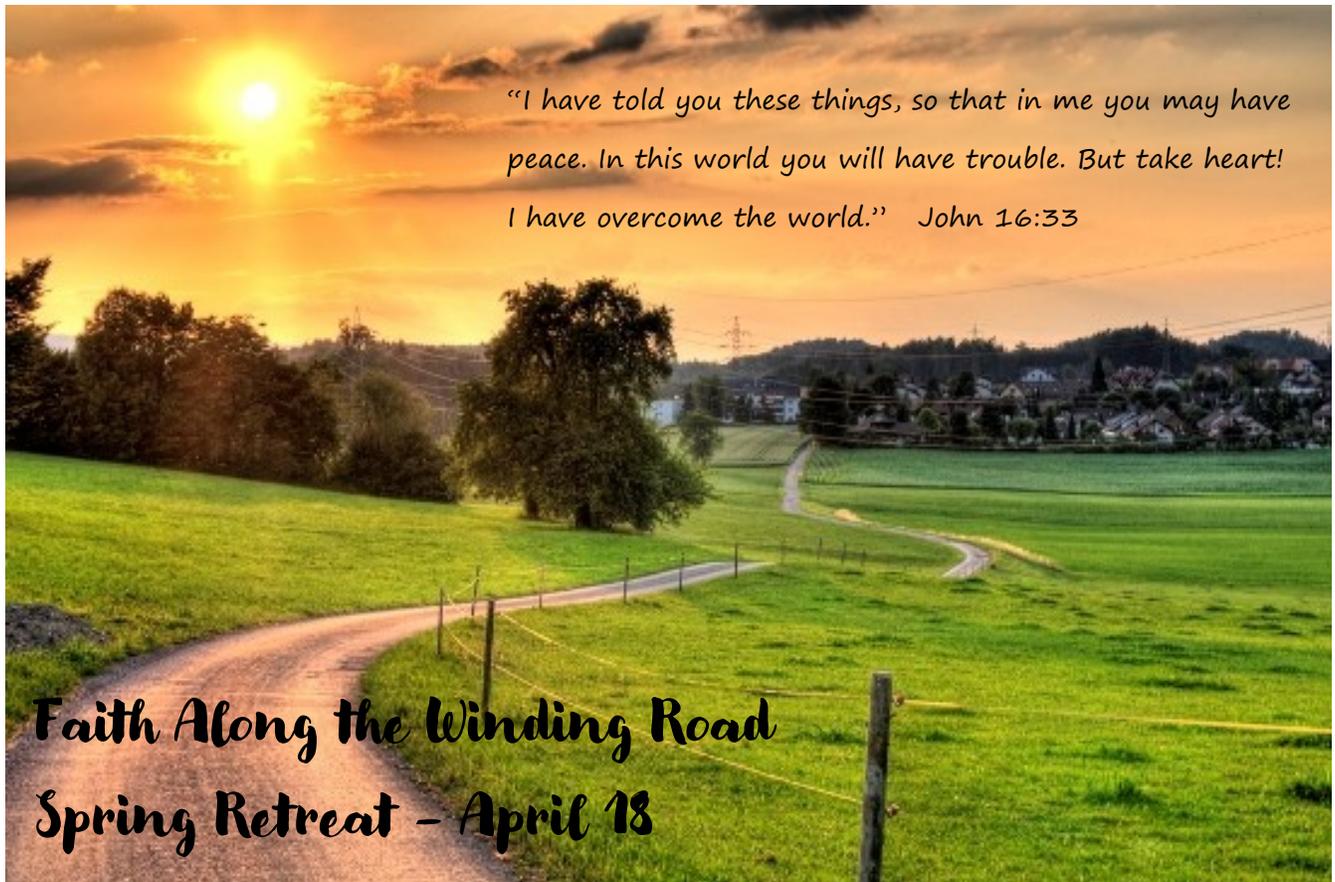


Northern Highlights

c/o First Lutheran Church
225 S. 3rd. St.
Rockford, IL 61104



Women
of the
**EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
IN AMERICA**



"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

***Faith Along the Winding Road
Spring Retreat - April 18***