



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.

From the President

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."
I Cor. 13:14

This verse is a wonderful reminder of one of the most important parts of being a Christian and knowing Christ: being in fellowship with the Spirit and with one another. As Christian women we spend many hours each day caring for others. This is a wonderful way for us to express the love we feel from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, and God our Father. But the recharging comes from the Spirit, and

The SWO Board will be meeting with cluster leadership on January 20 (snow date 27) to begin plans for our next Gathering in June. If you are a cluster chair (or other representative), we invite you to attend from 9-3 at the synod office. Bring your own coffee mug and reusable water bottle! We look forward to sharing lots of new information with you! Please pray for safe travels and wisdom to abound!

we must find it in fellowship with other Christians. One great way for Women of the ELCA to find this amazing fellowship is through our cluster gatherings. Clusters are geographical groups of congregations within a synod. In our synod, these clusters gather about two times a year to share ministry, common goals and yes, fellowship! When I attend cluster gatherings, one of the wonderful things I always see is the

"reuniting" of friends from different congregations with hugs and lively conversation. What a wonderful gift the Spirit gives us with these opportunities! I encourage each of you who has not attended a cluster gathering to try one this spring. If you need help finding more about your cluster, check out the calendar in this newsletter or give me a call. You might be very surprised by the joy, love and fellowship you find there! Blessings on your fellowship this Christmas season, *Diane Wills*

Mission Area: Discipleship

The first disciples...

I was thinking about the first disciples and I am going to guess that you think I mean Peter, James and John and the whole crew. But if you think carefully, the first disciples were really those nameless shepherds who dropped everything to go and see that tiny baby in a Bethlehem manger so many years ago. They went, saw, learned and then spread the GOOD NEWS! What an incredible example of pure faith! As Women of the ELCA, we too can do the same. Find a friend and invite her to come and learn of the Good News of Jesus, in your Bible studies, quilting circles, prayer groups, cluster gatherings and/or synod gatherings! Just like the shepherds, you might be a little fearful, but they did not let that stop them. They kept going and

look what they found!! *Merry Christmas to all, Diane Wills*

Mission Area: Justice

Justice has many different forms. At the WELCA Triennial in Minneapolis in June, I learned about an organization doing justice in Israel: World Service Jerusalem.

World Service Jerusalem works under the umbrella of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which has 145 member churches in 98 countries and represents over 74 million Christians. World Service is the relief and development arm of the LWF.

In an article titled: *From Tree to Table, Olive Oil*, I learned that through the sale of olive oil a Vocational Training Program (VTP) is in place to train Palestinian youth in carpentry, metalwork and auto mechanics and to train women in telecommunications, craftwork and catering. Being trained and finding employment is one way to a sustainable livelihood. Employment offers hope; unemployment has led many Palestinian youth to a state of hopelessness.

I have availed myself of the World Service Jerusalem offer of 250 ml bottles of olive oil for a donation of \$300. Incredibly, 20 plastic bottles of olive oil were shipped to my apartment through the postal system. What better Christmas gift can I give? Through this purchase I am helping to educate Palestinian youth; justice is being served as each drop of olive oil is used.

According to the article, 2016 was an excellent year for the olive harvest! The olives were handpicked then taken to the Latrun Monastery to be pressed into flavorful oil. Over 800 olive trees grace the LWF campus on the Mount of Olives. I also learned that you can go to Jerusalem and help pick the olives, beginning in mid-October, 2018. Anyone interested? Contact me granzowj@heartofiowa.net or info@lwfjerusalem.org. Submitted by *Pastor Jane Granzow, retired*

Mission Area: Stewardship

Just a friendly reminder: Beverly Sheridan is the "new" treasurer for the Northeast Iowa Synod Women's Organization. Her address is 701 Serenity Drive, Decorah, IA 52101. Please let your unit treasurers know of the change. Offering transmittal form A to use for sending in regular offerings can be found at neiasynod.org/women-of-the-elca. Print a copy of the form, complete, make a copy for your records and send one copy with your offering to Beverly.

As the end of the year approaches, now is the time to spend down your cluster and congregational unit accounts. Keep what is needed to start the new year and disburse the remainder. Your donations to the NE IA Synod Women help us provide scholarships for Triennial Gathering participants, for women theological students and for those continuing their education; and to support Lutheran Social Services, Lutheran World Relief, Riverside and EWALU Bible camps and the churchwide organization. Thank you for your help.

CALENDAR

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| Dec. 1 | Jan. <i>Good News</i> deadline 2018 |
| Jan. 1 | Feb. <i>Good News</i> deadline |
| Jan. 20 | SWO Board and Cluster Leaders 9:00–3:00, Synod office (snow date 1/27) |
| Feb. 1 | March <i>Good News</i> deadline |
| Mar. 1 | April <i>Good News</i> deadline |
| Mar. 3 | SWO Board, 9–12:30, Synod office (snow date Mar. 10) |
| May 19 | SWO Board, 9–12:30, McCoy Room, Wartburg College |
| Apr. 1 | May <i>Good News</i> deadline |
| Apr. 28 | Upper Iowa Cluster Spring Gathering, Big Canoe LC |
| May 1 | June <i>Good News</i> deadline |
| May 4 | LWR Truck Loading, First Lutheran, Decorah |
| Jun. 15 | SWO Board 7 p.m.–9 p.m., McCoy Room, Wartburg College |
| Jun. 16 | 31 st Annual NE IA Synod Women of the ELCA Gathering, Wartburg College, Waverly |
| Nov. 3 | LWR Truck Loading, Decorah |

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) has asked the Women of the ELCA for support in a special project that they have identified as crucial to the families of Iowa. The projects are client assistance, spiritual life, and God's Work, Our Hands. The NE Iowa Synod Women's Organization has chosen to support the Spiritual Life project with a goal of raising \$5,000. The Spiritual Life Program centers both staff and residents on LSI's mission to respond to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. The Spiritual Life Program nurtures the spirit of youth through relational ministry with Pastor Dennis Bauer. Over 83% of residents participating report that spiritual life activities helped them believe they are forgiven and were created for a positive purpose, trust in or belief in God, and believe they are loved. We are asking each cluster and unit to consider giving to this cause. Checks may be sent to LSI, PO Box 848, Waverly, IA 50677 (with WELCA challenge in the memo line). *Submitted by Bev Sheridan*

Around the Synod

Tree of Life Fall Cluster Gathering

A small and dedicated group of women from the Tree of Life Cluster met on Saturday, October 28 at Messiah Lutheran in

Janesville. We shared wonderful fellowship and delicious treats prepared by the ladies of Messiah, headed up by Ann Kirchoff. The program was about Leader Dogs for the Blind given by Pastor Kim and Diane Wills and Ginger, future leader dog. We also enjoyed a great discussion about the future of our cluster and how that might look. Our next gathering will be at Fredsville Lutheran in rural Cedar Falls as part of the Spring 2018 In-gathering. **Shechem Cluster Fall Retreat** was held at Zion, West Union on October 14. We were welcomed by Diane Zupke, our new president, who gave the devotion and introduced us to our first presenter, Teri Allen, who led us through a chair yoga series. Did that ever feel good! After the presentation by our Shepherdess, Jan Harbaugh, Cathy Hoffert did a beautiful presentation of music therapy. We then had a most delicious lunch.

We did it! We made 510 LWR quilts, school kits, personal care kits, fabric kits, baby care kits. We didn't even have to count the bars of soap, which totaled 63 pounds. Thanks to all who kept us in your prayers and helped us reach our goal. *Anna Jetson from Highland Lutheran Church in joint ministry with Big Canoe Lutheran Church, Decorah, IA*

Little Flock Cluster B

Nearly 60 women from five counties gathered at Emanuel Lutheran Saturday morning, Oct. 28, to explore the theme "500 Years of Faith: Living Our Lutheran Legacy." This was a semi-annual meeting. Donations were made to Shepherd of the Hills and the Spiritual Growth initiative of the Lutheran Services of Iowa. Rev. Larry Trachte, retired Wartburg College chaplain and religion professor from Waverly, discussed the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in October 1517, when Dr. Martin Luther, a 33-year-old Catholic priest and professor at the University of Wittenburg, Germany, posted 95 controversial theses for discussion and debate. Trachte explained how today, Lutheran and Catholic churches have spent years in discussion and now cooperate in a number of ways, including celebrating the Reformation together. The women were surprised when four "monks" served their German noon meal. *Submitted by Bev Ager*

Emanuel Lutheran Church hosted Hymns and Beer.

Almost 50 people attended a hymn and beer festival the evening of October 28 from 5:00 to 7:00 at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Strawberry Point. It was a commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Rev. Larry Trachte (retired Wartburg College chaplain) shared highlights of the life and times of Martin Luther. German beers, along with hot and cold apple cider, German potato salad and other delicious foods were served. *Edited by Jane Godson ministry with Big Canoe Lutheran Church, Decorah IA.*

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Good News

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Articles are due the 1st of the month for the next month's newsletter (e.g. April 1 for May issue). Please put WELCA in your subject line. (You can also send paper copies by "snail" mail.)

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