

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**

WHO?? ME???

I think I have said these words to God more times than I can count. The first time I was only 14 and newly-confirmed and trying to decide if I should teach the three-year-old class. Another time I was in college and trying to make a decision on a life mate. Again, when my husband announced he was being called to the seminary and we had three young children at home. And then a little later, after seminary and our first call, a friend told me that during her prayers that day, my name was being given to her as a candidate for the SWO board in SE Iowa. I eventually said yes each of these times, even though I had my doubts. Perhaps like many of you? Just like you, I wondered if God really knew what He was getting! I am not the youngest, or smartest, or wisest, or Biblically literate, or.....can you fill in the blank? By the time you read this, the SWO board will be preparing to meet with Cluster leaders and working with them to bring God's kingdom to this part of Iowa and the world. Please pray for our time together. And the next time you start asking WHO?? ME???, remember God's call is not just for the youngest, smartest, wisest... *New year blessings to all of you!*

Diane Wills

**Mission Area: Stewardship**

**Where Does the Money GO??**

Do you ever wonder what happens to the money bequeathed to churchwide Women of the ELCA? One of the many uses is scholarships provided to women in financial need. There are a number of scholarships, most of which are awarded annually. They apply to all levels of study, undergraduate, graduate, professional and vocational. They also apply to many areas including the health care field, Christian service, ordained ministry, lay ministry, general studies, etc. If you know of a woman in your congregation that could use the help, please have her check out the Women of the ELCA website and search for scholarships. The churchwide staff is more than willing to help and so are we at the synodical level. That's a great use for the money!! *Submitted by Diane Wills*

**Mission Area: Justice**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING. What did we learn about

human trafficking in Iowa and across the USA on November 9, St. Petri Lutheran Church, Story City, IA, sponsored by the NEIA Synod? The presenter was Mike Ferjak, B.S., MA, appointed by Attorney General Miller's office as the senior member of the human trafficking task force. Forty persons attended.

- Human trafficking is "hidden in Iowa"
- "Operation Detour" is the goal to make Iowa so inhospitable that traffickers will not want to be here
- The internet is the main means of contact for traffickers
- More people enslaved in US today than at any time in history
- Three-pronged methods for reaching the goal. 1) treatment of victims 2) community education 3) enforcement and prosecution
- Trafficking is always about money; a \$12-\$15 billion industry
- Traffickers earn as much as \$55,000 weekly, in cash
- Victims use the terms "in the life" and "out of the life"
- Not "johns," or "customers," but hobbyists
- Median ages of girls, 11-14 years; boys 7-11 years; victims last on average 7 years "in the life"
- Human trafficking is not the same as human smuggling. Smugglers desired, requested and paid for their choice. Once "in the life," victims have no choices

What Can We Do?

- If you see something suspicious, call 911, and tell the operator what you saw, not what you think.
- "See Something; Say Something."
- Do not approach victim or trafficker; call 911 or 1-888-373-7888, National Human Trafficking Resource Center
- There is a difference between "prostitution" and "people being prostituted"
- 15 homes in Iowa, 1,200 beds for survivors who are "out of the life"

*Submitted by retired pastor, Jane Granzow, Bethany, Iowa Falls.*

**Mission Area: Discipleship**

**Jubilee Cluster Fall Gathering**

Zion Lutheran Church in rural La Porte City hosted a fall

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## CALENDAR

2016

- Jan. 16 SWO Board & Cluster Leaders,  
Waverly, 9–3 (snow date Jan. 23)
- Mar. 5 SWO Board, Waverly 9–12 (snow date  
Mar. 19)
- Apr. 30 Cluster B Spring Gathering, Zion,  
Oelwein
- May 7 LWR Ingathering, Olson Explosives,  
Decorah
- May 14 SWO Board at Wartburg 9-12
- Jun. 17 Pre-convention SWO Board meeting at  
Wartburg, 5pm
- Jun. 18 NEIA Women's Synodical Convention,  
Wartburg College, Waverly
- Sep. 9–10 Three Rivers Fall Retreat, Camp Ewalu.
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WELCA event for Jubilee cluster on October 17th. The focus of the day was showing kindness. We heard their wonderful bell choir, ate delicious bars, and learned about how the organization Joni and Friends provides wheelchairs to people around the world. Not only was the church beautiful but the people were welcoming and lovely as well! *Submitted by, Melissa Miller*

### **Little Flock Cluster (B) Fall Gathering**

Little Flock Cluster (B) enjoyed their Fall Gathering on Oct. 25th at St. Paul, Monona. The theme "Faith Brings Us Together" was evident throughout the program. St. Paul's provided bell choir music, a funny skit, "Leap of Faith," and a lovely meal with quilted mug coasters as a favor to all attending.

Pr. Harold McMillin led devotions, with each getting an unlabeled can of food. The point he made was, if we don't share our faith with others we are like an unmarked can—no one gets to know us.

In the greeting from our shepherdess, Marjorie Lewis, all were urged to update their constitutions.

Guest speaker, Jeff Krambeer, Director, Shepherd of the Hills, shared information about the organization formed in

1968 with the purpose to join ministries to support the churches in the county and help those in need. Today the boundaries have expanded to include the whole conference. The large number of people they help with food, clothing and fuel assistance and those who need help is ever present.

Lynda Akers, president, held a discussion about the cluster's purpose. Responses included connection and unity, fellowship and support, sharing and spreading information from the synod, encouraging others and supporting mission.

Missions supported with the offering were Women of the ELCA, Shepherd of the Hills Holiday Shop, Clayton County Food Shelf and trucking expense for quilts.

Hope to see everyone on April 30, 2016 at Zion, Oelwein at the Spring Gathering! *Submitted by Linda Akers*

### **Upper Iowa River Cluster D Fall Gathering**

Twenty-six W/ELCA ladies attended the gathering at Winneshiek Winery on Sunday afternoon September 27, 2015. Anna Jetson and Becky Pahl led the Bible Study, "Stitches and Prints," incorporating it with crocheting and knitting Prayer Shawls. Both novice and veteran crocheters and knitters came and worked on a Prayer Shawl. It was interesting to see how Scripture and Stitches relate to one another. Hopefully, everyone left with a new skill to take back to their church and start a new mission of their own!

*Submitted by Carol Burnikel*

### **LWR Ingathering, Decorah**

It was a cold, sunny day on November 7, 2015 when we loaded our LWR donations in a semi donated by Olson Explosives in Decorah. They then truck it to Minneapolis for us. Upper Iowa River Cluster (D), Shechem Cluster (I) and Little Flock Cluster (B) donated a total of 1,186 quilts, 832 personal care kits, 863 school kits, 575 baby care kits, 48 fabric kits, 65# of soap and 36 blankets. Our champion quilters were Zion of West Union for 137 quilts. St. Peters, Eldorado, put together 235 school kits. A special thank you to St. Peters, Eldorado and Greg Hamm and his youth from St. Paul's in Postville for their great help in loading the semi. We will do this all again on May 7, 2016. *Submitted by Shirley Steggall, Upper Iowa River Mission Action Chair*

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### **NEIA Women of the ELCA website:**

[neiasynod.org/womenoftheELCA](http://neiasynod.org/womenoftheELCA)

### **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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### **NEIA Women of the ELCA Treasurer**

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