

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

November is always the time we pause to give thanks for God's many blessings in our lives. It is always important to give thanks, but why are we just limited to one month a year! Although I am thankful for the usual things: a great husband, wonderful kids and even better grandkids, good job, warm house, plenty of food, etc. It might surprise you that I am also very thankful for my "circles" of amazing women who are always there to support me when I don't even realize it. I'm sure it would not surprise you that these ladies are members of the many ELCA congregations to which we have been privileged to be members. Dating all the way back to when I was a small child to now, I have been very blessed to have strong, faithful, Christ-centered women to nurture, support and teach me how to be a good wife, mother and Christian. I am sure many of you have had similar women who have done the same for you. Remember these amazing women this November and into the next year as you walk your faith journey with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessings to all,
Diane Wills

It is with sadness that the NE IA WELCA synodical board announces the resignation of Lisa Bahe, effective September 20, 2015. The board appointed Beverly Sheridan, Good Shepherd, Decorah, to fill the empty position for one year until the next convention in June 2016. Bev graciously accepted and will begin her duties at the November board meeting. *Diane Wills*

Riverside Cluster F Fall Fun Fest

was held at the Carlson Learning Center/Christmas Tree Farm www.carlsonreefarm.com/ on Tuesday, September 15, 2015. We enjoyed fellowship with coffee, muffins and donuts. The theme for the day was "Taking Care of God's Creation." Pastor Tim Maybee from Bethany in Iowa Falls led the Bible

study on the theme. Dennis and Cathy Carlson, owners of the farm, gave a tour showing us their gardens and the hundreds of trees they plant and sell. The Carlsons provided our lunch, after which Dennis gave a talk about how they started the farm, and their educational programs for children.

Marilee Behrends led a sing-along, accompanied by Jan Harbaugh. We ended the day with a closing litany. (Check out <https://www.facebook.com/stolaf125?> for pics).

Attendance was 31 men and women from seven congregations. *Submitted by Donna Ostrem, Cluster Secretary*

Three Rivers Cluster Retreat

was held September 11–12 at Camp Ewalu Stone Center. We met at 5:00 p.m. for getting acquainted, general information, etc. Supper was at 5:30, after which we had Bible study, sing along and a game. Following that the evening was spent in playing games—card, dominoes and whatever else was instigated.

Saturday morning breakfast was served following devotions. There was more sing along, Bible study and a game. We had a business meeting which resulted in voting to try one more year of retreat. Following that we had lunch, packed up and headed for home.

We were 18 ladies, but we see the possibilities of twice that many if we can interest more church WELCAs to become involved. Those attending this year have been doing so for many years and find it relaxing and refreshing to once again be in touch with friends made over the years. Fredsville was the host this year and St. James will be next year. This means they do the program from start to finish, and treats to be enjoyed at all times are provided by the host. Retreat is an enjoyable and satisfying experience. Mark you calendars for September 9–10, 2016, and we'll see you there! *Submitted by Carol Anderson*

Thankoffering Service 2015

The Thankoffering Service is a time to celebrate Women of the ELCA and inform our churches about our

CALENDAR

- Nov. 7 Fall LWR In-Gathering for Clusters C (Jubilee), E (Tree of Life) and H (Three Rivers) at Nazareth Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls
- Nov. 7 LWR Ingathering for Clusters B, D, & I, Decorah, Olson Explosives
- Nov. 14 Living Waters Cluster G Fall Gathering, Bethlehem, Manley
- Nov. 21 SWO Meeting, 9-12, Waverly
- 2016**
- Jan. 16 SWO & Cluster Leaders, Waverly, 9-3 (snow date Jan. 23)
- Mar. 5 SWO, Waverly 9-12 (snow date Mar. 19)
- May 14 SWO at Wartburg 9-12
- Jun. 17 Pre-convention SWO meeting at Wartburg, 5pm
- Jun. 18 NEIA Women's Synodical Convention
- Sep. 9-10 Three Rivers Fall Retreat, Camp Ewalu
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commitment to the Churchwide women's organization. This service traditionally is a time when individuals bring the offerings they've collected during the year and involve women during church services. Thankoffering Services began in the very early 1800s, when women formed "mite" or "cent" societies to raise money. Mite boxes were given out as fundraising tools to collect pennies for the support of church projects and foreign missionaries. Lutheran women were given small Thankoffering boxes in the late 19th century to place in a special location in their homes as a visible reminder of blessings received. Women would add coins to those boxes almost daily as particular blessings were noted. Today, Women of the ELCA collect more than \$1 million in Thankofferings annually for the ministries and mission of our women's organization.

How is your church celebrating in 2015? Share your success stories for future newsletters! *Submitted by Vicky Jaeger, Stewardship Committee*

NEIA Women of the ELCA website:

neiasynod.org/womenoftheELCA

Good News

Editor Jan Harbaugh
P. O. Box 68
Renwick, IA 50577
515-825-8068
jan.harbaugh@gmail.com

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.)

Human Trafficking Program

Thistle Farms of Nashville, TN sent Shelia and Ty to visit Northeast Iowa in September, 2015. They visited St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Postville, Upper Iowa University and Zion Lutheran, Oelwein. They had heartbreaking stories of their childhood that they vulnerably shared with us. Their struggles in childhood led them to the streets and drug abuse at a young age.

They told us they were on the streets for over two decades. They had multiple run-ins with the law, and even served jail time. After they hit rock bottom, Thistle Farms, Magdalene, was there to support them. The Magdalene program helped the women recover from many of their childhood issues and gave them unconditional love and support.

The Magdalene program is unique because it is not based on quantity. They have a waiting list of 80-100 women. Those who truly want to change are welcomed in as beds allow. They focus on a high quality two-year program, with a success rate of over 80%. Some of the women run away from home in their early teenage years and never learn how to cook or balance a check book. At Magdalene, they take interesting classes to teach them how to live, and they work at Thistle Farms. The classes are in cooking, exercise, budgeting, PTSD, 12-step AA and more.

Thistle Farms is Magdalene's social enterprise. It was created to help fund the Magdalene Program and to give students and graduates of Magdalene a job to list on resumes for future employment. Thistle Farms, Magdalene, does not receive any state or federal funding to operate. They run a café, paper studio, sewing studio, essential oils production, and have a line of soaps and lotions. Their high quality products are excellent, and proceeds go to worthy cause. The Magdalene Program relies solely on the income generated from their Thistle Farms products and donations. So feel good shopping away at www.thistlefarms.org. *Submitted by Lisa Bahe, Zion Lutheran WELCA Secretary*

NEIA Women of the ELCA Treasurer

Nancy Poppe
2656 Gilmore Ave.
Ionia, IA 50645
641-435-2231
Popcan@exede.net

Contact Women of the ELCA at:

773.380.2730 or 800.638.3522, ext. 2730
<http://www.womenoftheelca.org/>
8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4189