Celebrating Renewal: Katherine von Bora Luther — Faith in the Home

Luther’s wife set the tone for Protestant family life

by The Rev. Mark Anderson, Assistant to the Bishop

In 2019 the Northeastern Iowa Synod will lift up Katharina von Bora Luther and the theme “Faith in the Home.” Katharina, also known as Katherine or Katie, exemplifies this theme both personally and in her historical context as the wife of Martin Luther.

Katharina demonstrated management skills that would be the envy of any modern CEO. She taught the faith in a loving home brimming with children, boarders, guests, students and servants — and all this in one of the first parsonages during a time when it was almost unthinkable for a woman to take on such responsibilities.

Katharina was born in 1499 to impoverished, petty nobility, most likely in Lippendorf, Saxony (Germany). After the death of her mother, five-year-old Katharina was sent to live in a monastery to be cared for and educated. At the age of nine, Katharina was sent to the much stricter Cistercian (Trappist) monastery, where her aunt was the abbess, for Katharina’s spiritual development. At the age of only 16, Katharina took holy vows and became a nun.

Two years later, Katharina was sent with her aunt, who was also a nurse and a midwife, to Jüterbog during an epidemic there. It was during this ministry that Katharina saw firsthand the poverty, illness, and death of peasants.

Despite the seclusion of cloistered life, word of the reformation reached inside the walls of the convent. Even with years of religious training and her aunt serving as the convent leader, Katharina, along with four other nuns, used friends to contact Dr. Martin Luther to plead for rescue.

Luther turned to Herr Leonard Koppe, a city councilman, to pick up the women in the dead of night on the evening before Easter in 1523. When their escape was discovered, the former nuns faced the penalty of excommunication from the church for breaking their vows. Herr Koppe, if he were apprehended, could face the penalty for helping a nun escape, which was public execution.

>> Continued on page 2
After two years, Luther had found homes, marriages, or employment for all of the refugee nuns, except for Katharina von Bora. In 1521, at the age of 26, Katharina and Martin Luther, aged 41, were married. John, Elector of Saxony and brother of Luther’s protector, Frederick the Wise, gave the “Black Cloister” to the couple as a wedding gift. The cloister had served as a dormitory and school for Augustinian monks in Wittenberg.

Martin Luther was famously uninterested in financial matters and less than gifted in common “do-it-yourself” skills. In a radical departure from social norms, it was Katharina who administered the vast holdings of the former monastery where she and Luther lived.

Katharina bred and sold cattle, ran a brewery, boarded students, operated a hospital, planted gardens, established an orchard, obtained fishing rights at a local pond, solicited gifts from wealthy supporters, and managed servants. However, the family’s main income was from the students Katharina fed and boarded. Their rent included a seat at the table with Professor Luther for his evening “Table Talks.”

Over time, Martin and Katharina also acquired a farm in Zuhlsdorf and several plots of land and houses in Wittenberg. This is why Luther gave her the nickname “boss of Zuhlsdorf.” He also called her the “morning star of Wittenberg” for her habit of rising at 4 a.m. Katharina served as Luther’s wife, accountant, manager and appointment secretary, and she also participated in theological discussions.

While Katharina von Bora was busy managing Luther’s domestic and financial affairs, she also bore six children and raised four orphans who had joined their household. Martin Luther was often away; when he was home, it was often because he was unwell. The day-to-day care, education, and faith development of the children fell to Katharina.

In his will, Luther left all his worldly goods to Katharina, an almost unknown practice in those days. The original hand-written will is now housed in Budapest at the offices of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary.

After Luther died in 1546, Katharina had to flee her home twice because of the Schmalkaldic War, during which the estate was laid waste and the animals killed or stolen. In 1552, escaping the Black Plague, Katharina traveled to Torgau where she fell from her cart. After lying unconscious in a nearby home for several months, she died in 1552 at the age of 53.

Luther was not the first former priest to marry nor was Katharina the first former nun to become a wife and mother, but their marriage — based on equality and a mutual love of the church and family — set a new standard for Protestant domestic life and faith in the home.

Day of Renewal
Rostered ministers can learn more about Katherine von Bora and faith in the home at the synod’s Day of Renewal, set for Thursday, March 14, at Nazareth Lutheran, Cedar Falls.

Look for more information about the event in future issues of the Star and on the synod website, www.neiasynod.org.
Reasons to Hear the Word of God

We are open on Sundays.

I know so much less than when I was ordained.

In part, this is because I know so much more of the experience of the people that I serve.

There are the physical concerns — the families that are in recovery from a heart attack, a diagnosis of cancer or confronting the reality of addiction. There are also the times of joy — the all-consuming experience of welcoming a new life into the family, the challenge of a new job or the chaos of moving to a new community.

All of these life experiences require attention of the soul.

Spiritual concerns are a part of all of these experiences. They also embrace the questions of the meaning of life. These are questions of identity and purpose. Am I loved by God? Am I forgiven? Am I worth anything to anyone? Can I make a difference in the world?

When we hear Good News in response to these questions and concerns, we add the layers of responsible living in response to the Good News that we hear. Issues of environment, race, gender, sexuality, immigration, world peace and justice all call us to be witnesses.

So, here we are … knowing the pain, questions and celebrations of our personal lives even as we hear the call to be witnesses.

These are reasons enough to show up every week to hear the Word of God, receive the sacrament and participate in the “conversation and consolation of the baptized.”

As Bishop Eaton says, “We are open on Sundays.”

See you there.

— Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

2019 Lenten devotional explores the Psalms

The 2019 Lenten devotional from Augsburg Fortress explores the Psalms texts for Lent in year C of the Revised Common Lectionary with 40 entries, one for each day in Lent.

*Lasting Hope: Devotions for Lent 2019* highlights Psalms assigned to Ash Wednesday (March 6), the Sundays in Lent, and to Holy Week. Each reading is accompanied by a photo, a quote to ponder, a reflection, and a prayer. This full-color format makes it easy to incorporate a simple Christian observance into the Lenten journey.

During times of celebration as well as suffering, loss, and lament, the Psalm writers turn to God and remember God’s promises — those kept and those still unfolding. God’s faithfulness to these promises creates a durable, lasting hope in the psalmists and in the community of God’s people.

The price for the devotional is $3 each for quantities of one to 24; $2.25 for orders of 25 to 99; and $1.75 for orders of 100 or more. The devotional is also available in large print.

Order online at [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org).
Rural Ministry Conference to focus on resilience

March 3 - 5, 2019
Dubuque, Iowa

The 2019 Rural Ministry Conference is set for March 3 - 5 in Dubuque with the theme “Building Resilience Among Leaders and Communities.” Hosted by Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS), this ecumenical conference includes worship, keynote speakers, breakout sessions, Bible study, and opportunities to network with others who are active in and concerned about rural ministry.

The Rev. Dr. Craig Nessan, academic dean and professor of Contextual Theology at WTS, will be the keynote speaker. The Rev. Dr. Annette Bourland Huizenga, dean and associate professor of New Testament for the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, will lead the Bible study. Jon Decker, a licensed mental health therapist and treatment supervisor, will also present during Tuesday’s general session.

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**Smooth Sailing: Becoming a Resilient Leader in Turbulent Times**
Jennifer Prinz, Portico Benefit Services regional representative for ELCA Region 5, will share ways for people to cultivate their God-given strengths and develop healthy practices to give them the stamina, confidence and inner peace to be a resilient leader.

**That Which Holds Things as They Change**
The Rev. Dr. Martha Brunell — an experienced pastor of the United Church of Christ, spiritual director, retreat and workshop leader, and writer — will explore the labyrinth and other spiritual practices that can be used to sustain people through their journey in ministry.

**Moving from a Dysfunctional to Functional Church**
The Rev. Michael Kasevich, pastor for St. Paul United Church of Christ in Old Monroe, Mo., will present ways to recognize sources of conflict, patriarch and matriarch leadership, and unhealthy dynamics in a congregation to move it from dysfunctional to a functional as a church.

**Uncovering Your Congregation’s ‘Theology of Conflict’**
The Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade, assistant professor of Preaching and Worship at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Ky., will help participants learn how to unearth hidden beliefs about how God relates to the congregation and its members in the midst of conflict so that the congregation can handle tensions in a healthier, growth-producing way.

**Going Deeper with the Speaker**
Nessan will lead this opportunity for participants to explore topics raised in the plenary in further detail, ask questions, share experiences, and continue the conversation around resilience.

Early bird registration is due by Monday, Feb. 4, for the discounted rate of $180. The cost to attend the Monday workshops only is $50, which includes worship, the banquet and keynote. The event will take place at the Best Western Plus. Call 563-557-8000 for room reservations.

To learn more, visit www.wartburgseminary.edu or call 800-225-5987.
Little free food pantries are popping up around the Northeastern Iowa Synod thanks to the synod’s Hunger Network, a group of volunteers and some committed congregations.

Each little free pantry is stocked with nonperishable food items, personal care products and household items for anyone who needs them. The pantries are placed in accessible locations where people can easily bring items to share or take items they need — 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year round.

The Hunger Network is supplying six little pantries for congregations that have made a commitment to install, display and maintain a pantry on church property. The pantries will be located at Our Saviour’s, Mason City; Redeemer, Waverly; Emmanuel, Strawberry Point; St. Paul, Volga, Lord of Life, Dubuque; and Bethesda, Jewell.

Four congregations have made their own pantries — Our Savior’s, Waterloo; St. John American, Arlington; St. Peter, Garnavillo, and West Clermont, Clermont.

Our Savior’s in Waterloo opened their little pantry in April 2017. A note left in the pantry just two months later affirmed the pantry’s value in serving others. According to Pastor Megan Graves, the note indicated that it was written by someone who recently went on disability, but hadn’t received funding assistance yet. “This has helped me get through it,” the note said. “Thank you for this blessing.”

The Little Free Pantry project is part of a nationwide initiative based on the “Little Free Libraries” project, in which people can take a book and share a book. The pantries are small, so they do not provide the quantity and variety found at other food pantries, but the little pantries can be accessed at any time.

“This project is about feeding neighbors and building community,” says Pastor Mark Anderson, assistant to the Bishop. “The pantries don’t replace other food security services in the community, but they can serve as a safety net for families in a pinch.”

The six pantries provided by the Hunger Network were built by volunteers from the Waverly area, including members of Redeemer Lutheran and students from Wartburg College and Lutheran Services in Iowa’s Bremwood campus. The Men’s Small Group from St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and School helped build the pantries as part of their study of the book, Enough: Why the World’s Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty.

Neighbors and community members are encouraged to bring nonperishable items to help keep the pantries stocked. Recommended items include canned vegetables, boxed meals, paper goods, and personal care items. People may want to share kid-friendly snacks in the summer or school supplies in the fall. Suggested items to donate in the winter are listed on page six.

Graves says that the pantry at Our Savior’s has become a neighborhood project. It is used a lot and is frequently empty, but people in the neighborhood keep it filled. The neighbors even hosted a food drive in the church parking lot to collect food to have on hand to replenish items for the pantry.

“This project has increased our presence in the neighborhood,”

Dave Abkemeier, a member of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and School, Waverly, helps build a little pantry for the Northeastern Iowa Synod’s Hunger Network. Six congregations will host the pantries as a way to offer free food to families in their communities. >> Continued on page 6

JANUARY 2019
High Rating for Northeast Iowa Food Bank

The Northeast Iowa Food Bank, based in Waterloo, was recently rated 19th best in the country.

Charity Navigator rated the 40 best food banks in the country and gave the Northeast Iowa Food Bank a rating of 97.17 out of 100. The scores are based on accountability, transparency and financial health, and also take into account money that went to programs and services. The food bank has raised $14,490,487 in funds and uses 96.8 percent of that for the programs and services it delivers, rather than on administrative-type costs. For every dollar the Food Bank receives, four meals can be provided back to the community.

The Northeast Iowa Food Bank provides meals to 5,800 people weekly, with the help of over 200 food pantries, soup kitchens, schools, churches and non-profit groups in 16 Northeast Iowa counties. In recent years, the food bank has received funding through ELCA Domestic Hunger Grants to support the food bank’s Mobile Food Pantry program, which brings food to hosting sites in 13 communities in Northeast Iowa. Congregations that host the Mobile Food Pantry include American Lutheran, Grundy Center; St. John’s Lutheran, Guttenberg; and First Lutheran, Cresco.

The United States Department of Agriculture reported that, in 2017, 40 million Americans lived in food-insecure households. Some 46,440 people in Northeast Iowa are living in food insecure households, which includes more than 14,500 children.

Learn more about the Northeast Iowa Food Bank at www.northeast-iowafoodbank.org.

Little Pantry Winter Supply List

Nonperishable Foods
- Dry pasta, boxed pasta meals
- Pasta sauce in plastic
- Cereal – cold and hot
- Peanut butter
- Snack crackers
- Applesauce, dried fruits
- Granola bars
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Moisturizer
- Diapers, wipes
- Deodorant
- Chapstick
- Hats, scarves
- Gloves, handwarmers

Personal Care Items
- Shampoo, conditioner
- Soap

Paper Products
- Paper towels
- Toilet paper
- Kleenex

Little Pantries feed neighbors and build community
<< Continued from page 5

Graves says. “I don’t think it would be successful if it were just the church taking care of it.”

Anyone wanting to learn more about the little pantry project should contact Alison Pettit, Hunger Network facilitator, at 319-352-1325 or alisonp@redeemer-waverly.org.

“Alison made this project happen,” Anderson says. “She will be a great resource for other congregations that may want to create their own little pantries.”
JANUARY EVENTS

1  Office Closed, New Year's Day
3  Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30 -11:30 a.m.
3  Meeting, Youth Ministry Network, TBA, 10 a.m.- 1 p.m.
10 Meeting, SAFE Ministry Team, 1:30 p.m.
12 Meeting, Synodical Women’s Organization Cluster, Synod Office, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.
12 Meeting, Treasurers, Redeemer, Waverly, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m.
17 Meeting, First Call Theological Education Executive Committee Conference Call, 1 p.m.
19 Meeting, LYON, Synod Office, 10-11 a.m.
19 Meeting, (Snow Date) Synodical Women’s Organization Cluster
21 Office Closed, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
24 Meeting, Fall Conference Coordinating Committee, 1:30 p.m.
25-28 Event, Extravaganza, Jacksonville, Fla.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

1-2 Event, Candidacy Retreat, American Martyrs, Cedar Falls
7  Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
7  Meeting, No Youth Ministry Network meeting due to Extravaganza
12 Meeting, Assembly Planning Committee, Wartburg College, Waverly, 4-6 p.m.
14 Meeting, Endowment Fund Investment Committee, Synod Office, 9 a.m.
16 Meeting, LYON, Synod Office, 10-11 a.m.
19 Event, Lutheran Day on the Hill
26 Meeting, Executive Committee, Synod Office, 9 a.m.

MARCH EVENTS

2 Meeting, Synodical Women’s Organization Board, Synod Office, 8 a.m.-12 noon
7  Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
7  Meeting, Youth Ministry Network, St. Peter, Greene, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
9  Meeting, (snow date) Synodical Women’s Organization Board
14 Event, Day of Renewal, Nazareth, Cedar Falls, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
16 Meeting, Synod Council, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
23 Meeting, LYON, Synod Office, 10-11 a.m.
23 Meeting, Resolution Committee, 10-11 a.m.

APRIL EVENTS

4  Meeting, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
4  Meeting, Youth Ministry Network, Redeemer, Waverly, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
9  Meeting, Assembly Planning Committee, Wartburg, Waverly, 4-6 p.m.
19 Office Closed, Good Friday
25-26 Event, Youth Ministry Network Retreat, Ewalu, Strawberry Point
27 Meeting, LYON, Synod Office, 10-11 a.m.
28-30 Event, First Call Theological Education Retreat, American Martyrs, Cedar Falls

INTERVIEWING

Castalia, Zion
Denver, St. Peter, Rev. Charis Combs-Lay, interim
Dysart, Zion
Janesville, Messiah and Denver, St. John (Maxfield)
(Unity of the Cross Parish of Bremer County)
Tripoli, St. John (Crane Creek)
Waukon, St. John

SELF-STUDY

Cedar Falls, Bethlehem, Rev. Audrey Lukasak, interim
Cedar Falls, St. John, Rev. Paul Svingen, interim
Charles City, Messiah, Rev. Norman Bauer, interim
Chester, United
Decorah, Decorah
Dows, First, Laurel Meester, contract lay minister
Dubuque, Holy Trinity (staff)
Dubuque, St. Peter, Rev. Karla Wildberger, interim
Hawkeye, Trinity
Independence, Immanuel (staff)
Mason City, St. Paul, Rev. Matthew Muters, contract
Nashua, St. John
New Hampton, Trinity (staff)
Radcliffe, Our Savior’s
Rockwell, St. Peter and Thornton, St. Paul, Rev. Joel Dahlen, contract interim
Sumner, St. Peter (Richfield) and Waucoma, St. John (Stapleton)

ROSTER CHANGES

Rev. Brenda Crossfield, transferred to East Central Synod of Wisconsin
## Resources available for Week of Prayer

### Justice, Only Justice, You Shall Pursue

**Jan. 18-25, 2019**

An order of service, biblical reflections and prayers are available to download for use in observing the 2019 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity set for Jan. 18-25.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America joins with Christians around the world to observe this week as an opportunity for Christians to pray together for unity.

This year’s observance has the theme, “Justice, Only Justice, You Shall Pursue,” based on Deuteronomy 16:20. As people pray together, they are reminded that their calling as members of the body of Christ is to pursue and embody justice and to promote the dignity of life.

Congregations and ministerial associations will hold special ecumenical celebrations and services of prayer as a witness to the world that Christians desire unity and renewal for the Body of Christ.

Liturgical resources and materials to help observe this week, plan an ecumenical service, and more are available on the World Council of Churches website. Find a link to the resource materials at [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/week-of-prayer](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/week-of-prayer).

### Lutheran Day on the Hill

**Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2019**

**Des Moines, Iowa**

Mark your calendar to join Lutheran Services in Iowa and the three ELCA Synods of Iowa for Lutheran Day on the Hill Tuesday, Feb. 19, in Des Moines. This day is an opportunity to connect with legislators at the Capitol to advocate for children and families in Iowa.

Online registration will open in January. Visit [http://lsiowa.org/support/advocate/lutheran-day-on-the-hill](http://lsiowa.org/support/advocate/lutheran-day-on-the-hill).

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### PRAYER CALENDAR

#### JANUARY 2019

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From the President

January is National Prevent Human Trafficking month. Did you know that is because during the weeks leading to the Super Bowl (Feb 3, 2019), there is always a marked increase in human trafficking? As many of you know, the Women of the ELCA have been working to remove this blight from our nation and our world, through education of youth and adults, and donations to local and national organizations, among other things. Your SWO board supplied all those who attended the 2018 Gathering in June with magnets to distribute with the hotline number on it.

I wanted to share with you about an organization I learned about a few months ago. This organization is Teens Against Human Trafficking. It is an organization that educates teens on how to help other teens recognize the signs of trafficking, and possibly prevent it from happening. In Iowa, Youth Support Services (YSS) sponsors these groups, which have been forming in many high schools. If you would like more information, please go to https://www.yss.org/program/teens-against-human-trafficking/ or https://humantraffickinghotline.org/mission. And don’t forget to put the Trafficking hotline number in your phone, 888-373-7888 and remember, if you see something, SAY SOMETHING!

Work for change, Diane Wills

Discipleship Committee

Reaching Out

It has been my privilege over the years to have been joined by someone in need of assistance. In each case, putting our thoughts and resources together, we were able to provide different immediate needs—for instance, a night or some lodging, laundry (so as to be presentable for job interview), food, small car repair assistance, encouragement. This is discipleship without going to the effort of investigating needs, the needs were brought to us. It was gratifying. And even more so seeing the success come in the follow-up contact.

Also, most of us join with the Giving Tree at Christmas, LWR quilts, school kits, etc., and in helping to keep our local food pantry supplied. Currently, the SWO is busy seeking additional funding for Katie’s Fund. This is named after Martin Luther’s wife, Katie.

Our local WELCA group’s current efforts are to resupply the Winter Flood Bucket project of the Northeastern Iowa Synod’s Disaster Response Network. Because of the over-sufficient supply of water earlier this fall, 200 buckets were used in flood cleanup in just Sumner and Mason City. Even a donation of one or two needed items for those buckets by several people can add up in a hurry. Again, all of these are people coming to us for aid, making it easy to help.

I believe in the discipleship Jesus speaks of: we are to look around, aid where we see the need. Many times it requires our most prized commodity, time. Have a cup of coffee, soft drink, with someone whom you haven’t seen in church recently; write a card of encouragement, thoughtfulness; call someone. Reference an article in the 2018 Guidepost magazine by Linda Lawrence Hunt about Sather Gowdy and his campaign to #Heal Spokane and how it MAKES PEOPLE FEEL BETTER about themselves and their lives who are doing one act of kindness a day to improve their community. The article documents turning negative energy into positive energy, ridding anger from their lives. Can we not all use that?

Last note: As you receive your 2019 calendars and begin to mark the coming events, PLEASE turn to November, make a note to choose a recipe for a special cake to serve next CHRISTMAS EVE—a BIRTHDAY CAKE for JESUS. Submitted by Lavonne Teem

Justice Committee

An epiphany is an experience of sudden or striking realization. I hope during Advent we were all struck with...
**CALENDAR 2019**

Jan. 12  SWO Board meeting with Cluster Leaders at Synod Office, 9–3 (Jan. 19 snow date)
Mar. 9    SWO Board meeting at Synod Office 9–12:30 (Mar. 16 snow date)
Apr. 13  LWR Ingathering, Clusters H, C, E, St. Peter, Denver
Apr. 13  Spring Salad Luncheon, Cluster G, Living Waters, Bethlehem, Manly, 8:30–12:30
Apr. 15  LWR Ingathering, 9–11, South Port Mall (old Sears area)
Apr. 27  Little Flock Cluster B Spring Fling, Bethany, Elkader
April 27  Cluster D Upper Iowa River Cluster Spring Gathering, Good Shepherd, Decorah
May 4    LWR Ingathering, Cluster D, Olson’s Explosives, Decorah
May 18   SWO Board meeting at Wartburg College 9–12:30
June 21  SWO Board meeting at Wartburg College, 7–9 p.m.
June 22  32nd Annual NE IA Women of the ELCA Gathering, Wartburg College, Waverly
Nov. 9    LWR Ingathering, St. Peter LC, Denver

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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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neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA

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an epiphany of God’s love for us. As we enter the season of Epiphany, I would like to recall what Pope Benedict XVI in his prayer on December 19, 2007 said, “Let us ask God to grant that violence be overcome by the power of love, that opposition give way to reconciliation and that the desire to oppress be transformed into the desire for forgiveness, justice and peace.” This is my hope and prayer for our future. However, it is not enough only to pray. We are taught that faith without works is dead. Therefore, let us commit to act out our faith in the year to come by caring for those in need, doing what we can to combat human trafficking, helping the stranger in our midst, the immigrant and the homeless, those struggling with mental illness, etc.

We as Christians know that God is always with us even in our darkest hours. Let us share God’s love with those going through “dark times,” that they may also know and feel God’s love. May our New Year be filled with us being God’s hands at work in a troubled world. Submitted by Nancy Miller

**Stewardship Committee**

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. Submitted by Beverly Sheridan

**Meet Your New Board Members**

Lavonne Klammer Teem

Typical Iowa farm girl. Oldest of six. Grew up doing farm chores, good student. Graduated high school, had fun as part of successful basketball program. Two and one-half years in the USAF. Married, now 57 years. Raised five children, two of whom were foster children who both came to live with us when they were 11. Both still part of our family, one 57 years old, the other 33. Now have 9 grandchildren. Worked for small factory; door to door sales; 22 plus years for AAL/Thrivent Financial. Stay-at-home mom, gardener, fence fixer, goat milker, hay harvester, etc., while the kids were in school. Cub Scout leader, several offices at church—Zion in Oelwein. Enjoy reading, playing guitar, bass, singing with a group, traveling stateside and overseas. Have participated with several Habitat for Humanity projects locally and overseas. Like working with people.
Dear Faith Shapers,

In the month of January we have three important holidays that we celebrate, as a church and as a country; Epiphany—January 6th, Baptism of our Lord—January 13th and Martin Lutheran King Jr. day—January 21st. With each of these three there is much to highlight and celebrate within a congregation and in the home. And while all three holidays have their distinct differences, they all have this in common—the celebration of freedom and God’s love. We celebrate God’s love thru the visiting of the Magi when Christ was born. We celebrate freedom and God’s love in the remembrance of our own baptisms when we remember that of Christ Jesus’. And we celebrate God’s love and freedom when we remember Martin Luther King Jr. and all that he went thru and stood for when advocating for the freedom to vote, worship and live ones life, no matter your ethnicity or color.

In this months HomeLife insert you will find ways that you can celebrate each of these important dates with your family. I hope you enjoy celebrating these holidays as much as my family does.

Kristin Johnson
Deacon

“We shall overcome” was a phrase commonly used during the marches of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s day. Discuss what Jesus overcame for us: sin, the grave, the world. Then talk about what we can overcome with the help of God: prejudices, bad habits, temptations, etc. Read these “overcome” scriptures together.

* John 16:33   * Romans 12:21
* 1 John 2:13  * 1 John 5:3-5
* Revelation 2:7 * Revelation 3:5
* Revelation 3:21 * Revelation 21:7

Ask God to help us see our prejudices and to overcome them by seeing all people as beloved children of God. Thank God for the life and ministry of Martin Luther King, Jr.
It’s customary on the day of Epiphany in many homes (especially in Western Europe) to mark the frame above the front door with symbols of blessing: 20+C+M+B+19
The letters have two meanings. First, they represent the initials of the Magi — Caspar, Malchior, and Balthazar — who came to visit Jesus in His first home. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, Christus mansionem benedicat: “May Christ bless the house.” The “+” signs represent the cross, and the “20” at the beginning and the “19” at the end mark the year. Taken together, this inscription is performed as a request for Christ to bless those homes so marked and that He stay with those who dwell therein throughout the entire year.

The chalking of the doors is a centuries-old practice throughout the world, though it appears to be somewhat less well-known in the United States. It is, however, an easy tradition to adopt, and a great practice whereby we dedicate our year to God from its very outset, asking His blessing on our homes and on all who live, work, or visit them there.

Gather by the front door as a family and have a prayer of blessing! Whomever you chose to lead, they can speak words similar to these: Blessing of the Door. Leader: Peace be to this house and to all who enter here. Let us pray: O God, who by the guidance of a star did on this day manifest your Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we who know you by faith may also attain the vision of your glorious majesty. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Read Matthew 2:11. With colored chalk, place the marks on the door frame. Leader: May Christ remain with us throughout the new year. Lord, remember your children and teach us to pray: Our Father, who…… Leader: May the Lord watch over our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and forevermore. Amen.

I am, as you are, a part of the priesthood of believers, claimed in the waters of Baptism and sealed by the Holy Spirit and Marked with the Cross of Christ forever and sent into the world as witnesses for the sake of the Gospel. Here is one way to celebrate the remembrance of baptism. At home, sitting around a bowl of water, dip your fingers into the bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead, saying the words “you are a beloved child of God, Sealed by the Holy Spirit and Marked with the Cross of Christ Forever”. Talk about the day of Baptism, what are your memories, share how Baptism informs faith. Encourage each other to tell your faith stories or share a favorite story of faith from the Bible.