Three pastors and a Catholic priest have found a way to revitalize ministry in their communities by working together on ecumenical activities.

The four ministers meet each week at a coffee shop in Hampton to study scripture together, give one another mutual support, share ideas and plan community ministry projects. In the past two years, they have led two joint Bible study series, created a Psalms devotional and hosted a conference on hope, and they are considering the possibility of a new ministry podcast.

“A lot of people have told us that seeing young pastors in rural areas working across denomination lines gives them hope,” says Pastor Laurel Meester, who serves part-time for First Lutheran, Dows. “They see their children and grandchildren not finding as much value in the church today as they did, so seeing pastors their children’s age working in the church in a public way is giving them hope.”

SEMINARY FRIENDS RECONNECT

Making a weekly connection came naturally for Pastor Daniel Hanson and Pastors Chris and Laurel Meester, who all attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., together. Hanson and Chris were also roommates at Wartburg College in Waverly and they both began their first calls in 2016 just 16 miles apart — Hanson at St. Paul Lutheran in Hampton, and Chris at Dumont Reformed Church in Dumont. They invited Father Kevin Earleywine — who began his first call in 2017 serving Catholic parishes in Hampton, Iowa Falls, Ackley and Eldora — to join them. Laurel joined the weekly meetings after she began working in Dows in February 2018.

“We are all new pastors trying to figure out how to do this.”
— Pastor Laurel Meester

**Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation**

**Ecumenical activities can rejuvenate rural congregations**

*A group of first call ministers tap their faith traditions to create new ecumenical ministries*

by Marcia Hahn

Pastor Daniel Hanson, Father Kevin Earleywine, Pastor Laurel Meester and Pastor Chris Meester meet weekly to share text studies and plan ecumenical ministries together.
“We are all new pastors trying to figure out how to do this.” Laurel says.

Hanson adds that he likes the convenience of a local text study group and enjoys being involved in events that respect their denominations’ differences while focusing on the unity of the Christian church.

“Sharing our faith together has been encouraging to others in our community,” Hanson says.

**BIBLE STUDIES EXPLORE DIFFERENT FAITH TRADITIONS**

Each member of the group coordinates a public ministry project. Father Earleywine organizes the Bible studies at the coffee shop, with some 30 to 40 people attending each week. Last fall’s Bible study explored the different aspects of each denomination’s Christian traditions related to baptism, communion, confirmation and ministry. The clergy leaders shared about how those traditions were different and alike, and they answered questions as a panel.

“There wasn’t an argument of right or wrong,” Hanson says. “We tried to answer questions about our identity and how God sustains us.”

The clergy members serve a combined eight congregations, with members from 15 towns in four counties. People from at least seven different communities came to the Bible study sessions.

“One of the coolest things is that people started to talk to people who were different from them, and that translated into their lives,” Laurel says. “A member came up to me and said she had never seen a Lutheran and Catholic converse on these topics together. She had never seen a pastor she knew talking to a priest in the same room.”

**CONFERENCE ON HOPE**

A congregation member from First Lutheran suggested the four ministers offer something deeper than an hour-long Bible study. Laurel worked with the parishioner to organize the “Hope Conference 2019” last June.

Some 60 people attended the all-day ecumenical event, which included worship, group study, breakout sessions, lunch and a musical guest. The day’s theme centered on Romans 15:13 — “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Each minister led a breakout session related to hope. Hanson’s session focused on mission and how it can focus people on hope in ministry and service.

“My experience is that the church tries to do a hundred things at the same time, and we might lose our sense of mission about what God is calling us to do,” Hanson says. “We might wonder why this matters if we’re not unified around a calling together.”

Hanson shared examples of how he has seen congregations and ministry organizations live their mission in concrete ways, such as how a local Christian youth group invested in a bus to overcome the obstacle of transportation to serve youth who didn’t have a church home.

“We wanted people to ask themselves, ‘What is their mission as a church?’ So often we do things because we did them last year, but is that really how God asks us to serve?”

Laurel, who describes herself as an inherent story teller, shared stories of hope during her session. Laurel says she was influenced by the stories of faith ministry told by her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents who all served as missionaries.

Hope in ministry was the theme for last June’s ecumenical “Hope Conference 2019.”

Ecumenical activities can rejuvenate rural congregations

<< Continued from page 1

>> Continued on page 5
Pastors should have time to renew and refresh

No organization furthers its mission without vital, healthy leaders.

Throughout this year we are celebrating the renewal of the church led by the most influential leaders in the church — congregational pastors. We are celebrating the witness of Johannes Bugenhagen, Martin Luther’s home pastor, in order that we might lift up the important work of pastors and deacons in the life of the church.

We will use feature articles in the Star to highlight the synod’s role in supporting the ministry of parish pastors. I am asking our members to assist in this work.

Please encourage your pastor to regularly take a day off each week. Sabbaticals can be a time of renewal that benefits the pastor and the congregation. Recently, a congregational president asked me to encourage pastors to have a sabbatical. “I had no idea the toll that ministry takes on a person until I became the congregational president. Sabbaticals are an important, even necessary, part of pastoral ministry.”

Ensure that your pastor participates in a weekly text study. Colleague groups can be an important component of supporting your pastor. Continuing education renews the pastor and keeps him or her fresh with new ideas.

Healthy leaders make for healthy congregations and mission. Let us, together, support their leadership.

— Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

Celebrating Renewal and Johannes Bugenhagen in 2020

This year, the Northeastern Iowa Synod wraps up its six-year theme of “Celebrating Renewal” to honor the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by recognizing Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation.

Bugenhagen served as pastor at St. Mary’s Church in Wittenberg, Germany, and was Luther’s own pastor and confessor, as well as trusted friend and companion during the Reformation. Bugenhagen was not initially in favor of Luther’s theology, but after studying Luther’s writings he became a supporter of the Reformation and moved to Wittenberg where he became part of Luther’s inner circle translating the Holy Bible from Greek and Hebrew to German.

Bugenhagen’s lectures became well known, making him one of the most important teachers and practitioners of biblical interpretation in the Protestant Reformation. As a theologian, he was largely self-taught with little formal theological training, but with Luther’s help, he became one of the first individuals to receive a doctorate in evangelical theology from the University of Wittenberg. He went on to ordain a generation of Lutheran pastors who had been educated at the university.

Bugenhagen is recognized for his exceptional organizational abilities. He applied Luther’s theology to create new church orders and practices for religious services, schooling and social issues of the church, and he convinced people to follow them. Bugenhagen outlined his reform ideas in a letter to the Hamburg community and became the most important figure in the Reformation in Northern Germany and Scandinavia.

After Luther died in 1546, Bugenhagen took care of Luther’s widow and children. Bugenhagen died 12 years after Luther at the age of 72. He is buried at St. Mary’s Church.
Lutheran Campus Ministry has a new location

Pastor Mark Anderson, assistant to the Bishop, wants everyone to know that Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Northern Iowa has not closed. In fact, the ministry has moved to a new location, just a short distance away from the original site.

“The truth is that the 100-plus-year-old building at the corner of College Street and University Ave. in Cedar Falls had become such a financial liability, it was strangling the ministry and putting the future of Lutheran Campus Ministry in jeopardy,” Anderson explains.

The UNI Lutheran Campus Ministry Board of Directors spent the last year strategically planning what the ministry needs to look like and, through prayerful consideration, decided that meant making the hard decision to sell the property. As of mid-November, the building was sold to the University of Northern Iowa.”

“I know this will be disappointing news to some alums, but it is important to remember that the ministry is not the building,” Anderson says.

Lutheran Campus Ministry Board Chair Mike Bobeldyk says he is positive about the future. “You can’t help but be excited when you meet the new staff we have in place.”

Jessica Simmons and Robin Kime will lead the Lutheran Campus Ministry. Simmons is a grad student at UNI and a graduate of Wartburg College with a bachelor’s degree in religion. She has served on the staff at Ewalu Bible Camp and Retreat Center at Strawberry Point and has worked as a congregational director of youth and family ministry.

Kime graduated from UNI with a bachelor’s degree in theatre performance and theatre for youth. She was active in the Northeastern Iowa Synod’s Lutheran Youth Organization Network, has served on the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council, and has been involved with ThreeHouse while attending UNI.

“Jessica and Robin bring a rich personal ELCA history and are passionate about getting out and serving the UNI community,” Bobeldyk says.

Lutheran campus ministry was established at the Iowa State Teachers College (later UNI) in 1922. The ministry moved into the building at University Ave. and College St. in 1929, where it served as the Lutheran Student Center for 90 years.

“Campus ministry will continue to be Lutheran and will continue to be significant in the UNI community,” Bobeldyk adds.

Rural Ministry Conference

March 1-3, 2020 • Dubuque, Iowa

Early bird registration for the Rural Ministry Conference is due Tuesday, Feb. 4. Sponsored by Wartburg Theological Seminary, the conference is set for March 1 - 3 at the Best Western Plus Hotel in Dubuque.

This year’s theme is “Ministry in Divisive Times.” The event includes plenary speakers, six workshops and Bible study.

Cost to attend is $180 if registered by Feb. 4; otherwise, the regular rate is $195, due by Feb. 22. Other special rates are available. To learn more or to register, visit www.wartburgseminary.edu.
“I like to find God in a story, whether it’s mine or someone else’s,” she says. “That’s what gives me hope — that God is enduring in every story. It doesn’t mean that good always outweighs the bad or God made it happen for a reason, but I believe God is active in stories and the best way to evangelize is to tell the stories of God’s actions in our lives.”

Laurel invited those attending to tell a faith story about when God was present in their life. People shared about the times when they thought they were alone, but they felt a peaceful presence come over them and realized God was with them. One person told about relationships that were reconciled through the church and learning about grace.

“To me being a pastor is about communicating the miracle of God,” Laurel says.

Laurel shared her own stories, including how God helped her through health issues as a child. She shared about being rushed to the hospital to prevent going into a diabetic coma and how that experience has driven a lot of what she does today.

“I woke up in the night and my mom was praying that she needed me to get better because she knew God was going to call me to be a pastor. It’s so reminiscent of Isaac and the women of the Bible who prayed over their children.”

Father Earleywine led a breakout session about finding hope in the church when its leaders fail. “This was especially poignant for him being a Catholic priest,” Laurel says. “He said that the church is broken because we are broken, but it doesn’t mean we give up on God.”

Chris shared about finding hope in the past as Christians and as a nation. Many people tend to think of a “golden age” of Christianity in the United States, but that has not been the case. By telling the truth about the past, Chris said that people will find that God has always been present with them and is once again calling them to a new part in the story of history.

“We learned that for some people the church in the golden era was awesome, but for some people it wasn’t,” Laurel says. “Maybe a church today is smaller, but maybe the people who are there want to be there more.”

**MINISTRIES TO TAKE ON THE ROAD**

Hanson’s ministry project was to coordinate the creation of the “Psalms for the Summer,” a devotional for people to use when traveling or on vacation instead of being in their normal worship routine.

The four clergy members invited their ministry friends and colleagues from across the country and around the world to share a reflection on a psalm and a prayer or prayer practice. Some 44 pastors, priests, deacons, missionaries, and others serving in camping or campus ministries from different denominations and Christian traditions responded.

“It was neat to see the different ways that people are spending time with God,” Hanson says.

A written introduction to the devotional explains that it is offered as a way for people to accompany one another on their journeys of faith and learn from the perspective of other Christian faith traditions and ecumenical voices. The devotional was distributed at the Hope Conference and to congregations where the contributing writers serve.

For the next project, Chris is looking into podcasting as a way to share conversations and dialogue about faith with a focus on ecumenical relationships. The group hopes this will be another opportunity for people to learn, listen, and share in discussion, just as they have been able to do in their study group.

“None of us could do these projects by ourselves,” Laurel says. “None of us would have the time or energy to put it together without the support of each other.”

Hanson adds that these ecumenical ministries have helped people look at the church in a new way.

“We have received a lot of great feedback from people who grew up in an era when they were taught to distrust other Christian denominations, especially Roman Catholicism,” Hanson says. “It has been a positive experience to see siblings in Christ gather around a table and discuss their faith. It shows the church is bigger than our congregation and even denominations.”
Your gifts exceeded the Fund for Leaders challenge

Bishop Steven and Ruth Ullestad challenged this synod to make contributions to the H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders. They even promised to match 1:1 every dollar given up to $10,000.

Among the things I love about this synod is that we are a generous people and this synod does not shrink from a challenge. Remember when we raised more than a half million dollars over three years to provide malaria nets? This synod saved thousands of children from contracting the mosquito-born disease.

Again, over the last three years we have raised more than a half million dollars for seminary scholarships through the Fund for Leaders.

So, what about the Bishop’s challenge?

Bishop and Ruth challenged the synod to match their gift of $10,000. As of Dec. 31, 2019, we have received more than $50,000 — and that’s before adding the Ullestad’s matching gift!

Thank you! We are incredibly grateful for your gifts.

— Pastor Mark A. Anderson
Assistant to the Bishop

Young adults are invited to apply for YAGM service abroad

Applications for the ELCA’s Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program are now open. Please invite young adults age 21 to 29 to apply for this yearlong mission journey abroad. The priority deadline for applications is Wednesday, Jan. 15, though applications will be accepted until Saturday, Feb. 15. Volunteers begin serving Aug. 11, 2020.

YAGM is a one-year, international service-learning and faith-formation opportunity for young adults to serve in accompaniment with Lutheran companion church bodies and organizations and become immersed in a new community.

Volunteers will be placed in one of 10 country programs: Argentina and Uruguay, Australia, Central Europe, Jerusalem and the West Bank, Madagascar, Mexico, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, and the United Kingdom. Host families, churches, workplaces and communities are ready to welcome YAGM volunteers.

Young adults will work with congregations, schools and social service ministries and gain work experience in several types of fields, including health care, human rights, homelessness, education, immigration, environmental justice, communication, youth ministry and more.

**CONGREGATIONS SUPPORT YAGMS**

A number of congregations from the Northeastern Iowa Synod annually support young adults from this synod in their YAGM journey, and YAGM volunteers who serve in Hungary as part of this synod’s Companion Synod relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary.

Congregations and individuals have supported YAGMs by following their blogs, subscribing to their newsletters, writing them letters, praying for them, and sponsoring them with financial assistance.

Applicants who apply before the priority deadline of Jan. 15 will receive a decision on their application by the end of February. Applicants applying by Feb. 15 will receive a decision by the middle of March.

For more information on the Young Adults in Global Mission program and to begin the application process, visit [www.elca.org/yagm](http://www.elca.org/yagm).
**EVENTS**

**JANUARY EVENTS**
1. **Office Closed**, New Year's Day
2. **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
3. **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, St. John, Sumner, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
4. **Meeting**, Congregation Treasurers, Redeemer, Waverly, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
5. **Meeting**, WYLDE Video Chat, 7 p.m.
6. **Meeting**, Synodical Women’s Organization Cluster, Synod Office, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
7. **Office Closed**, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
8. **Meeting**, (snow date) Synodical Women’s Organization Cluster
9. **Meeting**, WYLDE Video Chat, 7 p.m.

**FEBRUARY EVENTS**
6. **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
7. **Meeting**, No Youth Ministry Network meeting due to Extravaganza
8. **Event**, Candidacy Retreat, Shalom Spiritual Center, Dubuque
9. **Meeting**, Assembly Planning Committee, Wartburg, Waverly, 4-6 p.m.
10. **Meeting**, WYLDE Video Chat, 7 p.m.
11. **Event**, Luther Day on the Hill, Des Moines

**MARCH EVENTS**
1-3 **Event**, Rural Ministry Conference, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque
3. **Meeting**, Executive Committee, synod office, 9 a.m.
5. **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
5. **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, Bethesda, Jewell, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
7. **Meeting**, Synodical Women’s Organization Board, Synod Office, 8 a.m.-12 noon
8. **Meeting**, WYLDE Video Chat, 7-8 p.m.
14. **Meeting**, (snow date) Synodical Women’s Organization Board
21. **Meeting**, Synod Council, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
29. **Meeting**, WYLDE Video Chat, 7-8 p.m.

**APRIL EVENTS**
2. **Event**, Day of Renewal, Nazareth, Cedar Falls, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
2. **Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
2. **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, Trinity, Mason City, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
10. **Office Closed**, Good Friday
14. **Meeting**, Assembly Planning Committee, Wartburg, Waverly, 4-6 p.m.
23-24 **Event**, Youth Ministry Network Retreat, Ewalu, Strawberry Point
26 **Meeting**, WYLDE, Location and Time TBD
26-28 **Event**, First Call Theological Education Retreat, Ewalu (Stone Center), Strawberry Point

**INSTALLING**
Rev. Michael Blair, Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community, Waverly, pending
Rev. Kimberly Swenson, Zion, Dysart, pending
Rev. Amy Eisenmann, Bethlehem, Cedar Falls, pending

**INTERVIEWING**
Belmond, Trinity
Cedar Falls, St. John
Decorah, Decorah
Dubuque, St. Matthew and Luther Manor
Independence, Immanuel (staff)
Nashua, St. John, Rev. Charis Combs-Lay, interim
Tripoli, St. John (Crane Creek)

**SELF-STUDY**
Charles City, Messiah,
Chester, United
Clear Lake, Galilean
Clermont, West Clermont
Cresco, Immanuel
Decorah, Burr Oak and Hesper
Decorah, Luther College
Elma, St. Paul (Maple Leaf)
Frederika, St. John
Guttenberg, St. John’s and St. Paul, Rev. Jim Harbaugh, interim
Hawkeye, Trinity
Luana, St. John and Farmersburg, St. John
Mason City, St. Paul, Rev. Matthew Muters, contract
Northwood, First, Rev. Burton Everist, co-interim and Rev. John Gannett, contract co-interim
Ridgeway, Peace, Orleans and Madison (Ridgeway Parish), Rev. Jim Scaife, contract interim
Story City, St. Petri
Sumner, St. Peter (Richfield) and Waucoma, St. John (Stapleton)
Tripoli, Grace, Rev. Dennis Niezaag, contract interim
Waterloo, Our Savior’s
Waterloo, St. John (Bennington)

**ROSTER CHANGES**
Rev. Scott A. Johnson, transferred to Nebraska Synod
Rev. Judith Converse, transferred to Upstate New York Synod
Deacon Kristin Johnson, transferred to the Nebraska Synod
### JANUARY 2020

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#### Ingham/Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milford
- Rev. Michael L. Sherer, Waverly

- Rev. Gary C. Heidt-Johnson, Waterloo
- Zion, Alta Vista
- Rev. Eugene Ketterling, Waverly
- Lutheran Lakeside Camp Assoc., Spirit Lake

#### Rev. Dr. Michael H. Sherer, Waverly
- Riverside Bible Camp, Story City
- Middle East Peace Lord of Life, Asbury
- Camp Shalom, Dubuque
- Middle East Peace St. Olaf, Belmond
- Rev. Adam T. Starrett, West Union

#### Rev. Kurt A. Hansen, Dubuque
- ISU Lutheran Campus Ministry, Ames
- Rev. Luther H. Thoresen, Grundy Center
- Rev. Lois D. Knutson, Little Canada, Minn.
- Jane Chilson, Rochester, Minn.
- Trinity, Belmond
- Rev. Nancy J. Larson, Waverly

#### U of I Lutheran Campus Ministry, Iowa City
- Calmar, Calmar
- UNI Lutheran Campus Ministry, Cedar Falls
- Springfield, Decorah
- Christian Crusaders, Cedar Falls
- Zion, Castalia

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### OBITUARY

The Rev. Rose Marie Nack died Nov. 24, 2019, at the age of 77. She was ordained on Aug. 16, 1992. She served as pastor at St. John (Rock Township), Osage; Faith, Mitchell; and was visitation pastor at Emmanuel, Grafton. She retired on Sept. 1, 2002. The funeral service took place Nov. 30 at St. John Lutheran.

Rev. Nack is survived by three daughters. In lieu of flowers, please send memorials to St. John Lutheran Church (Rock Township), 1202 390th St., Osage, IA 50461-8074 or to Johnson Memorial Care Center, Dawson, MN.


### Day of Renewal is April 2

Rostered ministers should plan to attend the Day of Renewal on Thursday, April 2, to learn more about the re-former Johannes Bugenhagen and his influence on parish pastor ministry. The featured speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Kurt K. Hendel, who is the Bernard, Fischer, Westberg Distinguished Ministry Professor Emeritus of Reformation History at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

The event will take place at Nazareth Lutheran, Cedar Falls. Watch for more information in the Star and on the synod website.

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### Join Lutheran Day on the Hill

**Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020**

Des Moines, Iowa

Save the date for Lutheran Day on the Hill 2020!

Join Lutherans from all over Iowa Tuesday, Feb. 25, for a rousing morning of advocacy training, then speak directly with legislators at the Iowa State Capitol in the afternoon.

This day is an opportunity to gain new insights on important Iowa issues and to be part of faith-grounded outreach to legislative policymakers.

This event is presented by Lutheran Services in Iowa and the three Iowa Synods of the ELCA. Registration opens Tuesday, Jan. 14, at [www.LSIowa.org/LDH](http://www.LSIowa.org/LDH).
Serving is at the heart of Jesus’ ministry. Making the connection between Jesus feeding the five thousand and setting up a food pantry is easy. God serves others through us. Jesus calls us to be more than good wait staff. The ministry of feeding is commendable, but there is more to serving.

To follow the example of Jesus and serve all people requires us to get involved in the lives of others. Jesus valued relationships. Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman, making time for children, and comforting his friends, Martha and Mary, serve as a blueprint for moving us beyond projects and anonymous charitable activities to relationships.

Following the life of Jesus leads us into the mess of life where lives are transformed and Christ is made known. Serving as Jesus serves brings us closer to Jesus, the one who did not come to be served but to serve.

As we serve, the following are just a few examples of how we can do this: Visit the sick and imprisoned, Feed the hungry and Respond to disasters.

Submitted by Bonnie Dralle
Justice Committee
Truckers Against Trafficking

While working with one of my 7th grade students at Decorah Middle School, I noticed she had bracelet on that had the words “Truckers Against Trafficking.” It caught my attention since WELCA has taken a special interest in the human trafficking crisis. The student told me that when she was at the Iowa State Fair there was a mobile exhibit inside a 48-foot trailer that she toured. The exhibit is a tool used by the Freedom Drivers Project (FDP) to educate members of the trucking industry and the general public about the realities of domestic sex trafficking and how the trucking industry is combating it. Within the exhibit there are actual artifacts from trafficking cases that connect people to the back stories of so many who end up enslaved in our country. This really made an impact on my student. She told me that she is researching the topic and plans to report her learning as part of her 4-H project this summer. As she was leaving the classroom, my student stopped and said, “It is too bad that more people my age are unaware of human trafficking.” To learn more, go to the FDP page on the truckersagainsttrafficking.org website.

Women of the ELCA has resources available about human trafficking within its Justice section of their website.

Know the warning signs:

From the President
Happy New Year! I hope this is the best one yet. This time of the year can be a struggle for some, me included. Everyone talking about their new year’s resolutions to lose 10 pounds, or to get in shape, or get a better job, spend more time with family and friends. It makes me sometimes wonder why we think we are not enough. In 2019 I was reading the daily devotional Confident Woman by Joyce Meyers. There were days when I could really relate, and others, I felt, “Yeah, right.” In the end it all comes down to God created me for now for a reason. God created you also! I don’t know that I fully know or understand the reason, I just trust that God is guiding me, as long as I ask and listen. I want to invite you to have conversations with God about your purpose and our purpose as the Women of the ELCA.

I invite you to take a look at your ministries and see what is going on. Many of us have comfort in the projects we have done before. That is good. I invite you to look with new eyes. As some hands and eyes get older, does the quilting they liked to do go to the wayside as it is just too hard to continue? Or maybe quilting isn’t your thing? Women of the ELCA is an opportunity for all women to participate. Maybe your church has newlyweds or new parents, or young adults. Or you could have an older congregation, and you have busy professionals or retirees from professional work, empty nesters, etc. Perhaps there is someone you want to get to know better. Invite them to join you at a meeting or event, or find out what they like to do and ask to join them.

So again, I extend the invitation to ask others to join you in your passion, or you join in theirs. The best bible studies I have ever participated in have been multi-generational—the more experienced have wisdom to share, the less experienced have the blessing of new eyes on old texts. I request we all be open to where the spirit moves us as we become together the Women of the ELCA.

Discipleship Committee
“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45 (NRSV)
NE IA Women of the ELCA Executive Board

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JoAnn Brunsvold, Secretary
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NE IA Women of the ELCA Facebook page:
https://www.facebook.com/NEIASWO/

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**Good News**
Editor Jan Harbaugh
P. O. Box 18, Castalia, IA 52133
563-412-8906 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.)*

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

**NE IA Women of the ELCA website:**
neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA

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**Stewardship Committee**

*Psalm 24:1 The Earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.*

Using the resources God has provided us is one way to describe stewardship. God called us to be good stewards...to love and serve our neighbors. How do you respond to this call? Maybe by being generous with your time, your talents, your possessions—all that God has so richly given you. With that in mind, I encourage you to be more generous in your daily life.

**Your Time:** Maybe you can visit a recently widowed neighbor, schedule a day each month or even a day each week to visit shut-ins, volunteer to tie quilts for LWR, or volunteer at a crisis shelter. How about a “Thinking of You” card or a call saying “Would you like a ride to church?”

**Your Talents:** God gave us all different talents. Maybe you could join the choir, volunteer to teach VBS, make meals for shut-ins, or to be a lay reader for your church. Make quilts, knit baby blankets, or use your gift of organization and be the stewardship chairperson.

**Your Possessions:** This doesn’t have to be money. You may make quilts and donate them to a homeless shelter. Being generous with your words costs nothing. A thank you to your pastor, organist, choir director, or a Sunday School teacher would show that you care about what that person does.

Recently the members of the Living Waters Cluster sent 678 quilts, 142 baby kits, 1,063 school kits, 275 personal care kits, 16 fabric kits and 21 blankets to LWR. What a joy it is to see those numbers! The same cluster recently participated in a food pack for Feed My Starving Children. What a blessing those many hands were.

So again, I hope to encourage you to increase your generosity...no matter how you choose. Submitted by Jo Ann Brunsvold

**Meet Your New Board**

Hi, my name is Jo Ann Brunsvold and I live on a farm near Kensett. I am the new secretary for the SWO board. My faith journey began as a child, attending Sunday School and church. A big change happened when I married and became a Lutheran. It may sound strange, but I feel at peace knowing I am a Lutheran and that by grace I am saved. I have been involved with Sunday School, choir, church board, WELCA, and circle. As a young mother, I was blessed to be able to attend the first triennial convention in 1990 and I have attended numerous Iowa church and WELCA conventions and gatherings. What a joy it is to have so many people rejoicing and praying together.

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**CALENDAR**

Registration for the Triennial Gathering is now open

Jan. 1 Deadline for February Good News
Jan. 18 Board Meets with Cluster Leaders @ Synod Office, 9am–3pm (Jan. 25 Snow Date)
Jan. 20 Early Bird Discount to Triennial Gathering closes
Feb. 1 Deadline for March Good News
Mar. 1 Deadline for April Good News
Mar. 7 Board Meeting @ Synod Office 9am–12:30pm (Mar. 14 Snow Date)
Apr. 1 Deadline for May Good News
Apr. 25 Upper Iowa River Cluster Spring Gathering, Immanuel LC, Cresco
May 1 Deadline for June Good News
May 2 Board Meeting @ Wartburg College 9am–12:30pm
June 16 Deadline for July-August Good News
June 19 Board Meeting at Wartburg College, 7–9pm
June 20 SWO Convention, 8:30am–4:00pm, Wartburg College
Aug. 1 Deadline for September Good News
Sep. 1 Deadline for October Good News
Oct. 1 Deadline for Nov. Good News
Nov. 1 Deadline for Dec. Good News
Dec. 1 Deadline for Jan. Good News

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- An older “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” and is secretive about him/her
- Sudden change in clothes or expensive gifts such as jewelry, new cell phone
- Loss of interest in school and/or favorite activities
- Distancing from friends
- Signs of physical abuse and evidence of being controlled
- Fear, depression, or other unexplained changes in behavior

Submitted by Jennifer Larson
Dear Faith-Shapers,

Epiphany is a season that has been my season for writing and sending my cards of Christmas greetings. I guess it's my way of celebrating a time for giving - to friends and family. The last few years has included allowing the grandchildren the opportunity to move the nativity figures around. It's been a surprise to see where the parents end up in comparison with the sheep, cows, and donkey. There have been times that only the baby Jesus & the manger actually end up inside the creche - which included the story that Jesus is the most important part so ... I guess they knew what they were doing!

January brings a new year with new ideas and opportunities. Baptism offers us a new beginning daily. On January 12th, we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. We will remember Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. This gives us the occasion to remember and celebrate our own baptism on that day and everyday - remembering that God has named us and claimed us as God's beloved children.

Sue Cira, Student Pastor TEEM
The month of January provides these two events to discuss within your family or congregation. Here are some activities you can participate in to assist with learning.

**For Epiphany:**

1. Save a Christmas present to open on Epiphany. Remember the gifts the wise men gave to Jesus.
3. Make a three kings cake. Bake a cake in a Bundt pan and include a bean in the batter. Whoever gets the bean gets a special surprise. Decorate the cake to look like a crown.
4. Save a Christmas present to open on Epiphany. Remember the gifts the wise men gave to Jesus.

**For Baptism:**

1. Celebrate baptismal birthdays by sending a card, a small gift, or a phone call on the anniversary of the baptism day to remind children of their baptism. Have them think about special memories of the day. Write or draw pictures of those memories and over time, the story will become a cherished story. Include the pictures in a booklet to look at and add to each year.
2. Host a Baptism Reunion in your congregation. Invite anyone baptized during the past year to come forward for a blessing and have a time of baptismal remembrance during the worship service.
3. When you take a bath or a shower or when you wash your hands before meal time, trace the sign of the cross on your forehead and say out loud to yourself, “I am God’s beloved child. I have the promise that I am saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body.”