

# Reflections...

**A Newsletter of the Women of the ELCA + Northern Great Lakes Synod**

**September 2020**

## **A MESSAGE FROM LISA PLORIN, CWO EXECUTIVE BOARD PRESIDENT**

2020 has certainly been a trying year. Isolation and uncertainty, two words that describe what everyone is feeling due to COVID 19. This summer was to be the 11<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention and Gathering of the Women of the ELCA in sunny Phoenix, AZ, but due to the circumstances this event was postponed until August of 2021. Many other events were also cancelled or postponed, events that we, as women of the ELCA look forward to. Retreats, conventions, bible studies, regular worship just to name a few. We are all in the same boat!

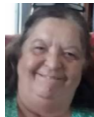
Over the past several weeks, myself and Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky have been meeting with the regional Synodical presidents over ZOOM. We use this time to connect and brainstorm ideas on how to thrive as a community of women. Yes, there is some lamenting, but the common denominator is shared through the words of our purpose statement "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."

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that this amazing organization is there for YOU! Yes, we still need to practice social distancing and conduct much of our business virtually - but it can be done. Whether you need ideas to revitalize your group or simply inspiration on how to live out our ministry as individuals, we're here for YOU!

Please take some time today to remember your calling. Go to [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org) and re-familiarize yourself with the many resources available. Take advantage of simple things like Tuesday prayers at noon. This is an opportunity to pray with Lutheran women across the church every Tuesday at noon (in your time zone) in prayer. Design a Thankoffering container and make a conscious decision to look for things to be grateful for each and every day. Drop a few coins in the container and forward these Thankofferings on to churchwide. Reach out to the Region 5 liaison Sarah Carson (800-638-3522, ext. 2766) for support. These small gestures will help you feel connected to your siblings in Christ across the entire churchwide expression.

Hang in there, my Friends, for soon we will be celebrating together in fellowship and praise in Phoenix in August of 2021!

Greetings



I receive the Daily Grace Devotions in my email every day. I don't always read them right away but during the end of

July and the beginning the titles caught my attention and the spirit nudged me to meditate on what they were saying. Be it understood, this are my interpretations of what I received from these devotions. You may need to read them on the Women of the ELCA website to see what they are saying to you. I am sharing as a way to provide food for thought. All Glory goes to God for inspiring each author who shared them.

Change is Coming ( 07/23/2020 – Phyllis Rude (2014)

I know that it is not only Lutherans who have trouble with change even if we do kid with each other about it. All of us have at one time or another said I wish things would be like it was when we were children. How many of us as children believed that NOTHING would change or believe that life was much easier then? But as children we had no idea what the world looked like to our parents. My constant sameness was comfortable to me then and I would still like it to comfort me now, but it cannot. Change in my life comes with change in me, growing from a toddler to a child to an adolescent to an adult, change in my environment and circumstances surrounding my life. There is moving from from K-12 and then graduating, then asking now what. There is a different structure of live to tackle as we step out on our own, get married (and divorced perhaps), have children (or not), have a career (or have a life where we move from job to job as we move from place to place. For me the big change came at 40 when I became the matriarch of what was left after my grandparents, parents and siblings are went home to see Jesus. Change is a constant in life, and for each change there comes a little grief over the lose of what has been. I would rather choose what is comfortable as a change as to have a change force on me, but then that is part of the ups and downs of life. Through all of this God is with us and if we have faith he will walk with us through it (secret: I think he has already seen down the path and knows that we will come out on the other side a better person than before).

Finding our Community (07/28/2020 – Katie Brantner (2011) It is a blessing being part of a faith community, we not only learn about ourselves, we learn to understand better who we are as a child (children) of God. The way we see ourselves and one another

changes, through interaction with others we discover gifts that we had never recognized before because others see them first and help nurture them. We are in a company of friends who stick with us through good and bad times, holding us up when needed and allowing us to hold them up when needed with no underlying expectations. We begin to develop passions for areas of service in which we can find ourselves living as God intends us to.

The Light of God (07/26/2020) Once we open ourselves to others, we also open ourselves to burnout a.k.a. stress a.k.a. depression. Overextending can lead to being overstressed which can lead to anxiety. Burnout can lead us to become distant, less engaged even self-isolation which leaves us with feelings of helplessness, lack of motivation and losing our sense of purpose. The devotion also states that “while stress leads to anxiety, burnout often leads to depression”. Yet, in that darkness community gives us others who will listen or sit with us in that darkness. Rekindling that light is by staying close to God and each other. When helping someone in this darkness, the best thing you can do is pray with them, listen to them, let them know you are there for them, but never and I will say never try to fix it for them.....your answer to that question may come from a totally different set of circumstances.

Abundance Thinking (07/24/2020) and Stuff Abundant (07/30/2020) We have all heard about Scarcity thinking versus Abundance thinking at one time or another and often over and over through our lives. Scarcity thinking makes us think that there is never enough, it creates fear, is sneaky and pervasive. It leads us to face even the most gracious outpouring of God's gifts with fear. Sometimes it makes us look upon the church in a way that we must take care of the building first to include maintenance, bills, and begin holding back on the mission that God has called us to. God will always provide, but it is in his time not ours. Have you ever heard it this way, God made it, God owns it and we are his stewards? With scarcity thinking we will always be looking forward with worry that there is never enough instead of trusting God. When my husband started seminary, our income was cut by two-thirds. No we did not have the ability to buy everything that we thought we wanted, but there was always enough that came at the right time to take care of what we really needed. Now I understand. Abundance thinking makes us look at what we have now and know that there will always be enough to fill the need (not necessarily what WE want) and we

must give thanks for it. Which leads me into “life abundant” versus “stuff abundant” These are not the same. For the disciples Jesus sent them out with one tunic, one pair of sandals.....I genuinely believe that his reasoning was for them to understand that God would provide. Abundance is a problem for many of us. Who has a closet full of clothes but nothing to wear? Which one of us does not have a consumptive habit that we need to abandon? Is learning to live a simpler life without all the gadgets such a bad thing for us to seek. I like the saying that if you have something you have not used in a year, then let it go. Now I will also say that I am still trying to live by that, not quite there yet but I am getting a little closer each day.

Measuring up (08/02/2020 – Catherine Malotky (2004)  
My mantra when I meet someone is “I am me, this is all you get, I am who I am” what I usually don’t say is “Please be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet. My thought behind this is that I am always trying to be better, but sometimes I stumble and sometimes I find myself falling off the cliff. The faith community is a place where we should all be accepted for who we are, with all our faults and downfalls. But sometimes do you find yourself hiding in that community, revealing only the side of yourself that you think people with accept

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Good Morning,

I'm sharing from our sermon this past week-

Not long before the COVID-19 pandemic closed churches we had a guest speaker here. Deacon Rick of St. Peter the Fisherman Church was kind enough to speak on behalf of a new organization: FORK. We know that word to be an acronym for “Feeding Our Rural Kids”. Concerned citizens noticed that far too many children who attend Northland Pines schools were not getting enough to eat. Deacon Rick spoke about the mission of FORK to provide backpacks of food for needy families with children during the summer months. His remarks touched our hearts since a Special Offering was taken, totaling \$800, a large amount from this congregation. People responded because they do not

and keeping the self that we fear to reveal buried because we are less proud or just down right afraid of rejection. Through Jesus we all learn that we are loved by God unconditionally. We should be celebrating who we wholly are, we should feel free to show what we show and what we hide without fear.

In closing I would like to say that 2020 has surrounded us with uncertainty of the future, skepticism of how things will change and fear because we cannot see what is ahead. When we are confused and living through events we have never experienced before, the Holy Spirit keeps inviting us to center ourselves in our faith and to see that Hope, no matter what confusion is going on, is one of the most precious emotion we can have. Our job is to be quiet and listen when that Spirit is speaking to us through all the commotion. A friend of ours once said to my husband “If it were not for doubt, there would be no reason for faith”. She does not remember saying it.....imagine that who do you think you used her that day?

Blessings to all my sisters in Christ  
Melzee Jacobson, SWO President.

want to hear of children  
going hungry in this land of plenty.

Then when COVID-19 hit, and schools were closed FORK went to work to provide meals for kids.

Community support has been tremendous, and even large donations have been received to make sure this hunger-relief program continues its life-saving work. Behind the community support is compassion for kids. Food is life. Food is a gift from God who has compassion for this world. I like the prayer, a table grace from Lutheran World Relief. It begins with the familiar “Come Lord Jesus be our guest, let this food to us be blessed.” Then it continues, “Bless be God who is our Bread, may all the world be clothed and fed.”

<https://pioneerlakelc.org/sermon/august-2-2020-sermon-from-pastor-john/>

Blessing  
Holly Gueri



### *Living in our Season.....*

Fall is just around the corner and most people tend to jump ahead to the next season. That is especially true for me. I'm a big fan of the fall season! We fall lovers look forward to those delicious pumpkin coffees (Yum). We look forward to the leaves changing. We look forward to the cooler weather. We look forward to all that fall baking and those lovely spicy smells floating through our homes. We look forward to dragging out our fall décor and decorating our home with all those beautiful autumn colors! Fall is definitely my "Season"!

*"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the Heaven."*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1 (KJV)*

Sometimes our seasons and paths of life aren't always pleasant. Sometimes they may seem long. Sometimes we don't understand why we have to stay in a situation or circumstance that seems endless. Right now, our lives are on hold! There's a new normal we are adjusting too. But even in this current season we are so blessed to know that our Lord is always there to see us through whatever season and circumstances of life that comes along. There is so much in our life to hold on to, our families, friends, and good health.

I look forward to the day we can come together and celebrate our Lord Jesus!

*You are always in my prayers*



Hope everybody is doing OK in these challenging and stressful times on multiple fronts. I thank God every day for all my blessings and talk to Him all the time about everything that is going on.

Sometimes I feel like there is not enough time for all the prayers that need to be said. When you are a natural born "worry-wart", everything seems stressful, even at the best of times. I must keep trusting in Him, praying for peace of mind, body, and soul. If I find my mind wandering when I am trying to sleep, I will sing to myself: *Have No Fear, Little Flock or God Will Take Care of You.*

I am happy that the weather is finally a bit cooler. There was no relief for me out in God's beautiful

creation when it was so hot—particularly before and after July 4<sup>th</sup>. Made me almost wish for winter (or at least fall).

My home church, Salem in Ironwood, with Zion in Ironwood as "Together in Christ", does video conference Bible study and virtual coffee hour along with the on-line services. Pastor Nicole is doing a fantastic job. While some of our Salem quilters have been working from home these last few months. we have started going back into the building—we must wait until the building is empty; sign in, wear masks, social distance, disinfect/sanitize our work areas when we are done. No coffee of course, which is incredibly sad,



coffee fellowship is special. We do not know if there will be LWR collection of quilts and kits this fall; we will continue to make quilts and collect items for school kits and personal care kits. If they must sit for a year, they will sit.

I miss the fellowship of being in church, in WELCA; but make sure that my monthly offering gets to the church. I know the WELCA groups and clusters are not meeting right now; but I urge you to continue as you have in the past; and **faithfully** send in your offerings to me. If you want to do something personally, I ask that you consider signing up for *Faithful Friends* on the Women of the ELCA

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Have you had an eye-opening experience recently? Mine occurred in a recent conversation with my granddaughter. I'm not going to add any names because I want you to think of your own conversations with a child.

This granddaughter had the same Pastor for most of her church life. He was someone she could talk to, ask questions of, laugh and cry with. Other than immediate family, there were no other people she shared any of her questions and problems with.

It came time for confirmation, and she was wondering if she really knew enough to be confirmed, yes, she went straight to Pastor and asked him this question.

She and I also talked about what she was feeling, I didn't ask about Pastor's response as I considered it a personal matter. I did tell her that she certainly has shown me that she has been paying attention. She was one of the few students brave enough to share an answer or ask a question. We also talked about the fact we all have questions and need to continue to study and learn the teachings in the Bible.

Then came the big day for confirmation. She thought she would maybe wait until next year to do

Hi Ladies,

Website. It is a convenient way to help our Sisters in Christ on an on-going basis.

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/faithfulfriends>

Wishing everybody peace and good health. You are all in my prayers,

Kris Carlson, SWO Treasurer  
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this. Imagine her shock when she found out Pastor was retiring!

She came to me in tears asking who was she going to talk to and ask questions if he was leaving her. After all, he was the only one who really understood what she was saying.

I had no idea that she was actually listening to he was teaching. Our talks about the Sunday sermon and Wednesday confirmation class only touched the tip of the iceberg.

It also reminded me that teaching our kids and sharing with them what we have learned and believe is critical in the formation of their faith.

One of the answers that I did share with her is that we are all supposed to continue to study the Bible and learn. We need to do this with other people and with people that know more than we know.

She taught me that sometimes we need to be quiet and listen to what others may be trying to teach us.

AMEN

Sue Hill



Hope your all enjoying your summer. I've been extremely busy working. But one thing I have taken time out for is my garden, flowers beds and watching the BIRDS! Bird watching is healthy activity simply because it takes you into nature. When you truly focus on seeing and hearing the birds, though, you elevate it to one of the most enlightening meditations you can perform. Bird song is the most sacred form of music; birds sing the songs of angels and the heavens. I hope some of you are inspired to stop and take time out for our feathered friends. God's Blessings to you all!

Dawn Holmgren



Deliver Christ to the World (Next Door Savior)  
I work". Using Christ's great strength  
That works so powerfully in me,  
Colossians 1:29

The virgin birth is more, much more, than a Christmas story; it is a picture of how close Christ will come to you. The first stop on his itinerary was a womb. Where will God go to touch the world? Look deep within Mary for an answer

Better still, look deep within yourself, What he did with Mary, he offers to us! He issues a Mary,, level invitation to all his children. "If you'll let me, I'll move in"\*\*\*

What is the mystery of the gospel? "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27 NiV).

Christ grew in Mary until he had to come out and Christ will grow in you until the same occurs. He will come out in your speech, in your actions, in your decisions. Every place you live will be a Bethlehem, and every day you live will be a Christmas You, like Mary will deliver Christ into the world.





# Beyond words

BY NICOLETTE PE-  
NARANDA

BEFORE MY FIRST call as a pastor, I served as a pastoral intern at a Lutheran congregation and school in Argentina. My supervisor there spoke as much English as I did Spanish (not much). Transcending the language barrier would be key.

It's hard being called to a vocation that involves authentic relationships when you lack the tools to communicate. Verbal communication is like a screwdriver with removable bits. With words you can convey love, sadness, displeasure, and curiosity. Without a shared language, I would just sit and nod during meetings, trying to catch a few words in conversation. Needless to say pastoral care was difficult.

With the school's approval, I found an activity I could lead without being able to speak the language. To connect with the students—most of whom were not part of the congregation—I led a mural-painting project. We spent recreos, or recess, with brushes in our hands, creating an original artwork that spoke to the school's Lutheran heritage and their Argentine identity. So we incorporated portraits of Martin Luther and the artist Frida Kahlo, images of baptism with the hand of God, an Argentinian flag and symbols attributed to los Pueblos Originarios (the indigenous people of Argentina). These moments were sweet, but I often felt they weren't enough. Did spending a few minutes a day together in silence really foster authentic relationships?

Then tragedy hit. Three of our students lost their lives. The school closed for several days as

the entire community gathered to celebrate the girls who had died. Groups of us walked through the town to lament at their wakes. Grieving, I returned to the mural and painted. For three hours, I sat on the empty patio and incorporated memorial ballet slippers laced into the hand of God. I posted a photo of the mural, now with the slippers, on Instagram. Students shared the image, and eventually it reached the parents who had lost their girls. The following day one of the grieving parents told a teacher he felt his daughter was present in those ballet slippers—her beautiful life represented in this simple piece of art.

Later that afternoon school staff summoned me to the patio to meet the parents of another one of the girls—the mother's only child. The father was snapping photos, while the mother stared at the image on the wall. The mother gave me a warm embrace. Her husband did the same, saying, "Thank you. Thank you." Two days earlier I'd struggled for the words to convey my sympathies; now we were able to connect over this piece of art. This experience exposed me to a new way to live in relationship. As cliché as it may sound, actions do speak louder than words. Daily engaging with students through art carried more weight than small talk ever could. Lamenting with the community and painting ballet shoes spoke more to the families than anything I could have possibly said. Relationships can—and do—transcend words. 🌿

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Greetings to you in the name of Jesus our Savior! While waiting for my daughter to finish up work I heard a song on the radio. There were four words in the song that spoke to me. They are praise, awake, joy and hope these words are important for us all today. Praise God every time we can. Know that our joy comes from God. Hope is in our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Awake to this new day and a new time to serve all others around us. Lamentations 3:22-24 "Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' "A prayer of thanks from Christ in Our Home "O Christ, thank you for your strength that holds us and empowers us for all that life brings. Amen."



#### YOUR OWN STRANGE THINKING

Is there anything more?  
Is there anything less?  
Could it be it's a world of nothingness?  
Is it love or wishing?  
Is it real or fake?  
Is it worth the while to even partake?

There's peace to be kept  
In this world so sad.  
It's not just something on a scratchpad.  
There's respect to be giv'n  
In all types of talk.  
"It's not just the talk; it's also the walk."

It may never be real;  
Perhaps all pretend;  
Whatever is needed should not to offend!  
It's never all right  
Nor is it all left'  
What did you say; what's your behest?

Nothing is new;  
Nothing is old;  
Just the same old story, whatever you're told.  
You may not care;  
You may care a lot.  
Whatever your thinking, it's all that you've got.

Carefully listen;  
Your soul is speaking.  
Your heart's important whate're you're seeking.  
You may quietly pray  
Or loudly proclaim.  
Others may protest, you win YOUR game.





## CLUSTER CORNER

First Lutheran Church, Gladstone, MI says goodbye to Pastor Tom Otis. Pastor Tom retires on August 1. He will be missed! We have been so blessed to have him with us and are extremely grateful for his leadership and support.



Kelly Ylitalo, L.L.M. has accepted a call to Mission United Lutheran Church in Pelkie, MI. Kelly will begin her new adventure in August. Ordination and installation will be on August 9 at Mission United.



A few of us ladies accepted the Lutheran World relief "Face Mask Challenge". 300 masks were made and sent on.



Currently we are making reusable cloth pads. These pads are for girls in the 10 to 14 age group for their Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes. These can quite literally change a girl's life. In many countries in Africa, for instance, girls will have to miss school a few days each month during their menstrual cycle. With the gift of reusable pads they can attend school with confidence. This project makes us, the cutters and sewers, feel that we are empower young girls and giving them a chance to continue their education uninterrupted.



## Fall Cluster Events

With all the uncertainty, I'm sure you have concerns hosting a cluster event. Our church wide executive board of Women of the ELCA strongly encourages congregational units to carefully monitor current state and local governmental orders and recommendations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, we are encouraged to postpone or cancel all in-person events through the end of 2020. Maybe your cluster unit could explore virtual opportunities for gathering. If anyone has ideas in how to keep in touch with the congregations in your cluster, please share them. We still need each other!

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A NOTE FROM WOMEN OF THE ELCA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
LINDA POST BUSHKOFISKY

Our purpose statement begins with the phrase “as a community of women.” We gather in groups, two or three, 20 or 30, and even 2,000 or 3,000. That’s one type of community, a group of people having particular characteristics in common. We are Lutheran women, acting boldly on our faith in Jesus Christ. That’s what we have in common. At least before the current pandemic, different expressions of our community gathered together regularly.

There’s another understanding of community: a feeling of fellowship with others that comes from sharing common attitudes, interests, goals, and, I would add, faith. And while we can’t gather together in person right now, we still have a great need for the sense of community, of fellowship. So, today’s #ThursdayTip offers ideas for promoting and sustaining community in the midst of a pandemic.

Gather women virtually: for a Bible study, a book discussion, devotional time or even happy hour. You can do this with your synodical board, of course, but I encourage to think more broadly. Could you gather the presidents (or whatever title they have) of all the congregational units in your SWO for a virtual event? Could you open up a virtual event to anyone who wants to join? How about a virtual event for those who are new to Women of the ELCA?

Since not everyone has access to a virtual gathering, build community creatively in other ways. Phone calls with one or more women at a time support fellowship. So would a small conference call. A simple Amish circle letter would work too; one woman begins a letter and sends it on to the next woman, who continues

writing in that letter and send it on to the next woman and so forth.

Any group could identify a need in their town and invite women to meet that need, in a way that is safe under the pandemic. For instance, maybe the local women’s shelter is in need of tampons and pads. Women could purchase them (from a store in person or online) and deliver them to a central location where one or two women could box them up and deliver them to the shelter. Or maybe an agency has an Amazon wish list and the group could covenant to purchase items from the wish list over a period of time, with Amazon making the delivery.

Groups that knit prayer shawls together or even groups that sew relief quilts could meet via Zoom and engage in that activity. They share fellowship while working, maybe have lunch or a snack together and get the job done.

The SWO can host some events described here. But the SWO has the responsibility to encourage ministries like these among its congregations unites. You can do that through your newsletter, your website or on your Facebook page.

What other community-sustaining ideas do you have?

Melzee asks: Would you be willing to share them with your cluster liaison? (contact information can be found on page 13 of this newsletter. Help us to help you. Help us by sharing ideas. We are all one community and we discover more when we communicate and share with one another.

# NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION 2020-2021

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## TOP 10 PREDICTIONS-----NO MATTER WHO WINS THE ELECTION

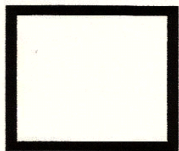
1. The Bible will still have all the answers.
2. Prayer will still work
3. The Holy Spirit will still move.
4. God will still inhabit the praises of his people.
5. There will still be God-anointed preaching.
6. There will still be singing of praise to God.
7. God will still pour out blessings upon His people.
8. There will still be room at the Cross.
9. Jesus will still love you.
10. Jesus will still save the lost when they come to Him.

And God approves this message!  
ISN'T IT GREAT TO KNOW WHO IS REALLY IN CHARGE!!!



NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD  
WOMEN OF THE ELCA  
527 E Margaret Street  
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**REFLECTIONS** Newsletter – September 2020



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**Our Purpose**

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

**Our Mission**

To mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.