



Reflections...

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

GREETINGS FROM MARY ELLEN PERKINS, SWO PRESIDENT



AUTUMN CONSIDERATIONS

With the arrival of September, we are entering into my favorite season of the year. The fall colors are particularly beautiful in the Northern Great Lakes region. I feel so blessed to have retired to this area, especially with the terrible weather wrought by climate change in other parts of the country. I may be getting a taste of it, however, with my trip to Phoenix for the Triennial Convention and Gathering. I'm praying that it is not dreadfully hot that week. Even so, I anticipate that most activities will be indoors, so I'll be able to enjoy our sessions and the opportunity to meet with women from all the other synods.

The following month we look forward to holding our own synodical convention and retreat at Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. The host committee has planned a wonderful schedule of worship, Bible study and workshops, as well as a return of the massage therapists. Pastor Kelly Ylitalo will serve as our chaplain, and Maggie Hill will again provide our music. I am also eagerly awaiting a visit with my high school best friend from downstate who wanted to attend our retreat. We all should have an enriching time, and I hope the colors will still be around.

At the end of October we observe Reformation when we celebrate the reclaiming of the one true gospel that had been lost and replaced with the traditions and teachings of men. We hold fast to the three solae:

Sola Scriptura – the assertion that scripture must govern over church traditions and interpretations which are themselves held to be subject to scripture. All church traditions, creeds, and teachings must be in unity with the teachings of scripture as the divinely inspired Word of God.

Sola Fide – the principle that we are accounted righteous before God, only by our faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sola Gratia – the recognition that our salvation is entirely a gift from God. Our salvation is not earned by our merit or good works but only by faith which is itself a gift from God through His Holy Spirit that we received at baptism. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

But scripture also teaches us that although we are saved by faith, we are sanctified – that is, set apart – by God for good works. The works do not in any way save us or earn us God's salvation, but we are created for the purpose of doing good works. God saved us, Jesus died for us, while we were still sinners. In gratitude, we acknowledge this grace by serving God and observing his commands, especially His command that we love one another. (continued)

Let us consider how we as Women of the ELCA's Northern Great Lakes Synod can serve God and one another. What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do? Let us plan to meet at fall and spring cluster gatherings to build up one another, to encourage all women to explore ways "to *engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.*" *Be praying for our sisters in Christ at the coming conventions and retreats. And if you are called to serve in your congregations and in our Synodical Women's Organization, gladly answer "Yes, by the help of God."* Step out in faith. Place your feet on the path of obedience and leave the rest to Him. Just because you say "yes" doesn't mean He's going to leave you to carry out every detail alone. He promises, "Do not be overwhelmed, for I am your *God*. I will strengthen you. *Yes, I will help* you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10



A WORD FROM NGLSWO VICE PRESIDENT & HISTORIAN

The Hope of one person can spread into something that changes the world around us. For instance, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital was founded through the hope of Danny Thomas. Mr. Thomas was an actor, singer, comedian, philanthropist, producer, and more in the 50's -80's. He founded St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in 1962. When young Mr. Thomas was a struggling actor, he put his last \$7 into the collection plate and prayed that he would find his way in life. Danny asked St. Jude to help him. St. Jude is the patron saint of desperate cases and lost causes, which is what he felt like at that time, but he had hope for the future. He promised to make a shrine to St. Jude and thus he named the hospital after that saint when his prayer was answered. Of course, I am summarizing here and more information can be found at [Stjude.org/directory/t/danny-thomas-founder.html?sc_icid=our-history-danny](https://www.stjude.org/directory/t/danny-thomas-founder.html?sc_icid=our-history-danny).



I first found an interest in St. Jude when I saw Danny Thomas' daughter, Marlo Thomas in a commercial. She is now the National Outreach Director for the hospital. She is also a star and has written books and received awards for her own philanthropy. Interestingly, both Marlo and her father were born in Michigan. I noticed that she was so sincere and passionate in her discussions of the hospital that it made me look into the story of her father's dedication to building this shrine to St. Jude. Mr. Thomas fulfilled his hopeful promise through the Holy Spirit. God, through the Spirit, spread that hope to his daughter, Marlo Thomas. She now continues the work because of the hope she saw in her father and still sees in the children and families who are helped by St. Jude.

The hospital has contributed to immunization work around the world as well as raising the survival rate for childhood cancer from 20% to 80%, with this goal: "We won't stop until no child — anywhere — dies from cancer. **By 2030, our goal is to cure at least 60% of children with six of the most common kinds of cancer worldwide.** With your support, St. Jude can provide cutting-edge treatment at no cost to families." (<https://www.stjude.org/about-st-jude/why-support-st-jude.html#:~:text=You%20can%20help%20St.&text=We%20won't%20stop%20until,%E2%80%94%20anywhere%20%E2%80%94%20dies%20from%20cancer.&text=By%202030%2C%20our%20goal%20is,at%20no%20cost%20to%20families.>)

For now, we live in this time and must deal with the suffering that comes with it, but this story is one example of how God answers prayers through one person. Danny Thomas was brought up in the Catholic church, but God's church is in you. Participating in worship services, serving the church, studying scripture and groups like our SWO are great ways to share the Gospel and the Hope God has given us in Christ Jesus. Dream big! We do not endure the suffering alone, Christ is with us and Hope in Christ changes the world.

NEWS FROM BARB MARDEN, NGLSWO TREASURER



One of the reasons I agreed to take the treasurer's position with SWO at this time was that I planned to retire from my position as the Administrative Assistant for Florence Parish (a partnership between Bethlehem Lutheran Church and the First Presbyterian Church of Florence, WI) sometime soon after August 2023. That time has now arrived, and I am excited to be on the verge of entering retirement. While I have enjoyed all my jobs, there are many personal interests that had to be put on hold because of the time and energy demands of my various work responsibilities. So, soon I will be able to devote more time to my SWO treasurer's responsibilities. I am also on the SWO Retreat committee, and we have been diligently working on the planning for the upcoming event. We look forward to seeing you there.

COMMENTS FROM CONNIE SCHMIDT, CLUSTER 6 REPRESENTATIVE

'A woman who honors the Lord should be praised!' Proverbs 31:30b

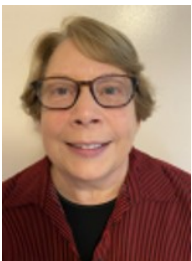
Mkuza Girls Secondary School is owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). It is known as the Shining Star, raising girls! Its purpose is molding their students based on Christian faith so as to enable them to be reliable catalysts towards development within their community. It is a day and boarding school, and girls from different denominations can enroll. It helps raise the child's dignity and helps her to realize her full potential as a woman in the world at large. Its aim is to improve student achievement, prepare students for a successful future, provide a healthy learning environment, and promote a God-fearing generation.

We support this school and send monies from our cluster offerings. Much is needed now as there have been two fires. Our NGLS congregations and members have sent \$7,600 in aid. God is good....All the time!!! We are helping our sisters and brothers to again repair this precious learning place.



I have been to Africa....looked into their eyes....they are so, so appreciative of our support. They sing praises daily to their Savior Jesus Christ. I am so thankful for their efforts to attend here, grow in faith and spread peace and understanding in their communities. Let's pray for them and continue the much needed support.

COMMENTS FROM , MICHELLE JOHNSON, CLUSTER 8 REPRESENTATIVE



Matthew 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of harvest to send out laborers in his harvest."

I think of the women of the Lutheran church as the "harvest" as we have many, but how can we get the "labors" out of this group? We have been struggling with adding members to our groups due to aging, younger generations working and many other commitments to their time. How can we find ways to welcome and include the women of our congregations? You may need to change meeting times, plan events that may include child care or plan a different meeting time. How about combining groups within the congregation or with other churches? These are just a few of my thoughts of possible changes, but you know your women the best, so you know what will work for your group.

I would like to challenge your group to either start planning and carry out your Fall gathering.

COMMENTS FROM DIANE GENDRON, BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE

Philippians 4:13 - You can do all things through me

Weighting heavy on my heart these days is the lack of involvement in the church and the women's organization. Our world is changing so much, and the younger generation just does not seem interested.



Maybe it isn't that they aren't interested, but that so many other things take up their time (schedules, family, work, etc.). I can remember when I was asked to join the SWO board 16 years ago it was a challenge. It was hard to get off of work for the meetings but with the Lord's help, I did do it. I loved being with the women forming new friendships and still think of them. Then my term ended and life went on.

Here I am once again. In September 2022 I attended the SWO convention at Fortune Lake and was voted in to be on the board as a member at large. When approached about joining the board, I really didn't hesitate much before saying 'yes'. I really felt a nudge that God was calling me to become involved again, and I was actually looking forward to it. Being retired time would not be a problem with the meetings every other month over Zoom. This results in less traveling.

My fear is with everything changing, there won't be a women's group or the SWO. Without the younger generation interested as the older fade out. where will we be? So I ask if God is calling or giving you that nudge, please think about becoming involved. Remember we can do all things through him for he never leaves us.

FROM THE EDITOR, BARB RICE



Greetings from your editor. As I write this, I am hearing the voices of your board members who are genuinely concerned about the longevity of this organization. I will add that the years I spent on the board were wonderful and so very fulfilling. It is a good place to be when you feel you have the chance to be active in doing God's work with a group of faithful women! I continue to be involved with SWO as editor because I can help these hard working women communicate with all of you. I hope that you will prayerfully listen to their



words as they encourage you to become involved in this organization and that you will encourage the young women in your congregations to become a part of this group in any small way they can. Plant some seeds and pray and I have faith that SWO can grow, with the help of God and you, God's children.

I continue to read many books about what I see as our Christian responsibility to social justice. I will share one title that I recommend for you to explore: Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Ms. Kimmerer is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and in this book she uses the lense of plants and animals as our oldest teachers to show the interconnectedness of nature and the human world. It brought to me greater understanding of our Native American siblings and their respect for all creation. It is the most strikingly beautiful book that I have read in a long time.

I would also like to encourage you to look at the NGLS website and sign up for a class offered in the Lifelong Faith Formation series. There are many inspiring topics that are led by pastors and lay members of our synod. It is an amazing opportunity for you to grow in your faith and to learn about our Church. <https://nclsynod.org/lifelong-faith-formation/>



CLUSTER NEWS



Cluster 1 (IGO) Fall Meeting

- Our Fall Meeting will be Sunday, September 24th at Zion Lutheran Church in Ironwood, MI.
- We will begin at 1:30 pm CDT/2:30 pm EDT.
- Our Theme will be God's calling to discipleship as it relates to the 2023 Convention and Retreat Theme of Walking With Our God.
- Advanced registration is Wednesday, September 20 at 906-932-1320. The office hours are 10:00 to 1:00 pm CDT (Tues, Wed, and Thurs)
- Alternate registration can be made by calling 906.282.0169 and leaving a message if no answer.
- Registration is \$5.00.
- Child care will be had if we know ahead of time.
- Offering will be 50% Michigan Home Extension for the Backpack Program, 25% for SWO and 25% for CWO.
- In-Kind Offering is Cans of soup for distribution to Union Station in Ironwood.
- A light supper will be served.

Cluster 8 (Superior) Central Fall Meeting

Cluster 8 is currently planning its Fall meeting at Faith Lutheran in Gwinn, on October 22nd. More information will be coming to cluster 8 churches.

Are you ready?

As you meet with your congregation's women's group, are you equipped and ready to begin your meetings with a quick devotion? Check out "Dwelling in the Word" on the NGLS website for resources for a new way to incorporate God's Word in your meetings, quilting hours, pray shawl gatherings, etc. https://nclsynod.org/dataarchive/ncls/2023/dwelling_in_the_word.pdf?t=1692366180



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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.