



Reflections...

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

DECEMBER 2025

GREETINGS FROM MELZEE JACOBSON, SWO PRESIDENT



Dear SWO Sisters in Christ,

Over the past years we have been through many changes in how our lives have been affected. I often hear that we are all getting older and that we just don't have any young ladies in our churches now. My answer is, we have them but they are working outside their homes and are busy with their children's activities. I was one of those women years back. I worked Monday through Friday most years. Saturdays were my day to be a taxi mama for my children who played sports. When I was young there were not as many sports available so it was usually a day playing with other children in the neighborhood while my mom and dad kept busy with doing things at home.

The ladies in our church held meetings on Saturday's but again I was out being a taxi mama most of the time from September through August. There was soccer, basketball, softball, baseball and list goes on. My church was also 20 miles north of where we lived. Granted we drove past four other Lutheran churches to get to the one we belonged to for 20 years, but that church felt like home the first time we walked in and we had been invited by two friends to come and check them out.

The ladies group used to have a salad luncheon and bazaar every year. They also had secret sisters which was enjoyable. I never made any meetings but I did make things for the bazaar. A few years before we moved, the group decided that they were all getting older so they stopped having meetings. The began having a no bake-bake sale, which was another way to address a yearly collection from the congregation so there would be funds to help send the children to camp and the national triennial youth gathering.

My husband began his seminary journey in 1997 and I worked fulltime while my son finished his schooling in the Quad cities. My husband would come home on the weekends. I attended some Women of the ELCA meetings in our second call but was never very active as I was working. At our third and last call I attended a convention and retreat. From there I was active. I was on the board not for seven years but nine because of covid. I took two years off as it was required. I became President again last year and I have one year left.

We have as a board and even as a congregational unit been trying to build up involvement on the synodical and local levels. We know that we cannot continue as we had in the past. So now it is time for me to ask all of you. What is it that you need from the Synodical level of the SWO to feed you and help you to do whatever it is you are able to do for you and the organizations. I know that some churches are looking at combining. We have had some churches close their doors. We as a nation have seen church involvement wane. As older woman, I as one do not care to drive at night and I am one of the younger women (or at least I would like to think I am). Perhaps if someone no longer drives at night a carpool brigade could be developed to pick them up and take them home. A lot of the activities that are available in groups are held during the day. That creates a roadblock for those that are younger and working to be able to participate.

If we as the previous generation do not step up and show the younger generation what the Women of the ELCA can be for them it surely will pass away and the fellowship which we were and still are able to claim with each other will be lost to the next generation. We, the board members, need your help. I am including some questions for you to pray over and respond to, please take the time and share your wisdom. You have such rich histories and stories of what it has been like and possibly what you would have liked it to have been. We need to brainstorm together.

And here we go

Did you know that the churchwide women's organization has developed six new models of how to organize a congregational unit?

I am going to be sending out this publication to everyone on the mailing list, so you can see if something like this might be useful.

I know that young families bring their children for baptisms and make promises to raise their children in church. The congregation also promises to help these children.

What can we do to reach out to these families and create a relationship with them and ask them what they would like to see for activities in the church that they could become involved in that will feed their faith?

Zion Lutheran in Ironwood has a Fall Festival with a salad luncheon and crafts for sale.

We thought about encouraging young families to come and bring their children. We encourage a donation amount for adults, but we think it would be great to offer any donation amount for the children that are adolescents and children 10 and under be free. Would something like that work at the events that you have?

Salem Lutheran in Ironwood held a Christmas tea and joined together with Zion our first year.

We had 38 attendees, and they even asked questions about SWO. The second year we invited the other two Ironwood churches to attend, and we heard some talk about how the four churches used to have events together in years past. We even talked about doing it on a Saturday afternoon and invited all 9 churches in the conference and families with children.

Other comments or suggestions about how we can put some life back into our Women of the ELCA activities and attendance.

Please share what events you hold throughout the year and when they are held so we can try to advertise the events in our newsletters and on our Facebook page.

Do you have an opinion about how you could increase the attendance at your events in the future and could you share those ideas.

Let us know what your church does for Lutheran World Relief, such as making quilts and making kits that we ship out each year. How many did your church ship in 2025.

Please return your input to the above questions to the Melzee Jacobson at the mailing address or the email address listed in the directory of this newsletter. It would be greatly appreciated if you could return them by the end of December so we could discuss them at our January Board Meeting.

Links available via internet:

Northern Great Lakes Synod Office nglsynod.org Phone: 906.228.2300

Churchwide Women's Organization womenoftheelca.org Phone: 800.638.3522

Lutheran Social Services of WI & Upper MI www.lsswis.org Phone: 414.246.2300

TTY WI 1.800.947.3529 MI 1.800.833.5833

Facebook Group Page

A MESSAGE FROM DIANE GENDRON, SWO VICE PRESIDENT

Soon the Christian season of advent will be upon us. It is a season of preparation and anticipation leading up to Christmas. The four Sundays are a time for spiritual reflection, prayer, and celebration focusing on themes such as hope, peace, joy, and love preparing for the birth of Jesus and his future return.

The bible definition of joy is a deep sense of happiness and well-being that is not dependent on external circumstances but on one's faith in God. This is a gift from the Holy Spirit, rooted in hope, in God's love, his promises, and his presence even during suffering. We find this kind of joy by trusting God, finding purpose in trials and focusing on spiritual trust not on earthly pleasures or accomplishments.

My question for you is: Are you going to choose joy this advent season.? One way would be to start a joy journal, jotting down the small gifts of being alive. Examples: scent of a fresh breeze, the laughter of children or grandkids, a smile, sounds/sights, aromas/texture to name a few, looking at all our blessings. Life is a grand blessing, but it's one that is carefully made of tiny and simple joys.

So if you decide that joy is the hue you want your heart to be, then start making the little and large choices that over time will paint your heart happy. Give yourself a perk. Condition yourself for joy by doing little things that you love on a regular basis. During this advent season choose joy over anger. Remember joy is available to anyone who learns to pursue every task with energy and dedication as if it was a calling.



Happiness is realizing that God is in the heart with it being the result of praise and thanksgiving of faith, of acceptance, of the love of God. Joy comes from within which is within reach of everyone in the world.

The Christmas season meant for joy is often consumed by busyness, pressure, mixed emotions and gone as quickly as it came. May you find the gift of joy this Christmas season.

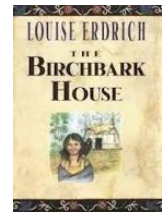


COMMENTS AND A BOOK RECOMMENDATION FROM BARB RICE, SECRETARY AND REFLECTIONS EDITOR

Advent greetings to all my SWO sisters! As you can see, I now am wearing two hats in our organization: that of Secretary and continuing as your Reflections editor. I look forward to a year of serving you all in these capacities as we continue to believe in the gift of unity as a women's organization in the ELCA. Many of you are in congregations that do not appear to have active women's groups per se, but take a look at all that the women in your congregations do to enrich the life of your church family! I bet each of you can identify at least 5 things that the women in your community do to keep things alive. This is your congregational unit, even if it doesn't meet as a group on a regular basis, and therefore, you and your church sisters are all part of our SWO. It is to you that I send my greetings and with whom I share my book recommendation. I hope to meet many of you at our fall convention in September '26.



As for my book recommendation in this issue, an easy read for those of you who are eager to learn more about our Indigenous brothers and sisters, *The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdrich tells the story of a year in the life of Omakayas, a 7-year-old girl from an Ojibwe community on Madeline Island in 1847. You will share her experiences, traditions, and life lessons as you read about her and her family. A young adult book, it has much to offer and inspired me to read more books by the author, who is an enrolled member of the Anishinaabe nation and a prolific author of novels, poetry, and children's books.



A WORD FROM BARB MARDEN, NGLSWO TREASURER



Well, as they say, life is what happens to you as you're making other plans. After five chemotherapy treatments with good success, my wonderful 94-year-old dad had a fairly rapid downturn and passed away on October 14. Obviously, that has changed my life in all the ways it does for everyone; first dealing with the loss of my best friend with whom I have been living and helping to care for over the last eight years, and second, dealing with all the things you have to do when someone dies. While this was very sad, he was a man of great faith and, as a friend said to me, "he is now having great discussions with Jesus." I am grateful that I had so many years with him, and also grateful for the great care and kindness we received from the hospice team at the VA in Iron Mountain as well as all the support from the Bethlehem Lutheran Church congregation in Florence, WI.



RE-INTRODUCING HOLLY GUERIN, CLUSTER 3 BOARD LIAISON

Hello

I'm Holly Guerin from Pioneer Lake Lutheran Church. Looking to show how WELCA can show up in every church in their own ways. WELCA stands for *Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. Their mission: "Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ." Strengthens Community by-Monthly Newsletter, Pet Blessing, Quilting, Fellowship, Food Bank, and Worship and Music. This month we will have our annual Lutefisk and Swedish Meatballs dinner the first Sunday of December at 4:00pm. Call for your place at 715-479-4966.

A WORD FROM CONNIE SCHMIDT, CLUSTER 6 LIAISON



"Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21

Our Gather group magazine has us into "Money, Stewardship, and Generosity." Many usually don't like the topic, but oh so eye opening! The women have loved all the extra articles on the topic also.

We are clay in our Potter's Hand. The Holy Spirit stirs us to uplift others. A simple phone call or text, a card or a short visit. We give as our hearts rest in God! We have a local grocery store and gain points for shopping there. This past week we found out we could donate points to our local veterans group here, so they can enjoy donuts, coffee, and support gathering in well-needed conversations. Another organization gives food to our college students at their pantry. I long remember the meals I went to at St. Mark's in Marquette when a student at NMU and so much appreciated the kindness. Also a new store in our community takes in about everything. People pay \$7.00 to come in and find what they need. So many ways to be creative in our giving to lift others up.

2 Corinthians 9:7 - we give as we have made up our minds for God loves a cheerful giver.

AN ADVENT CHALLENGE FROM LYNETTE BROXSON, CLUSTER 8 LIAISON



'GOSPEL OF LUKE CHALLENGE'

The Advent Season is here. The season began on Sunday, Nov. 30, 2026. Growth and Discipleship article. This is the fourth Sunday before Christmas, which is referred to as "Advent Sunday."

What is Advent? Advent is a time of anticipation and a time of hope for Christians around the world for both the celebration of Jesus's birth and preparing and waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

How can Christians observe Advent at home alone or with families? One way we can do this daily during Advent is to read a chapter of the Gospel of Luke a day.

This is called the "GOSPEL OF LUKE CHALLENGE"!

This challenge is simple! All you do is read a chapter of Luke a day. And by Christmas Eve, the Gospel of Luke is finished. This is a great way for families to observe Advent together. This is especially a great way to either begin reading or to continue reading the bible together as a family or as an individual.

After the chapter is read, treat everyone and yourself to a surprise from an Advent Calendar! There are many varieties of Advent Calendars for children of all ages, including for our pets!

May this Advent Season be full of anticipation and hope for the world as we await for the birth and the return of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen



RE-INTRODUCING PAM CHOUINARD, BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE



I am so happy to be joining the SWO board once more! We are truly blessed to be able to come together for the purpose of keeping WELCA alive and well! As women of faith, it's so important to make time to pray together and exchange ideas to share with our women's groups in our congregations. As we know, Lutheran Women love fellowship.

With Christmas just around the corner, our minds begin to fill up with all the holiday preparations! The decorating, baking and shopping can become exhausting. But when we slow down and look around us; we see the beauty in holidays: Christmas Carols, lights shining everywhere, beautifully decorated trees and a manger with a small baby laying in a bed of straw!

Luke 2:1-11 "And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

.The greatest gift we could ever receive!

On this Christmas Eve, may we set aside our busyness and simply enjoy the gifts God has given us. May we be ready to rest in God's goodness as we celebrate the birth of Jesus!

Merry Christmas to each of you!



NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD NEWS



New Babies!!!!

~Marigold Ray Hunter born 06/18/2025 to Pr Molly and Ehtan Hunter

~Esther Penelope Ford born 08/25/2025 to Pr Catie and Dillan Ford

~Evelyn "Evie" Elizabeth Brondyke-Bridges born 09/10/2025 to Pr Lilly Brondyke and Alex Bridges

Church Closings

~Holy Cross Lutheran Church is closed in Baraga, MI, the last service was held in July 2025

~Zion Lutheran in St. Ignace held its last service on 11/02/2025. The building has been bought by a nearby Funeral Home.

Pastoral Transitions

~Pr. Jack Busche from Grace in Gwinn, MI accepted a call to Wisconsin, His last Sunday in Gwinn was 08/24/2025. Pr. Dave VanKley and Pr. Alex LaChappelle will be filling in as interims.

~Pr. Thommy Wimasae (Richter) from Calvary Lutheran in Rapid River and Zion in Manistique accepted a call in Pennsylvania. Pr. Markwell will be interim for Pastoral Care and Ministry

leadership, and Mr. Chuck Thomas will Administrative Interim.

~Pr Rita Chirala accepted a call to a church in Canada. She will be accompanied by her son Derek.

~Immanuel Lutheran church has called Pr. Morgan Simmons as their new pastor and she began on 10/27/2025.

~Pr David Murphy has been called for active duty as Chaplain in San Diego, California for the next year. Lee Goddwin and Nick Johanes will serve as interims for Good Shepherd in Peshtigo and Our Saviors in Marinette during his absence.

~LLM Larry Molloy is recovering from some serious medical problems.

~Peter Vorhes will serve as interim for Chapel of the Sea and Mohawk

~Lon Hider accepted a call to Grace Lutheran in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

~Peggy Rose, Administrative Interim at Pioneer Lake retired 07/27/2025. Administrative interim is Kari Vardis.

~First Lutheran in Iron River has called Pr Lance Crevier to serve as pastor.

~Pr. Bonny Kinnunen is retiring and returning home to the Upper Peninsula

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD WOMEN
OF THE ELCA
527 E. Margaret St.
Ironwood, MI 49938



REFLECTIONS Newsletter – December 2025



If this box has an X in it your subscription time is up! Please help support the Women of the ELCA by renewing your subscription today!



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.

We acknowledge and honor the Anishinaabeg, the original peoples, upon whose homelands we live and work, who have cared for and continue to care for this place and call it their home. We respect the rich history and ongoing relationship Indigenous peoples have with this land and the many contributions they have made. We continue to acknowledge the need for healing and reconciliation around the harmful legacy of colonization. — Approved by Synod Council on April 26, 2024, for use in Synod communications.