



Reflections...

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

GREETINGS FROM MARY ELLEN PERKINS, SWO PRESIDENT



September Musings

The month of September moves us out of the summer months and into autumn. It's one of my favorite times of year, with the cooling temperatures and the beautiful fall colors. We are especially blessed by the autumnal display here in the northern Great Lakes area. Autumn is a time of harvest. It's a time of transition. I've always considered it a time of new beginnings as well.

With the harvest, we celebrate the bounty provided by God from our farms and gardens. We worked hard in the spring and summer, tilling the soil, planting the seeds, and tending the plants. But it is God who gives the growth which yields the fruits. And with the harvest we enjoy not only the fruits of our labor and God's generosity, but we also have the opportunity to practice generosity, sharing the garden produce with our friends and neighbors and at food pantries.

During the season of transition, we see the leaves changing color, and eventually dropping from the trees. We see temperatures dropping, and days getting shorter. We transition from the activities of summer to indoor pursuits. It can be a time of introspection, when we have more indoor time to read or do journaling.

September also brings the resumption of school and church activities. Now that folks have returned home from their summer vacations, the children are back in school, and my church starts up its Wednesday Bible Adventures and Faith Formation classes. Bible studies and women's groups resume their meetings. It's a good time to examine our walk with God. Ephesians 5: 15-20 tells us to "look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." It exhorts us to "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

While we practice introspection, we examine our walk with God. Are we doing His will in our lives? Is our use of the time and talents He has given us pleasing to Him? Are we making the best use of our time, or are we engaging in time-wasting activities? Are we making use of opportunities to further God's kingdom? Can we do more to get into God's Word? Besides our personal devotions, we should join or start Bible studies where we can invite others to join us in our discipleship path. Meeting as a group gives us a great breadth of perspectives on what God's Word is telling us. Are there ministries we can get involved in, to help our communities and the world? Are we regular in our worship, where we can join with our congregation to make melody to the Lord with our hearts?

Perhaps we can also create thankfulness journals, where we regularly remind ourselves to thank God for His blessings to us—families, jobs, homes, our luxuries and small pleasures. But we also must challenge ourselves to give thanks in times of trial, to be thankful in all circumstances. We search for the positive in our lives rather than bemoaning what we lack. We especially give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for without Jesus, there wouldn't be much to be grateful for. Our lives would simply be a long slog to death and an eternity in hell. Jesus and the salvation He won for us is the greatest gift of God.

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Finally, being filled with the Spirit means submitting ourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ. We must not demand that others submit to us, insisting on our own way. We look for ways to serve one another, to bear one another's burdens. We are to live lives of humble service, not entitlement. Look at the people around us. Look for ways to encourage and support them, to invite them into our lives, to share a kind word. When we are all submitting to one another, there is no room for conflict, selfishness or cliques.

So in this coming season, let us celebrate the beauty and the harvest, giving thanks for all that God has given us. Let us take the time to re-evaluate our walk with God--our use of time and talents. Let's eagerly jump into the worship, Bible studies and ministries that are becoming more active. Let's strengthen our relationships with God and with each other.

A WORD FROM SARAH SLEETER, NGLSWO VICE PRESIDENT & HISTORIAN

A poem from Sarah

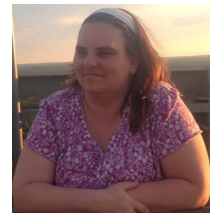
Jesus is the Holy One

The grace of God, the love of God, the holy bread of heaven,
seeks for you and reaches you to tell you, "You're forgiven."

The grace of God, the love of God, the holy bread of heaven,
calls out to me and rescues me, this gift so freely given.

The grace of God, the love of God, the holy bread of heaven,
for every friend who seeks no end, there's everlasting livin'!

by Sarah Sleeter



A WORD FROM BARB MARDEN, NGLSWO TREASURER



A happy end of summer to all of you. I've been non-stop busy this summer, particularly from July onward. Who said retirement was peaceful (probably no one)? It was my birthday on Wednesday, and on that day, my computer died. It probably could have been fixed, but I've been thinking about replacing it for a while now. That was the impetus I needed, but since I am very dependent on my computer, I needed a new one right away. Thus, my dad and I made a trip to Best Buy in Green Bay Thursday, and I've spent the last two afternoons with my computer guy getting the new laptop set up and everything transferred over. I'm very happy with my new HP Envy, so I guess I got a new computer for my birthday.

COMMENTS FROM CONNIE SCHMIDT, CLUSTER 6 REPRESENTATIVE

Philippians 2:1

“Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, And you have kindness and compassion for one another.”

I continue in prayer ...writing with a heavy heart ...two weeks in Sweden meeting relatives and on a mountaintop getting to my hotel on August 5. Within an hour hearing my dear sister Joan has passed away...it was down in the valley I went. She was the one I had so, so much to tell about this trip as she did a lot of the family research for years. Yes, I was grief stricken, but God has this I told my granddaughter at the funeral. He loves me, he comforted me in this valley. I thank God for all the years and chats we had in this life. Rest in the palms of HIS hands til we meet again.

I have learned...your presence is enough...its a way to embrace LOVE (2023 Triennial theme). Learning about the girls at Mkuza School and supporting them; helping them develop their Christian faith. Working with board members and others developing the next convention and fall retreat we are woven together in Christian LOVE. Singing...the words of a hymn or camp song...we weave, weave, weave ourselves together in HIS LOVE. Exercising in some fashion to work in movement brings JOY as we march in the Light of God! Enjoying the outdoors wherever we are in his beautiful creation. UP Wild is helping us do this during our 2024 Fall Retreat.

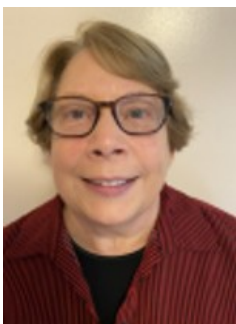
God's blessings to each of you. Enjoy the Christian fellowship wherever you are! Be kind, compassionate, benevolent, humane, sympathetic, thoughtful, gentle, gracious, and friendly to all you meet.



Editor's note: Our sympathies, Connie. Prayers for you and your family.



COMMENTS FROM MICHELLE JOHNSON, CLUSTER 8 REPRESENTATIVE



How is God calling you?

Our Synod Women's Organization (SWO) and the smaller units of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (WELCA) have been struggling since COVID-19. Many of our congregations have not had an active WELCA unit in the past two years. I am looking to see if your congregation has started meeting again, and if not, how the SWO board can help you. Are you aware that all women withing the church are members of the WELCA organization, but maybe just need an invitation to be an active partner? Are you receiving the Reflections quarterly (continued on next page.)

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Currently, only Clusters (Conferences) 6 & 8 have representation on the board and we have not seen a lot of activity. Have you lost your leadership for your group or has no one stepped forward to get your group going again? Some of our congregations have only a few members willing to participate, so how can the board help your group continue with their work either in the church or the community?

I would suggest that you join with other congregations that are within your area to increase your group size and support. If you are meeting, could you get a cluster meeting set up for the fall? If you are an active group, let us know what you are doing in your area. How is God calling you and are you willing to answer that call? "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10.

COMMENTS FROM DIANE GENDRON, BOARD MEMBER AT LARGE

Gather magazine Bible Study, "After Certainty" by Megan Johnston Aelaboun, May/June 2024 & July/August 2024

This is the study that my Wednesday virtual bible group just finished. It was a 3-part series focused on what it means to live in faith after certainty. What will the future bring us now? This is a question after a worldwide pandemic, escalating climate change, political turmoil, and a changing religious landscape.

The Bible shows us that God's people have often lived in deep uncertainty. Examples: Adam and Eve, the story of Sarah and Moses, and 1 Corinthians 13:12 where the Apostle Paul stood firm in the promises of the Gospel but his descriptions of faith do not always sound like certainty. Seeing in a mirror dimly but then seeing face to face.

June began with a look at curiosity which drew people to Jesus and his message. Holy curiosity can still lead us today to the place where God's love in Jesus transforms. "What is" to "what could be." With curiosity the disciples and many others were compelled to follow Jesus, seeking to know more. The story of Nicodemus is a lesson of importance; Jesus can often do more with our honest curiosity than with our stubborn certainty. When we ask, knock, and seek after Jesus, we may not find what we expect, but we may find something real and true.

Our curiosity has a goal. Think of the song "Jesus Loves Me". We have prayer for there are no easy answers.

Session two was on community where we learned about Martin Luther with Psalm 118. We are formed into the body of God to be the hands and feet of Christ for our neighbors. We are to love our neighbors like Christ loves us!

Session three was about compassion. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 22:37-40 that we shall love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind, but that we shall also love our neighbor as ourself. Christians can think of politics as the way we love our neighbors as a community, letting compassion shape our life together. (continued on next page.)



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Compassion is at the heart of God's instructions for human communities. Curiosity invites us to ask what is the need that certainty is trying to fill? What is the deepest longing of our hearts: to be right or to be enough?

We are fully known and fully loved by God in Jesus Christ. Let this gift of grace guide us beyond certainty to holy curiosity, community, and compassion.

FROM BARB RICE, REFLECTIONS EDITOR

September already? It is amazing to me how quickly time flies! As students and teachers return to their classrooms, my internal clock, which is still set on "school time" even though I retired from teaching in 2011, says it is time to seek to learn new things. Enter the wonderful opportunities afforded us by our synod, the NGLS, in their Lifelong Faith Formation offerings. Speaking from experience, I highly recommend that you consider investing yourself and your time in one of these valuable experiences. A link for more information and registration is attached to this message from Deacon Lori Ward, Synod Missioner.

Registration Now Open for Fall Lifelong Faith Formation

Join the conversations about our life together as a church through an interesting variety of classes which begin in September and October. This fall, our synod's classes will focus on the Bible, Prayer, Lutheran traditions, youth ministry, and more.

Here's the line-up:

~Earth's Climate Change

~Connecting through Prayer

~The Book of Proverbs

~Kaleidoscope Challenge

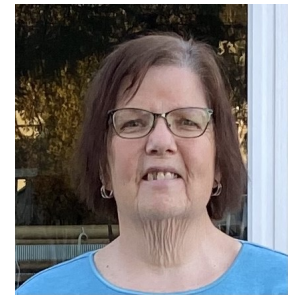
~"Raising Kids Beyond the Binary: Celebrating God's Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children," a book study.

~Growing Younger—Sharing ideas and Strategies to Engage Young People

~Introduction to Biblical Greek

~Beyond the Policy: Equipping the faith community to prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse

Registration is quick and easy! Click here for more information on each class and materials needed: <https://nglsynod.org/lifelong-faith-formation/>



COPPER COUNTRY CONFERENCE 2



Christine Ahlskog Raisanen

An Outstanding Servant of the Lord

St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Mass City is blessed to have an amazing woman who has devoted her life to serving her community and the Lord. Christine Ahlskog Raisanen has been a lifelong member of her congregation. Her father was a former pastor of St. Paul's who died too soon when she was a young girl. Chris was active in congregational life, and when she was only a teen became the church organist. She has served in this role for over fifty years! After a trip to Tanzania, she and her husband Ken began a monthly coffee hour to raise money for malaria nets and maternal and children's health services in Tanzania. To date, their ministry has raised over \$30,000! Chris is also active in a weekly quilting group that makes 80+ quilts each year that get donated to Lutheran World Relief, a local nursing home and a women's shelter, and to individuals facing health or emotional difficulties. Chris also leads a weekly Wednesday Bible Adventures Bible study for area youth who get dropped off at the church after school. She is also a wonderful friend to all, sending cards and notes to thank and encourage others in their ministries and volunteering at church.

In addition to her work at St. Paul's, she enjoyed a long career as a nurse, from which she is now retired. She and her husband volunteer at the Ontonagon County Animal Protection facility each week.



God's work. Our hands.

NEWS FROM WOMEN OF THE ELCA CHURCHWIDE



Linda Bushofsky

WELCA has had some big news this year. This past June 30, Executive Director Linda Post Bushofsky retired after twenty-two years of leading the churchwide organization. Under Bushofsky, the organization has connected leaders, grown its digital presence, deepened Bible study, carried out anti-racism and anti-trafficking work, inspired and challenged participants at triennial gatherings, and much more. One major hallmark of Bushofsky's tenure has been the launch of **2122: Growing Katie's Fund for the next 100 years**, a \$1 million capital campaign for the Katharina von Bora Luther Endowment Fund. Known as Katie's Fund, this endowment supports mission and ministry, seeking to grow bold leaders and creative ministry for generations to come. It is therefore quite fitting that WELCA is inviting women to make a contribution to this capital campaign in honor of Bushofsky's leadership. Katie's Fund supports ministries focused on global sharing, leadership development, and faith in daily life.

With Linda Bushofsky's retirement, WELCA announced the appointment of Jennifer Hockenbery for a 12-month term as the Interim Executive Director as of July 1. Jennifer is a college dean, philosophy professor, and editor of the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*. She has a strong background in Lutheran theology, management experience, astute listening skills and a collaborative leadership style. Our SWO is very excited to have the remarkable opportunity to meet Jennifer Hockenbery at our upcoming convention.



Jennifer Hockenbery

**Triennial Gathering
Des Moines, Iowa
July 16-19, 2026**



WELCA is also engaged in planning its 2026 Triennial Gathering, July 16-19. We here in the Northern Great Lakes Synod are delighted that it will be held in Des Moines, Iowa, which is not too bad a trek for most of us. Because the Gathering will be held relatively near to us, I encourage our women to plan to attend. Last year only the three delegates designated to attend the Convention also attended the Gathering afterwards. It would be great to have a larger contingent. The gatherings are an exciting time with large worship services and interesting speakers and workshops.

NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

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REFLECTIONS Newsletter – September 2024



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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.