



The Communicator

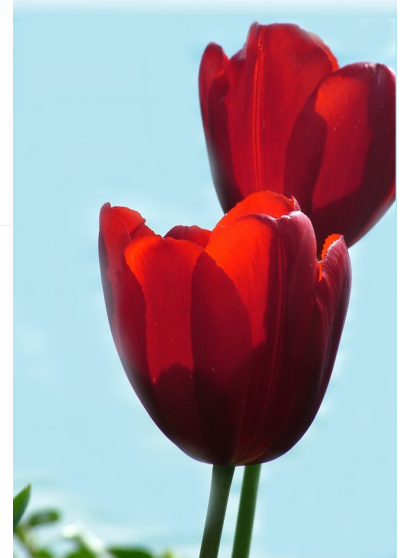
Gathered In Grace



**Registration for the 2017 Synod
Convention is now open!**

Click [here](#) to download your publicity packet with all the information and registration materials you need about our 2017 Convention on May 6 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, MN.

See you there!



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A Word from Your President

I know you are busy with many church activities during this Lenten season. I have read we are supposed to pause and contemplate during this time of the church year. Unfortunately, I am not good at this. Church activities are abundant during these 40 days, so I find slowing down difficult. I imagine you are feeling a little bit the same.

Spring Gatherings will be started very soon-April 1st! I always enjoy attending your conference events and try to be at as many as I can. Some of you have them on the same day, so that is not possible. Still have not figured out how to be in 2 places at once! It would come in handy. This spring is very busy for me with family activities, so I will not be able to attend as many as I would like. Know that I am grateful for all you do. Wonderful things are happening in Southwestern Minnesota.

Your synodical board has planned a wonderful convention for you! It will be held on Saturday, May 6 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Redwood Falls. Theme is "Gathered In Grace." Our theme verse is "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-not the result of works, so that no one may boast." Theme hymn is "O Day Full of Grace." In-Kind Offering : Baby Kits and School Kits (all other kits will be accepted, too). You may also bring Christian literature. Cans for Katie's Fund will also be available. Registration for this event is \$50.00. I hope you have received the publicity packet via email. Contact your conference president or board liaison if you did not receive it. Diane Bulthuis is our guest speaker. She writes a column "From the Back Porch." You will have 2 workshop opportunities from 4 options. They are: Living in a World of Color, Body Breakdowns Build Spiritual Strength, Lakota Heritage, Spirituality, and ART, and Incarceration and New Life. Don't forget about the uplifting worship and singing! Pastor Becca Krogstad will be our preacher at closing worship and Pastor Shannon Wachter will lead opening devotions and serve as chaplain for the convention.

New for this year with our 1-day Convention is a Friday night option. We are having "Picnic with Bishop Jon and Robyn Anderson." This will happen on Friday night, May 5 from 6:30-8pm at the Synod Office. There is no charge for the meal, but a freewill offering will be taken. Just be sure to mark your registration sheet that you are coming, so we can order enough food. This gives you the opportunity to visit with the bishop, see the Synod Office, and stay overnight for a girls' night with friends from Women of the ELCA.

We are offering 10 Scholarships for women who have never attended a convention. Please nominate someone. They will be included in the Friday night picnic, stay overnight, and attend the convention on Saturday. All expenses are paid by the Synod, except mileage. Kathy Bergs and Karen Skarphol will serve as mentors.

I hope you are registered for the 10th Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis, "All Anew" this July 13-16. I know that several of you are interested the 1-day option, preferably when Lehmah Gbowee is speaking. I have yet to learn when that will be! I share your frustration with this, too! When I know I will let you know, especially Jan Kittelson. She has a group in our northern area of the synod who are interested in this for a bus. Speaking of busing, a bus is available in the northern area. Contact Jan Kittelson about this. There is a poster about this in the issue of **The Communicator**. For those of you in the southern area, contact me about a bus. I have one reserved, but if there is not enough interest to be cost effective, it will be cancelled. I need to know by the

Convention. However, the South Dakota synod has 2 buses travelling to the Gathering. It is possible that will be a better option. One is going on Highway 212. The other is on Interstate 90 or other southern routes. Let me know as soon as possible that you are interested in a bus. Jan Kittelson is the contact person in the northern area. Thank you!

Joanna Rustad and I presented "Women of the ELCA: Not Your Mamas' Ladies Aid" at the Equipping Congregations Event on Saturday, February 25th in Willmar. We shared the message with about 50 women including some young gals who shared their emails to receive our information. I hope they are nominated for a scholarship!!

Jesus said, "Feed My Sheep!" In the past several years we have done that with Larry Strenge who received some matching funds. We did a wonderful job promoting these events and have been asked to do it again! \$29,000.00 in matching funds was offered for a Packing Event for the Willmar area. It will be much like to one held in St. Cloud last summer. Food is packed by people of various backgrounds, religions, ethnicity, etc. Working together for the common good builds relationships that are very important in these days in which we live. Last year in St. Cloud, the packing event brought Bishop Jon, pastors, priests, people of many ethnicities, churches, ages, and backgrounds together. A few weeks later, the knifing incident occurred. Those religious leaders and community people were able to come together to help the community of St. Cloud deal with the aftermath. Trust had been built. Packing food became much more than that. The Packing Event in Willmar will be on July 13th in Willmar. The packets will again be for the backpack programs, food shelves, and veterans programs in the Willmar area. We need to raise \$29,000.00 by mid-June. You have done an excellent job in the past. Let's do this again and "Feed God's People." More information will be given at your Spring Gatherings. Might want to bring your checkbook!

This is the second electronically sent **Communicator**. Another opportunity to sign up will be at the Convention at the registration desk. You may also contact Christina at a new link <http://eepurl.com/cGaXjX>. You will receive a confirmation email with this one. I know this is all new, but going well. Just let us know if we need to add people or change an email.

Have a blessed Easter! See you at our Convention in Redwood Falls! It will be great!

Blessings to You Always!

Kristy Henriksen, President



Prayers for Tuesdays @ Two

As I am writing today rain is falling in Apache Junction AZ, where this "snowbird" and hubby have enjoyed three winter months at Countryside RV Resort. New acquaintances have become dear friends. It's been a great experience to view the majestic Superstition mountains daily and the red rock country in and around Sedona AZ. God's creation is truly amazing! The prickly pears are turning pink; the picturesque desert cactus and palm trees are definitely different from the fields, forests and lakes of Minnesota.

Throughout the next 13 weeks I plan to concentrate on the fruits of the spirit as found in Galatians 5:22-23. I pray that this will help you in your spiritual and prayer life. I especially need help with "self-control" - specifically when eating and speaking. I recently heard a powerful sermon on taming the tongue. The pastor suggested using the word THINK as an acronym. THINK before you speak; ask yourself these questions: is it True? is it Helpful? is it Inspiring? is it Necessary? is it Kind? Make it a conscious effort to "be careful little tongue what you say" - remember that S.S. song from long ago??

April 4 - pray for spring rains that will water the earth in due season, whenever it is needed.

April 11 - pray for old, new and forever friends. Keep our friendships free from gossip! Speak kindly to one another!

April 18 - pray for our pastors that they will be true Christian servants of the church, in thought, Word and deed.

April 25 - pray for confirmation students that they will remember, once they are confirmed they are not graduated from learning about God.

May 2 - pray for growth and beauty of flower gardens, vegetable gardens, fruit trees, etc. to help feed the hungry.

May 9 - pray for mothers everywhere all over the world; young mothers, new mothers, and those mothers who must leave their children with daycare moms. "Happy Mother's Day"

May 16 - pray for the fruits of the Spirit to become a part of our life.

May 23 - pray for self-control; help me to think before speaking!

May 30 - pray for love and joy; hugs and kisses for the unloved!

June 6 - pray for peace and patience;

June 13 - pray for kindness and generosity;

June 20 - pray for faithfulness and gentleness;

June 27 - pray for delegates/voting members as they prepare for the business at the triennial churchwide convention in Minneapolis July, 2017.

"Farewell winter, hello springtime!" God's peace to all...in Jesus' name. Amen

Ruth Ann Anderson, Vice-president

Update on the PV for Phebe Project

"The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough."

*Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Pres of Liberia

This project is a manifestation of President Sirleaf's quote above. A faith walk from the very beginning, indeed, an army of believers brought it here to this point!

And thanks to the incredible support of over \$400,000 from more than 600 individuals, 400 ELCA congregations, conferences, and synods from west coast to east coast, Global Health Ministries, Wheat Ridge Ministries, the ELCA Churchwide Global Missions office, National Geographic Society, and countless additional supporters, the dream of bringing solar power to Phebe Hospital and School of Nursing is being realized!!! From Liberian concert fundraisers in the Twin Cities Metro, MN to speaking engagements in the Grand Canyon Synod, from ice cream socials in Pine City, MN to various fundraisers in New Jersey, this project is a living manifestation of the unstoppable, caring, powerful, **Bold Women** of the ELCA today.

Two containers of components, materials, and supplies have been shipped, and the team from RREAL will be on a plane on March 20th to begin the 100kW installation in collaboration with 8 local partners who will gain a paid hands-on learning opportunity in installing solar energy systems. The first container has arrived at Phebe Hospital and is being off-loaded on February 10th, 2017. The second container is expected at the beginning of March.

To find more information please visit: <http://www.nemnsynod.org/pv-for-phebe.html> for photos and way to stay updated on their

Challenge to Give Forward

The holiday season is the perfect time to consider what we are thankful for and why. But Thanksgiving and Christmas aren't the only times of the year to count our blessings. This spring and summer, let us prayerfully consider these ideas:

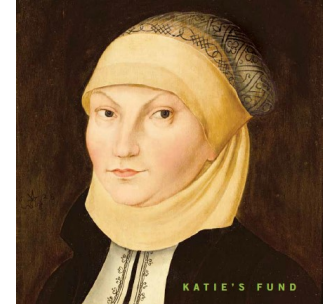
- At a regular meeting this month, talk about Katharina von Bora Luther and explain how Katie's Fund supports Women of the ELCA ministries. Take up a special offering and share at our upcoming SW Minnesota Women of the ELCA Convention.
- Invite your women's group or your whole congregation to give to Katie's Fund in honor of someone on Mother's Day or in honor of someone's graduation this spring.
- Ask your women's group to give a Thankoffering in honor of each of the young women who are being confirmed in your congregation this spring.
- Instead of taking up an offering, designate a gift in your annual women's budget for either Katie's Fund or Thankoffering recognition.
- Plan to hold a Saturday retreat this summer using the three-part summer Bible Study in the Gather magazine. During the lunch hour, take up a special offering for Katie's Fund.
- While the annual appeal for Katie's Fund takes place each May, and Thankofferings are typically shared at the end of the year, gifts can be used at any time of the year. Your generosity makes a significant difference in women's lives, and God's ministry throughout the world.

Mission Community: Give Forward

The Bible is filled with commands to give thanks to God. The Psalms are always a comforting place to turn for reminders in the joys of gratitude. Most verses go on to list reasons why we should thank Him, such as "His love endures forever" (Psalm 136:3), "He is good" (Psalm 118:29) and "His mercy is everlasting." (Psalm 100:5) Thanksgiving and praise go together. We cannot adequately praise and worship God without also being thankful. Knowing God's blessings are ever present & constant, we can give to others with confidence!

At our Annual SW Minnesota Women of the ELCA Convention, at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Redwood Falls on May 6th, units and individuals will have the opportunity to give thanks to God for the many good things He has sent our way. Sharing our gifts and resources with our neighbor, is pleasing to God. Being bold women of the WELCA, we are called to share our blessings that support and help develop

leaders throughout God's world, bridge cultures and nurture faith. We can accomplish this by supporting areas of stewardship like Katie's Fund or Thankofferings! Bring your support for both to the summer convention!



For more information on Katie's Fund and other Stewardship opportunities, please visit: www.welca.org/katiesfund

Mission Community
Kim Christianson, Coral Ackman

"Knowing God's blessings are ever present & constant, we can give to others with confidence!"

Mission Growth: Check Your Habits

Growth is, or should be, the goal of the Christian. If you have stopped growing as a Christian, you need help. Maybe you could use a "spiritual" check-up to see just how you are doing. Max Lucado in his daily devotions suggests we check out our habits. He advises us to cultivate the following four habits into regular activities and just see what happens.

First, the habit of prayer...Second, the habit of study...Third, the habit of giving...And last of all, the habit of fellowship.

Following is a verse which says a lot on this subject. Second Peter 3:18 NIV *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

We are blessed to have the opportunity to be both inspired and moved to acquire all of these habits at the 10th WELCA Triennial which will be held in Minneapolis on July 13-16. We'll "pray", "study", "learn about giving" and have a wonderful "fellowship" experience with like Christians from all over the country. If you are going, I'll see you there. If you are not yet registered, you need to give it serious consideration. It may be a once in a lifetime experience and perhaps even a life changing experience. Some Conferences are working on setting up bus transportation for one day and a three day trip. If transportation is an issue for you, please check with your conference president.

What are you doing at this time to grow yourself as a Christian as well as assist women in your family, your neighborhood, your church, or your conference to grow these four above mentioned habits? Sometime we concentrate more on our physical habits, you know, don't smoke, don't drink, get plenty of sleep, get plenty of exercise, eat healthy. Look around you and seek out opportunities to grow your "spiritual" habits. Spring is a time of growth for everything. Good luck with the plans you may have. May God bless your efforts.

Mission Growth

Bonnie Jaeger, Marcella Chapman, Betty Brandt



Dean Ndlovu, members of the Empangeni South Parish and Christina Nelson—February 2017

Mission Action: Look Outwards

Let's name the elephant in the room. There are many churches around the country that are very afraid right now. There are churches that are losing members or at least not bringing new members in. These churches see their sister churches closing their doors and the natural response is to be afraid for themselves. Here's the problem with fear. When we are afraid, we look inward. We look only for ways to desperately preserve what precious little we feel we have and think to ourselves: "It is not a time to take risks. It is not a time for change. It is not a time to **look outwards.**" Unfortunately, this is exactly what God calls us to do. When fear surrounds us, we are called to push past it, walk with God and take action!

This past February, my husband and I had the privilege of representing the Lakeland Conference on a journey to our partners in South Africa. We spent an amazing two weeks with Dean Ndlovu and other friends on the partnership committee traveling around the Empangeni Circuit. We visited many parishes in the circuit and other projects throughout, some relating to the church some not. But, the parish that stood out for me were the 2,200 active members of the Empangeni South Parish. Each parish we visited had different stories to tell about the history of that parish and lessons on culture; this parish wanted to share with us the value they put in using what they have to serve their community. One congregation of the parish, Ndabayakhe, had an old church building that was not used for much. So, they **looked outwards.** They saw the growing number of young children in their area and created a creche (daycare) run by church volunteers to help these parents and grandparents that desperately need to work. Another congregation, Ekwethabeni, provides support for needy and orphaned children; members will check in on those children and provide food and school uniforms. Most of this is funded solely by the church. Thanduyise Congregation is currently building their church. While they can't make official plans yet, members there told me with great excitement that they are already dreaming about ways to use this new building to serve their neighbors.

Empangeni South Parish knows to **look outwards** and serve. They see the ways God has blessed them with buildings, time and talent and then find where to use those blessings for God and for their neighbor. And, the happy consequence of this is that they are GROWING! Ekwethabeni Congregation has people standing outside every Sunday because they are, literally, bursting at the seams! Thanduyise is building a church to seat hundreds!

My challenge to you, beloved Sisters in Christ, is this: **look outwards.** Especially when fear drives you to look inwards, instead look around yourself, your family, your church. Where have you been richly blessed? Now **look outwards** to your community. Where can you put that blessing into action?

Mission Action
Christina Nelson, Joanna Rustad, Sara Larson

Empangeni South

Empangeni South has 9 congregations and serves approximately 2,200 active members including adults and children. The names of the congregations are: Nqutshini, Ngqolothi, Sigisi, Ndabayakhe, Eniwe, Ekwethabeni, Umhlathuze, Thanduyise and Indumiso.



Rev. Biyela speaking at Ekwethabeni Lutheran Church



Inside the storage unit at Mhlathuze congregation. Members come at 5am every Sunday to set up a tent for worship. The plans to build their church were just approved by the city in January after a three year wait.



Church building project for Thanduyise congregation. This project has taken 15 years. Their goal is to be complete by the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.



Faith Talk with Kristy: Walking Wet

A few years back I was involved with *The Child In Our Hands* initiative. It later became *Passing On Faith* and today is *Vibrant Faith Ministries*. It is helpful in teaching faith to the next generation while enriching one's own faith. I love the program and all I learned. What I learned I continue to use in my faith walk as a mother and grandmother. It explored the baptism promise and encouraged all to embrace that sacrament and "walk wet." To quote Luther's Small Catechism, "What does this mean for us?"

In baptism we are claimed by God as His precious child. We are marked with the Cross of Christ forever! This is a big deal. We did not earn it. And how could we? But, we are to walk as a Child of God—"walking wet." Baptism gives us strength to know that whatever happens, we know whose we are. We know that whatever we do or don't do, we are forgiven by a gracious and loving Father. It sounds so easy to just relax and say thank you. But, of course, it is not. Life is messy. After all, we are humans!

Baptism and water and moisture have been in a lot of my devotions and life lately. A recent gospel lesson was the woman at the well. My Daily Grace devotion has had water references this month—"DIVING deeper into Lent," "dry well", "how dry I am", "profoundly dehydrated", to name a few. We also received 5 plus inches of snow on my birthday!

I think the Lord is trying to tell me something! Most of these are not so pleasant thoughts-dry and not just dehydrated but profoundly dehydrated. But, all I have to do is drink, right? Why is that so difficult? I get busy, and I guess you probably do, too. We forget to replenish ourselves with water when we are thirsty. So when we are dehydrated spiritually, we need to take a big spiritual drink and remember our baptism. Get lost in the Word. Pray. Listen to what Our Father is telling us. He may use your friends and family to speak to you. Don't forget that! Rest and honor the Sabbath. It might have to be on a Tuesday some weeks. This is okay. You are a Child of God!

At a Conference of Presidents, we were discussing self-care of leaders. The consensus was that leaders felt that "the well was drying up." Leaders were giving and planning and doing!!! The well was getting dry. We were then told to not think of ourselves as a well, giving and giving until dry, BUT as a reservoir that gives, but is also replenished as it gives. Let the work flow through us and not out of us. If you are reading this, you are a leader. I hear you when you say you are tired. So let us try to take some time to be replenished. Remember our baptisms. Put your hand in that font. Thank our Father. And be renewed for a new day.

Walk Wet!

What's a Triennial?

The Triennial is an event that occurs every three years. Women of the ELCA gather from all across the country.

The first three days of Triennial is the Convention. This is where voting members will assemble and discuss resolutions, budgets and other issues of the national WELCA organization.

Then, July 13-16 is the gathering. This is the event that is open to all women. It is three days of amazing speakers, workshops, service projects, films and other special events/tours.

For more up-to-date information about speakers, workshops, schedules and more, please visit: www.welcatg.org

Triennial Gathering 2017: All Anew Announcements



Registration

Join us for three days of fun, fellowship and faith! Click [here](#) to go to the online registration or make a hotel reservation.

Transportation

Are you thinking of attending the gathering but don't want to drive? Check out these busing options!

- Glacial Ridge Conference is offering a bus service leaving from Kerkhoven with several stops in towns along Hwy 12. Click [here](#) to download the flyer for more information.
- Kristy Henriksen is currently working on busing options possibly leaving from Pipestone. Please contact her at henriksen7@mchsi.com or 507-825-3122 if at all interested.
- Board member Kim Christianson can be contacted (christianson.kim@gmail.com) by anyone needing bus transportation to Minneapolis Convention Center on Saturday, July 15th. A coach bus has been booked with Southwest Tours in Marshall. Price is \$25.00 for the one day trip to/from the Triennial Gathering. Route will be on highway 19, with pick ups in Redwood Falls, and Gaylord. Those riding the bus will leave after the concert (National Lutheran Choir) at Central Lutheran Church Saturday evening. Tickets for the concert must be purchased in advanced by those attending.

Gathered In Grace



Convention 2017: Gathered in Grace Announcements

Friday Night Opportunity

If you are thinking about traveling to Redwood Falls the night before the convention (you can see hotel options by clicking [here](#)), we are planning a special event for you! Meet us from 6:30—8pm at the Synod Park for a meet and greet with Bishop Jon and Robyn Sand Anderson. If you've never had a chance to get to know our Bishop, his wife or even the synod office, this is a fantastic opportunity. Supper will be available for a free will offering.

In-Kind Offerings

The truck will be open to collect your baby kits, school kits, Christian literature and all other offerings from 7—8:15am on Saturday May 6 at the Gloria Dei parking lot. Please have your offering ready by doing the following BEFORE dropping off (for more details, please see the sidebar):

- Have all kits properly assembled and in boxes weighing no more than 30lb
- Label each box with your church name, conference name and the contents that box (NOTE: only one type of kit per box)
- Make sure the boxes are securely closed up

Calling all Crochet Friends

If you are coming to convention and love to crochet, we need you! SWMN Synod will be providing crochet flowers for all members attending the triennial gathering in July. If you would like to help us create these pieces, please bring your G or H crochet hook and stop by the registration table to pick up yarn and a pattern. (See the pattern ahead of time [here](#))

In Kind Offering Resources

This year, Mission Action's focus has been Baby Care Kits and School Kits. These kits were established last fall as the greatest need for Lutheran World Relief. If you are looking for help in assembling these kits, check out the links below:

- [Overview of all LWR care kits](#)
- [Baby care kit guidelines](#)
- [VIDEO: Tips on the baby care kits](#)
- [School kit guidelines](#)
- [VIDEO: Tips on school kits](#)



2017 Spring Conference Gatherings

Conference	Date/Time	Location	Attending	Program
Crow River	April 29, 2017 8:30am	Gethsemane Lutheran Church Dassel, MN	Betty Brandt	“Martin Luther at Gethsemane” Rev. Larry Strenge Flyer
Glacial Ridge	April 24, 2017 4:30pm	Chippewa Falls & Shepard of the Hills hosting @ Glenwood Lutheran Church	Bonnie Jaeger Joanna Rustad	“Christ Be Our Light” Music by Paul Green
Great River	April 1, 2017 8:30am	Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church Foley, MN	Joanna Rustad	“Martin Luther at Gethsemane” Rev. Larry Strenge
Lac Qui Parle	April 18, 2017 8:30am	Big Bend Milan, MN	Kim Christianson Kristy Henriksen	“Saved by Grace thru Faith” Pastor Dan Baumann
Lakeland	April 1, 2017 9am—noon	Faith Lutheran Church Spicer, MN	Christina Nelson Maria Lokensgard	“Decluttering: Mind, Body & Spirit” Amy Larson
Minnesota Valley	April 18, 2017 5pm	Bernadotte Lutheran Church Lafayette, MN	Diane Fredin Kristy Henriksen Maria Lokensgard	“Hope” Ayan Musse Flyer
Prairie	April 22, 2017 8:30am	First English Lutheran Church Tyler, MN	Sara Larson	“He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” Pr. Jennifer Thul, Pr. Denise Fossen, Sara Larson, Barb Nelson Flyer
Scenic Valley	April 20, 2017	English Lutheran Church Walnut Grove, MN	Ruth Ann Anderson Betty Brandt	
Shetek	April 22, 2017 8:30am	Grace Lutheran Church Westbrook, MN	Marcella Chapman	“Panama” Herminio Nuniz
Watonwan River	April 8, 2017	Trinity Lutheran Church Truman, MN	Marcella Chapman	

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