

Southwestern Minnesota

Women of the ELCA The Communicator



2025 *SW MN SWO* Convention Theme: "I Love to Tell the Story"

Logo: Developed by Carmen Maus

Date: Saturday, May 3, 2025
at Vinje Lutheran Church, Willmar, MN

Theme Verse: Joel 1:3 "Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." NRSV

In-Kind Offering: quilts and kits for LWR and GHM

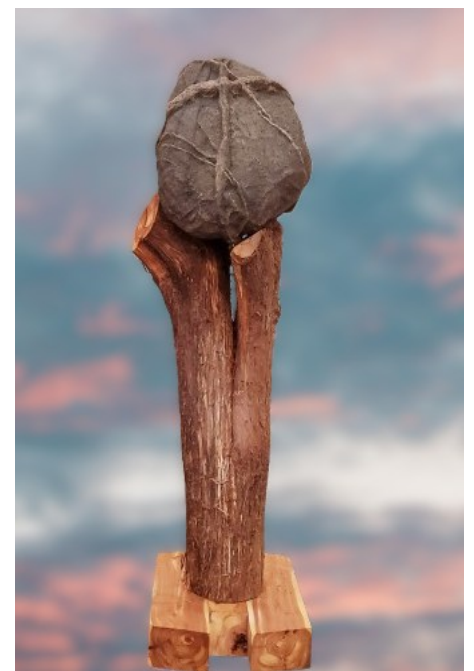
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TRIENNIAL **GATHERING**

is scheduled for
July 16-19, 2026
in Des Moines, Iowa
Start making plans
Less than 2 yrs away

The next business meeting of
the SW MN SWO board
Vinje Lutheran Church in
Willmar at 3 pm on
Friday, May 2, 2025.



“A Word from Your Synodical President”

A NOTE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT.....

Spring has sprung, with snow on the way!!! The Conferences have been planning their “Spring Gatherings”. A list of them is listed here in the Communicator.

The SWO board has been busy planning the 2025 Convention to be held in Willmar, at Vinje Lutheran Church on Saturday, May 3rd. There will be a truck for Lutheran World Relief and Global Health Ministries. The informational packets are just about ready to go out to all the churches.

This year the Lutheran Men In Mission will be joining the SW MN Women at convention.

Please welcome them.

The Nominating Committee has been working hard to find women to run on the ballot for the SWO board. This year we also vote for voting delegates for the Triennial, 2026. If you are interested in either of these positions, please let me know.

BUS TRIP!!! The SWO board is planning a bus trip on June 16, 2025. We will be visiting Lutheran World Relief and Global Health Ministries. The bus will be picking up at different places in SW MN. The cost will be \$20 each and the bus holds 56 women. So if you are interested, be sure to get your name and money in as soon as possible. An application is here in the communicator.

We are working hard to bring you fun, information and making new friends, at the SW MN Convention in May. Be sure to bring your husbands, so they can attend the Lutheran Men In Mission, at their convention.

God Bless and see you on May 3, 2025...

Ilene Penke, your SWMN Synodical President

“LEADING WITH HEART” “GIFTING”

NAME OF ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	PLANS FOR FUNDS
Old Westbrook WELCA	Lamberton, MN	Purchase batting for quilts
Women of the ELCA	Fulda, MN	Quilting supplies
Bethel WELCA	Lester Prairie, MN	Purchase items for kits
St. Matthew’s	Wabasso, MN	Purchase supplies for blankets
Sillerud Lutheran WELCA	Balaton, MN	Purchase batting for quilts
Kongsvinger Church KLCW	Herman, MN	Purchase quilting materials
Glenwood Lutheran Quilters	Glenwood, MN	Purchase batting for quilts
Our Savior’s Lutheran WELCA	Currie, MN	Purchase quilting supplies
Shetek Conference	Lamberton, MN	For mission
Women of West Zion	Hancock, MN	Purchase kit & quilt items
Grace Lutheran Women	Brownnton, MN	Purchase quilting supplies
Belmont WELCA	Windom, MN	Purchase quilt batting
Highwater Lutheran WELCA	Lamberton, MN	Items for Christmas boxes
Christ Lutheran WELCA	Slayton, MN	Speakers & Education
Peace Lutheran WELCA	Cosmos, MN	Sunday School support
Great River Conference	Sauk Center, MN	Funds for concert Oct. 2025
American Lutheran WELCA	Worthington, MN	Funds for quilting & speakers
Stockholm Lutheran WELCA	Cokato, MN	Outreach in the community
Grace Lutheran WELCA	Luverne, MN	Parish Care
American Lutheran WELCA	Gaylord, MN	Purchase materials for quilts

The SW MN Synodical board would like to thank all the church units and conferences that applied for the GIFTING of funds we set aside to help pay back what you generously give to the WELCA. These names were the first 20 to apply for the funds. All checks went out on February 1, 2025. We sincerely thank the Lord for all the gifts your organizations send to the board each year. Go in Peace and Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Mission Action/Stewardship

Greetings! My name is Cathy Blair, the newest member on the Synodical Board. I live about a mile south of Fulda with my husband of 36 years and our grandson. We adopted him 5 years ago. I am a member of First Lutheran in Worthington. Thirteen years ago I retired from MN West in Worthington. There I taught sociology for twenty five years.

As a board member, I am able to work on Mission Support with Karen Skarphol. I have been making mission quilts for over ten years. Sewing and quilting have been a hobby for many years. Karen and I have noted a few changes to the guidelines of Lutheran World Relief quilt and kit making. We have put together some points to take note when reviewing the new instruction book.

1. THROW AWAY materials written for years other than 2024. There are many changes to quilt assembly and kit requirements. We need to be aware of those changes and not dismiss them..
2. One change is there is a stated size in identifying 15”x 18” x 25” x 30” instead of just stating “hand towel”.
3. No fleece, fiberglass, polar fleece, or microfiber should be used in any part of the quilt or any kits.
4. When tying quilts use only crotchet thread, or embroidery floss.
5. When tying quilts space the ties no more than 6 to 8 inches apart and tied with a double knot.
6. Batting can be purchased at Oklee Quilting Supply, Inc., Econo Batting 60”wide by 55 yds. Ideal for Mission Quilts. www.okleequiltinginc.com
7. Lutheran World Relief donations can be dropped off at:

Motor Express	Lutheran World Relief Warehouse
2807 N. First Ave.	398 E. Richmond
Sioux Falls, SD.	South Saint Paul, MN
605-335-1600	
8. Quilts should be made warm. They are used to keep children and adults warm.

If you have using yarn to tie quilts it may be a bit of a change to start using embroidery floss or crochet thread. I believe you will find it easy to use. My quilt group had to change finding it much easier to pull the needle through the quilt when tying. If you have a great deal of yarn that needs to find a new home, I have a source. Please e-mail me for more information.

If you are not familiar with Global Health Mission they ask for a few different kits to donate. Please ask your Mission Action member for information.

The websites for both Global Ministries and Lutheran World Relief provide important information to make our projects successful.

You will see many requests for additional money to ship donations, by Lutheran World Relief to get to where they are needed. As you prepare for quilt-blessing or other times when quilts might be on pews or viewed by the congregation pin an envelope to the quilt or kit. On the outside of the envelope state how much it will cost to ship the item. A group of quilt makers used this method and received over \$800 from congregation members.

The Bible is quite clear as to our job as Christians. We are to serve one another by helping at a time of need. Lutherans are generous people. Remember to tell the need and ask. Thank you to all that give of yourselves and donate!

We are truly blessed!

Cathy Blair
Mission Action
cjblair68@gmail.com

Link to quilt kits
<https://lwr.org/downloads/quilt-kit-ministry-guide-2025>



Message from our SW MN Synod Minister



A Message from Pastor Heather

Lately, I have been reflecting on the biblical book of Ruth and the significance of faithful friendship. The book of Ruth is one of my favorite books in the Bible for a few reasons. First, because of its length, only a few chapters, you can read it and re-read it again, allowing it to capture your imagination and faith. Second, I love the book of Ruth because of its main characters, Ruth and Naomi, and their faithful friendship to one another. We as women need relationships, friendship, companionship in our lives. From our best friends in our youngest years who hung out with us on the playground at school, to our friends as we built our dreams and our families, to our friends through the years who listened to our joys and our heartbreaks, we as women need relationship and friendship.

Take a moment to think about those friends who friendships have meant the world to you. Perhaps they were friends for only a short time in your life but impacted you tremendously. Perhaps they were friends for a certain season. Perhaps they are long time friends that have spanned much of your life with you.

This fall, I encourage you to read the book of Ruth, once, twice, maybe more. As you read it, give thanks to God for your friends. Then reach out to those friends to do something to celebrate your friendship. Go for coffee. Sit in a quiet spot together and reminisce. Call each other more frequently. Send emails or real letters to one another. Celebrate the legacy of Ruth and Naomi's faithful friendship!

Pastor Heather Culuris

SW MN Synod Minister for Engaging Leaders

Email: Heather.culuris@swmnelca.org

EDITORS CORNER:

Note for Units and Conferences: Please send me special items that may be of interest to others in our Synod. I don't guarantee to have room in the Communicator or on the Website for everything but, I will try to put out there what I can. Stay in contact with your Liaisons or send items direct to swmnelca@gmail.com Jane Tongen



"Happiness is coffee shared
with a friend"

"Coffee and friends,
the perfect blend"

"Coffee is a hug in a mug"

"There's nothing like a little coffee to
get you through the day, especially
when shared with friends"

A great cup of coffee and the ear of
a good friend are
the best kind of therapy.

Coffee and friends are treasures
that go together.



Mission Community/Justice

**Sometimes we need a repeat.
This may have taken place awhile back
but still very relevant today.**

Calling women to action:

When the voting members of the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017) addressed domestic abuse and violence, they called all expressions of our organization into action. First and foremost, they required women in this organization to educate themselves about the signs of domestic abuse and violence and the services available in their community by inviting shelter workers, social workers, counselors and police officers to speak.

Calling women to action, the voting members offered the following suggestions.

Post information for local domestic violence hotlines and other hotlines in church restrooms, on bulletin boards, in church newsletters and in other publications: National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-888-799-SAFE
[National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline](#) – 1-866-331-9474
National Child Abuse Hotline – 1-800-4-A-CHILD
National Elder Abuse Hotline – 1-800-677-1116

- Assist people in crisis by connecting them with agencies, professionals, and resources, offering financial support to local domestic abuse and violence shelters and donating items for their “needs list”, such as personal hygiene items, food, clothing, furniture, toys,

quilts, and attending their events and fundraisers.

- Volunteer at a local domestic abuse and violence shelter.
- Make every ELCA congregation, where possible, a safe space for victims of domestic abuse and violence, and making it known.

Further educate ourselves about domestic abuse and violence, such as [ELCA Justice for Women](#), [Faith Trust Institute](#), [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) [Children’s Defense Fund](#).



**Lets all Work Together
to accomplish lots!**

Mission Growth/Discipleship

Editor Note: I missed getting this article in the last issue, But it is so great just needed to print!

I am a retired teacher. Every fall, I get so excited about school starting. My friend and I joke about getting excited to visit the school supply aisles. Every Fall, at my church, we are re-starting our circle meetings and Bible Studies. That is exciting, too. Mission Growth is all about Bible Study. So, we hope that you are getting excited to restart your Bible Studies, too.

Be sure to not be the silent partner. I think Mission Growth is the silent partner to Mission Action and Mission Community. I have been in several local units in two states and Mission Growth just isn't talked about or even acknowledged very much. Think about your own local circle or women's group. Where is Mission Growth? If you are the Mission Growth person, don't be a silent partner.

Encourage your folks to be excited about the Bible Studies. Remind them that several articles in the Gather Magazine relate to the topic of the Bible Study. Read the articles well before your meeting and share a tidbit from one of them to entice others to get reading. When you are finished with your Gather magazine, find a woman in your church who is not active in a circle Bible Study group and share your magazine with them. Direct them to a meaningful article and maybe they will look further in the magazine and find the Bible Study and try it out.

At our church, we realized that our two daytime circles had combined, due to a lower active membership, and our night circle moved to the afternoon, as we are getting older. So, that eliminated any choices for our working ladies to be actively involved in our circles. Maybe this has also happened at your church. It was unintentional, but created a difficulty. We brainstormed and started to offer a Gather Bible Study during the coffee fellowship/ Sunday School hour. Was it successful? Not really. But I think that was because we did not individually approach and welcome these ladies to get them to try it out. Maybe you can think of a solution in your church that would work to get more members involved in Bible study.

Gather is not the only Bible study option out there. There are many devotional books and Bible studies that can be used by an individual. It really doesn't matter what we are studying as long as we are reading our Bible and spending time in prayer. So, encourage your ladies, offer Bible study ideas and options, and pray for the spiritual growth of the women of your church.

If you find something that really works well, send it to me and I will share it with the other churches, here in the communicator. I pray that you will be blessed and enriched as you dive deeper into God's Word.

Yours in Christ, Brenda Danielson



**Study how you want,
“Just Do It”**

Prayers & Special Items



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.”

1. *A Prayer for the Ukraine and Russia.*

In a time of immense suffering, we pray for a just and lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia, that the suffering of the people may end, and that a future of reconciliation and cooperation may emerge. *In your name, Amen.*

2. *A Prayer for victims of natural disasters.*

God of hope and mercy, we lift up to you all victims of natural disasters and those responding with assistance and aid. Protect all who are in any form of danger; strengthen the weary, console the grieving, heal the suffering; and bless those engaged in disaster relief efforts with safety and courage.

In your name, Amen.

3. *A Prayer for Israel and Palestine*

May God's compassion guide the people of Israel and Palestine toward a peaceful future, where justice, understanding, and respect prevail, and where all can live in dignity and security.

In your name, Amen.

4. *A Prayer for after the US election*

We lift up all our duly elected leaders and public servants, those who will serve us as president, as legislators and judges, those in the military and law enforcement. Heal us from our differences and unite us, O Lord, with a common purpose, dedication, and commitment to achieve liberty and justice in the years ahead for all people, *In your name, Amen.*

5. *A Prayer for health in all the world*

Almighty God, we come before you, seeking your healing touch for all people on this earth. We pray for the eradication of disease and suffering, and for the restoration of health and vitality to every individual. May the sick find comfort and healing, and may those who are weak find renewed strength.

In your name, Amen.

What is Katie's Fund?

Katharina von Bora Luther was a practical and bold woman of faith. Through Katie's Fund, Women of the ELCA honors her life by supporting global connections, leadership development and living theology. **2122: Growing Katie's Fund for the next 100 years** is a one-million-dollar campaign for Katie's Fund that is designed to support the organization into the next 100 years of mission and ministry. Scroll down to learn more about Katie's Fund and the ways in which the fund has aided women across the church.

2122

Growing Katie's Fund for the next 100 years



ROLLED BANDAGES



Please watch the
**Website and
facebook page
For updates**

Cut & paste in you browser

<http://www.swmnwelca.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/>



Crow River:

Saturday, April 26 at Evangelical Lutheran, Cokato
– Registration at 8:30 followed by brunch. Cost is \$12.00.
Program is SW MN Youth Band.

Great River:

Saturday, April 5 at Peace, Cold Spring
– Registration begins at 8:30

Lac Qui Parle:

Tuesday, April 22 at Our Savior's, Montevideo – Registration begins at 9:30 – Speaker will be Rev. Gary Mills - Hebrews 10:19

Shetek: Saturday, April 12 at Our Savior's, Dovre, Coffee at 9:30
Program: "Hallelujah Hooligans" \$15 – Registration/Food



**Minnesota Valley Conference Women of the ELCA
Spring Gathering**

Featuring Doug Larson, Christian Musician/ Speaker
Christ Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minnesota

Saturday, April 12, 2025

Registration at 11:30 Lunch at 12:00

Registration cost \$12.00

"Rejoice in the Lord, always, again I say rejoice"

Philippians 4:4

Please call Megan at the Christ Lutheran at 320-864-4549



Prairie: Saturday, April 26 at Sillerud Lutheran Church in rural Balaton.
Registration begins at 8:30 am. Cost is \$15. Speaker is Lenae Bulthuis.
Theme is "When It's More than You Can Handle".



Glacial Ridge Conference.

Spring Gathering will be on April 7

Registration begins at 4 pm program beginning at 4:30 PM.

Program will be provided by Global Health Ministries,
Title of the gathering is "Sowing Seeds of Generosity".

It will be located at Trinity Lutheran in Cyrus. Cost is \$10

SPECIAL ITEMS

FAITHFUL FRIENDS

“Faithful Friends” is an easy way for you to support Women of the ELCA – automatically! You can start giving online right now.

“[Faithful Friends](#)” supports the Women of the ELCA general fund, which makes it possible for your church-wide organization to act quickly and flexibly in response to any need that may arise.



<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/category/daily-grace>



Jennifer Hockenbery, Ph.D., a college dean, philosophy professor, and editor of the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, will serve as interim churchwide executive director of Women of the ELCA, beginning July 1.

Dr. Hockenbery to serve as interim executive director of Women of the ELCA

CONFERENCE LIAISON'S

CROW RIVER (CR): Barb Borth
GLACIAL RIDGE (GLR): Gwen Degner
GREAT RIVER (GRV): Jane Leitzman
LAC QUI PARLE (LQP): Kathy Harwick
LAKELAND (LL): Karen Quistorff
MINNESOTA VALLEY (MV): Brenda Danielson
PRAIRIE (PR): Cathy Blair
SCENIC VALLEY (SV): Ilene Penk
SHETEK (SK): Karen Skarphol
WATONWAN RIVER (WR): Ilene Penk

SYNODICAL BOARD 2024-2025

President:

ILENE PENK

11168 Hwy. 15, Brownton 55312

320.510.1261 ilenepenk45@gmail.com

Grace Lutheran/Brownton

Minnesota Valley Conference

Elected 2023 for one year term

Served 1 yr-with re-election in 2024 for 2 yr. term

Vice-President:

JANE LEITZMAN

30655 Melanie Way, St. Joseph, MN 56374

320.291.6730(Cell) 320.363.4386(Home)

jane.leitzman@gmail.com

Salem Lutheran

Great River Conference

*Appointed 2023

Serve 1 yr. with re-election 2024 of 2 year

Secretary:

GWEN DEGNER

408-8th St. N., Benson 56215

701.261.8920 gwen.degner@gmail.com

Trinity Lutheran/Benson

Glacial Ridge Conference

Elected 2023 for two-year term

Served 2 yr-with re-election in 2025 for 1 yr. term

Treasurer:

KAREN QUISTORFF

10704 CO 95

Sauk Centre MN. 56378

320.282.6368 quistorffk@gmail.com

First Lutheran/Sauk Center

Great River Conference

Elected 2023-to serve 1 yr. With re-election 2024

For 2 years in 2024

Board Members At Large:

CATHY BLAIR

10222 Paul Ave., Fulda, MN 56131

507.370.2909 ciblair68@gmail.com

First Lutheran in Worthington, MN

Shetek Conference

Elected 2024, two yr.-with re-elect 2026, 2 yr. Term

As of now, our board to short four positions.

BRENDA DANIELSON

304 Polar Circle, Arlington 55307

952.956.2954 (Cell) 507.964.1021 (Home)

danielson.brenda6@gmail.com

Zion Lutheran Church, Arlington

Minnesota Valley Conference

Elected 2022-served 2yr., Re-elected 2024 2yr. term

KAREN SKARPHOL

1972 Bud Road, Windom, MN 56101

507.831.5540(Home) 507.822.0785(Cell)

ikskarp@windomnet.com

American Lutheran/Windom

Shetek Conference

Elected 2023-serve 2 yrs.

with re-election in 2025 of 2 yr.

KATHY HARWICK

724-7TH Ave., Madison, MN 56256

320.598.3268(Home) 320.361.0243(Cell)

kbearalive@live.com

Faith Lutheran/Madison

Lac Qui Parle Conference

Elected in 2023- serve 2 yrs.

With re-election in 2025 For 2 yrs.

BARB BORTH

2218-10TH AVE S

St. Cloud, MN 56301

320.492.3590

mamaborth@gmail.com

Atonement Lutheran/St. Cloud

Great River Conference

Appointed in 2024- with election 2024 to serve 1 yr

Re-elect in 2025 for 2 yr. term

SW MN Synod Staff Liaison:

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Communicator Editor:

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Southwest MN Synodical Women's Organization

2025 Bus Trip

We are planning a trip to Lutheran World Relief and Global Health Ministries on June 16th, 2025. The SWMN SWO board has donated \$1000.00 to make our cost only \$20.00 per person, to be paid in advance. We will be taking a coach from Reading Bus Lines. The bus will hold 56 people. There will be 6 stops along the way. The first stop will be at the Blue Line truck stop by Worthington on HWY 60 at 7:00 am. The following towns will be Windom, Redwood Falls, Olivia, Willmar and Dassel. Times will be determined soon. Our lunch stop will be at the Ridgedale Mall on your own. The first tour will be at Lutheran World Relief in St Paul and then to Global Health Ministries in Fridley before returning to our homes. Please carpool and try to park together away from the businesses store fronts.

We will be bringing donations to Global Health Ministries that will be bought to the Convention in Willmar on May 3rd. There will be a truck for LWR Quilts and Kits at the convention. Please don't bring additional boxes on June 16th.

If you have questions, text or call and leave a message to:

Cathy Blair 507 370 2909 or Karen Skarphol 507 822 0785.

Name _____ Cell # _____

Which town will you be meeting the bus? _____

Deadline to register will be May 3rd or until 56 people sign up!

Make \$20.00 checks written to SWMN SWO

Send To: Karen Skarphol 1972 Bud Road, Windom, MN 56101

WOMEN OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Southwestern Minnesota Synod

February 2025

Dear Unit President or other interested party,

The Southwestern Minnesota Synodical Nominating Committee of the Women of the ELCA is searching for nominees to serve as SW MN VOTING MEMBERS TO THE CHURCHWIDE TRIENNIAL CONVENTION. The WELCA Churchwide Executive Board voted to reduce expenses for the 2026 Triennial Convention and will hold it online. More information on this virtual convention will be coming out later. The Voting Members will be elected at our 2025 SW MN Synod Convention, May 3, 2025 at Vinge Lutheran Church in Willmar, MN. Triennial Voting Members are elected to represent their synod and make decisions about the future of the Women of the ELCA. The business sessions will be held the week of July 13-15, 2026 virtually.

We have little to no information from churchwide regarding the convention and gathering but in the past, the 2026 Triennial would have two parts. The first part will be the virtual voting. The second part is the Gathering with worship, speakers, workshops, tours, etc. For this Gathering' all expenses will be paid by those attending.

Each Unit shall submit the name of ONLY ONE participant for consideration by the SW MN Synodical Nominating Committee Women of the ELCA for the 2025 Ballot for Triennial Voting Members. The number of delegates we can send is determined by the number of local units in Southwestern MN synod. At the present time we are allowed eleven voting members plus the President. Requirements remain that three delegates must be first time attendees and one a person of color or one whose first language is other than English, if those positions can be filled..

Be sure to secure prior consent for a delegate to serve as a Triennial Convention Voting Member if elected. Please fill out the enclosed form for your nominee and send to the Nominating Committee Recording Secretary whose address is below.

Joanna Rustad
39956 County Road 2
Hancock, MN 56244
320-392-5926
Texts only to 320-288-8864

If you have questions, call Joanna at the number above. **We need the nominee form by March 31, 2025 so we can prepare the ballot for our 2025 Synod Convention.**

Serving together,
Southwestern MN Synod Nominating Committee
Women of the ELCA

**NOMINEE FOR VOTING MEMBER TO THE 13th TRIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE WOMEN OF THE ELCA THE
WEEK OF July 13 - 15, 2026.**

NAME OF NOMINEE _____

ADDRESS _____

_____ PHONE _____

NAME OF CONGREGATION _____

ADDRESS OF CONGREGATION _____

NAME OF CONFERENCE _____

Has this Nominee been a voting member to a prior Triennial Convention? _____

Give brief biological sketch of nominee, including involvement in Women of the ELCA, church organizations and community (in space below):

SUBMITTED BY: Congregational Unit _____

Congregation Address _____

SENT IN BY: Name _____

Address _____

THIS FORM IS DUE: MARCH 31, 2025

Complete form and return to chairman of Nominations SW MN Synod WELCA:

Joanna Rustad
39956 Co. Rd. 2
Hancock, MN 56244