



Expressions

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Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization

Doing Good to All

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people." — Galatians 6:9-10a NIV

The holidays are over, the Christmas decorations are down, and it's time to get back into our routines. It's still winter according to the calendar even though our weather has been mild thus far.

"Doing Good to All," the theme of our 2015 Spring Gatherings start next month. So pull out your calendar and mark 'NSWO Spring Gathering' on it. The Spring Gatherings give you the opportunity to refuel, refresh, and relax yourself.

There will be a Spring Gathering in each of the NSWO seven conferences. So attend your conference, attend another, or do both.

March 7, Southeast Conference will be at St. Paul's in Falls City. Pastor Robert Bryan, Director of Prison Ministry for the Nebraska Synod and pastor of Followers of Christ at the state penitentiary will be sharing with us his work within the penitentiary and with those who are re-entering our

communities. Heather Abbott will give us information about the 2015 Camp service project with a goal of 350+ quilts to be made for refugees. We are looking forward to seeing new and old friends at the Gathering.

March 14, Northeast Conference will be at Grace Lutheran Church in West Point. There will be a humorous presentation by Mary Lou Erickson called "Lean, the Cleaning Lady" and representatives from the Synod office for Bible Study in the afternoon. One of the workshops is to make a quilt and we are asking everyone to bring a quilt block, using left over materials. It is a 9 Patch Scrappy, using 3" squares sewn together with 1/4" seams. Your finished block should measure 8 1/2". We have some interesting workshops to attend also. We are looking forward to seeing all the Cluster Churches represented.

March 21, Southern Prairie Conference looks forward to presentations about the LFS "At Ease" program, Quilts of Valor, and Plastic Bag Sleeping Mats, as well as Bishop Maas and our own NSWO President and Treasurer. Our Gathering will be at Prince of Peace in Geneva.

Check the NSWO web site for the Registration Form.

March 28, High Plains Conference will be gathering at Berea near Chappell. Our guest speaker will be Kay Connery from the At Ease program of Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. She is planning on bringing a client with her who uses a comfort dog who also does training of comfort dogs to share his story. We are praying that will come to fruition. We have decided to ask for all types of gift cards as our tangible gifts. One of us will bring along extra cards in case it is difficult for some folks to buy them at their home town. They can include gas, restaurant, grocery, plus Target, Walmart, etc., any that could be used by Vets. We are excited and pray for good weather. Pastor Steve will be leading the Bible study and Brenda, PMA, will be bringing a message at our worship service.

April 11, Central Conference will be here with sunshine and brightness once again. The Committee has worked on this year's conference since last August. It will be both educational and inspiring for each of us. The day begins at

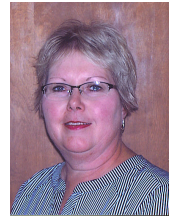
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Devotions

By VAL KILLINGER, Central Board Representative



Happy New Year!

That's the same thing we say every year isn't it? We all dream that this year is the year I lose those fifteen pounds or I'll do this or that this year. Good Luck!

In reflecting on the past year, remember the good times and don't let the bad times get you. Don't dwell too long on things, as 2015 is moving right along.

I read a devotion from Max Lucado that was very encouraging based on: James 1:17

Every good action and every perfect gift is

from God.

It doesn't say every BIG action, it just says every good action. It's a very simple thing an action; it may be dropping a card to someone, giving a phone call or stopping by to visit someone. Any good action is a great thing. On these cold dreary winter days, one action just may be what you need to perk yourself up, but think of what it will be for the receiver. Let God inspire you as He did the apostles. Let Him work in your heart this year.

Pray more, sing more, read the Psalms and ACT more. People need people and we are God's people.

Saved to Serve Opportunity



The first Saved to Serve Opportunity Retreat for 2015 will be May 1 to 3 at Sullivan Hills Camp, Lodgepole, Nebraska.

We will be polishing up the Buckley Center and the Dining hall for the camping season. Join us for fun and friendship, too. Come and learn about the NLOM (Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries).

We are planning a picnic, hayrack ride, and sing a long around the campfire. Devotions and Bible Study are an essential part of our weekend as well.

Have your unit consider collecting paper products for the camp, they need napkins, paper towels, toilet paper. Your unit's monetary donations will help subsidize camperships to Sullivan Hills. The cost is still \$39.00 with the retreat weekend starting at 6:00 p.m. on Friday and ending about 1:00 p.m. on Sunday. Send your check and/or unit donation to JoAnn Rohrs, 1409 10th Street, Auburn, NE 68305, 402-274-3058 joannrohrs1409@yahoo.com.

Expressions is a quarterly publication of the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization, Women of the ELCA.

Expressions provides information concerning programs and projects of the Churchwide and Nebraska Synodical Women Organizations, Women of the ELCA; and helpful information for congregational units. It is distributed free to Nebraska congregational unit presidents/coordinators; Nebraska female seminarian students; the other SWO Presidents; the CWO Officers and Executive Board Members; and past NSWO Presidents.

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Contact the *Expressions* Editor at nswo.expressions@gmail.com. Content information can be sent via e-mail and is the preferred method.

February *Expressions* team members included Arlene Johnson plus layout editor. Additional contributors included Conference Board Representatives, Conference Coordinators, and Beth Meyer.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello to All of You Amazing People of God,

I am ever so excited to start this new year of 2015, in addition to do it with you on our journey of faith in Christ Jesus. I found myself really looking forward to 2015 because I thought many challenges in my life just seemed to keep coming. I realized at one point that all of these challenges in my life were defining my character and my trust in God. I am sure that you have probably had challenges that also tested your stamina and you relied on God!!! SO my challenge to all my faith friends is let's make a difference in 2015 for others and ourselves.



When recently redoing the walls in my dining room of my old house I put a saying above the doorway that read "The fondest memories are made, when gathered around the table". As I thought about it more and more, I realized this was true in many aspects of my life. As I took inventory of how many times I meet around the table in my everyday life I realized it was quite few. There are those times when 1) my spouse and children would gather for meals each evening, 2) times where extended family members came together for celebration of holidays or birthdays, 3) potlucks at church or friends, 4) get together with couple friends to play cards or board games, 5) NSWO board meetings, 6) meetings at my home congregation, 7) work related meetings, 8) events of the Lutheran women both state level and Churchwide, and 9) communion in celebrating the body and blood of Jesus. I could name even more as I began to really think about it. It made me feel warm inside when I realized that each of these times I was engulfed in the presence of the Holy Spirit often praying or speaking of Him. It also made me smile when thinking that many of these times have been full of laughter, fun and loving people in my life.



So I ask, are you or your churches offering a welcoming table through small group gatherings, shared meals, and hospitable services of worship. As you meet, eat, and worship together, do you discover that friendships and new relationships can happen? Jesus offers a welcoming table and instructs his followers in the nature of hospitality with the words, "*when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind*" (Luke 14:13). I ask this because at the close of the Ninth Triennial Convention in Charlotte, NC one of the actions of the convention was that each Synodical board convenes a committee to review resources to help inform units, educate, and mobilize their congregations and communities through prayer, ministry and political action in the Awareness and Prevention of Human Trafficking. In addition to Human Trafficking as being a priority, we also recognize the continued need for Justice in areas for women, social, and racial. Nebraska is very blessed to have Rebecca Sipf as our Today's Dream, Tomorrow's Reality Appointee that has traveled to California this past summer for training to assist our synod on these issues. My pledge to you is that I will be a steering force in the event planning of these tough issues for NSWO and making Nebraska proud in our support to make a difference.

God's Peace to You,

Kandy K. Plaster

2015 NSWO Convention

September 18-20, 2015

First Lutheran Church, Lincoln, NE

Convention Theme is "The Power of M"

Bible Verse: *"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly...."*

Colossians 3:15-17 NIV

Keynote Speaker: Pastor Brigitte Weier of Lutheran Church of the Master



God's Mission Matters

Keynote synopsis by Pr. Brigitte



We find ourselves in a new reality as God's people in the 21st century. It is filled with both challenge and joy as we participate in God's mission in this particular time and place. As followers of Jesus Christ (called, gathered, and sent) we know that culture around us no longer supports the core message of church. The culture is skeptical at best and cynical at the worst, of religion and Christianity in particular. Yet, we are witnesses and bearers of the light and love of Christ in a world that is desperate to hear the promises of God to be with us now and forever. As the people of God, it's vital that we are rooted in those promises of

God through diverse, multi-age Christian community, daily faith/spiritual practices, and serving others. It matters that God's story is told and shared with the whole world, so how do we discern what God's already up to in the neighborhood where our faith communities are located? How do we daily engage in faith practices as household/community in order to listen to God and to one another? How do we live out our core baptismal identity as people of God? How do we connect to God's mission in a meaningful and purposeful way that will reveal the love of God to others? These are important conversations that we as the people of God know that God's mission matters in the world.



Shine Your Light

St. Mark's Lutheran Church Women at Pender, sent 110 quilts to Lutheran World Relief. They were displayed in the church before sending

—submitted by Ms. Allen

Shine Your Light



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

(Continued from page 1)

9:00 a.m. and concludes at 3:00 p.m. at Calvary, Swede Home, rural Stromsburg. Why should you come? For fellowship, education and fun and to learn about the "At Ease" Program, a quilting program, and comfort dogs to mention a few things.

Tangible gifts will be for Genesis House at David City. They can use everything, paper products to soap products. Each of our Churches in the Conference receive, the letter which has a registration sheet in it. You can also go to the Synod website under the WELCA section and print off as many as you need. Please send in the completed registration form to JoAnn Rohrs by April 3. To all of you: pray for all; as you prepare your heart and mind for Lent and Easter.

April 18, Midlands Conference will be held at Salem Lutheran in Fontanelle (a country church just ten miles from Fremont). It should be a warm spring day in the country. Our featured speakers are Rev. Dr. William Nelson from Midland University and Ruth Henneman, VP of Development from Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska. Bishop Maas will be with us for our Bible Study. We will also sing and worship with holy communion together. Looking forward to seeing you there, we can all enjoy an awesome day in the country "Doing Good to All."

April 25, Metro East Conference's planning committee is excited about the upcoming Spring Gathering at Rejoice! Lutheran in Omaha. We have two wonderful speakers joining us. Julie Shrader from "Rejuvenating Women," an Omaha Christian support group for women will be speaking on human trafficking in the area. Accompanying her will be a victim of human trafficking who will share her personal story. Our second speaker is Joy Johnson, head of the Centering Corporation, a grief counseling service in Omaha. Joy will bring a lighter touch to the program, sharing on her six fiction books on "The BOOB Girls at Table 12." (For your information, the BOOB Girls stands for 'Burned Out Old BROADS'.) The Bible study will be led by Rev. Juliet Hampton from the Nebraska Synod Office. Tangible offerings will be received for The Bethlehem House in Omaha. They provide support to pregnant women in a residential environment and educate the women on child care and personal life skills to become self-sufficient.

.....
We want to share an e-mail received on December 18 ...

Good morning ~

The synod women's organization warmly came to mind a moment ago, and I'd like to tell you why:

Today is the last day of final exams. Right now, there are 4 students curled up and sound asleep in various corners of the building, getting some much-needed rest before exams or a long drive home. They are curled up under the fleece blankets YOU made for them.

We lit candles, sang silent night, and tearfully blessed graduating seniors last night under the lights of our new Christmas trees and Chrismons. You were with them there in spirit.

I just finished cooking the 7th (and final) meal that will be cooked out of the Campus Lutheran kitchen during this exam week. It was in an oven you made possible for us. (Carrot cake baked oatmeal and cinnamon coffee cake, if you're curious.) And the dishwasher you gave us will be called into service once all tummies are full.

Insofar as it is possible, please extend another measure of my gratitude to all the women who make moments like this one possible.

*Blessed Christmas --
Pr Rachel Ziese Hacker
Campus Lutheran at University of Nebraska - Kearney
Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministry (NeLCM)*



What is an active unit?

How to define an "active" unit

What does it mean to be an active unit of Women of the ELCA? Your unit must commit to four items in order to be recognized as active:

1. Come together for study, support, and action.
2. Participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation.
3. Support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA.
4. Designate leadership that shall be in communication with the synodical and Churchwide women's organization.

(See the Model Constitution and Bylaws for Congregational or Intercongregational Units and for Special Units, Article II, section 2.)

Come together for study, support, and action

There is no prescribed way to come together for study, support, and action. And how your particular group of women comes together can change as the makeup of the group changes or your needs change.

Not everyone in a unit needs to participate in every activity. Units can have as many smaller groups of women as you'd like, each carrying out a different activity.

Study could mean coming together monthly for the Bible study found in *Gather* magazine, or a group could gather regularly to discuss the featured topic in *Café*. You could also come together using one of our many program resources.

Supporting each other can come in many forms. It could be expressed by praying together or organizing a prayer chain. It could involve a "secret sister" or "secret angel" exchange.

Action could involve working in a food pantry, writing letters to elected officials, or making relief quilts.

Participate beyond the congregation

Programming and activities occur in several different expressions of Women of the ELCA. The women in your unit could attend an event sponsored by the synodical women's organization, such as a retreat or convention. Some local area conferences or clusters are very active and offer regular programming in which to participate. Subscribing to *Gather*, *Interchange*, or *Café* are all ways to participate in our ministry beyond the congregation, as is attending a triennial gathering or an event sponsored by the churchwide women's organization.

Support financially the total program

Most questions about whether a unit is "active" involve this question: What does it mean to support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA?

In the fullest sense, the women in a unit would regularly be doing all of the following:

- Collecting regular offerings and sharing a portion with their synodical women's organization
- Having regular Thankoffering services and sending 100 percent of the Thankofferings to the

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- churchwide women's organization
- Supporting designated giving programs of Women of the ELCA
- Participating in occasional giving opportunities, like the anniversary of the organization, a memorial, or even disaster relief
- Subscribing to *Gather* and *Interchange*
- Purchasing other resources produced by Women of the ELCA

Some of our units do indeed support the organization in all these ways. Other may do one or two of these things. There are likely growth opportunities for most units in this area, and so we encourage all units to grow in their financial support of Women of the ELCA.

Designate leadership to be In communication

This is a simple requirement. One person in the unit needs to be a contact person, so that information from the synodical and churchwide women's organizations can be provided to the unit through this person.

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2013-2015
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Check List for Congregational Units

To Do Every Month

- ___ Send stories and pictures about your unit to the *Expressions* Editor
- ___ Remind women to use their Thankoffering boxes
- ___ Share information received from SWO and CWO
- ___ Send offerings to synodical treasurer

To Do on Specific Months

(S applies to units whose year starts in Sept.; J to those starting in Jan.)

February

- ___ Share *Expressions* with members
- ___ (J) Send list of new officers after unit elections to Terri Johnson and Conference Board Representative
- 9-10 – NE Synod Seeking the Spirit Within Residency
- 11 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 20-21 – NE Synod God's IDEA LifeShine Retreat

- 21 – STSW Reflective Practices
- 24 – NE Synod Deans Meeting
- 26 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 27-28 – NE Synod God's IDEA (High School)
- 28 – Spiritual Direction Guided Retreat

March

- ___ Publicize/Promote NSWOP Spring Gatherings
- 7 – Southeast Conference Spring Gathering
- 14 – Northeast Conference Spring Gathering
- 14 – NE Synod DREAM Team—A Ministry of Inclusion and Advocacy
- 14 – NE Synod Hands-On Ideas for Ministry with People with Disabilities
- 17 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 20-21 – Synod Council
- 21 – Southern Prairie Conference
- 28 – High Plains Conference

Spring Gathering

- 31 – NE Synod Staff Meeting

April

- ___ Publicize/Promote NSWOP Spring Gatherings
- ___ Remember in prayer the SWO conventions this month
- 1 – *Expressions* deadline
- 11 – Central Conference Spring Gathering
- 13 – NeLCM Board Meeting
- 13-14 – Seeking the Spirit Within Residence
- 15 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 17-18 – NE Synod PMA Convo
- 18 – Midlands Conference Spring Gathering
- 18-21 – W/ELCA Conference of Presidents
- 21-24 – CWO Executive Board Meeting
- 25 – Metro East Spring Gathering
- 28 – NE Synod Staff Meeting