



Expressions

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

Happy in God's Grace

"A friendly smile makes you happy, and good news makes you feel strong. — Proverbs 15:30



The holidays are over, the Christmas decorations are down, and it's time to get back into our routines. January held some days with mild temperatures and days to remind us it is winter with very cold temperatures and wind. However, let's warm up those hearts and mark the calendar with the upcoming Spring Gathering dates.

"Happy in God's Grace," the theme of our 2016 Spring Gatherings start next month. The Spring Gatherings give you the opportunity to refuel, refresh, and relax yourself. Come sing a favorite of children and adults, "If You're Happy and You Know It," the gathering theme song.

There will be a Spring Gathering in each of the NSWO seven conferences. So attend your conference, attend another, or do both. Here are some highlights planned from each of the conferences.

March 5, Central Conference will be held at Our Saviour's in Dannebrog. It will be the first of the series of Conferences. We will be

entertained by "Prudence" of York. A very funny lady that will entertain us and teach us at the same time. We will have the Bible study led by the one of the Assistants to the Bishop. There will be music to enjoy and of course we will all be happy!. The tangible offering will go to the Howard County Food Pantry. They can use anything really, especially rice, toilet paper, tuna, and tuna helper as well as hamburger helper to name a few items. The Owner of Majestic Treasurer's in Grand Island will tell us her story of the wonderful Lord that we all know and love. Come join us for a great day as we ring in the spring time with joy and laughter.

March 12, Southern Prairie Conference will be held at First Lutheran Church in Kearney. Happiness is.....fun, fellowship, and stewardship with our Sisters In Christ. There will be a video from Bishop Brian Maas as well as three workshops. Connie Stover will lead a "Seeking the Spirit Within" activity (from one of our Mission Field Nebraska projects). Sue Brown will present a program on "Health and Humor." Mona Mueller will help us put together LWR Personal Care Kits. (we encourage you to bring or send towels, nail clippers, wrapped soap bars, and strong

combs for this project) and quilts will also be tied. There are SO MANY reasons you will be HAPPY to attend!!

March 19, High Plains Conference will have a *Praying in Color* workshop and also have a canvas art project. It will enable us to explore another side of prayer and God's creation in our lives.

April 2, Metro East Conference will be held at Luther Memorial Church. We will be collecting food for the Omaha Food Bank as our tangible offering; they distribute food throughout Nebraska and Western Iowa. Following the business meeting, Simone and Matt Weber from Table Grace Café will join us. We will have volunteers from Paws for Friendship tell us about their program; this is a non-profit organization of volunteers that share the unconditional love of their personal pets with people in need throughout the world. The afternoon will close with humorous speaker, Mary Maxwell.

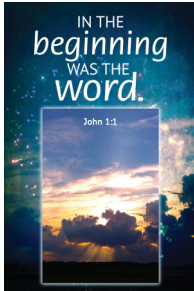
April 9, Northeast Conference will be held at Thabor Lutheran Church in Wausa. The musical group "Patches" will provide entertainment during the morning session. Afternoon session will include a Spiritual Practice called "Praying in Color." Four workshops will be available to participants. Orphan

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Devotions

By VAL KILLINGER, Board Member/Central Conference



Joyous Greetings Women of the WELCA.

We hope all of you had a joyous Christmas Celebration.

We women have a special place in our hearts for our children, or nieces or nephews, perhaps a young child that sits ahead of you at Church. When they do things that are cute, we all smile, maybe on the inside rather than the outside. Oh the Joy of little ones. Can you image God giving his only Son to us putting him in a lonely manger, surrounded by the animals and shepherds. We wouldn't hear of it now days. I know my new grandson was born in a very cleansed hospital with nurses and doctors attending.

When the words were written in John 1:1-5 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with

God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

What is the Word? The "Word" is a special name for Jesus, it means that Jesus is the person who reveals God, or tells us what God is like. The Bible says that Jesus existed forever and that He is God.

I like to recycle, I refold the tissue paper and the Christmas gift boxes. I do much more that my kids laugh at, but I hate to waste it. I hope that you do too.

I think the thing we neglect to recycle is the Love that God gave us. Have you told anyone lately about the love of Jesus. Let's try to recycle the Love of Jesus in 2016.

Blessings in 2016 to you.

Thank you ~ and Please Update Your Records

We thank JoAnn Rohrs for her service as our SWO Treasurer. We appreciate all her hard work!! Effective February 1, Sandy Terry is now the NSWOW Treasurer. Her contact information can be found on page 7. Your unit offerings should be sent to her. Many great things are accomplished because of your generosity. Thankofferings are to be sent directly to the Churchwide Women's Organization in Chicago, Illinois.

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 NSWOW Presidents.

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The newsletter is published four times a year, in February, May, August, and November. Deadline is the first of the month preceding the issue date.

Contact the *Expressions* Editor at nswow.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 in byline accordingly..

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy Blessed New 2016 Year,

It is with a heart full of thanksgiving that I wish everyone a year of joy, love, and peace. We have such a fantastic SWO organization in Nebraska. I would love to hear about the special things your congregational unit has done. The Churchwide Women's Organization has challenged us to continue to act boldly. How will you act boldly in 2016? Sunday, February 28 is "Bold Women's Day." You can find many suggestions, a litany, and handouts for your use in celebrating "Bold Women's Day" on the website, www.womenoftheelca.org.



In *Bold Connection's* January devotional "I am about to do a new thing!," it stated "In Isaiah 43:18-19a, the prophet reports God's word: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing!"



It's a new year. We can take that as a reminder that we can do a new thing too—a new thing for our beloved community of women.

What might that be?

One of the principles enshrined in our constitution is **interdependence**. That means we're not in this alone; we have each other. We need each other. That goes not just for individuals or for circles or congregational units; it means the same thing for synodical women's organizations and the churchwide expression of the organization, too. Our three expressions (congregational, synodical and churchwide organizations) depend on each other.

How do we live that out? We receive from each other, but do we support each other in equal measure? Do we support the three expressions of our own organization as generously as we support other organizations and ministries? Why wouldn't we?

So there's the **new thing** we can do. We can give to support our own community of women in all its expressions as generously as we give to other ministries. We can give Regular Offerings whenever we gather, and share them between our congregational unit and our synodical women's organization. We can give Thankofferings and undesignated gifts marked "where needed most" whenever the Spirit moves us, and send them to our churchwide women's organization.

In Isaiah 43:18-19a, God says: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing!" We are created in God's image. Let's thank God for the opportunity for us to do a new thing, too!"

It is my hope each of you had a terrific experience at Winter Retreat last month. Watch for the highlight article in the May issue of *Expressions*.

Later this month, I will be heading to Chicago to attend the annual Women of the ELCA Conference of Presidents. This should be a very exciting event. Our free-will offering will support a local project and the ongoing ministries of the Women of the ELCA. I will be presenting a written report on the work of NSWOW and how we are addressing human trafficking. The event's activities will include a craft activity, a review of the book "The Color of Water" by James McBride, along with business sessions and making new friends.

Stay connected with Nebraska Women of the ELCA. You can find more information about our happenings by visiting our website, www.nebraskasynod.org/welca and finding us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NebraskaWELCA

Nancy Johnson

Saved to Serve Opportunities

By SUSAN WATSON



The variety of experiences for Saved To Serve Opportunity participants continues to expand. For 2016, there will be activities with Mosaic group home residents in the Minden, Axtell, and Holdrege areas.

The Mosaic event is set for August 5-7 and the hope is to fulfill some of the residents' wishes of things they would like to do. The spring event is still under development.

An Opportunity with the women inmates at York is tentatively being planned for 2017, partly because of the size and potential of this undertaking the details are still being determined.

The proposed Saved To Serve Opportunity is a joint project with the inmates to package meals for Kids Against Hunger which is a nonprofit organization with a mission to feed starving children here and throughout the world using volunteers to package highly nutritious food.

The idea of such a joint event started when a request for a possible Saved To Serve Opportunity at the prison was combined with a letter. The letter was to Followers of Christ Pastor Bob Bryan from an inmate on the inmate council asking how inmates could give back to the community. Pastor Bryan and the warden at the York prison have met and a small trial packaging event with about twenty inmates is scheduled. If that event is successful, a second event will be held in 2017 for all 300 women inmates and the Saved To Serve Opportunity participants. Sources of the funds to cover the cost of the meals will be sought.

Think of the amazing number of meals that could be packaged. And think of the potential of a combined outreach with the women of the ELCA helping Kids Against Hunger feed the hungry and helping women inmates give back to the community!

It is such an exciting possibility that is worth a time of waiting. Stay tuned for further details.

Human Trafficking Task Force

By BARARA FANNING, Chairperson

The Nebraska ELCA Human Trafficking Task Force was created to address the resolution that was passed at the Women of the ELCA Ninth Triennial convention "Awareness and Prevention of Human Trafficking." We are charged with reviewing resources and helping the synodical organizations to promote resources that can help units to inform, educate, and mobilize their congregations and communities, through prayer, ministry, and political action. The women on the task force are Chairperson Barbara Fanning, Phyllis Eriksen, Chrissy Garton, Mary Mayfield, and NSWO President Nancy Johnson.

Human Trafficking Awareness Day was January 11. In order to educate the congregations on Human Trafficking, the Women of the ELCA were asked to distribute a Human Trafficking Awareness Day brochure on that Sunday in January. If you need a copy of the brochure, please contact the Board Member from your Conference or a member of the task force.

Linda Bushkofsky, Women of the ELCA Executive Director, shared a link from the Women of the ELCA website where you can find several resources on Human Trafficking. Please review the website to get a better understanding on Human Trafficking: <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/human-trafficking-pages-198.php>. There is also an article in the December 2015 *Gather Magazine*, "St Nicholas worked against trafficking" that will help you understand more about Human Trafficking.

Sister Rosalee Burke presented "Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery" last month at Winter Retreat. Hopefully you were able to attend.

If you would be interested in joining the task force, please contact any of the members.

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Mary Mayfield, mayfieldim@cox.net

NSWO President Nancy Johnson, nancy.johnson5@cox.net

NSWO Missionary Sponsorship

By SANDY OLSON, Global Missions Coordinator Appointee



We have received confirmation of our Covenant Sponsorship of Missionaries in Cambodia, Rev Sarah and Adam Erickson. Sarah and Adam serve as Country Coordinators for the new Young Adults in Global Missions (YAGM) program in Cambodia. They will also provide basic theological and worship training for the leaders of the Lutheran Church in Cambodia.

Sarah's home base is Springfield, NE and Adam's is Colfax, WI. Sarah's ordination date is January 16. She received her Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary, St Paul, MN. Adam has a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin. He stated, "I have spent almost a decade working in youth ministry. I am excited to continue the journey in this new and exciting context." He enjoys golfing, sports, reading, and playing guitar. Sarah enjoys playing piano, singing, reading, golfing, and drinking coffee. In her 20's she served abroad and said it was transformational. "My love of living with, and learning from other cultures was deepened. Now I'm thrilled to be facilitating similar experiences for the YAGM's," Sarah stated.

One of the most rewarding parts of the covenant relationship they have is, that it is a relationship. They want to get to know you and they want you to get to know them, and so you can expect to hear from them often. They do not have a mailing address because the postal system is unreliable but you can e-mail them, follow their blog, or on Facebook. Their contact information is:

E-mails: sarah.erickson@elca.org and adam.erickson@elca.org

Blog: yagmcambodia.wordpress.com — They encourage you to comment on their blog posts!

Facebook: [facebook.com/yagmcambodia](https://www.facebook.com/yagmcambodia) and "like" the page

They have written, "In our short time here we have already been impressed with the Cambodian people and believe that as you get to know them through us that you will be too. Our hope is that as you read about what we and our YAGM volunteers are up to and you see the pictures that are shared, that they will come together to tell the story of what God is up to here in Cambodia. Thank you! We are incredibly grateful for your support and it is a comfort to know that the people of the Nebraska Synodical Women's Organization, ELCA are praying for us during our time in Cambodia!"

Thank you again, NSWO for your support of our Missionary Fund and Covenant Sponsorship of Rev Sarah & Adam Erickson!

We Need You!

Are you looking for a way to get involved in the Church? An opportunity to volunteer for Women of the ELCA? A volunteer task that could be completed in the comfort of your home? Then we have two appointee positions we are looking to fill: Historian and Resource Coordinator.

The Historian collects material describing what has/will happen during this biennium, 2015-2017 and placing them in binders/albums accordingly. The books will then be displayed at the 2017 Convention and other events as requested.

The Resource Coordinator maintains a file of skits, videos, and other resources making them available to both NSWO units and units across the ELCA.

For more information or to express your interest in one of these positions, please contact NSWO President Nancy Johnson (see page 7 for contact information). Appointee terms coincide with the president's term.

Shine Your Light



St. John's Lutheran Church at Ohiowa sent forty-five quilts and forty-one school kits to Lutheran World Relief. Through the years many ladies have made quilts. Pictured is 97 year old Bessie Wulf with several quilts she made.

—submitted by Louise Wulf

“Walking with Jesus” during Lent is a project by the Women of the ELCA at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Omaha. It will give everyone a chance to clean out their closet and repurpose unwanted or unneeded shoes. All sizes and styles will be collected for children, women and men. The shoes will be donated to Holy Family Ministry which donates them to anyone in need. “One shoe can change your life” a quote by Cinderella.

—submitted by Mary Peters

St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Auburn made a difference by using Thrivent Action Grants of \$250 to decorate a Christmas tree to be auctioned at their annual Nemaha County Gives Back event. The monies from this event are used to provide food, clothing, and gifts for the less fortunate in our county. We used another grant to double our usual giving of school and personal kits to Lutheran World Relief. And another grant was used to purchased fabric to make blankets for Lutheran World Relief. We also supported the Auburn Backpack Program that provides backpacks with food to be sent home every Friday with students in need, this operates out of our church.

—submitted by Dorothea Wood
Circle for Winter Retreat 2015,
“You Make a Difference”



Bethany Lutheran in Ruskin made a difference by extending an

invitation to women who are not active members of the women's organization to sit down with a cup of coffee and look thru a *Gather* magazine and to consider dropping in for a Bible study sometime during the year. The requested copies of *Gather* from Churchwide.

—submitted for Winter Retreat 2015,
“You Make a Difference”

NEWS & Notes

Remember the women are working on learning more about our ELCA Church's social statement on Women and Justice as well as the Human Trafficking task force. Keep these ladies in your thoughts and prayers. Hopefully, our work will be able to help other women and girls who are in need.

The Nebraska Women of the ELCA have been invited to be a part of the **Synod Assembly Ministry Fair** which will be a dedicated time on the morning of Saturday, June 4 during which the agencies, organizations and ministries of the Nebraska Synod can connect with participants and the public in an interactive and meaningful way. The Ministry Fair is based on the Resource Center that was part of last year's ELCA Youth Gathering. The goal in staging the Ministry Fair is to educate people about the impact of these ministries in a way that a booth or exhibit table could never do.

Kandy Pflaster and Sandy Terry are busy planning our **Autumn Renewal** on Saturday October 8 at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Hastings. They are using the theme from the 2014 Triennial Gathering “of many generations” and Bible verse, Isaiah 58:12, “Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt, you shall raise up the foundations of many generations...” Save the date so you can learn more about “Fashionista's and Diva's of the Lutheran Women.”

(Continued from page 1)

Grain Train will be the recipient of the tangible offering. Since Wausa is a very Swedish community, the decorations, table favors and food will reflect their heritage.

April 16, Midlands Conference will be held at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Valley. After Bishop Maas' Bible study video, Bronwyn Zitka will give a presentation entitled "My Life as a Sex Slave." Bronwyn is a product of homegrown sex slavery. This is when an individual is sold out of their home by a member of their family rather than by a stranger on the street. In the afternoon "Aunt Edna," Cheryl Anderson, will bring good news to God's children as well as humor and laughter in the spirit of love. The day will close with worship and communion led by Pastor Stephanie Tollefson. Plan on attending!

April 23, Southeastern Conference will be held at American Lutheran in Fairbury. The keynote speaker will be Eunice Stuart; she will speak about the mission "Todos los Hijos de Dios," which means "All the Children of God." This mission is providing the region's growing Latino population with spiritual and logistical support. The ministry offers participants the opportunity to worship and study Scripture together. With partnerships, they are also able to offer ESL courses to area residents. Pastor Brian of American Lutheran and his wife Natalie will provide special music. Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska will also send a speaker to share information regarding the Health 360 program.

NSWO President Nancy stated, "The Spring Gatherings are approaching and I am hoping to get reacquainted with the ladies I met when I was the NSWO treasurer as well as meeting many new ladies."

**Nebraska Synodical
Women of the ELCA,
2015-2017
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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
- ___ Publicize/Promote Spring Gatherings
- ___ (J) Send list of new officers after unit elections to Elysia McGill and Conference Board

Member

- 10 – Ash Wednesday
- 11 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 15 – President's Day
- 19-20 – NE Synod IDEA LifeShine Retreat
- 19-21 – W/ELCA Conference of Presidents
- 25 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 26-27 – NE Synod God's IDEA High School Retreat
- 28 – Bold Women's Day

March

- ___ Publicize/Promote Spring Gatherings
- 5 – Central Conference Spring Gathering, Dannebrog
- 12 – Southern Prairie Spring Gathering, Kearney
- 13 – Daylight Saving Time starts
- 15 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 19 – High Plains Spring

Gathering, Cozad

- 20 – Palm Sunday
- 27 – Easter Sunday

April

- ___ Publicize/Promote Spring Gatherings
- ___ Remember in prayer the SWO conventions this month
- 1 – *Expressions* deadline
- 1-2 – NE Synod Council Mtg.
- 2 – Metro East Spring Gathering, Omaha
- 9 – Northeast Spring Gathering, Wausa
- 14 – NE Synod Staff Meeting
- 16 – Midlands Spring Gathering, Valley
- 21-24 – CWO Executive Board Meeting
- 23 – Southeast Spring Gathering, Fairbury
- 26 – NE Synod Staff Meeting