



Central/Southern Illinois Synod Women of the ELCA March 2023

From Our President – Helen Flatau



WELCA Sisters in Christ, as your new president, I must say I have been overwhelmed, both with the depth of your ministries and the intensity of the LOVE that has been shared with me and others. Let me introduce myself.

I am a lifelong Lutheran, first LCMS, and then our congregation, Bethel of University City, MO was the seed or yeast of the AELC, Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church. It was formed from/with the Concordia Seminary professors who walked out and became SEMINEX. They knew that a unified ELCA was their

ultimate goal! My daughters went to school with the professors' children, and grandchildren. They sang at the St. Louis Basilica, a serious start at ecumenism, when the ELCA was created from ALC, LCA and little AELC!

50 or so years later, our three daughters are grown and we have five grandchildren, ages 13 to 19, two of them adopted. All five are wonderful, as are all of your grandchildren.

I spent over 25 years as Clinical Laboratory Director at Washington University Student Health. Two of our daughters went to school there. (Fringe Benefits are good!) My husband retired after 30 plus years as an IBM Customer Engineer. We moved from St. Louis City to Prairietown, IL to 27 acres minifarm/wildlife habitat. Our current church is Zion, Mt. Olive.

Now, to WELCA CSIS! Our board has met once on zoom. Our next meeting is upcoming. Our assignment/goal is to find the questions to get the answers of WHY so few younger women are part of WELCA or even ELCA. Paradigm was changes from EVERY Sunday in church to three plus other activities was suggested years ago. I have found the WELCA publications, paper and online are exceedingly current and relevant. But we need to bring younger women, and women of color and of different backgrounds to see and hear of timeless message of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

So, now I present those same questions to each of you and each congregation, HOW do we bring back our younger women? Please feel free to email me and to discuss this with your families and congregations.

WELCA What is it, what was it and what will it become?

CSIS questionnaire for districts/ churches:

What is YOUR CHURCH women's group?

How many folks attend ever/regularly/occasionally?

How many years has it been together?

What are meetings like? Bible study? Topic discussions? Open agenda? Quilting?
LWR Kits? Other?

How often do you meet? How often do you meet with other groups?

What are your strengths? What would you like to improve?

How do these answers compare to what they would have been five or ten years ago?
30 years ago?

What would you LIKE to be doing more/differently?

And the reason for all these questions: What can your Central Southern Illinois Conference do to help you reach any of these goals? We have discussed making funds available for local conference activities.

Spring Gathering of the Northeast Conference WELCA

Saturday, April 1, 2023 with registration starting at 9:00 am to 9:30 am. At Trinity Lutheran Church, 100 West Cherry Street Fairbury, IL 61739. The meeting and program will follow. Cost is \$10 per person, which includes lunch. There will be an election as well as honoring Donna Schuler and her service as our President for the Northeast Conference since 2011! Please call or email Jean Harrison at cell 815-471-7653 or wmandj@frontier.com if you have questions.

Central/Southern Illinois Synod Women of the ELCA

Biennial Recap September 9-10, 2022 Biennial Convention

Grace Lutheran Church – Springfield, IL

Thirty-four women attended the 2022 Central/Southern Illinois Synod Women of the ELCA Biennial Convention at Grace Lutheran Church in Springfield on September 9-10, 2022.



Preconference tours of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, Lincoln's Home and First Presbyterian Church were enjoyed by about half of the women attending the convention. The food, speakers, fellowship, and worship kept with the theme of "Bonding, learning and growing closer to God".



Kathryn Harris presented Harriet Tubman, Sharon Miner spoke about Abraham Lincoln and Reverend Francis Springer's relationship, and we did some exercise with Eve Fischberg. We made one hundred fifteen care kits to give to our



neighbors in need and shared some with our neighboring downtown church, First Presbyterian Church. Thank you to all the women who made this event possible! It was great to see everyone! The new Board members are working on a Fall Conference for 2023.



Twelfth Triennial Convention is coming September 19-21 in Phoenix, Arizona

Twelfth Triennial Gathering is coming September 21-24th, 2023 in Phoenix, Arizona and registration is open now!

Please look at the National Women of the ELCA website womenoftheelca.org for more information. Thank you!

Treasurer's Report

Balance from 1-31-2022 Treasurers Report

Income

| | | | |
|------------|--|--------------------|-------------|
| 13-Feb | Salem Evangelical - Jonesboro | Regular Offerings | \$ 150.00 |
| | St. Paul - Pontiac | Regular Offerings | \$ 111.50 |
| | Immanuel - New Doublas | Regular Offerings | \$ 32.00 |
| | Church of the Cross - Metropolis | Regular Offerings | \$ 50.00 |
| | Trinity - Litchfield | Regular Offerings | \$ 60.00 |
| 27-Feb | St Peter - Glasford | Regular Offerings | \$ 176.50 |
| 7-Mar | ELCA | Katie's Fund Grant | \$ 1,000.00 |
| 16- Mar | St. John;s - Sibley | Regular Offerings | \$ 60.00 |
| | void line item not sent - dated 8-1-22 | | \$ 120.00 |
| | void ck 1029 dated 10-2-21, never cashed | | \$ 200.00 |

INCOME TOTAL \$ 1,960.00

Expenses

| | | | |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 13-Feb | Women of the ELCA | 4th Qtr Nov-Jan \$3135.10/2 | \$ 1,567.55 |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|

EXPENSES TOTAL \$ 1,567.55

Balance as of March 21, 2023

\$6256.38

Respectfully Submitted,
Penny Madlinger, Treasurer

Greetings Dear "Little Lambs family"

I am so blessed to be able to connect you to our children in this small way. Our "little" family is not so little anymore! We have 70 children being helped through this vision and ministry(fed, clothed, educated, given spiritual counsel and love). You have been a very integral part in this ministry and we would like to appreciate you and all you continue to do to ensure that these children's lives are forever changed. We know it is not always easy but it sure is worth it whenever I see the look of pure joy on their little faces....

you are responsible for that joy and hope friends.

We are halfway through our first term and a part from the normal coughs and colds our children remain healthy and continue to thrive. We have had a few cases of malaria from 3 of our children but we thank God through proper treatment they are well too. We have added onto our classrooms...we needed a bigger room for our littlest ones so they could have room to stretch, play and learn...we continue to believe for Divine provision to fully finish the floor and furnish it.

We have also built a little library above it so that we can further expand Kristin's vision of reaching the children in our village through literacy. This is the first step in setting up a community library that will be open to children from the entire village especially the ones not able to attend our school...we might not have the means to accommodate them all but we can at least provide an hour or so for them every week to escape from their harsh realities through the power of a book...that was Kristin's dream and we intend to honor that no matter how long it takes. We need as many books as we can to fill the first shelves of our little library.

Our annual camp and trip to the zoo will take place from the 7th to the 9th of April. As always we operate in faith as we plan for all these activities and God has never let us down. He has always come through sometimes even at the very last minute.

Thank you for believing in us to carry on but most of all for keeping her legacy alive. Love and blessings always. Barbara K. Sebulime





Welcome the Stranger, Welcome Christ

This is from a 2013 article by Emily Ewing, a pastor in Urbandale Iowa who served in the ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission program. It was first published in Bold Café, a publication of the Women of the ELCA.

Growing up, I knew several people who had immigrated to the United States because they worked for my dad.

When I went to college, I met people who came to the United States for school. During college I moved to Argentina to study abroad. After I graduated, I immigrated to Slovakia to serve in the ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission program.

Through my encounters with people from cultures different from my own, I began to perceive the world in new ways. New languages made me more aware of the words I use and the power that they hold. I became aware of the discrimination behind the use of the word “illegal.” I learned the negative implications of using the phrase, “I was gyped,” with people of Roma heritage throughout the world.

I realized that words can have an emotional impact. I also realized that I will never be able to get them all right. and That’s OK as long as I am also willing to admit when I say the wrong thing.

Taking action

I have had the opportunity to speak with state and federal representatives on several issues regarding immigration reform and creating a more humane and inclusive path for immigration.

I told a story about my friends, a same-sex couple who had married in Argentina, but since only one was a U.S. citizen, they were not permitted to live in the United States because in the state that they wished to reside, their marriage was not recognized as legal.

I shared stories of the women I worked with following the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid in Postville, Iowa in 2008.

Jesus’ message

The stories I told were short and to the point about real people, children of God, no longer others or “aliens.” Just as Sarah and Abraham provided hospitality to three strangers in the Old Testament, in Matthew 25, we are reminded to welcome and care for the stranger. When we advocate for and with those who have immigrated to this country, we advocate for and with Christ.

Issues related to immigration are often not clear or easy to discern, yet in Christ we trust that God’s love and grace for every one of us is the measuring stick. By that love and grace we are freed to proclaim God’s love for everyone and to help ensure that every beloved child of God can live their life—not merely surviving or scraping by, but living with human dignity.

We will mess up. Our words will not always fit or sound right but the Holy Spirit binds us together into a common destiny and in her we trust. In God we find freedom, grace, and love to be bold in our advocacy and our voice.

How have you experienced the power of words? Are there words that hold special meaning for you? How might you be more aware of the impact of the words you use in your interactions with others this week?

Closing prayer

Spirit of the living God, speak words of wisdom, life, and grace to us. Gather us together around your table to share in the diversity that is abundant life with you. Grant us courage and vulnerability to learn, share, and speak your truth from and to those around us. We ask all this in your Son's name and for love's sake. Amen.

Shared by Pat Caley, Mission Chair

INTRODUCING THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND CONFERENCE REPRESENTATIVES

We thank those ladies who have served these past years as Board members:

Outgoing C/SIS WELCA Board members :

Jean Scherer, President

Pat Casper, Vice President

Margaret Ryan-Debonis, Mission Chair

Cindy Lierly, Northwest Conference Representative

Donna Schuler , Northeast Conference Representative



Meet the new Northeast Conference Representative

Roberta Ann (Esser) Thomas (78), Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Chenoa, Illinois. Attended first Triennial in Spokane, Washington and all since. Registered for Triennial 12 in Phoenix, Arizona. Served on WELCA Central Southern Board for seven years. Worked at Illinois State University for over 50 years. Retired in 2009 as Director of Scheduling.

Married for almost 59 years to Ed Thomas. We have two sons, Tim (Emily) & Trent (Jill). Tim has 3 children Taylor, Trace & Eliana. Trent has one son, Zachary.

Attend Grace Lutheran Church in Brill, Wisconsin by our cabin in Sarona. Every Sunday after services at Trinity I sing at United Methodist, Chenoa.

My church in Chenoa is part of a seven church Parish. I sing in our combined choir and also participate in Bible Study with ladies from six of the churches.



New East Central Conference Representative - Mary Jo Erickson

I am a member of Grace Lutheran Church, Champaign, Illinois and serve as treasurer of Faith Circle. Since retiring in 2020 from being an occupational therapist for the Champaign Special Education Department, I've enjoyed volunteering at church. I'm grateful for being raised in the Lutheran Church and have many happy memories of growing up in the First Lutheran Church community in Decatur. Now I love Grace Lutheran Church, Champaign and WELCA for the fellowship, service opportunities and chance to grow in my Christian faith. I like sharing thoughts and feelings with the women in our Circle and using Gather Magazine as a resource for discussion.

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