



**Central/Southern Illinois Synod  
Women of the ELCA  
April 2024**

**From Our President, Helen Flatau,**

Dear Sisters in Christ, Alleluia, Christ is Risen! Alleluia INDEED!

Spring is my favorite season. EVERYTHING is in promise mode. Two C/SIS groups have had Spring Gatherings, Chenoa, (Chenoa is part of a seven church Parish of NE Conference, "the old FAITHFULS") and the Synodical Spring Gathering in June.

Nancy Schmidt has become our new treasurer, taking over from Penny Madlinger, speaking of "old faithful!" Penny has devoted many hours to WELCA and we thank her profoundly. Kathy Olesuk has taken the reins for the Northern Conference. She is full of fresh ideas and insights! Linda Davis has filled the empty chair for the Southern Conference. Bishop Busboom has taken the reins from Bishop John Roth and Linda Post Bushkofsky, Executive Director WELCA, will retire after 22 years!

ALL THINGS ARE BEING MADE NEW! Christ's love is new every day and I encourage each of you to think how your Christ-life can be new, whether at home, congregational level, or WELCA, as a board member or representative or as a faithful listener. One of my favorite hymns has the refrain, "Here am I, Send me, send me!" Here in Mt. Olive, Sisters of Zion have "reinvented" ourselves, with two new officers and two meetings so far this year! We had not met formally for many years and our new President, Kay Brines has taken over the reins from Mary Kratchcovil, who served for over 20 years!

April 27 will be our Spring Luncheon and Zion, Gillespie will be joining us, also an inactive group for many years. Zion MTO and Zion G are now "yoked" with Pastor Zachary Krampien, who became our new pastor just last August.

Meanwhile, several conferences have returned their cash and their information, "We just cannot get the women together..." I have encouraged them to stay on our mailing roster and continue to be a part of WELCA, however small their connection. One woman said, "Oh thank you! I was afraid I was going to be scolded for giving up!" We know this is not an aberration, that many churches and women's' groups are falling out of existence.

We are seeing this as an opportunity! I encourage the GATHER magazine, and all the electronic connections we have for free from the website [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org). We need to be considering ways to soften the structures to make ALL WOMEN feel welcome in WELCA



The Pillars of Africa Children's Ministry (PACM) in Manyangwa, Uganda is home to 56 abandoned and orphaned children. Patrick and Madinah Kunihira started the ministry in 2012 when 7 children came to their home for Sunday School and slept on their veranda because they had nowhere else to go. They

soon realized God was calling them to care for these vulnerable children and others like them.

In 2016, Patrick registered PACM as an official Non-Government Organization (NGO). Since then, many other children have found either a temporary or permanent haven with Patrick, Madinah and the staff at PACM. In 2019, seven U.S. supporters of PACM organized Hearts United in God's Service, Inc. (HUGS), a 501C-3 charitable organization. HUGS serves as a sister organization to PACM, partnering with them to provide basic needs of food, clothing, education medical care and hygiene items through our child sponsorship program. Other areas of support and ministry include the medical clinic; the nursery, primary and secondary schools; the vocational program, the church and children's choir.

Each program is designed to spread the gospel of Jesus while meeting the physical needs of the children and the community. PACM seeks to empower single mothers through the vocational programs to learn skills such as sewing, hair dressing, business and basic computer skills so they can provide for their children. The small medical clinic offers first aid, testing for malaria, typhoid and HIV, as well as limited pre and antenatal care. With more support, they hope to expand the services they offer to the community.

Members of the HUGS team and Faith Lutheran Church, Jacksonville, IL, were blessed to be able to visit Patrick, Madinah, the children, and staff at PACM and see their tireless service firsthand in March of 2023. We are continually amazed at God's provision for our friends in Uganda and for the love He has placed in the hearts of those who support their ministry.



HUGS is a grassroots organization run strictly by volunteers. We provide accountability and transparency with the staff at PACM. All administrative and operating costs are absorbed by the HUGS Board of Directors, so our supporters can be confident that their donations are fully utilized as intended.

There are many opportunities to make a big difference through the HUGS and PACM ministries. Please visit our website for more information [www.hugsforuganda.com](http://www.hugsforuganda.com) or email us at [info@hugsforuganda.com](mailto:info@hugsforuganda.com).  
Melissa Street, HUGS Board President

# Women's Fall Gathering

## CS/IS WELCA Northern Conference

**Worship & song**  
led by  
**Pastor Lisa Dietrich**

**Special guest**  
speaker  
**Deacon Pat Caley**



**\$10 per person**  
Pay at the door

**Includes**  
light breakfast  
and  
lunch

Verse: I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

**WORSHIP-FELLOWSHIP-FUN-FAIR TRADE MARKET**

**Saturday September 28**  
**9:00AM-1PM**

Love  
Joy  
Peace  
Kindness  
Gentleness  
Faithfulness  
Patience  
Self Control



**St. Paul Lutheran Church**  
**1427 West Lake Ave. Peoria, IL**

Women <sup>of the</sup> **ELCA** 

# **Save the date...** *October 19 tentative WELCA C/SIS Fall Gathering*

## **NORTHEAST CONFERENCE**

April 6, 2024, 42 women gathered from 11 churches in the area for a nice luncheon and a presentation on "Seed Starting "by Sandra Knight, a Master Gardener. Offering was \$583 split between our Synod WELCA & Lutheran World Relief.



Talking about "Seed Starting " Sandra Knight of Servants United Parish, Cornell, Master Gardener.

Carol Hanlon, NE Conference president and Jean Harrison, NE Conference recorder



Hostesses from Servants United Parish



Kathleen Bounds, organist

**REMINDER: IMPORTANT WEBSITES** such as [welca.org](http://welca.org) for up-to-date information about the Women of the ELCA including Daily Grace short devotions and how to get it as emails; photos from the 2023\_Just Love GATHERING, Phoenix; information about the next GATHERING July 16-19, 2026, in DES MOINES, IOWA, THANKOFFERING SERVICE information and many more resources!

Our website for the Women of the ELCA Central/Southern Illinois Synod is [welca-csis.org](http://welca-csis.org). We try to keep it updated with upcoming events and information and pictures!



Nancy Schmidt, Treasurer

I was born in Litchfield, IL, the oldest of 4 and raised in Wilsonville. This is a small old mining town of around 500 people where my grandpa, when he was young, was a coal miner. It's about 5 miles south of Gillespie, IL, where I now live. I was baptized Lutheran 2 months after my birth in my mother's home church in Granite City, IL.

My father was killed on Mother's Day in 1968 when I was 10. Close friends of the family who belonged to Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in Gillespie suggested my mom send the 3 of us older kids to VBS at Zion to take our minds off of losing our dad and keeping us occupied. The baby was 2 months old. That's when we joined the church.

It was a life altering experience for me after the shock of losing a parent because I found that I still had a Heavenly Father who would never leave us and always take care of us. I was terrified someone else in my family would die. It truly changed me as a person. That innocence and naïveté of faith has never wavered for me as I was steadfast in my belief of that heavenly being continually watching over me. I now know that it was the only thing that kept me grounded and feeling safe growing up after that and throughout my life.

I was confirmed at Zion and attended Gillespie High School graduating in 1975. I also met my husband, Larry Schmidt, at church who was born into Zion, baptized and confirmed there. His great-great grandfather was a founding father of Zion after coming over from Germany. I was best friends with Larry's cousin and he was 3 years older than us so I really didn't pay much attention to him and he really didn't notice me until his cousin and aunt got us together one Christmas Eve in 1974.

Larry grew up on a farm in Gillespie and graduated college with a degree in Law Enforcement. We were married in August of 1976 at Zion and a week after our wedding, we moved to VA to work for the FBI in Washington, DC until Larry received a call to join the IL Secretary of State Police Department and we moved back to Gillespie. I was then transferred to the FBI Field Office in Springfield, IL.

We had our first daughter in 1980 and I became a stay-at-home mom and in 1982 we had our son. In 1988, we built our home on the farm and in 1990 had our second daughter.

Zion is a big part of our lives. Larry and I have both been Sunday School teachers in the past and I have taught and directed VBS for many years. Larry and our son have both served as council presidents. Our youngest daughter has been on church council in the past and her husband is now Vice President. Our oldest daughter started playing the piano in church off and on when she was 10 and has been our pianist since she was 17 and now plays the organ as well at church.

My husband retired from the SOS Police Dept. 17 years ago after 29-1/2 years and I retired in 2023 after 25 years working as a paralegal for a local attorney. My husband continues to farm along with our son.

All 3 of our children were baptized, confirmed and married at Zion and we now enjoy 8 grandchildren (6 boys and 2 girls) and all but one have been baptized at Zion. Three have been confirmed there with 5 more to go!

I have been the Treasurer at Zion for 13 years and Larry lovingly says it is a life sentence! I will do my best as Treasurer for the C/SIS WELCA and look forward to meeting new friends in faith.

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