

Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation

Conferences help ministers and congregations stay connected

by Marcia Hahn

At a time when people are encouraged to keep their distance, rostered ministers of the Northeastern Iowa Synod are staying more connected than ever.

Pastor Josh Martyn of Holy Trinity, Dubuque, says ministers of the Water of Life Conference are constantly keeping in contact with one another. “We’re texting every day, meeting once or twice a week, and checking in on how our congregations are doing and how we can collaborate with each other.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Dubuque area ELCA ministers have been meeting on Tuesday mornings for text study and devotions online. This summer they

started meeting in person once a week for lunch at a park where they can sit and talk with social distancing.

“It’s been a great opportunity to vent and share how we are doing and remind one another that we can’t do everything,” says Martyn, who serves as the conference dean. “It’s nice to have this collegiality with one another.”

Most of the Dubuque area ELCA congregations have been offering joint online worship services using



Josh Martyn

“Open communication among congregations allows ministry to flourish as we live out the Gospel together in these unprecedented times.”
— Pastor Josh Martyn

technology provided through Wartburg Theological Seminary. Every week congregation members hear a different pastor preach, and Martyn says the congregation members love it. The congregations have also joined in the Zoom Bingo Bible study started by St. Matthew of Dubuque.

“During the start of the pandemic

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Interim Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, third from left, joins pastors from the Water of Life Conference for their weekly lunch at a park.

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we were all very nervous on how to do things online, but we knew we had each other's backs," Martyn says. "We pulled together and came up with ideas to keep people connected and in touch with one another in our congregations and across our congregations, as well."

DEANS AND CHAPLAINS TEAM UP TO OFFER SUPPORT

Martyn and Pastor Paul Amlin, who serves as the Water of Life Conference chaplain, saw early on how important collaboration would be during the pandemic and the suspension of in-person worship, so they invited the deans and chaplains from the synod's other eight conferences to meet online to see how they could support one another.

"We knew other conferences were struggling as much as we were, so we wanted to reach out to them," Martyn says. "We were all trying to tread in these unknown waters as best we could, so it has been really nice to get together with all the deans and chaplains to talk."

The deans and chaplains have been meeting regularly on Zoom since April to share how they and their congregations are doing, share ministry ideas, and brainstorm ways to collaborate and offer guidance for one another. When Governor Kim Reynolds allowed spiritual and religious gatherings in Iowa to resume in May, the deans and chaplains collaborated with one another and with the synod executive staff to send rostered members a letter encouraging them to continue with online services until public health officials and science could assure a



Outdoor worship at Good Shepherd, Decorah, includes pre-packaged communion cups.

safe return to in-person worship.

"We tried to provide some guidance and advice for each other going forward," Martyn says.

As congregations plan ways to reopen for their fall season, rostered ministers continue to turn to one another for guidelines and ideas, including those posted on the Northeastern Iowa Synod's website.

"Open communication among congregations allows ministry to flourish as we live out the Gospel together in these unprecedented times," Martyn says.

UPPER IOWA CONFERENCE

Rostered ministers of the Upper Iowa Conference met in Pastor Amy Zalk Larson's backyard in June to bid farewell to Pastor Chad Huebner who was leaving his ministry at First, Decorah, and to welcome Pastor Peter Kowitz to his new call at Decorah Lutheran. It was the



Amy Zalk Larson

first time the ministers had met in person since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. Other interactions have been primarily through online monthly conference meetings and weekly text studies, which Larson says have yielded some good discussions about how to give communion and how to reopen in-person worship and other ministry activities.

Larson, who serves Good Shepherd in Decorah and is the Upper Iowa Conference dean, says congregations have been offering worship in a variety of ways, including online, outdoors, radio services, and drive through with communion in the parking lot, along with some indoor services. Congregations have been using the guidelines offered in last spring's letter from the deans and chaplains and in documents provided by the ELCA to make their decisions.

"We are all motivated by love of neighbor, and each congregation is really taking that to heart in the decisions they make," Larson says. "Those open for in person worship

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God promises a future filled with hope

I've been taking some pictures as I get acquainted with my new surroundings in Northeastern Iowa. Snapshots of my walking path near my home show fields ready to harvest and fog lingering in the low spots. I am a preacher, which sometimes means everything I see is a sermon illustration. In this case, the analogy of 'fields ripe unto harvest' and our own spiritual journey in this time of COVID catches my attention, with perhaps a light lingering fog attached as well.

So many congregations are working through their concerns about being able to resume in-person worship. I hear the concern in both lay and rostered leaders' voices as they consider how and when, as well as what protocols to follow if their area infection numbers go even higher. There is fear in this time for all of us; and there is also impatience with what feels like an extraordinarily long time of being out of our usual habits and practices. I'm reminded of the image in my neighboring field of a combine sitting idle while a ripened field stands behind it.

What does it mean to be the Church in this time? We may feel being Church always has meant being in

"We do the best we can, knowing what we know now and trusting that when a break in the fog comes, we can seize that clarity and move ahead with even greater confidence."



Church, and now that most of us are virtually connected rather than physically present with one another, we have to re-think what it means to be the people of God in this time. We are an Evangelical church, called by God to reach out to neighbor and stranger



with the Good News of Jesus Christ. We have often described that reaching out as being welcoming to those who come to our building for a service. We probably haven't thought about the 'virtual' welcome of online services and Zoom gatherings as part of what it may mean to reach out in Jesus' name. Many congregations are reaching people in their areas with their online worship services whom they wouldn't have met or known about apart from this Covid-driven time. There are fully "ripe fields" right near us which we are now given the opportunity to see and engage with in new ways. Welcome in Jesus' name has new meaning because of the necessity of virtual worship, as well as other virtual church programs.

And about that lingering fog ... we certainly are not in a time of clear-sightedness as to how long the virus will last and when an 'all-clear' may sound. It can be very frustrating to navigate in fog, even with all the right lights and proper care taken. The life of faith is similar, isn't it? We can't always see clearly where God is leading us; we can't always travel on familiar roads where we kind of know the lay of the land, but we are called nonetheless to follow the God who brings light in the darkness and hope in the face of despair and fear. We do the best we can, knowing what we know now and trusting that when a break in the fog comes, we can seize that clarity and move ahead with even greater confidence.

"Better Days Ahead" is a favorite phrase of mine in these times. It could have always been a favorite phrase, truth be told. God promises a future filled with hope — a new life for now and into eternity. For now, there's this ripe field, and a little lingering fog for us to continue through as we follow God's call to welcome others in Jesus' name.

—Rev. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl
Interim Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod/ELCA

Fall Conference Zoom Event

Bonhoeffer as Pastor to Youth
Oct. 19-20, 2020

Rostered and lay ministers, seminary interns and spouses are reminded to register by Monday, Oct. 12, for the Fall Theological Conference set for Oct. 19-20 on Zoom.

The conference theme will be “Bonhoeffer as Pastor to Youth,” with keynote speaker Dr. Andrew Root presenting on Monday about Bonhoeffer’s work with young people and how it can inspire ministering to youth today. Root is the Carrie Olson Baalson professor of youth and family ministry at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. He earned Master of Theology and Master of Divinity degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., and a doctorate in philosophy from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the author of several books, including *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*.

Tuesday’s agenda includes “Time with the Bishop,” giving participants an opportunity to hear from Interim Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl. Dr. Root will lead a session about “The Pastor in a Secular Age.” The Racial Justice Advocacy Network will lead a special afternoon workshop, “Let’s Talk: Conversation about Race.”

REGISTER BY OCT. 12

There is no cost to attend; however, registration is required. A link to access the event will be emailed after Oct. 12 to those who have registered.

To register, email Linda Sue Hamilton at hamiltonl@neiasynod.org or call the synod office, 319-352-1414. To learn more about the event and to download the conference schedule, visit www.neiasynod.org/event.

2021 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Council has set the next Synod Assembly for June 11-13, 2021, at Luther College in Decorah. This assembly will include the election of a Bishop, with the theme “Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation.” For assembly updates, visit www.neiasynod.org/synod-assembly-2020.

Synod to offer All Saints Sunday worship service

Nov. 1, 2020

Interim Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl and the synod staff will record a worship service that will be available for congregations to use Nov. 1 for All Saints Sunday, or another day as they wish. The service will include a sermon by Bishop Andrea, children’s sermon by Pastor Mark Anderson, and music by choirs from Luther College and Wartburg College.

Two YouTube recordings will be available: One will include the entire service with a place to pause for the local congregation to remember friends and loved ones who have passed away. The other YouTube recording will include only the Bishop’s sermon. Both versions will also be available as audio files for congregations that are worshipping through radio broadcasts.

The synod staff invite others from the synod to participate by recording themselves singing verses of “For All the Saints,” ELW 422. Anyone of any age may contribute. Email Pastor Joelle Colville-Hanson at colville-hansonj@neiasynod.org if interested.

More information will be emailed to rostered members about how to access and use the recordings.

NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD

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Send news for the November 2020 issue to Marcia Hahn by Oct. 14. We welcome story ideas related to the 2020 theme, “Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation.”

Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated for use in synod congregations and organizations, with credit to the *Star* newsletter.

Please notify the synod office with name and address changes. To receive an electronic version of the *Star*, rather than paper, send your request to hahnm@neiasynod.org.



www.neiasynod.org

Free stewardship videos are available

For several years the ELCA has made short videos, about 15 minutes in length, on stewardship. Experts in the field make simple and informative presentations on topics such as:

- Proven approaches to growing mission support
- How technology can engage congregation members in ministry
- Electronic Giving (both Vanco and Tithe.ly)
- ... and many more

Now these videos are cataloged in one spreadsheet and available from one link. The videos are all available at no cost, and permission is granted to use the clips appropriately. For quick access, please visit www.neiasynod.org/ministries/generosity.



— *Pastor Mark A. Anderson*
Assistant to the Bishop

Opportunities to Help Derecho Victims

Donations and volunteers from the Northeastern Iowa Synod are making a difference in the lives of Iowans affected by the violent derecho storm on Aug. 10.

Members of Redeemer Lutheran in Waverly and Lord of Life in Dubuque are among the volunteers who have responded to help with clean-up efforts in the Cedar Rapids area. The groups have made repeat trips in August and September to cut up trees and brush for several families, working in partnership with First Lutheran of Cedar Rapids.

“There are still a lot of families who have a lot of clean up to do,” says Pastor Corey Smith of Redeemer. “If you haven’t seen the destruction there, you can’t fathom what it has meant to some of these places. It’s remarkable that trees 50 to 60 years old are just snapped off.”

Smith says that Redeemer plans to send a group to help one weekend a month. People wanting to join them can contact Smith at Redeemer or make plans directly with Pastor Craig Brown of First Lutheran.

“So often we go to help at a place for a week or two and then forget about

it, but the need for help down there is not going away soon,” Smith says.

GIFTS TO LDR RESPONSE FUND ARE BEING DISTRIBUTED

Thanks to generous donations, the Lutheran Disaster Response Fund of Iowa has given \$10,000 to the Southeastern Iowa Synod to help families recover from the widespread destruction caused by the derecho. This fund is a partnership among Lutheran Services in Iowa and the three Iowa synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The LDR-Iowa funds have been combined with donations received from other sources and are being distributed by the Southeastern Iowa Synod to various organizations in communities affected by the derecho, including:

- Churches United of the Quad City Area
- Meals to go in Newton
- Police departments in Marshalltown and Cedar Rapids to



Volunteers from Redeemer, Waverly; Lord of Life, Dubuque; and First Lutheran, Cedar Rapids clean up downed trees and brush from the derecho storm that hit Cedar Rapids in August.

distribute gift cards to families

- Partnership with Catholic Charities
- Four food banks serving heavily impacted communities
- Team Rubicon clean-up efforts
- St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids

Learn how to donate to this fund at www.neiasynod.org/disaster-response.

are being really thoughtful in how to be safe and protect others, and they have been responsive to change their plans if cases have spiked. There has been a good spirit of understanding that each congregation council works with what is best for their own context.”

With summer winding down, Larson says conversations are focusing on how to proceed with Sunday school, confirmation, and faith formation to support families in this time, especially when they are so overloaded with work and school. “We don’t want to add more busyness, but we do want to support families.”

Larson says she has appreciated being part of the bi-weekly online meetings with the deans and chaplains and hearing about the many resources congregation members are sharing. She learned from the Water of Life ministers about the PowerPoint template prepared by Wartburg Seminary and has been using it to create YouTube worship services for Good Shepherd.

In addition to the online worship services, Good Shepherd has been offering a brief outdoor communion service every other week. Looking ahead, Larson says plans are to offer a 15-minute time for communion in the building with 50 people or fewer. For those who can’t come, Larson and a visitation pastor can bring communion to people in other ways. She adds that she is grateful for the face shields the synod office provided for pastors as they begin reopening in-person worship services.

“It has been wonderful to hear what is happening in other parts

of the synod and the creative approaches being used to build connections and partnerships,” Larson says.

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS

The last time that ministers from the Shepherd of the Hills Conference met in person for a text study was St. Patrick’s Day, and then the world shut down. Weekly text studies have continued online via Zoom, but the conversations have changed.

“Three-fourths of our time on Zoom is spent sharing and asking how everyone is doing,” says Pastor Erika Lenth, pastor for St. Paul, Monona, and dean of the Shepherd of the Hills Conference. “That’s absolutely necessary because this is not normal. We need more help from each other, and we need to know what each other are doing.”

Congregations in the conference have been doing ministry in different ways, including online worship, outdoor services and drive-through communion. The Shepherd of the Hills Ministries located in St. Olaf had to quit accepting clothing donations due to sanitizing concerns, but is offering packets of clothing and items for families. In addition, the ministry packed 160 backpacks for area children heading back to school.

Lenth says the Zoom meetings with



Erika Lenth leads outdoor worship and communion at St. Paul, Monona.

Conferences for Cooperative Ministry

Congregations of the Northeastern Iowa Synod work interdependently in geographical areas to form nine Conferences for Cooperative Ministry.

Shared ministries of stewardship, evangelism, youth, education, and social ministry are initiated with gifts and resources available within the congregations, synod, churchwide ministries, and agencies and institutions of the church.

Conference deans support collegial relations among rostered ministers, and conference chaplains foster pastoral care among rostered ministers and their families. Conference correspondents help arrange conference assemblies.

To learn more about the synod conferences, visit www.neiasynod.org/about-us/synod-conferences.

deans and chaplains from across the synod have been helpful in deciding how to move forward in her own congregation. St. Paul offered summer worship services outdoors, with help from a congregation member who is also a deejay. He set up his own equipment to broadcast live and record the service for the congregation's YouTube channel for people at home.

When worship services moved inside in September, the St. Paul council approved his proposal for the congregation to purchase a new computer and iPad to use as a camera for live streaming and to make the entire church wi-fi stable. The large brick church building previously had only a router in the church office; now, the building is wired with hotspots for reliable Internet connections throughout the entire church.

"It took a pandemic to get the congregation updated," Lenth says. "Now we can stream onto YouTube from the balcony or anywhere in the church."

The indoor worship services have been shortened to 30 or 40 minutes, with only one song during worship with everyone masked. The large sanctuary allows for social distancing for the 25 to 35 people who have been attending.

"It's a great time for families with young kids to come since they don't have to sit as long," Lenth says.

St. Paul plans to resume Sunday school classes in October. "As long as things are going well at the school, we feel comfortable having the kids here for Sunday school," Lenth says.

"This pandemic is so much bigger in other areas of our synod, but we can still be supportive of each other, converse, hear different people's stories, and be grateful where we are."
— Pastor Erika Lenth

Classes will move into larger spaces, such as the fellowship hall for one class that has 14 students. Pre-school and kindergarten students will use lap desks and carpet pads for their projects, and students will be provided with their own gallon bags of crayons, glue sticks and other supplies to reduce contact with others.

Lenth's confirmation class of 17 seventh and eighth graders will use social distancing to meet in shortened sessions. When the students can't meet in person due to the weather, they will meet by Zoom — there won't be any snow days.

St. Paul is moving ahead with its fall mission dinner as a drive-through event with pre-packaged meals. Lenth says the dinner has

always been done with three goals — to help a mission, to be social with the community, and to feed people. Freewill offerings will support families affected by the Aug. 10 derecho storm.

"By doing the drive through, we will still meet two of our three goals, and the dinner will be safe with good food to support a good cause."

Prior to the pandemic, the deans and chaplains met twice a year at the synod office. Lenth says she always enjoyed bringing information back to her conference congregations from those meetings but as the pandemic continues, checking in with each other on Zoom has worked well.

"This pandemic is so much bigger in other areas of our synod, but we can still be supportive of each other, converse, hear different people's stories, and be grateful where we are."

Helpful resources for congregational decision-making related to COVID-19 may be found on the synod website at www.neiasynod.org/disaster-response.

Now Easier to Earn Wellness Dollars

Many people have had difficulty visiting a clinic for a biometric screening this year due to the pandemic, so Portico Benefits Services has decided to waive this step and credit wellness dollars to members who have not yet completed it — \$100 to ELCA-Primary members and \$100 to eligible spouses. The

credit will show up in people's online accounts.

Eligible members and spouses can each earn another \$100 in wellness dollars by having a phone conversation with a Portico Financial Planner by Nov. 30, 2020. Sign in to myPortico to learn more.

ELCA survey assesses pastoral needs for ministry

Rostered and lay members are invited to complete the ELCA survey by Oct. 12.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is conducting a survey to collect the experiences and needs of the church for ministry in a multireligious world.

This survey is an invitation for rostered and lay members to share their ministry experiences in order to help the ELCA identify what guidance and resources they need for the future. Respondents are asked about their participation in various pastoral situations, such as inter-religious prayer services, responses to tragedy, social ministry

work with partners, and pastoral care for inter-religious couples and families.

A link to one version of the survey was emailed directly to active rostered ministers on Sept. 12. Another version is available online for ELCA laity, retired rostered ministers, and ecumenical and inter-religious partners to complete.

Both surveys will be open until Oct. 12. Active rostered ministers are asked to complete the survey emailed to them. Retired rostered

members, lay members and other ELCA partners can complete their survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/PastoralGuidelines_Weblink.

The survey is a first step in the development of guidelines for the church as outlined in *A Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment: A policy statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. The declaration reflects the longtime inter-religious commitments of the church.

Youth groups are invited to 'Faith and Race' online event

Faith and Race Conversation
Sunday, Oct. 18
7 p.m. on Zoom

Middle school and high school youth from the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to join youth from other denominations for an online "Faith and Race" conversation with the artists Agape, Joe Davis and Teddy the Brave on Sunday, Oct. 18, at 7 p.m. on Zoom.

This interactive event, sponsored by Lutheran Campus Ministry of the University of Northern Iowa and the Northeastern Iowa Synod, is the first in a series of "Three Tough Talks" about how faith guides people through the world.

Students can participate as a group with their youth leaders or they can join in individually. There is no cost to attend.

The three artists will lead the live

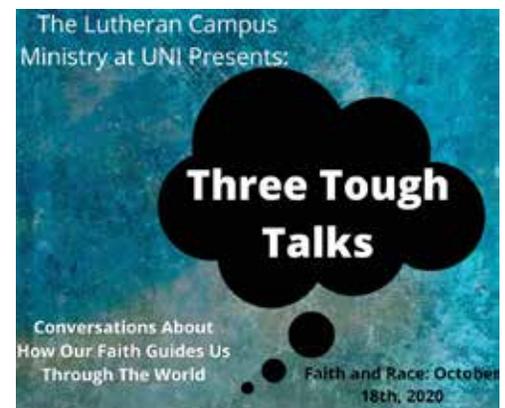
event with music, Bible stories, and conversations about their own racial experiences, how to recognize racism, and how to learn, grow and support one another.

Pastor Mark Anderson, assistant to the Bishop, and Deb Bachmann, Northeastern Iowa Synod youth coordinator, will also participate.

Lesson plans, conversation starters and other guidance materials will be provided for youth leaders to share with their youth about what to expect, how to interact with the artists during the event, and how to follow up with group discussion about what the youth heard at the event.

REGISTER ONLINE

A link to the registration form and more information about the artists is available on the synod website at



www.neiasynod.org/youth-ministry.

Individuals and groups can register online, or the form can be printed and mailed to Robin Kime at Three-House Campus Ministries, 2422 College St., Cedar Falls, IA 50613.

To learn more, contact Kime at robin@threehouse.org or call 319-266-4071.

OCTOBER EVENTS

- 1 **Zoom Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 1 **Zoom Meeting**, First Call Theological Education Executive Committee, 10 a.m.
- 1 **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, 10 a.m., Ewalu
- 6 **Zoom Event**, Colleague Group Leaders, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 8 **Zoom Meeting**, Deans and Chaplains, 9-11 a.m.
- 10 **Zoom Meeting**, Compensation Committee, 9 a.m.
- 18 **Zoom Event**, Faith and Race Youth Conversation, 7 p.m.
- 19-20 **Zoom Event**, Fall Theological Conference
- 22 **Zoom Meeting**, First Call Theological Education Orientation, 10 a.m.-12 noon

NOVEMBER EVENTS

- 5 **Zoom Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 5 **Zoom Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, 10 a.m.
- 12 **Zoom Meeting**, New to Synod, 9:30-11:15 a.m.
- 26-27 **Office Closed**, Thanksgiving

DECEMBER EVENTS

- 3 **Zoom Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 3 **Zoom Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, 10 a.m.
- 3-4 **Zoom Meeting**, Candidacy Committee
- 24-31 **Office Closed**, Christmas

JANUARY 2021 EVENTS

- 1 **Office Closed**, New Year's Day
- 7 **Zoom Meeting**, Interim Ministry Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 7 **Zoom Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, 10 a.m.
- 9 **Meeting**, Synodical Women's Organization Cluster, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Location TBD
- 18 **Office Closed**, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Advent Preaching Series

The Northeastern Iowa Synod staff will provide a recorded sermon for every Sunday in Advent. Interim Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl will also provide a sermon for Dec. 27, since many rostered ministers take that Sunday off.

Watch for more details to come.

INSTALLING

Rev. Kristen Briner Wiperman, St. Matthew and Luther Manor, Dubuque, pending
Rev. Katie Pals, Trinity, Belmond, pending

INTERVIEWING

Cresco, Immanuel, Rev. Charis Combs-Lay, contract
Decorah, Burr Oak and Hesper
Dubuque, St. Peter (staff)
Elma, St. Paul (Maple Leaf)
Independence, Immanuel (staff)
Mitchell, Faith; **Nora Springs**, St. Luke; **Osage**, Rock Creek and St. John (Cross Roads Lutheran Parish), (staff)
Nashua, St. John, Rev. Norman Bauer, contract interim
Tripoli, Grace, Rev. Dennis Niezwaag, contract interim
Tripoli, St. John (Crane Creek)

SELF-STUDY

Calmar, Calmar and **Decorah**, Springfield
Charles City, Messiah
Chester, United
Clear Lake, Galilean, Rev. Melinda McCluskey, interim
Decorah, First
Frederika, St. John, Rev. Megan Graves, interim
Grundy Center, American
Hawkeye, Trinity
Iowa Falls, Bethany
Jewell, Bethesda, Rev. Adam Starrett, interim
La Porte City, Zion (Jubilee)
Mason City, St. Paul, Rev. Matthew Muters, contract
Ridgeway, Peace, Orleans and Madison (Ridgeway Parish), Rev. Jim Scaife, contract interim
Story City, St. Petri, Rev. Scot McCluskey, interim
Sumner, St. Peter (Richfield) and **Waucoma**, St. John (Stapleton)
Waterloo, Our Savior's, Rev. Ruth Ann Shriver, contract interim
Waterloo, St. Ansgar
Waverly, LSI/Beloit (chaplain)
Wellsburg, St. Paul
West Union, Zion

ROSTER CHANGES

Rev. Norman Bauer, retired
Rev. Dave Nerdig, retired
Rev. James Harbaugh, retired
Rev. Steven L. Ullestad, retired
Rev. Scott Duffus, retired
Rev. Luther Thoresen, retired
Rev. Timothy Maybee, transferred to South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Rev. Burton Everist, retired

OCTOBER 2020						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders Mrs. Hanna Langholz, Decorah 1	Rev. Bruce L. Hanson, Garnavillo Rev. Dr. James B. Martin-Schramm, Decorah 2	Rev. Joel H. Becker, Waverly Deacon Patricia Gjere, Decorah 3
Rev. Kurt M. Bockoven, Decorah Rev. James K. Knudson, Waterloo 4	Mrs. Viola Engelstad, Iowa City 5	Rev. Melinda McVey McCluskey, Clear Lake 6	Rev. Anita Nuetzman, Mason City 7	Ossian, Ossian 8	Stavanger, Ossian 9	Peace Lutheran Fellowship, Parkersburg 10
Mrs. Carole Nesheim, Northfield 11	Rev. Jennifer J. Bohls, Mason City 12	St. Paul, Postville 13	Rev. Andrew G. Oppedahl Jr., Dubuque 14	Ms. Carol Hasvold, Decorah 15	Rev. James A. Mattson, Decorah Rev. Mark D. Walker, Kensett 16	Middle East Peace Madison, Ridgeway 17
Orleans, Ridgeway 18	Peace, Ridgeway 19	Zion, Rockford 20	Rev. Mark A. Anderson, Waverly 21	Rev. Victoria L. Shepherd, Wellsburg 22	Rev. Elizabeth A. Olson, Waverly 23	Rev. Gregory T. Bjornstad, Dubuque Rev. Oliver E. Johnson, Waverly Rev. Amy Zalk Larson, Decorah 24
St. Peter, Rockwell 25	Rev. Larry A. Trachte, Waverly 26	Bergen, Roland 27	Peace, Ryan 28	St. Peter, Toeterville 29	Rev. William J. Peters, Lake Mills 30	Rev. Harriet C. Danielson, St. Augustine Rev. Dennis A. Hugdahl, Farmington 31

National Donor Sabbath

Congregations of the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to observe National Donor Sabbath to raise awareness about the need for organ donors.

In 2015, the Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly adopted a resolution to encourage congregations to observe National Donor Sabbath, which this year is Nov. 13-15.

People are encouraged to sign up online as organ, eye or tissue donors through their state donor registry. Signing up now means that someday a life could be saved.

To learn more about National Donor Sabbath and to download resources, visit www.organdonor.gov/awareness/events/donor-sabbath.html.

Good Gifts offers a 'How-To Guide'

Since worship and in-person gatherings look different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ELCA Good Gifts has prepared a "How-To Guide" for online fundraisers to help congregations make the most of their digital tools.

Many congregations organize and host special fundraisers and giving fairs for ELCA Good Gifts in the winter as an alternative to traditional gift-giving and as a meaningful way to fight hunger — one goat, water well or school uniform at a time. Now they can use the step-by-step guide to create their own "wish list," go in together on a "group gift," or promote ways for families to make a difference at home.



To download the guide and other free resources, visit <https://goodgifts.elca.org/congregational-resources>.



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING
AUGUST 5-8, 2021 | PHOENIX
WELCATG.ORG

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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.

From the President

2020 has certainly been a trying year. Isolation and uncertainty, two words that describe what everyone is feeling due to COVID 19. This summer was to be the 11th Triennial Convention and Gathering of the Women of the ELCA in sunny Phoenix, AZ, but due to the circumstances this event was postponed until August of 2021. Many other events were also cancelled or postponed, events that we, as Women of the ELCA look forward to. Retreats, conventions, bible studies, regular worship just to name a few. We are all in the same boat!

Over the past several weeks, I and Executive Director Linda Post Bushkofsky have been meeting with the regional Synodical presidents over ZOOM. We use this time to connect and brainstorm ideas on how to thrive as a community of women. Yes, there is some lamenting, but the common denominator is shared through the words of 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."

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that this amazing organization is there for YOU! Yes, we still need to practice social distancing and conduct much of our business virtually – but it can be done. Whether you need ideas to revitalize your group or simply inspiration on how to live out our ministry as individuals, we're here for YOU!

Please take some time today to remember your calling. Go to womenoftheelca.org and re-familiarize yourself with the many resources available. Take advantage of simple things like Tuesday prayers at noon, an opportunity to pray with Lutheran women across the church in prayer. Design a Thankoffering container and make a conscious decision to look for things to be grateful for each and every day. Drop a few coins in the container and forward on to churchwide. Reach out to the Region 5 liaison Sarah Carson (800-638-3522, ext. 2766) for support. These small gestures will help you feel

connected to your siblings in Christ across the entire churchwide expression.

Hang in there, my Friends, for soon we will be celebrating together in fellowship and praise in Phoenix in August of 2021!

*Blessings, Lisa Plorin,
President of Church-wide Women of the ELCA*

Discipleship Committee

God is our refuge, our rock. He is always with us. He protects and heals us. He holds our hand as we travel thru life and gives us confidence with His word.

What can we do, as believers, to thank God for his presence in our lives? I believe discipleship is a way of "paying it forward". Most of us are not saving lives as a doctor or nurse, running an organization that can help all people across the world or a minister wanting to bring and strengthen congregants into God's fold.

As an ordinary person we can do well by sharing garden veggies with neighbors, sew face masks and quilts for LWR, drive a person to church or to sewing guild, maybe grocery shop for an invalid or pray for better health and safety for someone. There are so many small, common acts of kindness we can do for others in the name of God.

Never think that we are not important. God loves all of us in the same manner.

God's Blessings, LuAnn Bruner

Justice Committee

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month? What plans have you made to talk about it in your groups, congregations or communities?

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:

Nat Domestic Violence Hotline 1-888-799-SAFE
 Nat Teen Dating Abuse Hotline 1-866-331-9474
 Nat Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD
 Nat 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 “need 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.

Taken from www.womenoftheelca.org

Stewardship Committee

Giving. What does it mean for you? What does it mean for us during this time of Covid 19? This is my quick “go to list” of what I might do to share what God has given to me.

- **Giving Time:** Taking time to tell others of Jesus, time to share your faith journey, volunteering to help others, and time to listen to others.
- **Giving Talent:** Using your gift of music or song to bring joy to others, using the gift of baking to share with others, or using your gift of loving to sew, to make masks for nursing homes, hospitals and schools.
- **Giving Love:** Giving your loving kindness and compassion to others who may need your support.
- **Giving Monetary gifts:** Donating to MANNA, LSI, NEIA Synodical Women’s Organization, or to your local WELCA unit.

I wrote this today because someone has given our family an awesome gift. A new life. Our daughter and her husband are now the proud parents of a baby

boy. After numerous miscarriages, medical tests, failed adoptions and years of waiting, this little boy has brought joy to us and to our church family. God is so amazing.

What do you have to give to others? May God bless our using, sharing and giving of ourselves and our gifts.

Submitted by JoAnn Brunsvold

CALENDAR

- Nov. 1 Deadline for December *Good News*
 Nov. 7 LWR Ingathering for Clusters CEH, St Timothy Lutheran, Hudson
 SWO Board Meeting, 9-noon, Zoom
 Dec 1 Deadline for January *Good News*
 Jan 1 Deadline for February *Good News*
 Jan 9 SWO Board Meeting, 9-3, Synod Office, (by Zoom if weather issues)
 Mar 13 SWO Board Meeting, 9-12, Zoom
 May 1 SWO Board Meeting, 9-12, Wartburg Coll.
 Jun 18 SWO Board Meeting, 7-9, Wartburg Coll.
 Jun 19 SWO Gathering @ Wartburg College
 Aug 2-5 Triennial Convention, Phoenix
 Aug 5-8 Triennial Gathering, Phoenix

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Articles are due the 1st of the month for the next month's newsletter (e.g. April 1 for May issue)

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Contact NEIA Women of the ELCA:

neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA

Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church, too.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Dear friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you as we enter into the crisp fall season. As congregations continue to meet the needs of members and invite and serve others while considering the safety of all during the pandemic, the goal of this newsletter from the Synod Home Life Network is to share resources for this season. Some of the seasonal topics this month include: fall, Reformation, pandemic, Halloween, stewardship, and harvest. May your soul be nourished and inspired to share your faith in our loving, grace-filled God.

Robin Souhrada, Home Life Network member

We Plow the Fields and Scatter (ELW 681, public domain)

We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand:
He sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes, and the sunshine, and soft, refreshing rain.

*Refrain: All good gifts around us are sent from heav'n above;
Then thank the Lord, oh, thank the Lord, for all His love.*

He only is the Maker of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower, He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him, by Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, His children, He gives our daily bread.

We thank Thee then, O Father, for all things bright and good,
The seedtime and the harvest, our life, our health, our food;
Accept the gifts we offer, for all Thy love imparts,
And what Thou most desirest—our humble, thankful hearts.



As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. Genesis 8:22

Harvest time is here. What are you looking forward to in the fall season? Where have you recently seen God's abundance in your life? How might you share the gifts God bestows upon you?

A word for the weary:

Many of us, myself included, feel the weight of weariness during this time of unrest. Unrest in pandemic, unrest in injustice, unrest in political opposition, unrest in laboring differently, to name a few. Let me remind you of God's desire for us when we find ourselves struggling and anxious.

Cast all your anxieties on God, because God cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7

Come to me all you who labor and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts... Romans 5:3-5

May you rest in the compassionate love of God, find strength to cast your worries unto Jesus, and hope in the breath of the Holy Spirit that we, once again, are restored to abundant joy.

Live into the fullness of resting and gaining strength, trusting in God's grace.





THE PUMPKIN PRAYER

**Dear Jesus,
As I carve my pumpkin,
help me pray this prayer:**

**Open my mind
so that I can learn about you.**
(cut the top off the pumpkin)

**Take all my sin and forgive
the wrong that I do.**
(clean out the inside)

Open my eyes so your love I will see.
(cut eyes shaped like hearts)

**I'm sorry for times I've turned up my nose
at what you've given to me.**
(cut a nose in the shape of a cross)

Open my ears so your word I will hear.
(cut ears shaped like a Bible)

Open my mouth to tell others you're near.
(cut the mouth in the shape of a fish)

Let your light shine in all I say and do!
(place candle inside and light it)

Don't have a pumpkin to carve?
Draw and color a pumpkin to go along
with the poem.

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Original source unknown.

Looking Ahead

All Saint Day will be celebrated in many congregations Sunday, November 1st. It is a time to remember the saints who have gone before us and the saints among us. Light a candle and say a prayer to remember and honor the saints who have impacted your faith journey.

REFORMATION AND MARTIN LUTHER TRIVIA

(for youth and adults)



1. Who was the main influence in the protestant reformation?
2. What reformer was an early advocate for the translation of the Bible?
3. The publishing of what paper by Martin Luther is regarded as sparking the Protestant Reformation?
4. What city were the 95 Theses thought to have been posted on the church door?
5. What was the first protestant church?
6. What reformer expounded on the doctrine of predestination and the absolute sovereignty of God?
7. In the Bible, Martin Luther found that we are saved by what?
8. Who invented the printing press that allowed the reformers to spread their ideas rapidly?
9. Martin Luther translated the Bible into what language?
10. Martin Luther translated the Bible into German for what purpose?
11. Martin Luther left lawyer school to become what?
12. Luther rejected what doctrine that said the bread and wine of communion became the body and blood of Christ?
13. What year marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation?
14. What language was used in the church before Martin Luther translated the Bible into German?
15. Who was Martin Luther married to?
16. The widespread theological division by Martin Luther and many reformers against the Roman Catholic Church is called _____.
17. When is the Reformation celebrated?
18. Who is the man, who was a leader of United States racial reform, that is often confused with Martin Luther?
19. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther says the household is a _____.
20. In the Small Catechism, what phrase does Martin Luther use at the end of each meaning?

Answer: 1. Martin Luther 2. John Wycliffe 3. The 95 Theses 4. Wittenberg, Germany 5. The Lutheran Church 6. John Calvin 7. Faith 8. Johannes Gutenberg 9. German 10. So all people could read it. 11. A monk 12. Transubstantiation 13. 1517 14. Latin 15. Katharina von Bora 16. The Reformation 17. October 31st 18. Martin Luther King, Jr. 19. House church 20. "This is most certainly true."

This information is prepared for you by the
Northwestern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network
for use by families and local congregations.



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*WHITE FRAGILITY

"A phrase coined by author Robin DeAngelo, defined as 'a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves.'"

*BIPOC

Black, Indigenous,
and People of Color

* Definitions taken from Layla F. Saad; Me and White Supremacy.2020 (pg. 226 & 230)

Suggested Online Resources:

<https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Race-Ethnicity-and-Culture>

RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

NETWORK Pr. Hillary Burns-Kite, Network Coordinator

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faiths, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful, or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. – 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

The synod Racial Justice and Advocacy Network would like to offer some resources for use in your congregational Bible studies, women's and men's groups, and youth groups. Here are a few resources that we, as pastors and laity in the synod, have personally used to participate in conversations around the topics of race and racism over the past six months. Recognizing that it can be painful to explore what it means to be part of the systemic problem of racism, our hope is that in doing the work we can become part of the movement toward a more just and equitable church and society. We hope you will find these resources and information helpful.

Luther's Small Catechism with African Descent Refelctions.

Augsburg Fortress, 2019 – This resource is being used, by the Shepherd of the Hills conference, throughout the month of October as an adult study, over Zoom. We will be discussing this familiar content in a new way; seeing the catechism through the lens of those who have contributed to this work. If you are interested in joining the conversation, everyone is truly welcome, you may e-mail me for the Zoom information at pastorhillary@alpinecom.net.

Me and White Supremacy by Layla F. Saad – Currently, this book is being used in a virtual community against racial injustice book discussion. The book invites the reader to make a journaling commitment and doing the slow, contemplative work of uncovering and dismantling the messages of white supremacy we hold in varying degrees of consciences. Layla Saad offers definitions that help readers to become more familiar with the language commonly used, today, in discussions of racial injustice. Her examples and journal prompts help readers to become more aware of both subtle and overt messages of white supremacy and anti-blackness, which we read and hear every day.

Fully known and loved by God; keep looking to know and love each other

Adapted from a sermon by the Rev. Anne Edison-Albright, Director of College Ministries at Luther College, given at Focus—the student-led multid denominational worshipping community at Luther—on Sunday, September 7, 2020. The sermon is part of series called: “Covenant Keeper: Exploring the Promises of a Faithful God”.

A full version of Rev. Edison-Albright’s adaptation can be found at <http://blog.neiasynod.org/>.

In 2015 Maggie Steinberg, now Maggie Hagen, wrote an outstanding senior paper on “Luther College and American Lutheran Engagement With Race and Racism.” She found in her research that there was a group of Norwegian Lutheran lay leaders who, overcoming the reticence of their pastors, pushed their synod to take a stance against slavery, and that stance helped hasten the founding of Luther College.

While the Lutheran church and Luther college was willing to take that kind of stance against slavery, however, Maggie found that it was *not* active in the movement for the rights of freed Black people, and not an ally with Blacks in the national conversations and conflicts over race that followed the Civil War.

The first Black student arrived at Luther in 1951, 100 years after the school was founded. From 1861 until the late 60’s/early 70’s, the college, and the wider Lutheran church it was part of, stayed largely silent and largely separate in white communities, committing both sins of omission and commission to maintain the status quo of whiteness at the college and in the church.

Maggie’s paper also traces how Luther students from the 1970s to the present time inherit a legacy both of powerful Black student activism and organizing but also of largely unspoken and unrecognized institutional whiteness.

Sometimes we tell the story of Luther College and focus only on the part about how we were founded to oppose slavery, leaving out the rest of the context and the critique from Maggie’s research. When we do that, we fail to recognize the whole story of who we are as a college and a community. We miss an opportunity for recognition, insight, and deeper relationships.

The Rev. Dr. Ron Bell is a pastor, writer, musician and speaker in the Twin Cities who wrote about missed recognition on his blog after the murder of George Floyd. Dr. Bell writes:

“I think you were so busy looking for a riot that you missed the gathering of the grieving. I think you were so busy looking for looters that you missed the lament and heartbreak of a community. I think you were so busy looking for trouble that you missed the tragedy of systemic racialized trauma on the bodies of Black and brown people. Tonight, tomorrow, and even the next day I beg of you, look again. Look again.”

Dr. Bell continues: “Once you have really looked upon our sorrow, once you have put away your hashtags, retweets and emojis, once you have set with the weight of our sorrow what you will discover is my city has become your city. My pain has become your pain. That young person protesting has become your young person grieving, that kid looting has become your kid weeping. Do not look away. For then and only then will you be truly with us! Look again.”

Our ability to recognize and love each other is incomplete; it is like looking through a dim mirror. And yet we are called, we are compelled, to look again.

Look again and keep looking.

Keep searching for a glimpse of that truth, that recognition of the Image of God in each other, that love that is unconditional and un-ending and able to overcome all the ways that we fall short.

Dr. Bell writes: “My city has become your city. My pain has become your pain ...For then and only then will you be truly with us!”