



Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation

New online groups help ministry leaders stay connected

by Marcia Hahn

Online classes and Zoom meetings were a core part of John Sheahan's studies while he was enrolled at Wartburg Theological Seminary, and that technology has emerged as a fundamental part of his ministry at Bergen, Roland.

"Little did I know that the Zoom technology I was introduced to when going to seminary in the last four years would come in so handy," says Sheahan, who was ordained in August 2020. "My exposure to it in seminary prepared me for ministry in this pandemic situation."

Facebook Live and Zoom options have helped Sheahan reach out to congregation members and a broader audience online, including some 150 people who have tuned in some weeks for Bergen's virtual worship services. Sheahan is also connecting with ministry colleagues and synod staff through rostered ministers Zoom meetings hosted by the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

"These weekly meetings are very informative and help build relationships that have been wonderful," Sheahan says. "I appreciate this effort to get to know us and instruct us, and I am getting introduced to people from throughout the synod. I would not have had that opportunity before."

The rostered ministers Zoom meetings are one of several online

"As someone who is new here, I really value seeing the pastors' faces with their names and hearing their voices."

— Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl

groups that have emerged or grown in the synod during the pandemic, including women clergy, deans and chaplains, youth ministry leaders, council presidents, and administrative assistants.

ROSTERED MINISTERS

Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl and synod staff members host the rostered ministers Zoom luncheon meetings at noon on Wednesdays to help the ministers stay connected with one another and with what's happening in the synod. The meetings include devotions and time to share, along with updates about the synod assembly, bishop election, Portico wellness benefits, online giving, and other informational topics.

"Even though we haven't gathered in person for more than a



Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl connects with congregational leaders and staff from across the synod through regular Zoom meetings.

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year, these meetings contribute to a healthy next chapter as we get closer to synod assembly and thinking about nominating a bishop,” DeGroot-Nesdahl says. “The collegiality of pastors and knowing each other adds to that experience.”

Rostered ministers have traditionally connected with each other at the annual Fall Conference, Synod Assembly and Day of Renewal. Since most in-person events were cancelled in 2020, DeGroot-Nesdahl hopes that these regular meetings online will fill that gap and help rostered members from across the synod strengthen their relationships with one another.

“As someone who is new here, I really value seeing the pastors’ faces with their names and hearing their voices,” DeGroot-Nesdahl says. “It’s a way for me to get to know our flock a little bit; otherwise, they would just be names in the directory. It has been something I have benefitted from and value.”

DeGroot-Nesdahl says the synod staff appreciate getting feedback from the pastors, hearing their concerns and joys, and answering their questions. The pastors have expressed their gratitude for the prayers and support they receive from the synod staff, including the recent Advent series of sermons the synod staff recorded for congregations to use in worship.

“Pastors are putting out so much right now to help their congregations and to be pastors in ways they can’t in person due to the pandemic, so we want to give something to them to help nurture their relationships with each other,” DeGroot-Nesdahl says. “Everyone has a lot



Women clergy from the Northeastern Iowa Synod meet on Zoom each Tuesday at 1 p.m.

of Zooms to do, but this is one that the rostered ministers don’t have to plan.”

WOMEN CLERGY GROUP

When last spring’s Rostered Women’s Gathering was cancelled due to the pandemic, a group of women pastors started talking about the need for women clergy to stay in touch to support one another. Shortly after, Pastor Beth Olson of St. Timothy, Hudson, and Pastor Lisa Dietrich of Fredsville, Cedar Falls, set up the first Zoom meeting for women clergy of the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

“At the first meeting, we decided we all missed each other so much and needed each other for mutual support,” Dietrich says. “We learned that some women were going through some hard times with their congregations who weren’t necessarily listening to them about the need to be safe and to move to online worship. We needed a sisterhood to hold each other up, so we

decided to meet right away the next week, and that still continues.”

Pastor Megan Graves of Grace, Tripoli, joins Dietrich as co-host of the meetings. Discussions often center on issues related to their ministry and the pandemic, the grief they feel for their parishioners and their own families, and their joys in finding ways to celebrate baptisms and other milestones.

DeGroot-Nesdahl attends on the first Tuesday of the month to listen and share her own perspectives. The Rev. Dr. Norma Cook Everist, who taught at Wartburg Theological Seminary for many years, also joins on occasion to support the group. Dietrich says that being supported by these church leaders is especially important for the young women clergy who may feel they are not always being respected or listened to.

“These conversations remind the women that they are making good

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God gives us strength along this journey

Let me say clearly at the outset how much I appreciate you and the ministry you are doing, albeit under unusual circumstances. The commitment we share to Jesus Christ perseveres, even as Christ unites us in mission and gives us strength along the journey. God is with us!

I want to lift up two items here: Synod Assembly and COVID-19 vaccinations

SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Council, meeting on Jan. 16, decided on a virtual assembly for 2021. The dates are June 11 -12. We anticipate about one and a half days of time rather than going into Sunday this year. Our broadcast site will be Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, as that was our location if we had met in-person. Voting members will be connecting through their electronic devices (phone, iPad, computer, etc.) and will not be gathering at Luther in person. There are details to manage, now that we've made this decision, so next month's *Star* will carry more information as we get plans in place.

The key item of business for the Synod Assembly is the election of a new Bishop. Nominees for the office of Bishop must be ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A new Bishop will be elected to a six-year term. As you think ahead to this election, please pray for God's guidance and inspiration as we seek that new leader for the next chapter of synod life and ministry. Pray for the person, whomever it may be and wherever they may currently be serving, that God would be stirring in their heart to be open to this unique call. If you want an individual's name to be lifted up for nomination, remember to ask them about it beforehand, as a courtesy, so you can share the name with your congregation's voting members — or nominate them yourself if you are a voting member.

There are other items of business at Assembly as well, such as electing a synod secretary, electing other positions on the Synod Council, and the voting members for the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in 2022 (planned for Aug. 8-13, Columbus, Ohio), synod budget, compensation guidelines, and so on. It promises to be memorable, and we pray it will be inspiring for our ministry together.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

I continue to hear news of people sharing that they have received their first (of two) vaccinations for COVID-19. We

"God is with us, friends,
whether in our virtual
worship or Synod
Assembly, in our plans for
the future, or in our care
for our own health."



hear daily news reports with updates about how many people have been vaccinated and in what categories. We understand this will take time, but I encourage you to be informed as to the protocols and categories for vaccinations in your county. I encourage you to learn about the vaccine's value, and to get vaccinated when it's available to you.

The county public health office has been where decisions are made in each county, so checking in with them is a good idea. I encourage our rostered ministers especially to be mindful of their own health/underlying conditions, as well as the risks they encounter in the area where they serve, and to inquire in their county about the group they would be in for getting vaccinated. We need healthy leaders in our congregations and ministries. Pastors are usually the ones who have everyone go ahead of them on any given occasion, but in this instance I encourage them to advocate for their vaccinations so their presence and gifts for serving can continue to guide and inspire our people, congregations, and communities.

In closing, I'm reminded of the text from I Samuel 3, which was assigned for the second Sunday after Epiphany. Samuel is called by God as a young boy, and through the account of the text grows in his understanding of how God is speaking to him/calling to him. Though we may not all be young in years, we can still learn from this text about listening for/expecting God to be speaking, to be at work and moving, to be present in our lives and our world. Like Samuel, we can practice again and again saying our own: "Speak Lord for your servant is listening." God is with us, friends, whether in our virtual worship or Synod Assembly, or in our plans for the future, or in our care for our own health.

God is with us as we continue to learn how to attune our hearts, our ears, our lives to God's voice and call.

— **Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl**

Video about COVID-19 and the church available online

The webinar "COVID: Public Health and the Church" is available as an online resource for congregations. The webinar, sponsored by the three ELCA synods of Iowa, was recorded Jan. 14 in a live online discussion with Dr. Ulysses Burley III, founder of UBtheCURE, who shared his expertise about COVID-19 and public gatherings, church activities, and plans for the near future.

Iowa's three ELCA bishops share these five highlights from the presentation:

- Many are weary of COVID-19, yet as people of faith, we hold onto hope, praying forward and living into a new normal.
- We join medical experts in urging you to be vaccinated when it is available to you and yours. Listen to the recording to learn more about the vaccinations.
- Continue to wear masks, distance physically, worship virtually or outdoors at a distance (when possible), use electronic giving platforms, in order to reduce the spread.
- Join in prayer for all involved in healthcare, in business, and in community leadership in these times, for those who struggle with the disease itself and for those who grieve those who have died.
- God hears our prayers, sees our needs, and remains faithful to us always. While challenging and difficult, we are people of hope caring for one another.



Ulysses Burley III, MD

The hour-long video can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/500691299>. It can also be downloaded at <https://vimeo.com/southeasterniowasynod/download/500691299/79034ebdc6>.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY TO BE ONLINE

June 11-12, 2021

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Council has approved moving the 2021 Northeastern Iowa Synod to an online virtual event set for June 11-12. The live broadcast will be based at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, with the theme "Celebrating Renewal: Johannes Bugenhagen, Parish Pastor of the Reformation."

The assembly will include the election of a new bishop, synod secretary, synod council members and nominating committee, along with other business. Plans also include designated time to honor the milestone anniversaries from 2020 of women being ordained in the ELCA—50 years for Lutheran women in the U.S., 40 years for women of color, and 10 years for people in same-gender committed relationships.

Read more about the assembly in Bishop Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl's article on page 3 of this newsletter and on the synod website at www.neiasynod.org/2021-synod-assembly.

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Send news for the March 2021 issue to Marcia Hahn by Feb. 8. We welcome story ideas related to the 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

Who's Missing and How Do We Know?

At worship, pastors take attendance. We look around the sanctuary to see who might be missing. If after being regular in attendance someone is missing for several weeks, the pastor might check in to make sure everything is all right. The truth is we don't look for who is present, we look for empty pews. Since Lutherans tend to sit in the same place every week, it is much easier to take attendance by looking for the absent.

These days, many congregations are not holding in-person worship, and those who do, find many worshippers are more comfortable joining on-line from home. So, how do we take attendance at virtual worship? More importantly, how do we know if there is a member of the congregation with

whom we have failed to engage during the pandemic?

Now is the time to check the 2020 giving records for congregation members and look for folks who have stopped or dramatically reduced their giving during the pandemic. This is a great opportunity for the pastor, church council members or other congregational leaders to check in with those members. It's not as effective as looking for empty pews, but it is an equally important ministry.

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



HOW TO GIVE TO SYNOD MINISTRIES

Gifts to the Northeastern Iowa Synod Annual Fund or Fund for Leaders support ministry together in ways that could not be done alone.

MAIL CHECKS payable to the Northeastern Iowa Synod, with the memo indicating which fund you would like your gift to support, to: Northeastern Iowa Synod, 201 20th St. SW, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804.

DONATE ONLINE at www.neiasynod.org/ministries/generosity or use the QR Code.



INSPIRED GIVING

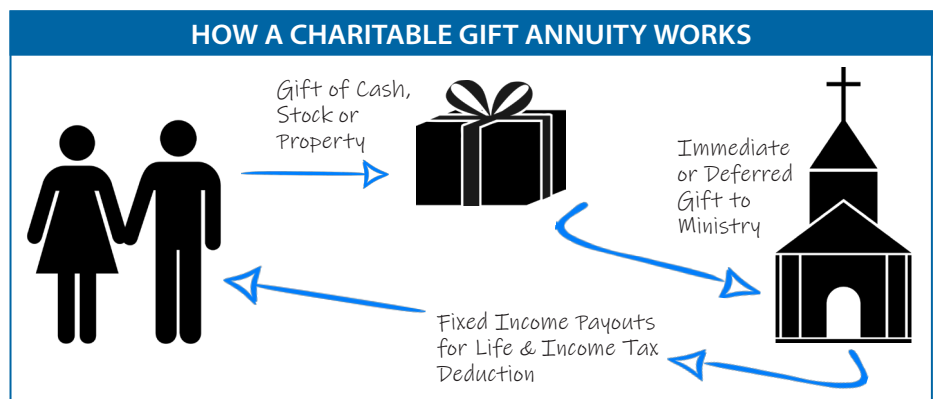
Give and Receive with Charitable Gift Annuities

With a charitable gift annuity, you can support the ELCA, your congregation or another ministry with an irrevocable gift of cash, appreciated securities or other assets, which will provide you or a beneficiary with fixed payments during your lifetime. The remainder of the gift benefits ministry. Rates are determined by the age of the donor(s).

MINIMUM GIFT AMOUNT: \$10,000

With a charitable gift annuity, you can:

- Take an immediate income-tax deduction for the contribution's value.
- Receive fixed payments for life and a steady income stream



- where portions of annuity payments may be tax free.
- Avoid or reduce capital-gains tax when funding an annuity with appreciated securities.
- Make a significant gift to the ELCA, your congregation or a ministry you specify with the remaining assets.

- Select from joint-and-survivor annuity options, where both annuitants can create plans for couples.

Ready to take the next step?
Contact Pastor Mark Anderson 319-352-1414.

40th Annual Rural Ministry Conference to Meet Online

March 8, 2021

Engaging and Ministry with Cultural Traditionalists

The 40th annual Rural Ministry Conference will meet online Monday, March 8, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with the theme “Engaging and Ministry with Cultural Traditionalists.” Co-sponsored by Wartburg Theological Seminary and the University of Dubuque, this ecumenical conference will offer keynote speakers, workshops, Bible study, and opportunities to network with others who are active in and concerned about rural ministry.

The keynote speaker will be The Rev. Dr. Tex Sample, who will share about cultural traditionalists — the largest demographic in rural America — and offer suggestions for ministering to this group and all congregation members. Sample brings years of ministry experience, teaching and research to this topic. He taught for 32 years at Saint Paul School of Theology, has published 14 books, and currently serves as pastor for Trinity United Methodist Church in Kansas City. Sample’s most recent books include *A Christian Justice for the Common Good* and *Working Class Rage: A Field Guide to White Anger and Pain*.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Engaging the Practices of Cultural Traditionalists

Sample will focus on cultural traditionalist practices and specific practices for working with them in ministry.

Bible Study

The Rev. Dr. Richard “Skip” Schaffer, senior pastor and head of staff of the Oswego Presbyterian Church in Oswego, Ill., will focus on how congregations can build a sense of

community and hospitality when food and drink don’t work.

Group Discussion: Harvesting the Best Practices of Being Church in the Time of COVID

Members of the Rural Ministry Planning Conference Planning Committee will lead group discussion about the ways that congregations carry out worship, pastoral care, Bible studies and other ministries during the pandemic.

Group Discussion: Harvesting the Best Technological Practices for Small Congregations in the Time of COVID

Members of the Rural Ministry Conference Planning Committee will lead group discussion about the creative and innovative ways of



Tex Sample

addressing technology issues to carry out ministry in smaller, less-resourced congregations.

Beating Burnout: A Better You, A Better Congregation

Jennifer Prinz, Portico Benefit Services’ regional representative for ELCA Region 5, will lead discussion about how ministry leaders are navigating challenges and supporting one another during this pandemic.

The cost to attend is \$25. Online is required. A few days prior to the event, registrants will receive an email with information to access the event online.

To learn more or to register online, visit www.wartburgseminary.edu/rural-conference. Questions can be directed to Ann Fritschel at afritschel@wartburgseminary.edu or 563-589-0308.

Virtual Fellowship Opportunities for Men

Lutheran Men in Mission invites men to join in virtual opportunities to share their faith and connect with new brothers across the nation.

Pray at Noon

Men are encouraged to take a minute to pray every Wednesday at noon in their time zone for all that is going on in the world.

Bold Gathering — Stories from the Heart

Speakers from the Dec. 12, 2020, virtual Bold Gathering share their faith stories in a series of six videos. Listen to reflections from Adrian Clark, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, Elvaughn Riley, Dr. Mallory



Everett, Ulysses Burley III, and Joe Davis at www.youtube.com/user/LutheranMenInMission.

Weekly Book Discussion

Meets 7 p.m. Tuesdays on Zoom.

Weekly Online Bible Study

Meets 7 p.m. Thursdays on Zoom.

Zoom links can be found on the synod’s Mens Ministry Network web page at www.neiasynod.org/ministries/mens-ministry.

faith decisions as called leaders,” Dietrich says.

The women clergy members meet every Tuesday at 1 p.m. on Zoom. Rostered women interested in attending should contact Dietrich at pastorlisadietrich@gmail.com or Graves at pastormegangraves@gmail.com.

YOUTH MINISTRY LEADERS

For several years, professional leaders in youth and family ministry from the Northeastern Iowa Synod have met monthly to share creative ideas and experiences, and to learn what their colleagues from other congregations are doing in their ministries. When the pandemic hit last spring, the group began meeting online twice a week to support one another and come up with new ways to connect with their congregations’ youth and families.

“We shared ideas about how to send things home with the youth, what kinds of activities were working, and how to stay engaged with families,” says Deb Bachman, director of Faith Formation for St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and School, Waverly, and facilitator for the synod’s Youth Ministry Network.

Group members used take-home kits for vacation Bible school, Sunday school, and other celebrations. Their plans for Lent include offering kits with all the needed supplies to complete weekly lessons at home. Some congregations offer hybrid Sunday school classes in-person and simultaneously on Zoom. Online videos and take-home activities substitute for in-person after-school programs.

“I appreciated meeting Bishop Andrea, being able to visit with a couple church secretaries in the small breakout session, and hearing feedback from others about worship innovations.”

— Mary Anna Hunstiger

“Some schools are still hybrid or virtual and that can be hard for families to juggle,” Bachman says

Over the summer, the group scaled back their Zoom meetings to once a week and then monthly. By fall the youth leaders managed to connect in person a couple times outdoors at Camp Ewalu near Strawberry Point.

“A lack of engagement with families has been our biggest challenge, so we try to figure out together what is working to help keep families engaged,” Bachman says.

CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS AND SUPPORT STAFF

DeGroot-Nesdahl participates in weekly Zoom meetings with Bishops from the ELCA Region 5 synods in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, and with the broader Conference of Bishops. In those discussions, DeGroot-Nesdahl says she has learned that other synods have been hosting a variety of Zoom meetings for their congregational leaders, including council presidents and administrative assistants.

“I realized that getting lay leaders together is equally important to the health of the synod,” she says.

DeGroot-Nesdahl explains that congregational presidents often find that being president isn’t always what they thought it would be. They get involved in the call process and finding interim help, which can be a lot for the council to handle. In this pandemic year when church buildings closed, councils had to make a lot of decisions about how to do worship and get the equipment to make that happen.

“These folks are not on anybody’s payroll; they are volunteers,” DeGroot-Nesdahl says. “We wanted to get them together, introduce them to each other, encourage them to share ideas, and keep them informed. It helps them to be good co-leaders with their pastors.”

The synod has hosted two Zoom meetings for council presidents. Dale Nimrod, who served as council president for Glenwood Lutheran, Decorah, says he picked up some useful tips for doing ministry during the pandemic, such as what it takes to offer drive-up worship and how to reach a quorum for the annual meeting.

“There was information that helped us move ahead on a pressing matter the congregation needed to deal with,” Nimrod says.

Some 40 administrative assistants from congregations across the synod attended a synod-sponsored Zoom meeting in January. DeGroot-Nesdahl and synod staff shared about synod resources, the upcoming synod assembly and the synod’s new “Safe Gatherings” boundaries training program.

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Future Church Update for Rostered Ministers

A video about the Future Church design affirmed by the ELCA Church Council in November is available for viewing.

The 35-minute video was recorded Jan. 19 from a webinar intended to update rostered ministers about the Future Church. The video features Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton; the Rev. Philip Hirsch, executive director of Domestic Mission; and Mikka McCracken, executive for Innovation. They give an update about the Future Church and address these questions: What is Future Church? What specific hopes do we have for our ministries? What are our next steps?

According to a Nov. 16, 2020, ELCA news release, the Future Church design identifies three priority areas: a welcoming church that engages new, young and diverse people; a thriving church rooted in tradition and radically relevant; and a connected, sustainable church that shares in a common purpose and direction. The Future Church structure, set to



be implemented in the churchwide organization on Feb. 1, will introduce three new home areas: Christian Community and Leadership, led by Hirsch; Innovation, led by McCracken; and Service and Justice, led by the Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla. Approximately five percent of the churchwide organization staff will be separated as a result of the new design.

Bishop Eaton invites everyone to view

the video and send their questions or comments about the Future Church design to future@elca.org so that those responses can be compiled.

"We're just at the very beginning of our future together," Eaton said.

The video can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPKsDy206MQ.

New online groups help ministry leaders stay connected
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The assistants introduced themselves in small breakout groups and shared how they have managed being the front line in their congregations during the pandemic, including reaching out to congregation members through phone calls, letters, Facebook, yard signs, family packets and more. They shared how their congregations celebrated Christmas, what they are planning for Ash Wednesday and Lent, and the ways they are approaching in-person worship.

Mary Anna Hunstiger, secretary for Faith Lutheran, Shell Rock, joined the meeting by phone. "I appreciated meeting Bishop Andrea, being able to visit with a couple church secretaries in the small breakout session, and hearing feedback from others about worship innovations," Hunstiger shared. "The media support information and Safe Gatherings Training information was also helpful."

DeGroot-Nesdahl says she is hope-

ful that the ways people get together in the future can change with more in-person gatherings, but for now these Zoom meetings strengthen this time of transition for the synod to get ready for a new bishop.

"We will always rely more on electronic communication, so having some of these meetings in motion can be pathways that new leadership may find helpful."

FEBRUARY 2021 EVENTS

- 2 **Women Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 1 p.m. Every Tuesday
(Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23)
- 3 **Rostered Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 12 Noon Every
Wednesday (Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24)
- 4 **Interim Ministry Colleague Group**, Zoom Meeting,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 4-6 **Youth Ministry Network Extravaganza**, Online Event
- 9 **Church Council Presidents**, Zoom Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- 14 **Three River Annual Conference**, Zoom Meeting, 2 p.m.
- 21 **Water of Life Annual Conference**, Zoom Meeting,
12:30 p.m.
- 21 **Shechem Annual Conference**, West Clermont,
Clermont, 1:30 p.m.
- 21 **Shepherd of the Hills Annual Conference**, Zoom
Meeting, 2 p.m.
- 21 **Upper Iowa River Annual Conference**, Zoom Meeting,
2 p.m.
- 21 **Jubilee Annual Conference**, Zoom Meeting, 3 p.m.
- 26 **Candidacy Committee**, Zoom Meeting, 1-4 p.m.
- 26 **Candidacy Retreat**, Zoom Meeting, 4-6 p.m.
- 28 **Riverside Annual Conference**, Zoom Meeting, 1 p.m.
- 28 **Tree of Life Annual Conference**, Zoom Meeting, 2 p.m.

MARCH 2021 EVENTS

- 2 **Women Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 1 p.m. Every Tuesday
(March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30)
- 3 **Rostered Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 12 Noon Every
Wednesday (March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31)
- 4 **Interim Ministry Colleague Group**, Zoom Meeting,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 4 **Youth Ministry Network**, Zoom Meeting, 10 a.m.
- 8 **Rural Ministry Conference**, online event, 8:30 a.m.
-3:30 p.m.
- 9 **Executive Committee Meeting**, Location TBD, 9 a.m.
- 9 **Church Council Presidents**, Zoom Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- 11 **Lutheran Day on the Hill**, Virtual Event
- 20 **Synod Council Meeting**, Location TBD, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 21 **"Faith and Poverty,"** Zoom Event for Youth, 7 p.m.

APRIL 2021 EVENTS

- 1 **Interim Ministry Colleague Group**, Zoom Meeting,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 2 **Office Closed**, Good Friday
- 6 **Women Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 1 p.m. Every Tuesday
(April 6, 13, 20, 27)
- 7 **Rostered Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 12 Noon Every
Wednesday (April 7, 14, 21, 28)
- 8 **Youth Ministry Network**, Zoom Meeting, 10 a.m.

MAY 2021 EVENTS

- 4 **Women Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 1 p.m. Every Tuesday
(May 4, 11, 18, 25)
- 5 **Rostered Clergy**, Zoom Meeting, 12 Noon Every
Wednesday (May 5, 12, 19, 26)
- 6 **Interim Ministry Colleague Group**, Zoom Meeting,
9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 6 **Youth Ministry Network**, Zoom Meeting, 10 a.m.
- 7 **Candidacy Committee Meeting**, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
- 31 **Office Closed**, Memorial Day

ORDAINING

Calvin P. Konop, Servant of Christ, Champlin, Minn.,
Jan. 29

INSTALLING

Rev. Calvin P. Konop, St. Peter, Dubuque, pending
Rev. Melinda McCluskey, Galilean, Clear Lake

INTERVIEWING

Cresco, Immanuel, Rev. Charis Combs-Lay, contract
Decorah, Burr Oak and Hesper
Decorah, First
Elma, St. Paul (Maple Leaf)
Grundy Center, American
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. Megan Graves, interim
Waverly, LSI/Beloit (chaplain)
Waterloo, Our Savior's

SELF-STUDY

Charles City, Messiah
Chester, United
Decorah, Big Canoe & Highland
Dysart, Zion
Frederika, St. John
Hawkeye, Trinity
Iowa Falls, Bethany, Rev. Darby Lawrence, interim
Janesville, Messiah, Rev. Dave Powers, contract interim
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
Ryan, Peace and **Dundee**, St. John (Unity of the Cross
Lutheran Parish), Rev. Rhea Evanson, contract interim
Story City, St. Petri, Rev. Scot McCluskey, interim
Sumner, St. Peter (Richfield) and **Waucoma**, St. John
(Stapleton)
Waterloo, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Waterloo, St. Ansgar, Rev. Susan Weier, contract interim
Waterloo, Zion
West Union, Zion

ROSTER CHANGES

Rev. Kimberly Swenson, on leave from call
Rev. Gary Heidt-Johnson, retired
Rev. Kurt Bockoven, transferred to Southeastern
Minnesota Synod
Rev. Kristi Grieder, new call as Spiritual Care
Counselor, Cedar Valley Hospice, Waterloo

FEBRUARY 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	Patricia Nelson, Waverly 1	Doris Kampfe, Rockford, Ill. 2	Rev. Scot McVey McCluskey, Clear Lake Rev. Bryan L. Robertson, Waukon 3	Zion, Castalia 4	Rev. Joyce D. Sandberg, Roseville, Minn. 5	Grand View University, Des Moines 6
Rev. Patricia L. Shaw, Waverly 7	Rev. Dr. Richard Simon Hanson, Decorah 8	Deacon Mildred Dieter, Waverly Rev. Kristen C. Rod, Jesup 9	Rev. Jane E. Harris, Rockwell Rev. Stephen P. Brackett, Waverly 10	Rev. Burton L. Everist, Mason City Joyce J. Rohde, Manchester 11	Rev. Linda Marlett, Cedar Falls 12	Bethlehem, Cedar Falls 13
Luther College, Decorah 14	Rev. Roger McKinstry, Marion Deacon Jean P. Rieniets, Dubuque 15	Rev. Peter R. Kowitz, Decorah 16	Middle East Fredsville, Cedar Falls 17	Rev. David L. Coffin, Elgin Rev. Robert Ericson, Cedar Falls Rev. Alan R. Schulz, Columbus, Ohio 18	Rev. Margaret R. Yackel-Juleen, Elkader 19	Wartburg College, Waverly 20
Nazareth, Cedar Falls 21	Lutheran Services in Iowa, Des Moines 22	St. John American, Cedar Falls 23	Lutheran Youth Organization 24	St. Paul, Cedar Falls 25	Rev. Dr. Steven L. Ullestad, Cedar Falls 26	Mosaic, Omaha, Neb. 27
Rev. Darrel W. Gerriets, Waverly Rev. Kevin T. Jones, Mason City 28						

OBITUARY

Pastor Gary Lee died on Dec. 17, 2020, at the age of 80. He was ordained on June 5, 1966. He served as pastor at Williams Bay Lutheran, Williams Bay, Wis., and First Lutheran, Cresco, until his retirement on Sept. 1, 2005.

Memorial services will take place July 17, 2021, at First Lutheran in Decorah. Burial will be that afternoon at Sunset Rest Cemetery in Northwood.

He is survived by his wife, F. Geraldine "Gerry," and three children. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Gerry Lee, 2280 Prairie View Rd., Decorah IA 52101.

For a complete obituary, go to: www.fjelstul.com/obituary/rev-gary-lee.

Summer Camps to Open

ELCA Bible camps in Iowa want everyone to know that they will be open for summer camp in 2021. The camps plan to follow recommended guidelines to keep youth and adults safe at camp. Read more at these websites:

- **Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp**, www.riversidelbc.org
- **Ewalu Camp and Retreat Center**, www.ewalu.org
- **Ingham & Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camps**, www.okoboji.org
- **Lutheran Lakeside Camp**, www.lutheranlakeside.com
- **Camp Shalom**, www.campshalomia.org

2021 IRS Mileage Rates

The Internal Revenue Service 2021 optional standard mileage rate for calculating the deductible costs of operating a car, van, pickup or panel truck for business is 56 cents per mile, down 1.5 cents from the rate for 2020. For medical or moving purposes, the 2021 rate is 16 cents per mile. The rate for driving in service of charitable organizations is 14 cents per mile. Learn more at www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-issues-standard-mileage-rates-for-2021.

GO PAPERLESS

To receive an electronic version of the *Star* newsletter instead of a paper version, send an email to hahn@neiasynod.org with the subject: Online Only.

CARTER G. WOODSON

(aka-The Father of Black History)

As the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Dr. Woodson initiated the first Black History Week, in 1915. It became a whole month in 1976.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, or ideas of a people or society by members of another, and typically more dominant, people or society

Suggested Online Resources:

<https://aaslh.org/> - Black History Month resources and virtual festival by the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History

RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY NETWORK

Pr. Hillary Burns-Kite, Network Coordinator

February has been designated as Black History Month, in the United States, since 1976. Starting out as a week-long celebration, it was chosen, by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, to correlate with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Here are a few resources that might be used to help you celebrate Black History Month in your congregation, classroom, community, or home.

Adult Study:

* [The Black Church: This is Our Story. This is Our Song.](#)

- Documentary hosted by Henry Louis Gates Jr., airing on PBS; <https://www.pbs.org/weta/black-church/>

* [Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man](#)

- Series of short discussions on race and racism in the United States; book and online videos, <https://uncomfortableconvos.com/>

Children/Youth/Family:

* [Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt](#) by Deborah Hopkins,

Illustrated by James Ransome; (1993 and 2018), Dragonfly Books

- Children's book about slave life and the underground railroad

- Visit https://jamesransome.com/?page_id=36 for more books by this illustrator.

* [Young, Gifted, and Black: Meet 52 Black Heroes From Past and Present](#) by Jamia Wilson, Illustrated by Andrea Pippins; (2018), Wide

Eyed Editions

- Family book, highlighting Black leaders across the globe

* The "Who Was" book series is written for young readers, featuring many leaders in Black History, as well as the present. Find out more at <https://www.whowasbookseries.com/books/>.

* [The Life of Frederick Douglass: A Graphic Narrative of a Slave's Journey from Bondage to Freedom](#) by David F Walker; (2019), Potter

- Youth and family graphic novel, based on Frederick Douglass' speeches and the history of the U.S. Civil War and emancipation

In response to the Omaha FBI Field office warning to Iowans of plans for armed protests of the Inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Harris at the Iowa State House, the Des Moines Black Liberation Movement issued a travel advisory to Black Iowans. They advised "Black Iowans to not travel alone at night and to always have an exit plan" in fear of racial violence.

The Racial Justice Advocacy Network of Northeastern Iowa Synod discussed the implications of these warnings from the Federal government and a local social action group. These warnings and advisories obviously spread valid fear and concern among people across the state. Racial violence is intended to instill horror in the potential victims and to generate a false sense of achievement in the perpetrator. As Christians, we must commit to listening to and addressing the anxiety of our siblings. Racial violence predators seek to divide and destroy the loving relationships with others which the second greatest commandment demands of us.

Martin Luther writes in The Small Catechism concerning the fifth commandment (You shall not murder): "We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs."*

The Synod Racial Justice Network recognizes that the threat of racial violence anywhere in Iowa is credible. The Network is committed and dedicated to assuring all our neighbors they are loved. Drawing upon our Lutheran and Christian tradition, we take this moment to ask all those in the Northeast Iowa Synod to bring comfort, care and support to people living in fear, being exposed to and/or subjected to hatred and experiencing indifference with regard to racial justice. As individuals and congregations, we are called to do our part to support one another in times of need, especially when one member of Christ's body is threatened. We strive to lift our voice to embolden Synod members to participate with the Network in racial justice sponsored activities.

* Luther, Martin. Luther's Small Catechism. Augsburg Fortress, 2016.



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

Good News

February 2021
Volume 34
Number 1

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

Welcome to a New Year!!!! I am hoping it is nothing like the last one. I am also hoping this finds you healthy and well. My co-worker said to me the other day, “you take care of you.” (I wish I could.) I asked for her to explain. She responded, “when you are tired you rest or read or relax.” (I can’t do that. I need to finish things or my mom, sister, brother wants...) Then I understood. I started thinking. What motivates me (you) to do what I (you) do? I admit, sometimes I am a bit jealous or envious of my co-worker’s life. She doesn’t live alone. When she comes home there are numerous greetings from her pets and husband. I come home to an empty house. I think we each envy parts of the other’s life. Envy is usually not a good thing, but sometimes the positive is that what I envy in her, are sometimes, the places I struggle. Her skills help me to become a better co-worker, friend, woman and Christian.

I have never been good at accomplishing resolutions or goals. My personal focus for 2021 is to be healthier by creating healthy habits throughout my day. Instead of going to the fridge/kitchen for a snack, walk the loop in my house. Put the junk mail directly into the trash. Collect my good notes/ideas for when my brain is focusing on the negative. Seek understanding, before jumping to conclusions. What challenges are you facing this year? How do we as an organization become healthier? How do we shift our focus to encourage one another during these times? Can we try something new or different? There have been many changes at our Churchwide organization. More changes to the Triennial Gathering may be coming. Please pray for those making these difficult decisions. And “you take care of you”, as we continue to weather this storm together.

Blessings, Anna Jetson

Justice Committee

The fall 2020 Bible studies written by Meghan Johnston Aelabonuni and published in Gather magazine seem to be written pointedly for *times such as these*. There were three sessions with the theme of “Holy Time”. Session 3: Holy time: Reimagining the Future, brought some peace to me personally as I look ahead to the future. At the beginning of the study I could not answer the question “What are you looking forward to”? It has been almost like I have been scared to look forward to something for fear that it would fall apart or it would be cancelled like so many things lately. The Bible study was a reminder that scripture tells us that there is a future and God will be with us. (Isaiah 55, Revelation 21-22)

How do we faithfully look to the future? What does it mean to reimagine the future in light of the promises of God’s reign? How do we live now in hope and active expectation, and how does this open us (individuals, churches, communities) to transformation? Answer these questions with an eye towards justice. Justice is faith in action; it addresses inequities in political, economic and social systems. Justice is equity and impartiality, mercy and compassion. Justice includes serving God in ways that bring healing and wholeness to the church, the society and the world. The future will be **HOLY!** Thanks be to God! **Looking for the videos that accompany this study? Find them on Gather’s resources page.**

Submitted by Jen Larson

Discipleship Committee

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) helps us to understand our calling as Christians and to use what God has given us to honor and glorify Him. Jesus tells us that we have been given talents, gifts, and abilities that we should use for the kingdom of heaven. He cares

more about us trying than how perfect or imperfect the results are. He probably is not pleased when we do nothing with what he has given us.

He wants us to take risks by using our talents, even if we are unsure of ourselves and how it turns out. Maybe volunteer to serve in our Synodical Woman's Organization. You might be surprised on what skills and abilities you do have to share with other women or how you can grow as a Christian. Join your church sewing group and help with projects; maybe thread needles, organize projects or learn to sew on various stages of quilts and backpacks. Do your best and try your best.

Choose to not lose hope; take a risk by using your God given talents, gifts and abilities to honor and glorify Him.

Submitted by LuAnn Brunes

Stewardship Committee

Well here we are in 2021! We have turned into a virtual group but hopefully we will be able to meet in person this year. I want to thank you for contributing to our convention offering. We collected \$1,620.00. One half (\$810.00) will go to the Churchwide Women's Organization and the remainder will be divided between the five groups that we support – Wartburg Seminary scholarship for female students, LSI, LWR, Riverside and EWALU Bible camps (\$162.00 each).

This has been a trying year for us as we cannot see each other face to face as we would like but give thanks in the ways in which we can connect. As we travel forward into 2021, let us be resilient women. We can stay connected via the many internet opportunities, by phone and by writing letters. I know that I have come to look forward to attending my church services, circle meetings and even NEIA SWO board meetings from my dining room table. I also enjoy the little notes that are sent with your church offerings and the visits I have had with unit treasurers who have given me a call. Continue to be good stewards of our time, talents and resources in this trying time. Stay connected as we start the new year.

Submitted by Bev Sheridan

LWR Update

Our LWR shipping/ Ingathering day, November 9, 2020 in Mason City, had awesome results of 17 local churches participating. We are blessed with continued dedication to this complex mission. Thank you again for all that each of you do for people around the world. Our next gathering is planned for Spring 2021, Old Sears Mall, Mason City, 8:30-10:30 am.

Totals were:

992 Quilts	173 Baby Kits
376 School Kits	402 Personal Care Kits
11 Fabric Kits	3 Blankets

Submitted by Lea Norlinger

CALENDAR

Mar 13	SWO Board Meeting, 9-12, Zoom
May 1	SWO Board Meeting, 9-12, Wartburg
Jun 18	SWO Board Meeting, 7-9, Wartburg
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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773.380.2730 or 800.638.3522, ext. 2730

Contact NEIA Women of the ELCA:

neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA

Living Faith @ HOME



LOVE, a word we use often. We love our family and friends. We love pizza and ice cream. We love snow or the sunshine.

What does the Bible tell us about love? The entire book is a love story between God and his creation – us!

In Mark 12:29-31(NIV) 29 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is

one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Jesus tells us that love is the most important commandment. He tells us that we are to love God and our neighbors.



In Corinthians 13:4-8(NIV) the Bible tells us what love looks and acts like.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.



Deuteronomy 6: 5-7

“ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, and when you lie down and when you rise.”

Love your Enemies

It is easy to show love for our friends and even strangers, but what about people who are not kind to us. People we would see as an enemy. In Luke 6:27-29(NIV) the Bible talks about loving our enemies.

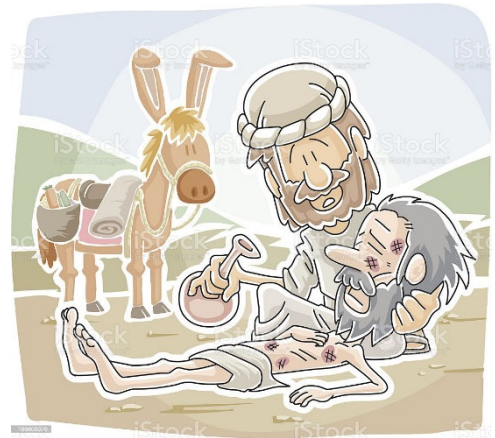


27 “But to you who are listening I say:
Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
28 bless those who curse you,
pray for those who mistreat you.

Love In Action

One of my favorite missionaries often says, “Love is something you do”. Love is a verb. Jesus taught about “love your neighbor” in action using the parable of The Good Samaritan. Read Luke 10:30-37 and answer the questions below.

1. Why did Jesus tell this story?
2. Why do you think the man asked Jesus to explain who his neighbor was?
3. Who did not treat the hurt man with love and what might have been their reasons?
4. Why was it strange for the Samaritan to help? How did he help?
5. How did Jesus' story answer the first man's question? How should we treat others?



Love Activity

How can we show love in action every day? Make a list of ways to show love to your family, friends and strangers and post them on the bulletin board or refrigerator where they will remind you to look for opportunities to show love for others each day. At dinner or evening prayers talk about how you made love into action during your day.

Suggestion: Make and send Valentines for the residence in the local care facilities near your home or where you have church members living.

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

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newsfeed. Our page is [Northeastern Iowa Synod Home Life Network ELCA](#)



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