

## The Little Video That Could

*How a homemade video drew a PhD pastor to a rural ministry call in Northeast Iowa*

by Marcia Hahn

After two and a half years in the call process, the rural Decorah congregations of Big Canoe and Highland Lutheran churches were ready to try just about anything to attract a full-time pastor for their shared call.

“Every couple months I called the synod office and was always told there was no movement for anyone to interview,” says Tammy Nordheim, who led the congregations’ call committee. “We had done all the paperwork, but would anyone ever look at it?”

Pastor Steve Brackett, assistant to the Bishop for the Northeastern Iowa Synod, asked Nordheim if they would like to participate in a pilot program to make a call process website with a video to help promote their congregations. Brackett had recently become a



Bill Stoen leads a video tour of the parsonage located at Big Canoe Lutheran in rural Decorah.

certified drone operator, and he was ready to use that skill as part of making videos for congregations in the call process.

“I researched during my sab-

batical in 2022 what the other 64 ELCA synods were doing to advertise open calls on their websites, and no one else in

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Pastor Matthew Becker, pictured with his son, Jacob, and wife, Deetra, serves as full-time pastor for the Big Canoe and Highland congregations near Decorah.

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the ELCA was using videos,” Brackett says. “A lot of rural calls are available throughout the country. I wanted to make sure our congregations in the Northeastern Iowa Synod were given an edge.”

Nordheim recruited 15 parishioners to participate in the video to share about their ministries, church history, veterans recognition, and recreational opportunities in the Decorah area. Nordheim showed the hand-painted chair used for children’s sermons. The quilting groups shared about getting together every week to sew quilts and kits for various ministries, and last year’s friendly competition between the two congregations that resulted in 180 personal care kits donated.

Big Canoe member Bill Stoen led a video tour of the parsonage, which was built in 1907 and dubbed the “Castle on the Hill” for its high vantage point and panoramic view. Stoen suggested the acreage and outbuildings could be used for kids’ 4-H

projects, such as keeping honeybees, raising hens for eggs, or raising a couple calves or goats. Highland members shared a peek into the “Little Highland” church replica built and donated by a congregation member in memory of Highland’s first Sunday school teacher. Brackett conducted all the interviews and used his drone to film overhead views of the church buildings, grounds and surrounding countryside.

“Tammy did a fantastic job organizing the people and places for the video,” Brackett says. “None of the folks were professionals, but they did a fantastic job.”



Tammy Nordheim talks about youth ministry and the hand-painted chair used for children’s sermons at Big Canoe Lutheran as part of the video promoting a shared call to Big Canoe and Highland.

The result was a 16-minute video that shared down-to-earth stories from people who genuinely love their church, their community and one another. Brackett posted the video on a web page he created for the Big Canoe and Highland call process. The page also included a slide show, links to the congregations’ profiles and website, ELCA information pages, and Decorah-area web pages. A link to the page was posted on the synod’s website and on the ministry site profiles.

Among those who received a link to the video following an interview with Brackett and Bishop Kevin Jones of the Northeastern Iowa Synod was the Rev. Dr. Matthew Becker, who was serving as a theology professor for Valparaiso University in Indiana. Becker had served on the faculty



Women from Big Canoe Lutheran share about their quilting ministry in their call process video.

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there since 2004, but in March 2023 he received notice that the theology program was to be discontinued. Becker could stay on with a one-year rolling contract, but he would have no real job security going forward.

Becker says he and his wife started having conversations and praying about what they should do. He had always stayed involved in parish ministry by helping a rural pastor with a small congregation east of Valparaiso, so the timing seemed right to pursue a full-time call in parish ministry.

Becker was already well-connected to ELCA bishops in the Midwest through his work at Valparaiso, so within 15 minutes of posting his rostered minister profile online, he started receiving calls from bishops. Over the next two weeks 15 synod bishops and assistants had contacted him with potential congregations. Becker and his wife started looking at several different synods and viewed a hundred ministry site profiles online, but the Highland and Big Canoe video caught their attention.

“Of all the congregation profiles we looked at, this was the only one with a video connected to it,” Becker says. “We smiled and kept coming back to that video—we watched it a half dozen times.”

Becker says he was originally looking for a call in an urban

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“There is way too much competition for similar calls, so everything we can do to lift those congregations helps with those calls.”

— Pastor Steve Brackett

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ministry or as an associate. His wife was working on her master’s degree in counseling at Valparaiso, so their plan was to keep their house and continue paying the mortgage on it.

“We realized that finding a congregation with a parsonage would be the right avenue for us, and the Highland and Big Canoe video spent quite a bit of time going through the parsonage,” Becker says. “I fell in love with some of the people in the video and we were very attracted to the parsonage, so we thought this might be the way to go.”

Follow-up conversations with Brackett confirmed Becker’s interest in Big Canoe and Highland. “At that point I let the other bishops know I was going to pursue that call,” Becker says.

Once Becker was interested in the call and met with the call committee, Brackett says it was a matter of working out Becker’s compensation since he was more experienced than the congregations thought they would get. All parties wanted the call to go forward, so they had to do some compromising. The call vote eventually took place in June 2024 and Becker began his call last October, which gave the congregations time to complete promised renovations in the parsonage.

Becker says that the first question people from the congrega-

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A camera drone captures a panoramic view of the rural setting surrounding the Highland Lutheran Church.

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tions asked him was, “Why do you want to come here?” He explains that the parsonage was a draw, along with the call’s flexibility to allow him mornings to research and write. Becker is retired from Valparaiso University, but he remains on the faculty as a research professor and on the university’s health insurance.

“If Highland and Big Canoe would have to pay for our health insurance package, I’m not sure they could afford it,” Becker says. “This arrangement was a big plus for them, and the parsonage was a big plus for us.”

Nordheim credits a well-rounded call committee for being patient and letting God guide them through the process. Early on, the committee interviewed a pastor who they invited to preach, but they realized they didn’t have anyone to compare that candidate to. The committee decided to wait it out and pray to do another interview to help make the right decision. When they interviewed Becker months later, Nordheim says his experiences and the way he answered questions made the committee members feel almost like he had been with them forever.

“He understood us, like he could be your best friend or neighbor down the road,” Nordheim says. “I was worried that his credentials are so high that he’ll find the pace isn’t strong enough for him, but there is so much in the surrounding area for anyone to branch out.”

Brackett says that producing the video took quite a bit of time, but he plans to keep making them for congregations in the synod that have been in the call process the longest. In the meantime, he encourages congregations to tap into the talents of their parishioners and explore other resources to begin making their own videos.

“We want people to know we are trying and working hard to get people to come to this synod, but it is a real challenge,” Brackett says. “There is way too much competition for similar calls, so everything we can do to lift those congregations helps with



Members of Highland Lutheran show the “Little Highland” replica in their call process video.

those calls. The key is to build a relationship between the pastor and the open call before they walk in for an interview.”

Becker agrees that the more congregations can do to be visible beyond the paperwork is good for both congregations and candidates.

“We felt a strong connection to the people interviewed in the video and to the place,” Becker says. “That wouldn’t have happened without the video.”

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# Training events to focus on suicide awareness and prevention

Feb. 28 & March 1, 2025  
St. John Lutheran, Nashua

Congregational leaders, families and members of the broader community in the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to attend two upcoming training events focusing on suicide awareness and prevention. The "Hope in Action" workshops will take place at St. John Lutheran in Nashua Feb. 28 and March 1.

The workshops were developed by Soul Shop, a nonprofit organization that equips faith communities to minister to those impacted by suicide. A trained "Soul Shop" representative, Kelly Ahola, will lead the workshops.

According to Deacon Jackie Schilling, the workshops are being offered free of charge, thanks to funding provided by "Everybody Hurts," a suicide awareness nonprofit organization from New Hampton.

***Hope In Action: Soul Shop for Communities Suicide Awareness and Prevention***  
Friday, Feb. 28 • 7-9 p.m.

The event is for the general community with information about a community-focused program that examines how to approach and discuss suicide. This training introduces the "CALL" model, designed to help keep individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts safe.

To learn more and register, visit [eventbrite.com/e/hope-in-action-soul-shop-for-communities-suicide-awareness-and-prevention-tickets-1118272766949?aff=oddtcreator](https://eventbrite.com/e/hope-in-action-soul-shop-for-communities-suicide-awareness-and-prevention-tickets-1118272766949?aff=oddtcreator).

***Hope In Action: Soul Shop Training for Faith Leaders***  
Saturday, March 1 • 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

This all-day workshop is designed to equip faith community leaders with the skills and resources necessary to minister effectively to individuals who have been impacted by suicide.

Participants will learn how to create worship resources, train congregation members in suicide awareness and basic conversation skills, and extend invitations to those who have experienced suicidal thoughts to share their stories. The workshop will engage participants in exploring how to cultivate a soul-safe culture within their congregations.



Lunch and snacks will be provided. Participants can receive seven hours of continuing education credit and a certificate of completion. There will be an option to purchase curriculum materials to use for small groups.

To learn more and register, visit [eventbrite.com/e/hope-in-action-soul-shop-workshop-for-leaders-tickets-1120835371769?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl](https://eventbrite.com/e/hope-in-action-soul-shop-workshop-for-leaders-tickets-1120835371769?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl).

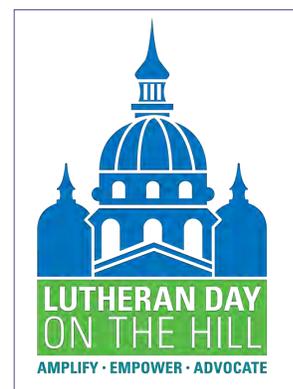
## LUTHERAN DAY ON THE HILL

March 11, 2025  
Des Moines

Join Lutheran Services in Iowa and the three Iowa ELCA bishops for Lutheran Day on the Hill Tuesday, March 11, in Des Moines.

Lutheran Day on the Hill is LSI's biggest advocacy event of the year. Participants will gather at a local downtown church to learn about critical issues facing Iowa children, adults and families. After learning about advocacy and LSI's mission in action, the group will head to the Iowa State Capitol to talk directly with legislators. There is no cost to attend.

Learn more at [lsiowa.org/ldh](https://lsiowa.org/ldh).



# New season of youth ministry webinars begins Feb. 20

Northeastern Iowa Synod youth workers, clergy and volunteers are invited to join a new year of free webinars offered in partnership with Youth Ministry Consultants.

Youth Ministry Consultants is a non-profit organization that offers webinars on a variety of youth ministry topics to help congregations, parents and leaders pass faith on to the next generation.

Three upcoming sessions will be offered live on Thursdays at 11 a.m.:

## **FEB. 20**

### **From Chaperones to Shepherds**

Tiger McLuen will share how leaders can train their team to shepherd students with care, purpose and spiritual depth, and retain volunteers.

## **MARCH 6**

### **Communicating to Teens**

Ashley Bohinc will use her nearly 20 years experience as a middle school teacher to share strategies to capture the attention of youth and communicate to them in a way they truly understand.

## **APRIL 3**

### **Understanding Gen Z and Gen Alpha**

Pastor Lisette Fraser will share about the unique characteristics of these generations and give strategies for ministering to their specific needs and challenges.

Anyone from the Northeastern Iowa Synod can register free by entering



the new code **NEIA25**. Recordings of past sessions are also available for viewing.

Visit [youthministryconsultants.org](https://youthministryconsultants.org) to learn more and register.

## 'Form Follows Mission' at the 2025 Rural Ministry Conference

**March 9-11, 2025**

### **Wartburg Theological Seminary**

The 2025 Rural Ministry Conference will focus on the creative ways small congregations are adapting to keep vitality in their mission and ministry.

The conference will take place March 9-11 at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, with a "Form Follows Mission" theme. This ecumenical event includes speakers, workshops, Bible study, worship and opportunities to network with others who are active in small town or rural ministry.

The featured keynote speaker will be Pastor Nancy Nyland, who currently serves as pastor for Bethany

Lutheran, Indianapolis. After a career working in higher education, Nyland earned her mDiv degree and was ordained in 1990. She served in several rural congregations in the Midwest before becoming Director for Evangelical Mission for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. Nyland has led congregational vitality trainings across the ELCA and assisted congregations with planning, visioning and transitions.

The full registration fee is \$200 before Feb. 16, and \$225 after. Registration closes Feb. 26. To learn more and register, visit [www.wartburgseminary.edu/rural-conference](https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/rural-conference).

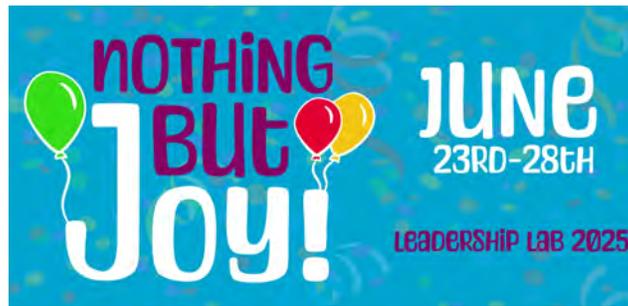
# Youth can develop ministry skills at the Leadership Lab

June 23-28, 2025  
Augustana College

The Northeastern Iowa Synod has a long history of offering leadership development opportunities for high school youth through the program WIYLDE. This year, the synod will instead be partnering with the three synods in Illinois to offer Leadership Lab, a weeklong camp of faith-formation and leadership development that takes place at Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill., the last week of June.

The camp, which is in its 63rd year, is a unique opportunity to experience faith-based fellowship and undergo leadership skills training that prepares individuals for leadership inside and outside the church.

Over five days, campers experience the equivalent of 14 weeks of youth group and nearly half a year of Sunday worship services, led in



ministry by rostered ELCA Leaders and lay leaders from different synods across the country. While the bulk of attendees are high schoolers, the camp also has levels for young adults (ages 18-23) and adults involved in youth ministry, as well as faith and lay leaders in the church. Rostered leaders are invited to attend the camp as a faith retreat.

Leadership Lab is predominantly an expression of the ELCA, but is open to anyone regardless of synod, denomination, confirmation status, or identity-related markers. Participants will find an inclusive community where the love of Jesus pervades and

defines the experience.

"I have met several rostered deacons, pastors and lay leaders who have attended and led at Leadership Lab, and they can't say enough good things about it," says Pastor Kristen Rod, Director for Evangelical Mission for the Northeastern Iowa Synod. "This camp has a long history of developing leaders in the three Illinois synods, and I'm really excited that they decided to reach across the Mississippi River and partner with the synods in Iowa, as well!"

This year's camp will be June 23-28. The baseline registration cost is \$420, with various discounts available. Learn more and register at [leadershiplab.net/leadership-lab-2025](http://leadershiplab.net/leadership-lab-2025).

Questions about Leadership Lab can be directed to Thomas Frase, one of the adult leaders of the program, at [thomasfrase1226@aol.com](mailto:thomasfrase1226@aol.com). Inquiries regarding possible financial assistance to attend should be emailed to Rod or call 319-352-1414.

## Let Lutheran Lakeside lead a Lock-In!

For several years, Campus Ministry students at the University of Northern Iowa have hosted a middle school lock-in at their Wellness & Recreation Center, but they are no longer able to do this. So, the folks from Lutheran Lakeside Camp in Spirit Lake are offering to bring lock-in events to interested congregations.

Staff from Lutheran Lakeside Camp will plan, set up, and lead a custom lock-in for church communities anywhere in the Northeastern

Iowa Synod. Congregations will be responsible for providing the food and location, and Lakeside will provide the fun!

The cost starts at \$390 for two LL staff members. A typical lock-in schedule begins on a Friday at 6 p.m. and ends on a Saturday morning at 8 a.m.

Interested congregations should email Dalton Bunnell at [program@lutheranlakeside.com](mailto:program@lutheranlakeside.com) to learn more and schedule a lock-in for a night of fun and faith!

## IRS MILEAGE RATE

The Internal Revenue Service 2025 optional standard mileage rate used to calculate the deductible costs of operating a vehicle for business is 70 cents per mile, up 3 cents from 2024. To learn more, visit [www.irs.gov/newsroom](http://www.irs.gov/newsroom).

# Synod Assembly registration begins Feb. 10

**June 6-7, 2025**

**Bien VenU, Cedar Falls**

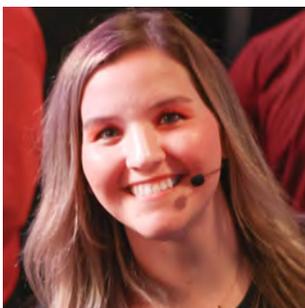
Registration begins Feb. 10 for the 2025 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly, set for June 6-7 at the Bien VenU Event Center in Cedar Falls.

The assembly will begin at 7 p.m. Friday with an optional worship service and social time at Fredsville Lutheran, located a few miles west of Cedar Falls. Saturday's schedule will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the event center and conclude by 5 p.m. The day will include plenary sessions for synod business and reports, ministry exhibits, lunch and closing worship.

## CREATED TO BE CONNECTED

Two speakers with connections to Northeastern Iowa will give presentations related to this year's theme, "Created to Be Connected."

**Pastor Emily Harkins**, founding developer and pastor of The Dwelling ministry in North Carolina,



Pastor Emily Harkins

will present the keynote. The Dwelling is an ELCA mission congregation that provides weekly worship services, community meals, a mobile shower trailer, personal care items, and other services to the housing insecure in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Harkins is a graduate of Wartburg College in Waverly and Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, and was ordained in the ELCA in May of 2020. She is a nationally recognized speaker known for her storytelling,

humor and theological insights, and was a featured speaker on the main stage at the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. Half of this year's assembly offering will support The Dwelling ministry; the other half will support the Dwelling in Faith Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community, located in Mitchell, Iowa.

**Aaron Shoppa**, program director for ELCA Youth Ministry, will address



Aaron Shoppa

the assembly as churchwide representative. Shoppa has more than 15 years experience in youth, family and young adult ministries. He earned a Master of Theological Studies from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He has made a focal point of his ministry to engage and equip lay and ordained people in the work of formation ministries.

Originally from Muscatine, Shoppa says he came into faith as a 20-year-old while attending the University of Northern Iowa and finding a home at the Lutheran Student Center during his undergraduate years. Shoppa last visited the synod in November when he led a synod-sponsored youth ministry event in Cedar Falls for high school youth and adult leaders.

## VOTING MEMBERS TRAINING

At this year's assembly, voting members will elect members of synod committees and the Synod Council, including a secretary and vice president.

All voting will be done electronically through VPOLL, a company that provides online election security and authenticity for ethical voting. Every voting member will need to bring to the assembly a device (mobile phone, tablet, laptop) that can access an internet browser in order to vote.

Three pre-assembly Zoom meetings will be scheduled in May for voting members to review the proposed synod budget and compensation guidelines, review submitted resolutions and memorials, and practice using the new electronic voting system. Log-in information for the Zoom meetings will be sent to registered voting members at least one week prior. All of the sessions will be recorded so that those who can't join live will have access to view them later.

## REGISTRATION BEGINS FEB. 10

Online registration for the assembly will open Monday, Feb. 10. The early bird registration fee is \$130 for voting members and \$100 for visitors through May 1. After that date, an additional \$30 fee will be added. No registrations will be accepted after May 15.

The Holiday Inn & Suites/Bien VenU Event Center has designated a select number of guest rooms for the special price of \$139 plus fees for Friday, June 6. This price and special link for the "2025 Synod Assembly" will be available through May 8.

Visit [neiasynod.org/2025-synod-assembly](https://neiasynod.org/2025-synod-assembly) to learn more and get started with registration and hotel reservations.

# Synod office renovations are nearing completion

Renovations that began in early December at the Northeastern Iowa Synod office are expected to be completed by the middle of February. The renovation project refreshes much of the original interior of the building, which was completed in 1990, and installs energy efficiency updates and accessibility improvements.

The updates include new flooring throughout the building and new cabinets and countertops in the kitchen and restrooms. Both restrooms have been converted into single-person, gender-neutral rooms with accessibility improvements and the addition of a baby changing station.

All interior lighting has been converted to LED. Some office spaces have been reconfigured, along with a new workroom and seating area. The conference room and library will be furnished with new tables and seating that can be interchanged for flexible arrangements in both rooms.

All of the building's exterior doors will be replaced with new energy-efficient doors, including wheelchair-accessible automatic front doors. The other three doors will have push bars, compliant with code requirements for fire life safety. In addition, new energy-efficient windows will be installed in the spring or early summer.

"Our goal is to bring the entire interior of the building up to today's standard for ADA compliance and functionality," says Gary Lindgren, Synod Council treasurer who is serving as project manager. "All of the

subcontractors and suppliers have been very good to work with. There are always surprises that can come up, but they have kept those to a minimum."

Lindgren emphasizes that all funding for this project comes from money that has been set aside for some 30 years for stewardship of the synod property. No Mission Support money or fundraising is being used for this project. Other updates at the synod office in recent years have included an energy-efficient HVAC system, new roof and gutter system, new phone system, wallpaper replacement, and exterior lighting and landscaping improvements. This summer, plans are to resurface the parking lot and sidewalks.

"We want to thank everyone for their patience during this time of construction with limited office hours and remote meetings," says Jan Glaspie, executive assistant for synod administration. "We look forward to welcoming visitors and hosting meetings onsite again very soon."



Top, Jan Glaspie shows the newly carpeted center area at the synod office. Bottom, new cabinets and countertop in the synod office kitchen.

# Books Featured on the National Day of Racial Healing Event

by Lisa Nelson, Racial Justice Advocacy Network

On Jan. 21, the ELCA partnered with Augsburg Fortress to present an online educational observance of the National Day of Racial Healing. Members of the Northeastern Iowa Synod were among the 2,000 people who participated. Presenters included authors, editors and illustrators who are ELCA leaders of color. Some of the books that were discussed include:

**God’s Holy Darkness**

by Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick

This children’s book lifts up all of the ways darkness is important in the story of God’s people and helps children see how blackness is a celebrated element in the life of faith.

**You Are So Wonderful**

by Jacqui Lewis

This children’s book beautifully con-

veys the message of the wonderfulness in every person. It features a diverse cast of children and adults and includes a reading guide.

**Call to Allyship: Preparing Your Congregation for Leaders of Color**  
edited by Angela T. !Khabeb

Through this collection of stories and essays, the reader can learn from church leaders of color to identify biases and hurtful patterns of behavior that impede the church in honoring and growing through the gifts these leaders bring.

**Remind Me Again: Poems and Practices for Remembering Who We Are**  
by Joe Davis

This collection of 41 poems “will inspire, challenge and affirm readers from all stages of life,” to explore their

spirit, their community and their purpose. Each poem includes a practice to connect the verse to the reader’s everyday life. A facilitator guide is also available.

Augsburg is offering 20 percent off and free shipping on the books featured at the event through February 28. For more information and the savings code, visit [elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/racial-justice-ministries/national-day-of-racial-healing](http://elca.org/our-work/publicly-engaged-church/racial-justice-ministries/national-day-of-racial-healing)

The Racial Justice Network of the Northeastern Iowa Synod is creating an email list to facilitate communication about upcoming events related to racial justice. If you would like to be added to the list, please email us at [neiasynodrjan@gmail.com](mailto:neiasynodrjan@gmail.com).

## Join an ELCA Fireside Chat

Feb. 13, 2025

The ELCA seminaries will host a new Fireside Chat series in February, with the first session focusing on the ins and outs of serving as a chaplain in the ELCA.

Join the ELCA seminaries and Chaplain Corps Thursday, Feb. 13, for the virtual “Fireside Chat: Exploring Pathways for Chaplaincy in the ELCA” at 7-8:15 p.m. CST. There is no cost to attend.

To register, visit [admissions.callutheran.edu/register/ELCAChaplaincy](http://admissions.callutheran.edu/register/ELCAChaplaincy).

## DAY OF RENEWAL IS SET FOR APRIL 24

April 24, 2025  
Ewalu, Strawberry Point

Ministers actively serving in the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to gather Thursday, April 24, for the Day of Renewal event at EWALU Bible Camp, Strawberry Point.

This will be a day to renew connections with one another as colleagues and as the synod. Ministers include pastors, deacons, seminary interns, collaborative learning leaders, TEEM leaders and synodically authorized ministers who regularly

serve as ministers in congregations and ministries of this synod.

The theme of the day will echo the 2025 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly theme, *Created to Be Connected*. The Day of Renewal schedule will be spacious, with plenty of time to connect with each other, spend time in nature, worship together, and engage in deep conversations and learning.

The cost to attend is \$20. Online registration will begin in March.

# Immigration and the Lutheran Church

Returning from sabbatical, I have been met with a crash course on immigration law. The new executive immigration orders around the so-called “sensitive areas” like schools, churches, courthouses, and health care facilities are disrupting ministry and raising concerns in the synod and the state. I know that these orders are being received by some in our churches with relief and vindication that something is being done to address important immigration issues. It is also being met in our church with heightened anxiety, confusion, and distress for the way these orders open a path to treat some people as if they are not made in the image of God.

The complexity of U.S. immigration policies, combined with a lack of federal resources to process refugees and migrants, have resulted in long (five to 10 year) waits to get processed and resettled. For those migrants who are documented, getting extensions or switching from one status to another (student visa to work visa for example) is cumbersome, expensive (legal fees, travel expenses, days off from work, etc.), and stressful. I have personally witnessed this as we explore bringing pastors from other countries to serve our congregations or when students from other countries graduate from ELCA seminaries and feel called to serve a congregation in the ELCA. Many migrants who don't have legal status originally entered this country under legal status which has expired while they wait in the backlog of bureaucracy.

Additionally, the work of Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) and Lutheran Services in Iowa in legally resettling immigrants has been stopped, at least temporarily. Funding to help get immigrants and families

established and self-supporting has also been halted as of this writing (Jan. 29). Much of this funding is compensation for local case workers who have been assisting in the resettlement of 190 legal immigrants already relocated to Iowa (108 of them children). LSI is working with the support of the three Iowa bishops to navigate these changes and share ways for us to help when a path emerges.

## ROOTED IN IMMIGRATION

The Lutheran church in the United States has long been involved in welcoming immigrants and refugees. Our church was born in this land when immigrants and refugees brought their faith with them from places like Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. When I was a child, I remember our congregation sponsoring a Vietnamese family, refugees from a war-torn land, as they started anew in America. In 2008 we here in Northeastern Iowa witnessed the devastating effects of the Postville raid on the whole community. The work of St. Paul Lutheran, Postville and surrounding congregations in response to the immigration raid continues to this day.

The God we read about in scripture seems to “be with” those who are aliens in the land that they inhabit, starting with God's care for Adam and Eve when they were banished from Eden. Abraham and Sarah wandered away from their home at God's command. Jacob had to leave his country in fear of his brother's retribution and God went with him. The twelve tribes of Israel were both saved by and enslaved by the Egyptian empire to escape famine. When Israel was in power, the prophets called for care and attention to the resident aliens. God was with an entire generation of

people in exile in Babylon. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lived as immigrants/refugees in Egypt to escape the political wrath of Herod.



The ELCA is a church that is committed to care for people. That care has always extended to our members and beyond. This care includes advocacy for better immigration laws, policies, and resources. This care includes reminders of the full humanity of migrants and refugees no matter where in the world they originate. This care includes reducing fear, stress, and anxiety so that we may all live peaceful lives. I pray that we can be this church for you and for all as we proclaim that we are One in Christ through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

We are a church that cares for our neighbors in the same way that God cares for all of us. (I remind you to review your small catechism for more on who Luther understood our neighbor to be.) Let us have open eyes, ears, hearts, and minds to the ways God is calling us to serve our neighbor in these days.

— *Bishop Kevin Jones*

## RESOURCES:

[ELCA AMMPARO Ministries & Resources](#)  
[AMMPARO Welcoming Network Resources](#)  
[2020 Social Message on Government and Social Engagement](#)  
[Presiding Bishop Eaton Pastoral Message on Executive Orders](#)  
[Know Your Rights](#)

# Where to start? Trust in God.

*“Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.”*  
— 2 Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG)

What is the right thing to do? Where is God directing you to invest your time and energy and resources? How do you know you are on the right track?

There are so many needs right now in our communities and in the world; it can be hard to know how God might want you to respond. I know I can easily become overwhelmed by all the things that need attention, need passionate champions, need someone to seek truth and sort fact from fiction, need people to stand up and reach out to help, and need financial support.

In those moments when I am overwhelmed, I like to take a deep breath, talk to a friend and pray. The breath slows me down. My friend reminds me that I can only do what I can do—pick one direction or area of concern and focus on what I might do there. Good friends remind me that I am not the lone source of all goodness, justice and compassion. We must trust others to do what they can, when they can, as each of us does what we can, when we can.

So I take a deep breath to slow me, reach out to a friend to remind me, and center myself in prayer to ground me. An active prayer life connects us and grounds us in God. Prayer keeps God at the center; it acknowledges that God is the one who is “in charge” and is the designated savior of the world—not me and not you.

With God at the center and core of your being, the love and care the world needs flows out, and your path, your next steps, will become clearer.



As the Bible says in Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG), “Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.”

— *Pastor Liz Bell*

## Updates from Portico Benefits

by Jennifer Prinz, Regional Representative for Portico Benefits



### GET READY FOR TAX SEASON

Since congregations and clergy have unique reporting requirements, Portico offers complimentary access to two important resources:

1. The *Clergy Tax Return Preparation Guide* by Richard R. Hammar focuses on tax-related topics most relevant to ministers.
2. *Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches* helps congregations understand their federal tax-reporting requirements.

Both tax guides are available on [my-Portico](#) and the Tax Filing Information tab on EmployerLink.

### “REFILL YOUR CUP” CHALLENGE

We’re all stronger when we’re all stronger—physically, emotionally and spiritually. Portico plan members with ELCA-Primary health benefits, join the community as together we strive to complete 12,000 minutes of classes on Bernalong this February. Whatever activity or subject boosts your well-being, there’s probably a Bernalong class that can support you—or check out these suggestions on our February playlist. Complete 100 minutes and you might even win a prize! Get started today.

### COMPENSATION CHANGES

To administer benefits accurately, Portico needs to know each member’s current compensation amount.

If your congregation’s annual meeting included a salary or benefit adjustment, be sure your EmployerLink user notifies Portico within 60 days of the effective date of that change. Late notifications of compensation changes can impact your sponsored members’ retirement account contributions as well as disability and life insurance benefits.

# What is your congregation doing to care for creation?

by Donna Rasmussen, Care for Creation Network

We want to hear from you! The Northeastern Iowa Care for Creation Network has sent a survey to all congregations, colleges, camps and organizations in the Synod to gather information about:

- current creation care activities in the synod,
- what projects/activities could be done with guidance from the Care for Creation Network, and
- who is willing to share their knowledge with others.

The ELCA adopted a resolution at the Churchwide Assembly in 2022 to reduce greenhouse gas pollution by 50 percent by 2030. The

Northeastern Iowa Synod adopted a resolution in 2023 setting the same goal for the synod's congregations, educational facilities, administrative offices, and outdoor ministry facilities. The Care for Creation Network of the Northeastern Iowa Synod has been working to determine how best to help member churches make progress along this path.

Benefits of this work will be significant cost savings to congregations and organizations that implement efficiency measures and reduce their carbon footprint. The purpose of the survey is to provide some information about the benefits, gather information to determine what measures your

organization has taken already and the realized benefits, what help your organization might want or need, and what advice or assistance your organization may be able to offer others wanting to do similar projects.

Please assign someone from your congregation or organization to complete the survey by Feb. 28, 2025. If you would like to receive the link in order to complete the survey for your congregation or organization, please email [rdrasmussen@outlook.com](mailto:rdrasmussen@outlook.com). Survey results will be available at the 2025 Synod Assembly.

Thank you!

## GLOBAL CHURCH TOGETHER

### Area pastors to join ELCA delegation trip to Namibia

Three pastors from the Northeastern Iowa Synod will join an ELCA delegation to Namibia in February to witness the historic installation of the first female bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN).

Pastor Dena Gable of St. Timothy, Hudson; Pastor Mike Wilker of First, Decorah; and Pastor Margaret Yacke-Juleen of the One in Faith Parish in Strawberry Point, Elkader and Volga; will join nine other representatives from the Southwestern Washington Synod, New Jersey Synod and Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod for the trip to Windhoek, Namibia. All four synods have companion synod relationships with the three churches of Namibia.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Namibia (ELCIN) made history in August when the Rev. Hilja Nghaangulwa was elected as the first woman to serve as a diocesan bishop in Namibia. She will be installed as bishop for the Eastern Diocese of the ELCIN. Namibia's first female president, newly elected Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, will be among those attending the installation.

The delegation will also witness the installation of the Rev. Alfredo Barros of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola, which is joining the companion relationship with Namibia.

Bishop Kevin Jones has hand-carved wooden prayer birds for the group to take as gifts on behalf of the



Prayer birds hand-carved by Bishop Kevin Jones

Northeastern Iowa Synod. As he carved each bird, Jones prayed for the person who will receive the bird. The birds were carved from firewood harvested at Ewalu Bible Camp near Strawberry Point.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod has been in a synod companion relationship with the three churches of Namibia since 1990.

# Taking a Break from Alcohol

by Pastor Jane Harris, Substance Abuse Network Member

So, did you make a New Year's resolution for 2025? Mine was to exercise more, which is the same one I made last year (heavy sigh.) According to an article posted by the Associated Press, over half of U.S. adults say they intended to make at least one New Year's resolution for 2025. Most of these resolutions focus on better self-care, including both physical and mental health. For some, that might mean reducing their alcohol intake.

The good news is that there is help available, even if you are more interested in limiting your alcohol intake than giving it up altogether. Up until the last few years, most experts in the field of addiction treatment would say there was only one way to prevent alcohol use from becoming alcohol abuse or addiction, and that was to permanently discontinue all use of alcohol, (also known as abstinence.) This is still the case for many – if the use of alcohol (or drugs) is causing problems in other areas of your life, i.e., financial, relationship, health, or legal problems, it's advisable to seek help through an abstinence-based treatment program.

Many who are wanting to take a break from alcohol are participating in challenges such as "Dry January," a campaign that was developed by the organization "Alcohol Change UK" in 2013, and its popularity has since spread worldwide. The challenge involves giving up alcohol for a full 30 days (it doesn't have to be January; you can start anytime.) The purpose is to allow time to pause, reset, and reflect on your relationship to alcohol or other mind-altering substances. The results have been encouraging — many say that through this 30-day challenge they slept better, felt

healthier, skin problems disappeared, they lost weight, (alcohol is extremely high in calories) and they felt less anxious, with an increased ability to focus and stay present in situations. Many reported that they saved a lot of money!

After 30 days, some participants will return to drinking alcohol, but with a plan to limit their intake. Others may decide they can live without alcohol and give it up completely. Some have come to the realization that they couldn't stop drinking and decided it was time to get help. Alcohol and drugs often mask mental health issues such as anxiety, trauma and depression, so it may be a good time to seek professional help to develop healthier ways to cope.

Please be aware that for those who consume large amounts of alcohol on a regular basis, it may be dangerous to stop abruptly; severe, life-threatening withdrawal symptoms and seizures can occur. In this case, it's best to contact a medical professional

before reducing intake.

Also, it is important to note that some past studies have suggested that moderate drinking might be good for your health. But scientists highly debate these findings. Recent studies (see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Center for Disease Control) reveal that there are not more health benefits to moderate drinking compared to not drinking and that even moderate alcohol intake could increase the risk of certain types of cancer.

If you have been questioning your relationship with alcohol lately, a 30-day "dry challenge" might be a good starting point. There are several articles online and social media support groups that can help. If you would like more information for yourself or your congregation, please feel free to contact Steve Brackett at the Synod office, and he will connect you with a member of the Substance Abuse Network.

## Women's Celebration Event is Feb. 21-22

Women of the Northeastern Iowa Synod and friends are invited to a celebration event Feb. 21-22 at Ewalu Stone Retreat Center, Strawberry Point.

Sponsored by the Northeastern Iowa Women of the ELCA Synod Board and Katie's Fund, this "M & M Retreat" will celebrate all the Marys and Marthas by learning and doing a variety of activities, including a hymn sing, board games, puzzles, crafts, meals and fellowship. Pastor

Susan and Norman Friedrich from the National Alliance on Mental Illness "Bridges of Hope" will present on Saturday.

Registration is due Monday, Feb. 19. The cost to attend both days is \$35, including overnight accommodation and meals. The rate for Saturday only is \$15.

To learn more and to download the registration form and flier, visit [neiasynod.org/women-of-the-elca](http://neiasynod.org/women-of-the-elca).

## FEBRUARY 2025

- 6 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 7-8 CANDIDACY RETREAT**, Shalom Spirituality Center, Dubuque
- 13 LIVING WATERS CONF. ASSEMBLY**, Good Shepherd Health Center, Mason City, 10 a.m.
- 13 RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY NETWORK**, Synod Office & Zoom, 3:30 p.m.
- 16 TREE OF LIFE CON. ASSEMBLY**, Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community, Waverly, 2 p.m.
- 16 SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS CONF. ASSEMBLY**, St. Paul, Volga, 2 p.m.
- 21-22 SWO WINTER RETREAT**, Ewalu Stone Retreat Center, Strawberry Point
- 23 JUBILEE CONF. ASSEMBLY**, St. John, Cedar Falls, 1 p.m.
- 23 WATER OF LIFE CONF. ASSEMBLY**, Holy Trinity, Dubuque, 1 p.m.
- 23 RIVERSIDE CONF. ASSEMBLY**, St. Bergen, Roland, 2 p.m.
- 23 UPPER IOWA RIVER CONF. ASSEMBLY**, Stavanger, Ossian, 2 p.m.
- 24 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m.

## MARCH 2025

- 3 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**, Zoom, 3 p.m.
- 3 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 6 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 7 CANDIDACY COMMITTEE**, Synod Office
- 9-11 RURAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE**, Wartburg Seminary
- 11 LUTHERAN DAY ON THE HILL**, Des Moines
- 13 RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY NETWORK**, Synod Office & Zoom, 3:30 p.m.
- 15 SYNOD COUNCIL**, Synod Office, 9:30 a.m.
- 22 SWO MEETING**, Synod Office, 9 a.m.-12 noon

## APRIL 2025

- 3 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY MTG.**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 7 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 18 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Good Friday
- 24 DAY OF RENEWAL**, Ewalu, Strawberry Point
- 25-26 LAY TRAINING RETREAT**, St. John, Cedar Falls

## MAY 2025

- 1 YOUTH MINISTRY PLAN-IT EVENT**, Ewalu, Strawberry Point, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- 1 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 2 CANDIDACY COMMITTEE**, Synod Office, 9:30 a.m.
- 3 SWO MEETING**, Synod Office, 9 a.m.
- 4-6 ALL IOWA FIRST CALL GATHERING**, St. James, Johnston
- 5 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 17 SYNOD COUNCIL**, Zoom, 9 a.m.
- 26 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Memorial Day

## INTERVIEWING

- **Asbury**, Lord of Life, Rev. Karla Wildberger, interim
- **Decorah**, Good Shepherd, Rev. April Ulring Larson, interim
- **Dows**, *First\**
- **Dysart**, Zion
- **Eldorado**, *St. Peter\**
- **Greene**, St. Peter, Rev. Jennifer Edinger, interim
- **Independence**, Immanuel, Rev. Kristi Grieder, interim
- **Janesville**, *Messiah\**
- **Jesup**, American & La Porte City, Zion (Jubilee), Rev. Patricia Mohr-Kelly, interim
- **Jewell**, Bethesda
- **Lake Mills**, Salem
- **Leland**, *Our Savior & Garner, Faith (Miller)\**
- **Osage**, Our Savior's
- **Thornton**, *St. Paul\**
- **Toeterville**, St. Peter & Carpenter, Deer Creek
- **Tripoli**, Grace
- **Waterloo**, *Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd\**
- **Waterloo**, *Our Savior's, Rev. Lisa Kruse, contract\**

Follow updates on open calls at [neiasynod.org/open-calls](https://neiasynod.org/open-calls).

## SELF-STUDY

- **Cedar Falls**, Bethlehem
- **Clarion**, First
- **Decorah**, *St. John's & Hauge\**
- **Decorah**, Washington Prairie
- **Hawkeye**, *Trinity\**
- **Joice**, Bethany; **Lake Mills**, Winnebago; **Northwood**, Silver Lake; **Albert Lea, Minn.**, Lunder (One in Christ Lutheran Parish)
- **New Hampton**, Trinity, Rev. Sue Cira, contract
- **Oelwein**, Zion
- **Ossian**, Ossian
- **Washburn**, *Redeemer\**

## ROSTER CHANGES

- **Rev. Kevin Frey**, transferred to Southeastern Iowa Synod
- **Rev. Elaine Siemsen**, transferred to Grand Canyon Synod
- **Rev. Eric Thiele**, transferred from Northeastern Minnesota Synod

*\*Part-time Call*

## JUNE 2025

- 2 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 5 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 6-7 NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD ASSEMBLY**, Bien VenU Event Center, Cedar Falls
- 9 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**
- 14 SWO CONVENTION**, Zion, Oelwein, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 9 RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY NETWORK**, Synod Office & Zoom, 3:30 p.m.
- 19 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Juneteenth Observance

# PRAYER CALENDAR

Please join in praying for the following leaders and ministries of the Northeastern Iowa Synod and ELCA:

## FEBRUARY 1-8, 2025

- **H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders**
- Linda McMillin
- Pat Nelson
- Rev. Bryan Robertson
- Rev. Scot McCluskey
- Rev. Patricia Shaw
- Grand View University, Des Moines
- Luther College, Decorah
- Wartburg College, Waverly
- Mosaic, Omaha, NE

## FEBRUARY 9-15, 2025

- Rev. Deacon Millie Dieter
- Rev. Diane Koschmeder
- Rev. Kristen Rod
- Rev. Steve Brackett
- Rev. Jane Harris
- Rev. Burton Everist
- Marion Krentz
- Rev. Linda Marlett
- Deacon Jean Rienets

## FEBRUARY 16-22, 2025

- **Middle East Peace**
- Rev. Barb Fricke
- Rev. Peter Kowitz
- Rev. David Coffin
- Rev. Margaret Yackel-Juleen
- Rev. Al Schulz
- Rev. Bob Ericson
- Lutheran Services in Iowa

## FEBRUARY 23-28, 2025

- Louise Anderson
- Rev. Dr. Steve Ullestad
- Rev. Darrel Gerrietts
- Bishop Kevin Jones
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls
- Fredsville Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls

## MARCH 1-8, 2025

- **H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders**
- Julie Nordstrom
- Rev. Norm Bauer
- Rev. Dave Lenth
- Ruth Groth
- Rev. Kent Mechler
- Good Samaritan Society, St. Ansgar
- Good Samaritan Society, Waukon
- Good Samaritan Society, West Union

## MARCH 9-15, 2025

- Rev. George Anderson
- Rev. Ginny Olson
- Rev. Bob Lehmann
- Rev. Kristen Wipperman
- Good Shepherd, Inc., Mason City
- Strawberry Point Lutheran Home, Strawberry Point

## MARCH 16-22, 2025

- **Middle East Peace**
- Rev. Rev. Roger Buhr
- Ginny Tomlinson
- Rev. Maggie Falenschek
- Rev. Eric Thiele
- Rev. Ron Roberts
- Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls
- St. John American Lutheran Church, Cedar Falls

## MARCH 23-31, 2025

- Rev. Frank Johnson
- Bev Ager
- Rev. Dennis Bauer
- Rev. Allen Vik
- Rev. Tyler Hoey
- Sarah Andersen
- St. John Lutheran Church, Charles City
- Messiah Lutheran Church, Charles City
- First Lutheran Church, Clarion
- St. John Lutheran Church, Clarksville





# Good News

Jan/ Feb  
2025

*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.*

## **President's Sparks**

Our winter retreat at the Stone Center in Strawberry Point is scheduled for Feb. 21 and 22. Come and spend the night or just come for the day! See Discipleship article for more information.

On March 22 the women's synod board will have a meeting in Waverly @ the synod office @ 9am with all *interested people /cluster leaders invited*. We will be finalizing June party gathering activities.

We are having a sharing party on June 14, 2025 @. Zion Lutheran Church in Oelwein. This fun is for everyone. There will be a few interest sessions and "new" circle sessions. Circle sessions are a chance to share the good things happening in your church community. Ideas might be: Food needs, clothing and home needs, school needs for kids, different ways to worship, supporting your members. We look forward to lively discussion and fun.

We are giving out educational scholarships again this year, so look for the forms on the webpage [Women of the ELCA - Northeastern Iowa Synod, ELCA](#) and each church will receive a registration form, flier, and scholarship form.

*Sparkling with Jesus,  
Christine Schmitt*

## **Justice Committee**

Lily Bags are given out to Crisis Intervention and hospitals for women in crisis. Many times, women need to surrender their clothing as evidence in hospital emergency rooms. This program has been going on for approximately four years and over 365 bags have been distributed. It started in a nine-county area and has now increased to 15 counties. Each bag contains essential items such as a shirt, pants, underwear, socks and sports bra. In each bag there is a card with a lily on the front and an explanation of the lily. In part it says, "*you are beautiful like the lily and you can draw strength from deep within you – your core.*" These bags are distributed by St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mason City, with assistance from Our

Saviour's Lutheran Church. This is one of our missions for justice. Psalm 101:1 "*I will sing of your love and justice to you, Lord, I will sing praise.*"

*Submitted by Janice Nelson*

## **Stewardship Committee**

Katharina von Bora Luther was a practical and bold woman of faith. Through Katie's Fund, Women of the ELCA honors her life by supporting global connections, leadership development and living theology. Our churchwide organization has started a special campaign to honor Katharina's legacy to us today. 2122 is a \$1 million campaign for Katie's Fund that is designed to support the organization into the next 100 years of mission and ministry. Please consider giving to continue Women of the ELCA into the next 100 years. [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) or call 800-638-3522.

## **Discipleship Committee**

The women at St. Paul in Lime Springs are getting ready to lead a once-a-month Community Free Soup Supper, January - March. It is open to our whole community. Last year it was very well attended and people enjoyed socializing in the middle of winter. What is your women's group doing during the long winter months?

The Board is excited for everyone to join us for our Mary and Martha retreat at EWALU Stone Center, Strawberry Point on Friday, Feb. 21, 4 pm and Saturday, Feb. 22 till 3pm. If you are unable to come on Friday please join us on Saturday for all the fun activities! There will be Bible study, hymn sing, games, time to work on your own craft projects or watch and learn a new one. On Saturday, Pastor Susan & Norman Friedrich will speak to us about the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) "Bridges of Hope." Registration is due Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>. The cost is \$35.00 for both days or \$15.00 for just Saturday.

*O God, your Son, Jesus Christ enjoyed rest and refreshment in the home of Mary and Martha of Bethany: Give us the will to love you, open our hearts to hear you, and strengthen our hands to serve you in others for his sake; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

*Submitted by Becky Paul*

Go to [Women of the ELCA - Northeastern Iowa Synod, ELCA](#) to get registration forms!



**Mary and Martha fun for all**  
Friday Feb 21 and Sat. Feb. 22, 2025

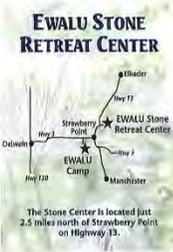
**YOU and your friends are invited to a retreat to Celebrate all the Marys and Marthas! This is a Celebration of YOU!**  
Who is welcome? Any woman who belongs to the ELCA and their friends.  
*A Woman, a Christian, a helper, a doer, a listener, a learner.*

Activities: bible board games, mixer game, puzzle, *bring your own crafting projects* (everything is welcome including: Quilling, bandage rolling, knit/crochet, etc)  
**Celebrating and learning and doing.**

**Friday Feb 21st** arrive anytime after 4pm  
join soup supper, hymn sing, game, puzzle and crafting time.  
Stay overnight and meals for \$35  
Beds, bedding, and towels included (Share a room)  
**What to bring:** comfortable clothes, craft projects opt, yourself with a joyful heart

**Saturday Feb. 22nd:** come for the day,  
breakfast/ coffee @ 8am; Noon meal,  
bible study, hymn sing, crafting time and lots of fellowship  
Afternoon speakers: Pastor Susan & Norman Friedrich from the National Alliance on Mental Illness "Bridges of Hope"

Welcome @ 9am, Day ends @ 3pm  
Day only rate for meals and building usage \$15  
**Registration deadline: Monday Feb 19th**



**EVALU STONE RETREAT CENTER**

EVALU Stone Center, 35124 Hwy 13, Strawberry Point, IA  
which is 2.5 miles north of Strawberry Point. Handicap accessible facility.

hosted by Your NE IA Women of the ELCA Synod Board and Katie's Fund  
Snow dates Feb. 28- March 1  
questions ? contact: Christine Schmitt [candcschmitt@gmail.com](mailto:candcschmitt@gmail.com)  
641-397-2572 or cell 641-220-5361

**Event plan:**

Friday night:  
4-6pm Coffee/ drinks/ mixer/ settling in/ visiting  
6-7pm meal: soup and sandwiches(devotional reading)  
7pm hymn sing followed by activities (bring your own projects, games, puzzles, coloring/crafts)

Saturday:  
8-9am: Coffee/ breakfast: egg bake, breakfast potatoes  
check-in for day people  
9am: Welcome, Hymn Sing  
9:30: Bible Study  
10am: Local project showcase "What do you do to help in your area?" discussion  
11am: project/crafting time and visiting, sharing and/or learning a new skill  
Noon meal: hot beef/hot turkey, mashed potatoes, green beans  
1pm: speakers: Pastor Susan & Norman Friedrich from the National Alliance on Mental Illness "Bridges of Hope"  
2pm share your crafts/projects  
2:30pm Hymn sing top 10 count down, send off

Bold Women's Day will be observed on Sunday, February 23. On this day we celebrate all Lutheran women who have acted or are acting boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. For more information on planning a celebration at your church, go to [Bold Women's Day - Women of the ELCA](#)

## CALENDAR

Feb 21-2	EWALU Winter Retreat
Feb 23	Bold Women's Sunday
Mar 22	SWO/ Cluster Meeting in Waverly
Apr 5	Cluster D Spring Gathering @ Highland Lutheran
Jun 14	M & M Sharing Party, TBD

## NEIA Women of the ELCA Executive Board

### Christine Schmitt, President

641-220-5361, [candcschmitt2@gmail.com](mailto:candcschmitt2@gmail.com)

### Alice Greimann, Vice President

641-456-2973, [algreimann@wbrec.com](mailto:algreimann@wbrec.com)

### Chris VanDeventer, Secretary

515-320-2877, [cdvandeven@gmail.com](mailto:cdvandeven@gmail.com)

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*Checks payable to NE IA SWO, include Form A*

### Good News, Editor Diane Wills

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1399 Beeds Lake Drive, Hampton IA 50441

### Contact Women of the ELCA:

<http://www.womenoftheelca.org/>  
773.380.2730 or 800.638.3522, ext. 2730

### 2026 Triennial Gathering in Des Moines:

[www.WELCA.org](http://www.WELCA.org)

### Contact NEIA Women of the ELCA:

[neiasynod.org/women-of-the\\_-ELCA-](http://neiasynod.org/women-of-the_-ELCA-)



NE IA Women of the ELCA- Check us out and give a like or post about your church's activities!