

## New 'C3' Ministry Fair to offer more than 20 workshops

by Marcia Hahn

All congregation members from the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to attend the synod's first "Creative Collaborative Congregations (C3)" Ministry Fair Saturday, June 1, at Wartburg College, Waverly.

This new event is an opportunity for lay people, pastors and deacons from across the synod to gather in fellowship, learn together, share ideas and get inspired with skills to strengthen their congregational ministries. This year's Ministry Fair replaces the Synod Assembly, which will take place every other year and will meet again June 7, 2025.

### SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The Ministry Fair will feature more than 20 workshops, along with round table discussions and displays to support congregations, staff members, council members, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and volunteers in their ministries and administrative activities. Parents and family members will find a number of workshops on faith in the home, keeping children safe, spiritual practices, and other family-focused topics.

Everyone will be able to attend two workshops in the morning beginning at 9 a.m. and two in the afternoon, concluding at 3:45 p.m. Check-in for the fair will begin at 8:30 a.m. The day will also include a devotional worship service, lunch



Bishop Kevin Jones and his tuba will be part of the live worship band planned for the C3 Ministry Fair worship service on June 1. Everyone who plays an instrument is invited to join the band, which will be directed by Pastor Dave Efflandt. Read more on page 6.



with round-table conversations and a service project to support area food pantries. (See page 2.) Everyone who plays an instrument is invited to join the worship band, which will perform at the worship service. (See page 6.)

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"I am very grateful for the network leaders, pastors and others who are stepping up to share their best practices and ideas on a variety of topics," Jones says. "These are talented people who have a lot of passion about ministry and want to share it with others."

## WORKSHOPS TO SUPPORT MINISTRY

Here is a look at some of the planned workshops and presenters:

### Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Calling a Pastor or Deacon

Pastor Steve Brackett, assistant to the Bishop, will explore what is leading to a longer call process time for congregations and will suggest strategies and resources to help bridge the gap between calls and shorten the length of a call process.

### Make Time for Strategic Ministry

Brittney Swanson, executive director of Lutheran Lakeside Camp at Spirit Lake, will share ideas to help congregations think strategically about their ministries, explore ways to build relationships with youth and adults in worship and outside of worship, and suggest ways to make worship an interactive place for people of all ages.

### Faith Formation & Volunteer Recruitment: Thinking Outside the Box

Deacon Jackie Schilling of St. John, Nashua, and Lisa Acton will share innovative approaches to faith formation and volunteer recruitment. They will look at current practices and introduce ways for congregations to stretch their imaginations and consider fresh alternatives. This session will inspire pastors, educators and lay leaders to think

## BRING BIRTHDAY CAKE KITS TO THE FAIR!

### SERVICE PROJECTS TO SUPPORT FOOD PANTRIES

The Hunger Network invites congregations to bring birthday cake kits and packages of sanitary products to be distributed to food pantry ministries in this synod.

The birthday cake kits contain items needed to celebrate a birthday or special day, including a cake mix, candles, canned frosting, a can of soda (to replace oil and eggs), and a birthday card in a foil cake pan. Additional items can also be added, such as paper plates, sprinkles and other cake decorations, streamers, and party hats.

People are also encouraged to bring a variety of sanitary products (tampons, pads, panty liners, etc.) in their original packages. The kits and supplies can be brought to the Neumann Auditorium lobby during the Ministry Fair.



Download the complete list and instructions at  
[www.neiasynod.org/ministry-fair](http://www.neiasynod.org/ministry-fair).



creatively and take practical steps toward revitalizing their faith community.

### The Dwelling: The Church That Started as Three Showers and a Trailer

Paula Letsche and Audra Cherry of Redeemer Lutheran, Waverly, will share about Redeemer's intergenerational mission trip to Winston-Salem, N.C., and The Dwelling, a congregation made up of people who are currently or formerly housing insecure and led by Pastor Emily (Harkins) Norris, a graduate of Wartburg College and Wartburg Theological Seminary. Congregations will learn how they can become part of this spirit and service learning experience, which

includes relationship building, learning about justice issues, storytelling and service.

### Reflecting on Your Congregation's Legacy

Pastor Dione Stepanek, Director for Evangelical Mission for the La Crosse Area Synod, will present options for congregations to consider if they ever need to make decisions about the ongoing viability of their ministry—such as closure down the road, a new partnership or other radical change. Thinking ahead can help congregations plan for an enduring Christ-focused legacy for the sake of future ministry.

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# Congregations are invited to connect in ministry

In the days following Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples, and many others who had put their hope in Jesus, could only focus on what was lost. Their leader, the one who had taught them and expressed confidence in them to continue his proclamation and healing ministry, had been shamefully executed on the cross. In their grief over his loss, Jesus' followers could only feel fear, shame, and guilt. So, they hid in the upper room where they had shared that last supper together.

When the resurrected Jesus appeared to them, one of the things he did was to remind them of God's continued presence and abundance in their midst. He met them in their grief, walking with them and breaking bread with them. He met them in their doubts, letting them touch him and feed him. He met them in their resignation, calling them from their nets once more and sending them out.

When we are losing things and it feels like the world is falling apart, it's important to remember that God is still present, abundantly blessing us, and calling us to a ministry of proclamation and healing.

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS & SHARE IDEAS

Creative Collaborative Congregations (C3) is designed to be a reminder of God's abundance in our midst. It's an opportunity to meet the resurrected Christ in the ministries of our neighboring congregations. It's an opportunity for leaders in Northeastern Iowa to share their passion, their knowledge, and what they are challenged by as they are sent by the living Christ into the world around us. It's a chance to network and make connections with others who are also hearing Christ call to them.

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"We need to have our eyes opened to the ways Christ is alive and among us. Creative Collaborative Congregations is one way that we are going to try to do that."

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Who should come to the C3? The person who wants to do ministry but feels unequipped. The person who wants their congregation to get involved in environmental ministry, day care ministry, lay ministry or some other ministry but can't find anyone else to join them. The person who wants to know how to get involved, where to start, or who to talk to for encouragement and support. The person who is just looking for the spark of an idea to ignite a bit more life in them and their community.

It is my prayer, and the work of my office, that we move beyond the competition between congregations for members, program participants and dollars. Instead, we need to recognize the gifts each congregation (and member) brings to the Synod and the whole Church. We need to have our eyes opened to the ways Christ is alive and among us. Creative Collaborative Congregations is one way that we are going to try to do that.

Are we ready to leave our "upper rooms" where Jesus comes to us and go out to meet the resurrected Jesus in the wider world? I believe we are. I believe we have to.

— *Bishop Kevin Jones*

## Learn about Land Acknowledgements

**APRIL 22, 2024**

Join Wartburg Theological Seminary for a one-hour Land Acknowledgement Workshop on Monday, April 22, at either 11:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m.

This free online event will share Wartburg's process for creating a

land acknowledgement for its campus and how congregations can move toward creating their own land acknowledgements to honor and recognize the Indigenous Peoples who were original stewards of their land. Bishop Kevin Jones will be among the presenters.



Those interested in attending should email the synod office at [pettita@ne-iasynod.org](mailto:pettita@ne-iasynod.org) to receive the Zoom link.

# Free Youth Ministry Webinars

The Northeastern Iowa Synod has entered into a partnership with Youth Ministry Consultants to offer free monthly webinars for those who work with youth in faith formation. All youth workers, clergy members, volunteers, parents and anyone from this synod who impacts kids and teens can access the live webinars by using the code **NEIA24** on the Youth Ministry Consultants website.

Youth Ministry Consultants is a nonprofit organization that offers coaching, consulting and training to help parents, leaders and churches be more effective and intentional in sharing Jesus to the next generation. According to Rebecca Jacobson, YMC director of training and strategy, the live webinars give people an opportunity to ask questions and interact with experts who they would not otherwise have access to. Many of the topics center on realities facing small churches, such as budget issues and lack of volunteers.

"The webinars share practical information that people can use to grow their ministry," Jacobson says.

Recent presentations have focused on small church ministry, caring for challenging kids, nurturing lasting faith, creating safe spaces for youth, and management strategies. Two webinars are planned for April—"Faith Beyond the Youth Group" on April 4 and "Partnering with Parents" on April 25.

A list of upcoming webinars and previous presentations is available on the Youth Ministry Consultants website.

"We hear from leaders with youth ministry programs that are hanging by a thread, and they tell us they feel encouraged," Jacobson says. "This information gives them the boost they need to try something new."

Read more at [www.neiasynod.org/ym-webinar](http://www.neiasynod.org/ym-webinar).



## Register by April 15 for Women in Ministry Retreat

**APRIL 28-30, 2024**

Women from Northeastern Iowa and surrounding synods who are rostered ministers or candidates for rostered ministry are invited to a Women in Ministry retreat April 28-30.

With a theme of "Journeying Together," the retreat will take place at Ewalu Stone Center, Strawberry Point, with opportunities for worship, artistic and meditative spiritual practices, and time for connection.

The retreat will begin at 5 p.m. Sunday with supper, and will end after breakfast on Tuesday. Meals will be included. Participants are welcome to bring breakfast and snack items for themselves or to share. A refrigerator, microwave and coffee maker will be available.

The registration fee with lodging will be \$200 for two nights or \$120 for one night. The fee is \$80 for those who want to attend without lodging.

Questions may be emailed to Pastor Kristen Rod, director for Evangelical Mission, or call 319-352-1414. Register online by April 15 and read more at [www.neiasynod.org/women-retreat](http://www.neiasynod.org/women-retreat).

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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. The *Star* can be downloaded at [www.neiasynod.org/blog/newsletter](http://www.neiasynod.org/blog/newsletter). To request a printed version, call the synod office.



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

# Plan-It Event for Youth Leaders

JUNE 6, 2024

The Northeastern Iowa Synod's Youth Ministry Cohort will host a "Plan-It" Event to help ministers and faith formation leaders develop a one-year calendar of events for their youth and family ministries.

Lyle Griener of Peer Ministry Leadership will lead this free planning event Thursday, June 6, 9:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Decorah Lutheran, Decorah.

This event is a guided planning and sharing experience for those responsible for faith formation ministries. Griener will offer planning tools, templates and a system to help participants plan out a year of themes and events that will involve nearly every youth in their congregations.

Youth leaders, faith formation directors, children's ministry directors, pastors, and volunteers are encouraged to attend. People should plan to bring their entire planning team, if possible, as well as laptops and a list



of important dates to plan around, such as community and school events. Everyone will have an opportunity to share ideas as part of the planning process.

## REGISTER BY JUNE 4

Cost is \$15, which includes lunch to be ordered in. Online registration is due by June 4. Questions about the Plan-It event can be emailed to Pastor Kristen Rod at [rodk@neiasynod.org](mailto:rodk@neiasynod.org) or call 319-352-1414. To learn more and to register online, visit [www.neiasynod.org/plan-it-2024](http://www.neiasynod.org/plan-it-2024).

# Renee Hardman named CEO for LSI

Renee Hardman has joined Lutheran Services in Iowa as its new president and chief executive officer.



Renee Hardman

Hardman has extensive background as a business professional, nonprofit executive and community leader, including serving her second term as a city councilwoman for the city of West Des Moines.

Hardman earned a bachelor's degree and master's in business administration from Drake University. She recently served Broadlawns Medical Center in Des Moines as chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer and vice president of human resources. She also served four years as chief executive officer of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Iowa and spent 19 years as senior vice president of human resources for Bankers Trust.

Read more at <https://lsiowa.org>.

## Register by April 5 for Day of Renewal

APRIL 9, 2024

Online registration for the Day of Renewal will be open through Friday, April 5.

The "unplugged" event is set for Tuesday, April 9, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., at Riverside Bible Camp, Story City. All actively serving and retired rostered ministers from this synod and those training to become rostered ministers are invited to attend.

The day will include roundtable discussions with Bishop Kevin Jones, worship, and lunch, along with time in the afternoon for people to join in conversations, prayer, crafts, and outdoor activities. Kayaks and canoes will be available to use free of charge for those interested.

Learn more and register at [www.neiasynod.org/day-of-renewal-2024](http://www.neiasynod.org/day-of-renewal-2024).

## MISSION SUPPORT

Congregations are reminded to submit their Mission Support Intent Forms for 2024. Completed forms should be submitted to Michelle Van Riper at [vanriper@neiasynod.org](mailto:vanriper@neiasynod.org) or by mail to Northeastern Iowa Synod, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804.

[www.neiasynod.org/download-category/congregations](http://www.neiasynod.org/download-category/congregations).

## Talking Out Loud About Addiction

This workshop will feature a panel presentation to introduce the synod's Substance Abuse Network, which offers resources and support for congregations to help those who are in recovery, supporting someone in recovery or coping with the effects of addiction on a family or friend. Panel members will discuss the need to talk openly about substance abuse and addiction, and provide information on how to respond to an opioid overdose.

## Dinner Church Ministry

What would you do if you could try anything? Pastor Sarah Nye of Cross Roads Lutheran Parish and her teenage child Karis Nye will share how Karis' answer to that question resulted in a sanctuary redesign, a new ministry after the closing of the congregation, and a rethinking of what church can be like. Learn about the new Dwelling in Faith Dinner Church and possibilities for it in other settings.

## Ukraine Trip & Moral Trauma

Pastor John Sheahan of Bergen Lutheran, Roland, will share about the mission trip he took in 2022 to train Ukrainians on how to deal with moral trauma and why he sees a need to continue to support "our brothers and sisters" of this war-torn country.

## LSI Immigrant & Refugee Community Services

Mike Knipp, director of Philanthropy and Church Relations for Lutheran Services in Iowa, will share about LSI's expansion of Immigrant and Refugee Community

## SIGN UP TO JOIN THE WORSHIP BAND!

Anyone who plays any type of musical instrument is invited to sign up to be part of the Ministry Fair's worship band!

Pastor Dave Efflandt, who serves St. Paul's Church & School in Waverly and has a music education degree, will lead the band in a performance at the 11:30 a.m. worship service. Band members will receive the sheet music ahead of time and will have an opportunity to rehearse prior to the worship service. Bishop Kevin Jones will bring his tuba, so others are encouraged to dig out their instruments and join the fun!

Efflandt says the music won't require much practicing ahead of time, so he encourages people of all abilities to join. "The music will be accessible to instrumentalists who have not done much playing recently but would still like to participate."

Those interested will need to sign up for the band when registering for the ministry fair.



Services in the Waterloo/Cedar Falls area and how congregations can support this service.

## Art as Spiritual Practice: A Hands-On, All-Ages Faith Practice

Participants can plan to quiet their minds and busy their hands to create art together with Pastor Kate Johnson, who serves Emanuel, Strawberry Point, and Bethany, Elkader. Johnson says that God speaks to people in these quiet spaces to offer encouragement, healing, discernment and a host of responses. She will bring mixed media art supplies for people to use and will walk them through the process of creating sacred space for this prayer practice.

## Dying Generously: Planned Giving as Part of Your Legacy

We have all been blessed by a loving

and generous God, so how do we respond to the generosity shown to us? By returning to God that which belongs to God. Mike Klinefelter, regional gift planner for the ELCA Foundation, will lead a conversation about how people can give by using their assets, primarily at the end of their life, so that their generosity ensures the continuation of God's work in the world for years to come.

## What Is a Mutual Ministry Committee and Why Do We Need One?

In the Model Constitution for Congregations, the ELCA calls for each congregation to have a Mutual Ministry Committee (C13.04). Pastor Steve Brackett will present reasons why a Mutual Ministry Committee is a good idea and share best practices for the composition and function of the committee to

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support pastors, deacons and the people and ministries they serve.

### **Rocks and Roots: The Outdoors as Spiritual Playground**

Have you ever experienced the Word of God come to life in the outdoors? Explore the intersection of the great outdoors and the Christian faith with Frank Johnson, executive director of Camp Ewalu, who will draw on years of experience as a long-distance hiker, angler, adventure racer, pastor and camp director to pursue what it is about the outdoors and Lutheran camps that forges deep spiritual connections.

### **Tips & Tricks for Church Communications: Making the Most of Your Emails, Website & Social Media**

Congregation staff and volunteers put a lot of time and energy into church events and programs, so it's vital to make sure people know about these events and opportunities. Steph Boeding, Ewalu director of marketing and communications, will share about resources to pump up church communications, suggest ways to make the church website and social media be the most welcoming "front door" they can be, and offer tips to make all this work do double-duty to make sure people are actually receiving your message.

### **A Look at Campus Ministry**

Coffee, cookies, conversations and ... charcuterie? Find out how that relates to campus ministry through a conversation with Robin Kime and the Rev. David Glenn-Burns from ThreeHouse Collaborative Campus Ministries in Cedar Falls. Learn about some of the students

they meet, trends in spiritual life they see at a public university, and the impact they believe campus ministry has on the future of the church.

### **WORSHIP OFFERING**

The worship offering will go to the Synod Companion—Hungary Fund to support ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary. The synod's Global Mission Network is organizing a companion synod trip to Hungary later in June, led by Bishop Kevin Jones. The group will present the gift from this synod to Bishop Tamás Fabiny when they meet with him in Budapest.

Read more about the Hungary trip at [www.neiasynod.org/hungary-trip](http://www.neiasynod.org/hungary-trip).

### **REGISTER ONLINE**

The cost to attend the Ministry Fair is \$50 per person, which includes access to workshops, box lunch and welcome packet. Online registration is due by Friday, May 24.

"I'm excited about how this event is developing and would love to see church staff, education volunteers, and people who are interested in trying new ideas in their congregations come check it out," Jones says. "I believe they will come away with a sense that they're not alone, that there are others in the synod experiencing the same things they are and we can share with each other what we're learning."

Register online and find updates at [www.neiasynod.org/ministry-fair](http://www.neiasynod.org/ministry-fair).

## **HUNGER MINISTRY GRANTS AWARDED**

A total of \$7,750 has been awarded to 16 hunger ministries in the Northeastern Iowa Synod through the Ride Against Hunger Ministry Grant. The grants are from donations to the "Iowa Bishops Ride Against Hunger" in the 2023 RAGBBRAI.

Here are the newest ministries to receive grants since January 2024:

#### **HOLY TRINITY, DUBUQUE**

\$750 for a new freezer for the new "Meals to Go" feeding program

#### **ST. JOHN, LUANA**

\$750 for a new Afterschool Program with meals

#### **ST. JOHN, FARMERSBURG**

\$750 for a new Christmas day catered meal for 200-250 people

#### **ST. JOHN, GUTTENBERG**

\$500 for supplemental food for the community food pantry

#### **MEALS ON WHEELS, POSTVILLE**

\$500 for St. Paul's partnership with local restaurant Jalapeno's to provide meals

#### **HIS HANDS FOOD PANTRY, ORAN**

\$500 for purchase of a new freezer

#### **DOWS COMMUNITY MONTHLY MEALS**

\$500 to provide meals to approximately 60 people/week with other partners

#### **LORD OF LIFE, ASBURY**

\$250 for Little Food Pantry supplies

Grant applications are reviewed monthly. To learn more and to apply for a Hunger Ministry Grant, visit [www.neiasynod.org/hunger-ministry-grant](http://www.neiasynod.org/hunger-ministry-grant).

# ELCA Youth Gathering Updates

by Alison Pettit, Gathering Synod Champion

Some 436 participants from more than 30 Northeastern Iowa Synod congregations are now registered to attend the Youth Gathering July 16-20 in New Orleans. As the date gets closer, new policies and recommendations continue to be announced. Here is a look at some of the latest updates.



## 2024 GATHERING VENUE POLICIES

The following policies will be in effect at the Smoothie King Center and Convention Center.

- 1. Cashless Venue**—The Smoothie King Center and Convention Center are cashless. Please be prepared to use a credit or debit card when purchasing food at concessions at either of these venues.
- 2. Clear Bottles**—Water bottles should be clear and/or translucent. No metal/aluminum or glass water bottles will be permitted.
- 3. Clear Bags**—Participants will be able to carry the following style and size bag, package or container at the convention center, stadium plaza areas, stadium gates, or when approaching queue lines awaiting entry into the stadium:
  - Bags that are clear plastic, vinyl, or PVC and do not exceed 12" x 6" x 12".
  - No buckles, grommets/hardware, or décor can be concealing any part of the bag.
  - One-gallon clear plastic freezer bag. Logo can only be on one side of the bag.
  - Small, non-clear bags that do not exceed 4.5" x 6.5" in size, with or without a handle or strap, can be taken into venues with one of the clear plastic bags.

## COLLECT COOLING TOWELS FOR IN-KIND OFFERING

In the aftermath of a storm, hurricane or tornado, New Orleans residents regularly find themselves without electricity. This quickly becomes a health crisis as people try to manage life in the hot, humid Gulf Coast summers.

## GETTING READY EVENT

MAY 5, 2024

All youth and youth leaders from this synod who are registered for the ELCA Youth Gathering should plan to attend the Getting Ready event set for Sunday, May 5, at Wartburg College.

Check-in will begin at 1:30 p.m. at the McCaskey Lyceum, located in the Saemann Student Center. Programming is from 2 – 5 p.m. and will include games, discussion led by Chaplain Maggie Falenschek on how to process unfamiliar topics or situations, and Bible time with Bishop Kevin Jones using Unit 5 of the Getting Ready materials.

Everyone planning to attend the Gathering is highly encouraged to attend this informational meeting. There is no charge to attend. Leaders can RSVP for their groups at [www.neiasynod.org/gathering-24](http://www.neiasynod.org/gathering-24).

City leaders and community organizers identified the eight most-requested items to help residents as they wait for the power grid to be restored. A goal for the Gathering is to create 3,000 disaster relief kits filled with these items to help New Orleanians get through the days immediately following a natural disaster.

It takes about \$100 to complete an entire disaster relief kit. Synods are encouraged to collect items assigned to their regions to contribute to the disaster relief kits. As part of Region 5, the Northeastern Iowa Synod youth groups are asked to collect cooling towels for the kits or raise funds to complete an entire kit.

Starting in April, people will be able to order cooling towels directly through an Amazon Wishlist with items being delivered directly to New Orleans. Now we need your help to make sure families and neighborhoods are prepared for the next disaster.

Find more updates at [www.neiasynod.org/gathering-24](http://www.neiasynod.org/gathering-24) and at [www.elca.org/gathering](http://www.elca.org/gathering).

## Good Shepherd, Decorah wins national energy saver award

Congratulations to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Decorah for winning the energy saver category of Interfaith Power & Light's 2024 Cool Congregations Challenge!

IPL awarded congregation winners in six categories and 16 runner-ups for their work in responding to climate change by reducing their carbon footprint. Good Shepherd received the \$1,000 Energy Saver Award for eliminating the use of fossil fuels in heating, cooling, lighting, and powering their buildings. They have converted their building to all-electric with heat pumps to heat and cool their buildings, powered entirely by solar on their property, preventing 25 tons of carbon emissions annually.

The Cool Congregations Challenge, is an annual national contest to recognize "Cool Congregations" that are becoming energy efficient and sustainable role models within their

communities. The contest is available through Interfaith Power & Light, a nonprofit organization inspiring and mobilizing people of faith and conscience to take bold and just action on climate.

Learn more at [www.neiasynod.org/care-for-creation](http://www.neiasynod.org/care-for-creation).



A solar pergola is part of the energy saving additions at Good Shepherd, Decorah.

## OBITUARIES

**The Rev. Dr. William ("Bill") Paul Thalacker** died Jan. 31, 2024, at the age of 89. He was ordained May 28, 1961. He graduated from Wartburg College, Waverly, and Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque. He also earned a master's degree in religion from the University of Iowa and a Doctor of Ministry from Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul.

He served as pastor for Bethany, West Branch; Ridgeway Parish (Peace, Madison, Orleans); Trinity, Hawkeye; Trinity, Waterloo; and St. John's Bennington, Dunkerton. He retired March 1, 2000. The funeral service will be April 20 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Waverly.

Rev. Thalacker is survived by his wife, Marilyn, five children, 14 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. The full obituary is available at [www.kaisercorson.com](http://www.kaisercorson.com).

**The Rev. Harold McMillin, Jr**, died March 2, 2024, at the age of 78. He was ordained on June 10, 1973. He graduated from Wartburg College and Wartburg Theological Seminary. He served as pastor at St. John's Crane Creek, Tripoli; First, Dows and Vernon, Williams; Emmanuel, Fontanelle; Elgin, Elgin and Highland, Elkader; and St. John's, Guttenberg. After his first retirement in 2011, he served St. John, Luana and St. John, Farmersburg. He retired again in 2019 and was most recently serving as contract interim pastor for St. Peter, Garnavillo and Peace, Clayton.

Rev. McMillin's funeral took place March 9 at St. John's, Guttenberg. He is survived by his wife, Linda, two children, two stepchildren, and six grandchildren. Harold's full obituary is available at [www.graufuneralhomes.com/2024/03/15910](http://www.graufuneralhomes.com/2024/03/15910).

# World Hunger Gathering aims for accessible food for all

by Deborah Tidwell, St. John Lutheran, Farmersburg

The ELCA held their World Hunger Leadership Gathering Feb. 1-4 in Houston, Texas, and I had the opportunity to attend representing the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

This was my first time at such an event, where Lutherans from across the country came together to learn about effective programs addressing hunger, attend workshops, participate in discussion groups, engage in networking, and spend time collaborating with colleagues from their ELCA region. At first, I really didn't know what to expect, but what I found was a group of amazing people driven by their vision for making food accessible for all. They had a strong sense of camaraderie and were open and friendly, making it very easy for me as a newcomer to participate.

While there isn't space to share all the insights I gained from this World Hunger gathering, I would like to highlight experiences that had a real impact on my thinking. One was a workshop on grant writing for hunger, and the second was a session on advocacy for hunger.

In the workshop on developing grants, an experienced grant writer provided us with a survey of needs in world hunger (global and local) as well as a list of potential funding sources. She also provided insights on what makes a grant proposal effective, then shared examples of previously submitted proposals that were funded. From small local grants to larger international funding proposals, we all walked away from this experience thinking how we could move forward in developing proposals for our own area and state.

## ADVOCATE BY THINKING SMALL

My second insight came from a presentation on the concept of advocacy, which has always been a struggle for me in understanding where to start. The idea of becoming an advocate for world hunger often seemed overwhelming. What I learned changed my thinking about the nature of advocacy within my own life.

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*"By finding that niche of interest, it enables us to step in, support and make a difference in the needs of the people around us."*

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They explained that as the community of Christ, ELCA is informed by the World Hunger program around economic issues and economic justice. What is it that causes hunger? The session raised the issues of high housing prices, healthcare costs, and quality food costs. If people don't have wages that pay enough, they are unable to afford their own safe place to live, health care to stay well, or decent food to nourish their bodies. Advocating for world hunger issues is the church's call to seek justice that has many facets and complexities. In this advocacy roll, we aren't asking anything for ourselves—we are asking for our neighbors.

In terms of advocacy, when people say they don't know where to start, it means they haven't really found their one thing yet. That thing is that piece of the puzzle which speaks to them. It was suggested in this advocacy ses-



sion that to think about advocacy is to think about what seems important and compelling—it can be worldwide, nationwide, statewide or local. What is it that needs changing or improving? They pointed out that when the focus is on a particular issue that can make a difference—the smaller it gets, the fewer people are required to make a difference.

This really helped me to answer some of my own questions about advocacy: Where do I begin? How do I start? What is enough to help? What I learned was that the smaller you start, the more influence you can have faster—one's enthusiasm can come from a genuine place.

I now see advocacy as a process of thoughtful selection, taking an issue one step at a time. To start one's own advocacy focus begins with brainstorming those pieces about hunger that one finds important. Focus on just one of those pieces and break it down into key elements or parts. Then, take one of those parts as the focus for advocacy. This helped me to see how we can pursue our passions to support and help with hunger issues in a realistic, yet meaningful way. By finding that niche of interest, it enables us to step in, support and make a difference in the needs of the people around us. It helps us to see the world through our lens of faith and to continue through our advocacy to live the life that Jesus reminds us to be.

## APRIL

**4 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY COLLEAGUE GROUP,** Zoom, 9:30 a.m.

**9 DAY OF RENEWAL,** Riverside Camp, Story City, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

**18 YOUTH MINISTRY COHORT,** First, Decorah, 10 a.m.

**22 LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WORKSHOP,** Zoom, 11:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

**23 SUBSTANCE ABUSE NETWORK,** Synod Office, 3 p.m.

**28-30 WOMEN IN MINISTRY RETREAT,** Ewalu, Strawberry Point

## MAY

**2 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY COLLEAGUE GROUP,** Zoom, 9:30 a.m.

**2-4 FIRST CALL SPRING RETREAT,** Bethesda Lutheran, Ames

**3 CANDIDACY COMMITTEE,** Synod Office

**4 SWO BOARD MEETING,** Synod Office, 9 a.m.-12 noon

**5 PRE-GATHERING GETTING READY EVENT,** Wartburg College, Waverly, 1:30-5 p.m.

**16 DEANS & CHAPLAINS MEETING,** Synod Office, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

**16 YOUTH MINISTRY COHORT,** Trinity, Mason City, 10 a.m.

**27 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED,** Memorial Day

## JUNE

**1 C3 MINISTRY FAIR,** Wartburg College, Waverly, 9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.

**3 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**

**6 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY COLLEAGUE GROUP,** Synod Office, 10 a.m.

**6 YOUTH MINISTRY PLAN-IT EVENT,** Decorah Lutheran, Decorah, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

**15 SWO CONVENTION,** Redeemer, Waverly 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

**19 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED,** Juneteenth Observance

**21-28 SYNOD TRIP TO HUNGARY**

## JULY

**4 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED,** Independence Day

**11 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY COLLEAGUE GROUP,** Zoom, 9:30 a.m.

**16-20 ELCA YOUTH GATHERING,** New Orleans

## INSTALLING

- **Rev. Nichole Robson,** St. Peter, Dubuque

## INTERVIEWING

- **Asbury,** Lord of Life, Rev. Karla Wildberger, interim
- **Decorah,** Big Canoe & Highland, Rev. Waldemar Gies, contract interim
- **Decorah,** Decorah, staff
- **Dows, First, Rev. Anita Nuetzman,** interim\*
- **Dysart,** Zion
- **Eldorado, St. Peter\***
- **Garnavillo,** St. Peter & Clayton, Peace
- **Greene,** St. Peter
- **Hampton,** St. Paul, Rev. Nikoli Falenschek, interim
- **Janesville, Messiah\***
- **Jesup,** American & La Porte City, Zion (Jubilee)
- **Lake Mills,** Salem
- **Leland, Our Savior & Garner, Faith (Miller)\***
- **Mason City,** Trinity, staff
- **Maynard,** St. Paul, Rev. Susan Friedrich, interim
- **Rockwell,** St. Peter
- **Toeterville,** St. Peter & Carpenter, Deer Creek
- **Thornton, St. Paul\***
- **Waterloo, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd\***

- **Waterloo, Our Savior's, Pastor Lisa Kruse, contract\***
- **Waverly,** St. Paul's, staff

## SELF-STUDY

- **Decorah,** Good Shepherd, Rev. David Wrightsman, interim
- **Decorah, St. John's & Hauge\***
- **Elgin, Elgin & Elkader, Highland, Rev. Adam Starrett, interim\***
- **Hawkeye, Trinity\***
- **Independence,** Immanuel
- **Osage,** Our Savior's
- **Ossian,** Ossian
- **Washburn, Redeemer\***
- **Waterloo, Trinity\***

## ROSTER CHANGES

- **Rev. Edintzon Y. Santos Barrera,** transferred from Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
- **Rev. Charis Combs-Lay,** retired
- **Rev. David Wrightsman,** transferred from St. Paul Area Synod
- **Rev. William Thalacker,** deceased
- **Rev. Harold McMillin,** deceased

\*Part-time Call

## LOOKING AHEAD— Mark these Dates!

SEPT. 8, 2024 –  
"God's Work. Our hands." ELCA  
Service Day

OCT. 13-15, 2024 –  
Fall Theological Conference  
BienVenu/Holiday Inn, Cedar Falls

NOV. 7, 2024 –  
Boundaries Training for Rostered  
Ministers

A coordinated day of boundaries  
education at satellite locations  
across the synod for all ministers.

JUNE 7, 2025 –  
Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly  
BienVenu/Holiday Inn, Cedar Falls

# PRAYER CALENDAR

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

## APRIL 1-6, 2024

- **H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders**
- Rev. Steven M. Jacobsen
- Rev. Allen L. Bidne
- Janice D. Schumacher
- Ingham/Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milford
- Luther Manor Retirement Community, Dubuque
- Lutheran Lakeside Camp Association, Spirit Lake

## APRIL 7-13, 2024

- Martha G. Deines
- Rev. Reed Pedersen
- Rev. Amy Strydom
- Rev. Daniel W. Gerriettes
- Rev. Marion Pruitt-Jefferson
- Lutheran Retirement Home, Inc., Northwood
- Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago
- Lutheran Services in America, Washington, DC

## APRIL 14-20, 2024

- **Middle East Peace**
- Rev. James Gardner
- Jane Hoppenworth
- Rev. Grant J. Woodley
- Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnston Largent
- Rev. Jerome G. Godson
- Lutheran Services in Iowa, Des Moines
- Luther College Congregation, Decorah
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Decorah

## APRIL 21-27, 2024

- Judy Wogsland Foreman
- Rev. Jane S. Keel
- Rev. Ernest Elzey
- Rev. Henrik Engebretson
- Rev. Scott R. Duffus
- St. John Lutheran Church (Maxfield), Denver
- St. Peter Lutheran Church, Denver
- First Lutheran Church, Dows

## APRIL 28-MAY 4, 2024

- **H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders**
- Rev. Kristi V. H. Grieder, Waterloo
- Rev. Matthew Agee, Dubuque
- Rev. Paul J. Fohs
- Rev. Randall V. Baldwin
- Rev. David Burling
- Janice M. Kraabel
- Rev. Mark A. Oehlert
- Rev. Michael D. Wilker
- St. John's Lutheran Church, Dubuque
- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Dubuque
- Lutheran World Relief, Baltimore

## MAY 5-11, 2024

- Eileen Delk
- Rev. James M. Magelssen
- Portico Benefits Services, Minneapolis
- Region 5, Cambridge, Wis.
- Rev. Dale A. Halverson
- St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Dubuque
- Deacon Marianne J. Beck
- St. Peter Lutheran Church, Dubuque

## MAY 12-18, 2024

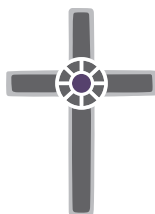
- **Middle East Peace**
- Rev. Kevin G. Frey
- Rev. Timothy D. Malek
- St. John Lutheran Church, Dundee
- Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Dysart
- St. Peter Lutheran Church, Eldorado
- Elgin Lutheran Church, Elgin
- Highland Lutheran Church, Elgin

## MAY 19-25, 2024

- Rev. Matthew W. G. Rossler
- Rev. Laura Gentry
- Rev. Nicole L. Woodley
- Rev. Gary L. Johnson
- Leota Lenning
- Zion Lutheran Church (Clayton Center), Elkader
- Bethany Lutheran Church, Elkader
- Hope Lutheran Church (Littleport), Elkader

## MAY 26-31, 2024

- Rev. Russell G. Leeper
- Rev. Elizabeth Retz
- Rev. John P. Sheahan
- St. Paul Lutheran Church (Maple Leaf), Elma
- St. John Lutheran Church, Farmersburg
- St. John Lutheran Church, Frederika
- St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Garnavillo
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Peace (Clayton), Garnavillo





# Good News

Mar/ Apr  
2024

*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.*

## **Rejoice and Renew Recap**

Rejoice & Renew was the theme for the Women's retreat that took place on Feb 23-24 at the Stone Center EWALU just north of Strawberry Point. It was a great opportunity to connect with other people in Northeast Iowa. Lots of eating, laughing, playing games, coloring, talking, learning and sharing. There were short devotions and Bible study about spreading the word. Did you know that the average Lutheran shares their faith every 67 years?

We also learned about Global Health Ministries and rolled bandages for them. GHM was started in the 60's by Lutheran health workers. They realized the overseas rural hospitals needed help with supplies. They started GHM in their garage, expanded to a storage unit and now have a warehouse in the Twin Cities. They help the medical facilities (most are Lutheran hospitals and clinics) who request items. Items can be anything from x ray machines, ultrasound, to scissors and medicine. Last year they sent cargo containers full of medical supplies to countries in Africa, India and Central America. Many of these clinics serve 10,000 people. Most are large areas with small villages. It is the little things that make the most difference. The rolled bandages that we make out of old sheets are used to tie IVs in place or to hold dressings on wounds. They also have things you can make for newborns, baby hats, quilts. They also have a suitcase ministry. You can donate old suitcases and they use them when they go to different countries to take medical supplies to the clinics they visit. They are packed and then left, so they always need more suitcases. We had 22 women gathered and they rolled enough bandages to fill a suitcase. Many sheets were ripped into strips and 7 bandage rollers were cranking.

Like to help and learn more? Our next gathering is June 15th at Redeemer Lutheran in Waverly.

*Submitted by Christine Schmitt*

## **Stewardship Committee**

When I think of stewardship, it makes me think of things I did with my mom when I was growing up. I remember we would bring a hot dish to a family that had lost a loved one or had surgery or was ill. Sometimes we would visit someone in the nursing home and at Christmas we would go Christmas caroling. Whenever there was a fund raiser in church, we would prepare a food item to help

raise money for Luther League or other related church projects. These memories are still very fresh in my mind and helped me learn how to help others. This stewardship and hospitality continue today in my adult life. Continuing these traditions is vital and gives us better insight into the current needs of others. In our church, Burr Oak Lutheran, we have a "Be Jesusy" event for all our church members to participate in. One event was to invite someone to attend a Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Worship. We also prepared and sent care packages to our Military in our church and the SS children made cards to be included with the care packages. We also made sack lunches and brought them to the farmers in the fields to tell them "Thank you." Just recently our church had a potluck and then put together birthday kits to be distributed to our local food bank. These kits included a cake pan, cake mix, cake frosting, birthday candles and birthday supplies. We all can benefit from the opportunities for stewardship and service. This is Graceful living. We have a common vision as women of faith to seek renewal and transformation, not just for ourselves but for the greater community. 1 Peter 4:10, *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

*Submitted by Darlene Emory*

## **Discipleship Committee**

Going back to Biblical times, you may recall that a disciple was someone who studied under a valued teacher. Christians today view it as a follower of Jesus the Christ, who guides and leads us by his example. Jesus says, *"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

I was taught this years ago: A disciple is someone who, by God's grace is learning to:

**+Be With Jesus** – to know and walk with Him in all of your life.

**+Become like Jesus** – choose to be more Christ-like in our character.

**+Live like Jesus** – how would Jesus handle this situation.

Let's continue in your journey "learning by God's grace."

*Submitted by Jo Ann Brunsvold*

## **Fall LWR Totals**

November 4, 2023 was the LWR - Fall - In - Gathering Day at Olson's Explosives in Decorah We received donations from Clusters D, B, & I. We also received donations from Trinity Lutheran and Blackhamer Faith; Old West Paint Creek and Old East Paint Creek, Norway, and St. Peter. Thank you to the workers from First in Cresco & St. Paul in Postville. 941 boxes were loaded into the truck filled with 1805 quilts, 571 personal care kits, 1811 school kits, 615 baby kits, 53 fabric kits and 33 blankets. We CAN make a difference...We DO make a difference.

*Submitted by Carol Maki & Sue Darling*

## **Justice Committee**

"The Biblical role of women is to live in such a way that glorifies God – to obey the teachings of Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, to trust the Lord as Provider and Protector, and to follow Christ." (Paul Maxwell. Thithe.ly.com). This Biblical role fell on the shoulders of so many women in the Bible – Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Ruth, Hannah, Rachel, Deborah, Esther, Elizabeth, to name a few. Their situations were difficult. Women who were childless until late in their lives, who lost husbands and status and who worked so hard to care for and save others.

All these women were stretched seemingly beyond limits, yet they persevered, they gave, they survived, and they continued to care and show justice for others. Proverbs 31 tells us, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." This fear is a sense of "wonder" that comes as a result of Christian love and respect for God. A willingness to obey God. And just like those women in the Bible, our "fear" of the Lord finds us caring for our neighbors, making blankets and quilts, rolling bandages, shelving in the food pantry, taking a casserole to a grieving family, and sincerely saying the words, "How can I help you." Just let that "fear", the sense of wonder and respect for God, take over in your life.

*Submitted by Donna Busch*

## **Cluster Gatherings**

❖ April 13 Living Water Cluster G Spring Salad Luncheon @ Our Savior's, Mason City, 8:30 am to noon. Speaker will be Nancy Jewell from Freedom Inn His Grace Ministry. RSVP to Nancy Nielsen, 641-420-6562 by April 10.

❖ April 27 Little Flock Cluster B Spring Fling @ St. John's - Luana 9a-1p. Themed program starts with 2 Corinthians 5:17, with guest speaker Director Jim Langhus, of the Monona Butterfly Garden & Trail. Please RSVP by April 17 to Betty Handke : [handbett@neitel.net](mailto:handbett@neitel.net), or call the St. John's church at 563-539-2321, [stjohnsph@alpinecom.net](mailto:stjohnsph@alpinecom.net)

## **CALENDAR**

Apr 13	Cluster G Gathering @ Our Savior's, Mason City
Apr 27	Cluster B Gathering @ St John, Luana
May 1	Deadline for May/ June <i>Good News</i>
May 4	SWO Board @ Synod Office LWR Ingathering, Decorah
Jun 14	SWO Board @ Redeemer, Waverly
Jun 15	SWO 36 <sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering @ Redeemer, Waverly
July 1	Deadline for July/ Aug <i>Good News</i>

## **NEIA Women of the ELCA Executive Board**

### **Sondra Nelson, President**

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### **Alice Greimann, Vice President**

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### **JoAnn Brunsvold, Secretary**

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### **Nancy Poppe, Treasurer**

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

### ***Good News*, Editor Diane Wills**

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### **Contact Women of the ELCA:**

<http://www.womenoftheelca.org/>

773.380.2730 or 800.638.3522, ext. 2730

### **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!

# Living Faith @



According to the calendar, we are in the season of Spring. We've changed our clocks to Daylight Savings Time and the robins are bouncing around outside ... today in the snow. Some areas got bunches of snow which makes me wonder whether the flowers will recuperate. Blooms of tulips, daffodils, and other lovely spring flowers had begun their growing process. March is the month of windy conditions and we have felt those all month - even on warmer days, it seemed cool outside because of the winds! As we make our way through the month, through the season of Lent, and into Holy Week, we begin with Palm Sunday (and a forecast of snow, wind, and rain). Children will have the joy of waving palms ... yes, adults also participate, but they don't seem to have as much fun as the children. This time of transition from Lent, into Holy Week, & culminating with Easter morning sunrise worship ... Wow! It's spectacular!!

I hope you all have a chance to attend a service that day - maybe not at sunrise but sometime.

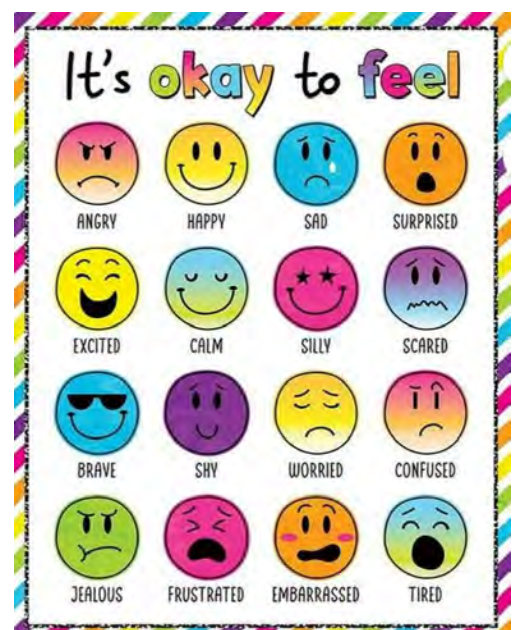
All the days to follow Easter in April will hopefully bring us rain - much needed rain. I thought you might need a few artsy/craftsy ideas to keep your children entertained, so I've included those in this issue ... along with a little information about the covenants we covered during Lent.

Happy Easter to you all!!

Rev. Sue Cira

*Do you find yourself or someone around you struggling with an emotion? You just can't describe it - you only know how you feel ... perhaps this chart will help you figure it out.*

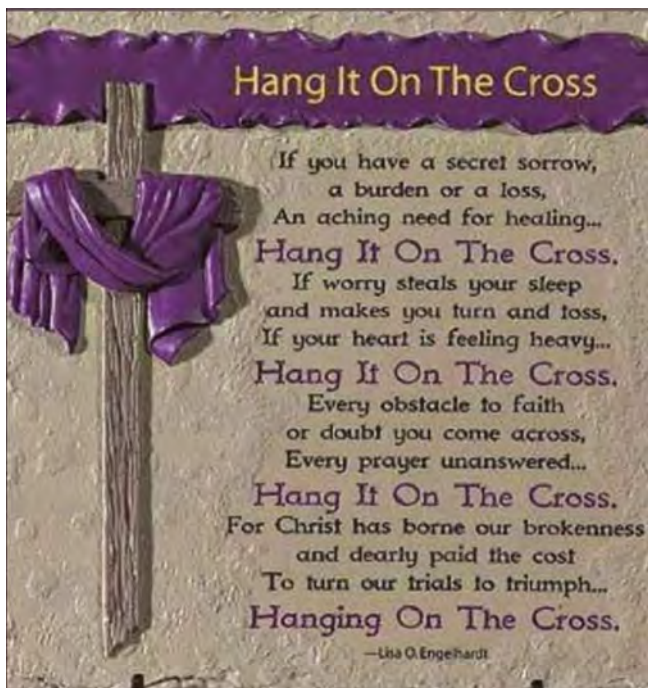
*Remember it's okay to not be okay - some days are just harder than others!!*



This information is prepared for you by the **Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network** for use by families and local congregations. Like our page on Facebook and our posted resources will appear in your newsfeed. Our page is [Northeastern Iowa Synod Home Life Network ELCA](#)



Find us on  
**Facebook**

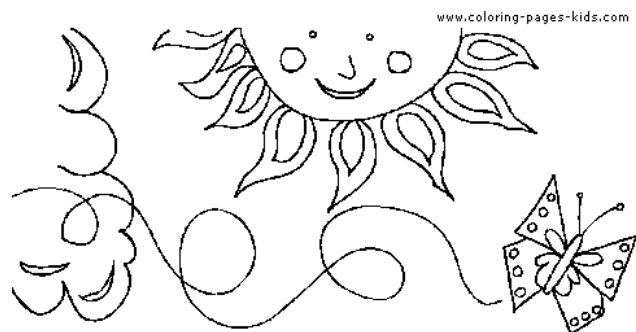


God's promises in our readings during Lent came through something tangible: Noah building an ark and God's promise never again to use floods to destroy the world.

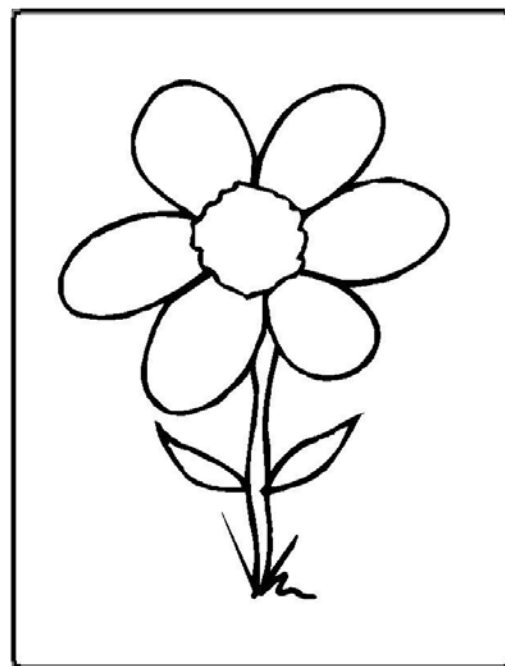
Yes, that rainbow ... that even small children can recognize! What a beautiful



physical sign. The faith of Noah in God's promise of salvation was so strong that he moved to action. What floods are you facing, and how is God calling you to live out your faith ... having faith in God's promise that the waters will not overwhelm you?



Here are a couple pictures for you or your kiddos to color ——— enjoy!!



# Take the Cake!

## to the C3 Ministry Fair June 1

The Northeastern Iowa Synod invites congregations to bring Birthday Cake Kits and personal care products to the Synod's C3 Ministry Fair on June 1 to share with food pantries in Northeastern Iowa.

### Make a Birthday Cake Kit

Birthday Cake Kits contain items to help families in need celebrate a loved ones' birthday!

#### ESSENTIAL ITEMS:

- Box cake mix (not angel food)
- Can of Sprite or other flavored pop
- Canned frosting
- Sprinkles
- Birthday candles
- Rectangular foil pan (with lid or cover with plastic wrap)
- Baking instructions (see box)

#### OPTIONAL ITEMS:

- Birthday Card
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Plastic silverware
- Streamers, decorations



#### KIT ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Assemble all items in the pan.
- Cover with lid or plastic wrap.
- Bring kits to the Ministry Fair June 1 at Wartburg College, Waverly.

#### BAKING INSTRUCTIONS:

Happy Birthday!  
To make cake without eggs,  
oil and water, mix 1 can  
of pop with the cake mix.  
Bake according to directions  
on the box. Enjoy!

### BRING SANITARY PRODUCTS!

We invite congregations and individuals to bring a variety of **sanitary products** (tampons, pads, panty liners, etc.) in their original packaging to the Ministry Fair so they can be distributed to area food pantries.

### SEE YOU AT THE FAIR!

**SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2024**  
**Wartburg College, Waverly**  
**9 a.m.-3:45 p.m.**

Gather in fellowship!  
Learn at workshops!  
Share ideas & get inspired!

Register by May 24 at  
[www.neiasynod.org/ministry-fair](http://www.neiasynod.org/ministry-fair)  
or call 319-352-1414 with questions.



Northeastern Iowa Synod  
Ministry Fair

Bring Birthday Cake Kits and sanitary products to Neumann Auditorium at Wartburg College, Waverly, June 1, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.