

Iowans celebrate with Lutheran companions in Namibia

by Marcia Hahn

Lutheran pastors and bishops came from around the globe to witness the installation of two Lutheran bishops in Namibia on Feb. 16. Among them were three pastors from the Northeastern Iowa Synod who attended the historic celebration as part of a delegation representing the ELCA.

Pastor Margaret Yackel-Juleen, Pastor Dena Gable and Pastor Mike Wilker, all members of the synod's Global Church Together Network, joined nine others from the Southwestern Washington Synod, New Jersey Synod and Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod to represent the ELCA at the installation. All four synods have companion synod relationships with the three Lutheran church bodies of Namibia.



Pastors Mike Wilker, Dena Gable and Margaret Yackel-Juleen meet with faculty and staff during their visit to the Paulinum United Lutheran Theological Seminary in Namibia.

AN EXUBERANT CELEBRATION

Some 1,200 people attended the six-hour consecration event where the Rev. Dr. Gideon Niitenge was installed as presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and bishop for the Western Diocese, and the Rev. Hilja Nghaangulwa was installed as bishop for the Eastern Diocese of the ELCIN. Nghaangulwa is the first woman to serve as a diocesan bishop in Namibia, and only the second female bishop in Africa.

The event took place in a large tent at the Ongwediva ELCIN Center in northern Namibia and included a

colorful processional of hundreds of pastors, three hours for the installation and worship, hymn singing in four-part harmonies, and a couple hours of speeches from bishops attending from the U.S., South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Finland. A choral concert the evening before kicked off the celebrations with a thousand people attending.

"Everyone cheered and clapped with a lot of ululation," says Wilker, who serves First, Decorah.

Yackel-Juleen, who serves One in Faith Parish in Strawberry Point, Elkader, Volga and Arlington, says she was amazed by how spirit-filled their worship was.

"There was joyfulness everywhere," she says. "They are not afraid to get

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up and dance and clap their hands.”

Gable says that a highlight for her was the opportunity to meet other people from the global church who were also attending.

“It was really an honor to be invited to this installation and attend this historic event,” Gable says.

GREETINGS FROM IOWA

Much of the 10-day trip centered on meetings and deep conversations with the Namibian church leaders and staff to learn about their ministries, their challenges, and their plans for the future.

The ELCA delegation hosted a reception for area bishops, pastors and deacons who had attended an ELCA college or seminary, or worked at an ELCA Bible camp. Some 30 to 40 guests reminisced and shared stories about their time in the U.S. A lot of the guests had served as counselors at Ewalu Bible Camp near Strawberry Point or attended Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS) in Dubuque.

Delegation members presented a variety of gifts, including wooden prayer birds hand-carved by Bishop Kevin Jones from firewood harvested at Ewalu and prayer shawls knitted by women of One in Faith Parish as a warm embrace from Northeastern Iowa.

“To know the birds were carved by Bishop Kevin meant a lot to them,” Wilker says. “Two of them were former camp counselors for Ewalu and when they read about where the wood came from, they both sighed.”

Wartburg Seminary sent a certificate for each of the two new bishops



Pastors Dena Gable, Margaret Yackel-Juleen and Mike Wilker present prayer shawls to the General Secretary and Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia.

and listed the names of current faculty members on them. Bishop Gideon’s certificate also included the names of faculty from when he was a student at Wartburg. Wilker says that Bishop Gideon sat and went over every single name, reminiscing about who taught him what.

“We could see how much the people in Namibia cherished their time with Wartburg Seminary,” Wilker says. “They told stories about their time in Iowa and at Ewalu, and remembered professors and students who had come to Namibia to visit.”

LUTHERAN MINISTRIES

The delegation visited the only Lutheran seminary in Namibia—the Paulinum United Lutheran Theological Seminary—where half the faculty members are graduates of Wartburg Seminary. Group members toured the school; had conversation with the director, faculty and students; and gave away WTS pens, journals and stickers.

In northern Namibia, the group visited the Engela Parish Institute, a

non-profit organization that provides vocational training for young adults. The school is partially supported by grants from the ELCA. Through its “Infohut” program, classes are being taught in life skills, computer skills, hospitality careers, business practices, sewing techniques, HIV and AIDS prevention, and lay ministry.

“The unemployment rate in Namibia is close to 40 percent, so there is a lot of poverty,” Gable says. “At the schools, people are learning skills to give them an opportunity for jobs in the future.”

The three Iowa pastors were especially interested in the institute’s lay training program, since the Northeastern Iowa Synod recently started offering lay ministry training. The group visited a class of 50 people learning to be lay ministers. Namibia has a shortage of pastors, so the students are learning how to be lay preachers in their circuits or parishes where one ordained pastor may serve four or more churches. Most of the students were retired

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from various backgrounds, seeking lay ministry as a second career.

“They told us they don’t want to get bored in retirement,” says Wilker. “This is a way they can serve Jesus.”

Yackel-Juleen says she was impressed by the leadership at the school and the progress that has been made since 1990, when apartheid in Namibia was ending and Black people had limited education.

“The church in Namibia is on fire in a lot of ways,” Yackel-Juleen says. “They are transitioning out of that oppressive system and have all indigenous leaders now. We met Pastor Magdalena, so full of chutzpah and a beautiful, welcoming person running the school.”

One of the most moving experiences for the Iowa pastors came later that day when they joined a group of 20 or so women for their weekly Lutheran HIV/AIDS support group. The women come from surrounding communities to meet under a large tree next to fields of millet and corn to support one another and their families. The women welcomed the ELCA group at their bus on the main road, singing and dancing down the driveway to the tree.

“They had hardly any income beyond subsistence farming, yet they spread a couple tables with tablecloths and bouquets of flowers and served us a meal under the tree,” Wilker says. “It was very moving to receive that hospitality from them. They were very grateful for our presence and support.”

At their meetings, the women share hymns, Bible study and prayers. They learn how to grow and share nutritious food to help them remain

healthy, they arrange transportation to help the women obtain their medications from the local hospital, and they work to educate people about HIV to dispel misinformation.

The women are working to raise funds to build a structure for



Some 50 people are learning how to become Lutheran lay ministers in a class offered at the Engela Parish Institute in Namibia.



ELCA delegation members sit under a tree in Namibia with women attending an HIV support group, a ministry funded in part by the ELCA.

their meetings. They have a micro-lending program, sell beaded Bible covers, and sell food on the roadside to raise funds. One woman told the group, “It is hard, but God has given us each other and you, and we’re so grateful for the joy and beauty that just springs up.”

“That was a beautiful blessing,” Wilker says. “ELCA Hunger is a grantor for this ministry, so it was good to see how our offerings to hunger appeal and Mission Support are working together.”

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Bishop Frank Schütte of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN-GELC) holds a carved prayer bird presented by pastors from the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

This trip was the first time Yackel-Juleen had visited Namibia, and the second time for Gable and Wilker. Both Gable and Wilker became interested in Namibia during their college and seminary years. Wilker and his family visited Namibia and South Africa during his sabbatical in 2017.

Gable visited Namibia in 2010 after researching and writing her master's thesis about the relationship between Wartburg Seminary and Namibia. (See box.)

"The country had been independent since 1990, but in 2010 they were still really focused on their independence, and the people who were part of that movement were still influential," Gable says. "Now there has been turnover and a new outlook for the future. They are ready to move into a new era for what the church in Namibia looks like."

The Iowa pastors say they came away from this trip with an understanding of the strengths and concerns of the Namibian churches, and they look forward to staying connected to Namibian Lutherans through online conversations and in-person visits in Namibia and Iowa.

Yackel-Juleen says the trip opened her eyes to a different culture and ways God is at work around the globe.

"To meet the folks there, see their lives, and how they worship and make connections with others was inspiring and heartwarming," she says. "They were so hospitable and welcoming. All of a sudden, we were part of their family."

WTS & Namibia Bonded in Faith

by Pastor Dena Gable

In 1971, a Namibian family moved to Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, and their story touched the lives of the people in Iowa. The Shejavalis shared with their new friends about the struggle for independence from apartheid South Africa.

A movement was born. Out of the walls of Wartburg Seminary, the Namibia Concerns Committee became a national movement of education, aid, advocacy and divestment. The efforts bound the Lutherans in the U.S. to the Lutherans in Namibia.

Namibia won independence and officially became a nation in 1990. The relationships forged during the independence movement continue to this day through companion synod relationships and Namibian students studying at Lutheran universities and seminaries, and spending summers working at Lutheran camps in the U.S.

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Please notify the synod office with name and address changes. The *Star* can be downloaded at neiasynod.org/blog/newsletter. To request a printed version, call the synod office.



neiasynod.org

Register by April 4 for the Spring Day of Renewal

April 24, 2025
Ewalu, Strawberry Point

Registration for the Northeastern Iowa Synod's Day of Renewal is due Friday, April 4. The event is set for Thursday, April 24, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at the Camp Ewalu Creation Center, Strawberry Point.

All actively serving and retired rostered ministers of the Northeastern Iowa Synod and those training to become rostered ministers are invited to attend.

CREATED TO BE CONNECTED

This year's theme is "Created to be Connected," with opportunities to connect with nature and one another. The day will include one-on-one conversations, prayers, songs, large group activity, and a healing worship ser-

vice. A designated "play time" will give everyone an opportunity to join in games, create with Legos, or get outside to explore the grounds on their own.

The cost to attend is \$20, which includes lunch and refreshments. Go to neiasynod.org to register online and learn more.

Contact Pastor Liz Bell, 319-352-1414, with questions.

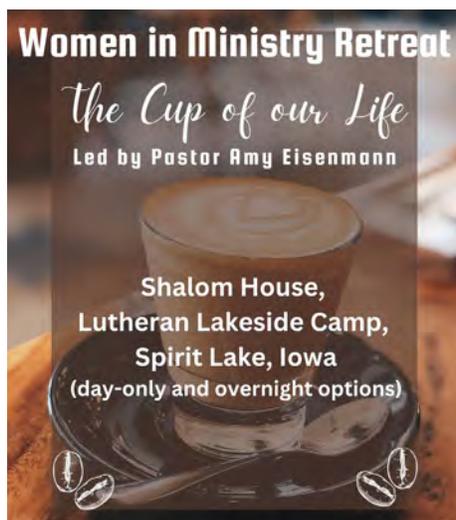


Register by April 9 for the Women in Ministry Retreat

April 26-27, 2025
Lutheran Lakeside Camp, Spirit Lake

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 26-27. The retreat will take place at Shalom House at Lutheran Lakeside Camp, Spirit Lake, with the theme "The Cup of Our Life" led by Pastor Amy Eisenmann.

Women often do their best to fill the cups of those around them. For a change, women can come to this retreat for a day or overnight to fill their own cup. They will leave the retreat with new connections to other women in ministry, a renewed sense of who they are, and a cup full of love and hope.



COME FOR ONE OR BOTH DAYS

The one-day option on Saturday will be from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. for \$75. The two-day option with lodging will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday and conclude

at 11 a.m. Sunday for \$150. Meals are included with both options.

A video sermon with manuscript will be available for congregations to use Sunday, April 27, in their pastor's absence. The recorded sermon will be given by Pastor Kristen Rod, Director for Evangelical Mission. (See page 10.)

REGISTER BY APRIL 9

Registration is due by Wednesday, April 9. Questions may be emailed to Pastor Rod at rodk@neiasynod.org or call 319-352-1414. To learn more and register, visit neiasynod.org/2025/02/women-in-ministry-retreat-2025.

Synod grants support area hunger ministries

The Northeastern Iowa Synod has awarded 24 hunger ministry grants totaling \$10,750 in the past year to ministries and congregations in this synod. The “Ride Against Hunger” grants were made possible through donations supporting the Iowa Bishops’ Ride Against Hunger in the 2023 RAGBRAI.

The grants have been used to purchase supplemental food and supplies — including four freezers — to support food pantries, community meals, afterschool and summer snack programs, and other hunger-related initiatives.

Camp Ewalu used a \$750 grant to build a greenhouse as part of its camp garden. The greenhouse will enable the camp to get an early start growing more of their own food and give campers an opportunity to experience the plants’ growing cycles from the seed to harvest. St. Peter, Dubuque, used a \$500 grant to support their ongoing Cereal Appeal Program to donate breakfast items to the Salvation Army of Dubuque.

POSTVILLE COMMUNITY MEALS

When the senior living organization that provided Meals on Wheels in Postville closed, three local congregations decided to work together to deliver meals to senior citizens at home. In 2022, St. Paul Lutheran, Community Presbyterian and St. Bridget Catholic formed Postville Community Meals, which prepares and delivers 40 meals a week to Postville residents aged 60-plus who need assistance.

The organizers reached out to Jason Manning, owner of Jalapeno’s Restaurant, who prepares the meals on Tuesday through Friday for volunteers to deliver. Members from each of the congregations take turns preparing casseroles, sandwiches and other dishes for the Monday meal deliveries.

“Jason and his staff do a wonderful job with the meals,” says Paula Enyart, Community Meals coordinator. “Although the restaurant is Mexican, the meals delivered are mostly American food.”

Postville Community Meals is funded through congregation gifts, fish fry fundraiser, individual recipient donations, and grants, including a \$500 hunger grant from the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

“I’m really glad that community meals were able to continue,” Enyart says. “It is a vital part of any community to be



Grisell Ramirez, right, hands Paula Enyart a packaged meal ready for delivery through the Postville Community Meals. Ramirez is a cook for Jalapeno’s Restaurant where the meals are prepared Tuesday through Friday for delivery to Postville senior citizens who need assistance.

able to take care of each other. These meals fill the needs of many community members who may be going through challenging times in their lives. It’s a gratifying feeling that so many people volunteer to help with it.”

OUR SAVIOR’S, WATERLOO

Our Savior’s, Waterloo, recently learned about the synod’s hunger ministry grants and is considering ways that a grant could help fund the congregation’s ongoing support of hunger programs in the community. The congregation’s Evangelism Board coordinates a variety of community outreach projects, beginning with the a food collection box that congregation members contribute to year-round. Collected items are given to the Northeast Iowa Food Bank, a veterans-assistance agency, and other hunger-related programs, including the new food pantry at their partner in education, Poyner Elementary in Evansdale.

Last fall, the congregation collected ingredients and empty

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freezer containers for a soup drive, which resulted in 130 containers of soup being delivered to disabled veterans through the Americans for Independent Living (AFIL) organization. Congregation members spent two days in October prepping and cooking three kinds of soup and chili, filling each container with two servings, and transporting them to AFIL for staff to deliver to veterans at their homes.

"AFIL isn't as well known as the food bank, so we chose to spread out a little bit and support them," says Sandy Stuber, who, along with Dawn Holmes, coordinates Our Savior's evangelism projects.

Last spring, Our Savior's members collected personal hygiene items for a "Purses of Hope" campaign. Congregation members donated 30 purses, which were then filled with essential care items and donated to three area agencies that support women in crisis.

"The congregation is very supportive of these projects," Stuber says.



Sandy Stuber sorts personal care items donated by members of Our Savior's, Waterloo, for their "Purses of Hope" campaign to deliver to area agencies that support women in crisis.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A SYNOD HUNGER GRANT

The Northeastern Iowa Synod offers hunger ministry grants to sustain and grow hunger ministries in Northeastern Iowa. The grants are intended for programs and ministries connected to or supported by ELCA congregations. Congregations and hunger ministries can apply for a \$250 sustaining grant, \$500 partnership grant or \$750 new initiative grant.

Grant applications are reviewed monthly. All applications submitted before the 15th will be reviewed that month; checks are typically sent out by the end of the month. To learn more and to apply for a hunger ministry grant, visit neiasynod.org/2023/11/hunger-ministry-grant.

RAGBRAI REPRISE

Join the Iowa Bishops for a one-day "Ride Against Hunger"

JULY 24, 2025

RAGBRAI is coming through Northeastern Iowa this summer! The three ELCA Bishops in Iowa



are climbing back on their bikes for a one-day reprise in support of anti-hunger ministries. Join the bishops on Thursday, July 24, for the ride from Iowa Falls to Cedar Falls.

You can also make a donation by scanning the QR code, clicking onrealm.org/neiasynod/-/form/give/ragbrai2025 or sending a check to the Northeastern Iowa Synod office.

To join the ride and learn more, email the synod office at neiasynod.org/contact or call 319-352-1414.



Scan to support local hunger ministries!

Register by April 10 for the youth ministry Plan It Event

MAY 1, 2025

Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point

The Northeastern Iowa Synod will host a “Plan-It” workshop to help ministers and faith formation leaders develop a calendar of events for their youth and family ministries. Kelsey Blinn of Peer Ministry Leadership will lead the workshop Thursday, May 1, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point.

This event is a guided planning and sharing experience for those responsible for faith formation ministries. Blinn 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. It is an opportunity to share ideas, organize ministry systems, learn time-saving tips, and build a leadership-producing culture with an emphasis on self-care.

Youth leaders, faith formation directors, children’s ministry directors, pastors, volunteers and the entire planning team are encouraged to attend. People should plan to bring laptops and a list of important dates to plan around, such as community and school events.



give us one day,
we'll give you one year

REGISTER BY APRIL 10!

Cost is \$15, which includes lunch. Learn more and register online at neiasynod.org/plan-it-2025.

Upcoming Youth Ministry Webinars

Northeastern Iowa Synod youth workers, clergy and volunteers are invited to join these upcoming free webinars offered in partnership with Youth Ministry Consultants. The sessions are offered live on Thursdays at 11 a.m.

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.

MAY 1

Making Curriculum Work for Your Ministry

Leaders are invited to join Mike Haynes of G Shades Curriculum to learn how to tailor curriculum to fit the unique needs and culture of their



church, regardless of size, for more impactful and effective ministry.

Anyone from the Northeastern Iowa Synod can register free by entering the 2025 code, **NEIA25**. Recordings of past sessions are also available for viewing.

Visit youthministryconsultants.org to learn more and register.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Urban Servant Corps, an ELCA ministry partner located in Denver, Colo., offers one-year, full-time experiences for young adults to live in community in downtown Denver while volunteering at nonprofit organizations that work with low-income and at-risk populations.

Food, housing, health insurance, a monthly stipend and an annual “growth and development” allotment are provided. Spiritual direction, alumni mentorship, and professional development opportunities are also offered as part of this experience.

To learn more and apply, visit urbanservantcorps.org.

Register by May 1 for the Synod Assembly early bird rate

June 6-7, 2025
Cedar Falls

Voting members and visitors will convene in Cedar Falls June 6-7 for the 2025 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly. Registration is open through May 15. Early bird registration is available through May 1.

The assembly will center on the theme “Created to Be Connected,” based on John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

June 6

Everyone is invited to the 7 p.m. worship service on Friday at Fredsville Lutheran, located seven miles west of Cedar Falls at 32756 150th St. Pastor Lee Gable will preach, and a reception with refreshments will follow. Registration is not required to attend.

The Fredsville congregation invites those attending to view displays about their 150-year history and ministry, learn about their new solar energy system and explore the grounds, which includes a mission house for families in transition.

Youth are encouraged to join in fellowship after the worship with Aaron Shoppa, program director for ELCA Youth Ministry.

June 7

Check-in on Saturday starts at 7:30 a.m. at the Bien VenU Event Center at 7400 Hudson Rd., Cedar Falls. Opening worship is at 8:30 a.m. The day will include three plenary sessions, ministry exhibits, lunch and closing worship with Bishop Kevin Jones preaching. The assembly will conclude by 5 p.m.

Voting members will elect members for synod committees and the Synod

Council, including a secretary and vice president. All resolutions and memorials must be submitted to the synod secretary by Thursday, May 1.

All voting will be done electronically through VPOLL, a secure online election platform 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. Devices cannot be shared for voting; each voting member will need their own fully charged device. Two pre-assembly Zoom meetings in May will help voting members prepare for the assembly. (See box.)

GUEST SPEAKERS

Pastor Emily Harkins, founding developer and pastor of The Dwelling ministry in North Carolina, will be the keynote speaker. Her “Connections on the Edge” presentation will talk about The Dwelling ministry and how it serves people who are housing insecure and living on the edge. Aaron Shoppa will address the assembly as the churchwide representative.

ASSEMBLY OFFERING

The assembly offering will support The Dwelling ministry in North Carolina and the Dwelling in Faith synodically authorized worshipping community in Mitchell, Iowa.

REGISTER ONLINE BY MAY 15

The early-bird registration fee is \$130 for voting members and \$100 for visitors. After May 1, 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 rooms for the special rate of \$139 plus fees for June 6. This price and



link for the “2025 Synod Assembly” is available through May 8.

Read more, find resources and get started with registration and hotel reservations at neiasynod.org/2025-synod-assembly.

PRE-ASSEMBLY ZOOMS

All Synod Assembly voting members are encouraged to participate in two live pre-assembly Zoom meetings to help prepare for the assembly.

Budget & Compensation Review **Tuesday, May 20 • 6:30 p.m.**

This session will review the budget for 2026 and 2027 and compensation guidelines. It will be led by Pastor Steve Brackett and Gary Lindgren, Synod Council treasurer.

Resolutions, Memorials & Voting **Thursday, May 22 • 6:30 p.m.**

Pastor Mike Ashman of St. Paul and St. John, Guttenberg, will review the submitted resolutions and memorials that members will vote on. Alison Pettit, synod administrative assistant, will explain how to use the new electronic voting system, which voting members can practice using during the session.

Zoom links to attend the sessions will be emailed one week prior to all registered voting members. Both sessions will be recorded for later viewing.

Showing Up Again and Again

This late winter, early spring weather has us ping-ponging back and forth between shirt sleeves and winter parkas. One afternoon I am enjoying a walk in the warm sunshine and 24 hours later I am shoveling 7+ inches of heavy snow from my driveway after a thunder-blizzard. It is, at the same time, frustrating, fascinating, and unnerving.

It seems to me that a lot of life these days is like the weather: frustrating, fascinating, and unnerving. We are either frustrated by the way things are or by attempts to change things. We are fascinated by the novelty of social events, politics, or technology to the point of endless (doom) scrolling through algorithmic feeds that fill the spaces between scheduled events. We are unnerved by unpredictability, threats of loss, and innumerable fears.

In the Gospel lesson for the Second Sunday in Lent (Luke 13:31-35) we see Jesus ping-pong from irritation, to empathy, to dismissiveness, to compassion and commitment. Jesus is clearly irritated by the actions of the Pharisees and reported threat from Herod. He

“Like Jesus, you and I are called to show up for family, friends, neighbors, and the world even when we want to leave them to their own devices.”



then reveals a mothering desire to protect the children of Jerusalem from chaotic leadership even though the children don't listen to God either.

His words, “See, your house is left to you,” sounds like he is giving up and willing to let people wallow in the mess they have made. We might not like to think of Jesus as dismissive. The humanity of Jesus can't be denied, however. These are real emotions that we experience in life. So where does Jesus go from here?

He continues on his way. He refocuses on the mission God has given to him and he promises to return when people will say, “Blessed is the one

who comes in the name of the Lord.” This is a clear allusion to his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. During a frustrating, fascinating, unnerving experience Jesus promises to show up again knowing it will not be easy.

As the Body of Christ in the world, the Church can be found in all of the emotions and responses listed above and more. Like Jesus, you and I are called to show up for family, friends, neighbors, and the world even when we want to leave them to their own devices. Showing up again and again in frustrating, fascinating, and even unnerving situations, ready to do hard things is what we do to make the love of Jesus known in the world.

VIDEO SERMON

Pastor Kristen Corr-Rod, Director for Evangelical Mission, will record a video sermon for congregations to use in their worship services on Sunday, April 27, if they wish. The sermon will be based on the day's lectionary. The video and transcript will be available to download in advance from the synod's Video Library and the synod's YouTube page. Links to both pages can be found at neiasynod.org/download-category/worship-resources.

Environmental Stewardship Clergy Cohorts

Climate-informed Ministry Cohorts: A Continuing Education Opportunity for Clergy

The new “Climate-informed Ministry Cohorts” from Iowa Faith & Climate Network (formerly Iowa Interfaith Power & Light) is a one-year learning experience to help Iowa clergy and their congregations become leaders in environmental stewardship. Through mentorship, training and connections with other faith leaders,

Iowa clergy can gain tools to bring climate-conscious practices and resilience to their faith community and ministries.

Applications are being accepted through May 31, 2025. A total of 30 clergy will be accepted into the program. Learn more and apply at iowaip.org/cohorts.



Did you know . . .

by Reg Green, Racial Justice Advocacy Network

Did you know an American Black Lutheran ordained minister in the 17th century led Black and racially integrated churches? Also, in the first half of the last century Lutheran colleges in Northeastern Iowa were affiliated with an Indian mission school?

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Racial Justice Advocacy Network has developed a project titled Lutheran Memoir, which consists of posters and handouts to promote learning and discussion. Thus far, a set of five individuals or locations have been completed. Congregations are welcome to display the posters and/or use the handouts for adult or secondary school youth programming.

Available now are:

- BETHANY INDIAN MISSION
- BISHOP NELSON TROUT
- PASTOR JEHU JONES
- REV. DANIEL PAYNE
- SAINT SEBALD CHURCH

For your convenience, digital copies (PDF format) of these resources are available for printing. Three-foot poster displays with stands are available for short term loans. Our hope is to soon develop digital presentation software to accompany the topics above.

Contact the Racial Justice Network by e-mail to arrange for any of the opportunities in this article. Members of the Racial Justice Network will be available during the upcoming Spring Day of Renewal, and the posters will be on display at that time.

For further information or to express interest in using this project in your context, please email the Racial Justice Advocacy Network at neiasynodrjan@gmail.com.



If you are a researcher, author or presenter in the field of religious racial justice, we welcome your suggestions.

Office Updates

The synod office building will be closed to walk-in business April 7-11 to allow for the installation of new energy-efficient windows throughout the building. Communication with office staff will be available through email and phone, 319-352-1414.

The parking lot and sidewalk will be resurfaced during the week of April 21. Visitors should plan to park across the street in the Redeemer Lutheran parking lot during that time.

OBITUARY

Deacon Marianne Beck died Feb. 20 at the age of 90, after a long battle with Alzheimer's. Her body was donated to the University of Iowa Deeded Body Program.

Marianne was an elementary school teacher and spent most of her career as a librarian at St. Paul's Lutheran School and at Wartburg College, both in Waverly.

A memorial service will take place Saturday, April 26, at 2 p.m. at Bartels Good Shepherd Chapel in Waverly, with visitation starting at 1:30 p.m. A reception and fellowship will immediately follow the service.

Marianne is survived by Walter, her husband of 67 years, and their family. View her full obituary at kaisercorson.com/obituaries/Marianne-J-Beck?obId=37903151.

An Update from Lutheran Services in Iowa

by Leah Nelson, LSI Marketing Manager

At Lutheran Services in Iowa we have been navigating some challenging times due to the recent federal government stop order and lack of funding. These obstacles have impacted the way in which we move forward with regards to our Resettlement Services Program, which is one of six other service lines.

The lack of the federal government honoring their financial commitments has created some hurdles. While we will continue our services of Foster Care, Adoptive Services, Early Childhood, Mental Health, Global Greens, People with Disabilities, and Immigrant Services, our Resettle Program is winding down. As we continue to face this uncertainty, it is important to acknowledge how these challenges have impacted everyone who is part of this journey, from our dedicated team to our valued supporters like you. However, despite these tough times, we are committed to pushing forward. The work we do is too important to give up on, and we are tirelessly exploring new ways to secure the resources needed to continue advocating for change. We remain hopeful and resilient, knowing that the support of people like you is what keeps us going.

We are immensely grateful for your understanding and patience as we navigate these hardships. It's because of our communities that we're able to face each day with renewed strength. Your continued support means the world to us, and we're confident that, together, we'll come out stronger on the other side of this challenging period.



Attendees gather for a group photo at this year's Lutheran Day on the Hill on March 11.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT STOP ORDER

On Jan. 20, an executive order was signed pausing the legal resettlement of refugees to the U.S. and Iowa. LSI was preparing to welcome 104 individuals, many of whom were joining family members in Iowa. Unfortunately, all flights were cancelled.

On Jan. 24, the Department of State ordered all resettlement agencies to stop providing services to recently arrived legal refugee families, and federal funds for these services would no longer be available after that date. These federal funds are essential in helping new refugees build a stable foundation in their new communities through direct financial assistance and supportive services from LSI. As a result of this action, 191 individuals—108 of whom are minors—are now at risk across LSI's three resettle-

ment locations in Des Moines, Sioux City, and Waterloo.

In addition to initial refugee resettlement services offered through the Department of State, LSI provides several other important services to legal refugees and immigrants, who are new Iowa residents, through contracts that the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement and USCIS has established with LSI and other providers. These services include workforce services that help refugees, Afghan allies and those the U.S. government has welcomed from Ukraine to enter the Iowa workforce and become economically self-sufficient and productive contributors to Iowa's economy. It also includes citizenship programming that assists Iowans who are lawful permanent residents through the process of becoming U.S. citizens when they become eligible five years after arrival.

>> *Continued on next page*

We are asking Iowans to support LSI and those we serve in two critical ways:

1. **Support** the families being impacted by this situation through a gift to LSI as we seek to maintain our service commitment to these new members of our community. Giving options are available at lsiowa.org/give.
2. **Contact** Iowa's U.S. Elected Officials and ask them to restore the U.S. refugee resettlement program and ask them to work with the new administration to fulfill its payment obligations for services that Congress has authorized to allow new residents to become contributing members of the Iowa workforce.

LUTHERAN DAY ON THE HILL

We are thrilled to share the incredible success of our 2025 Lutheran Day on the Hill, where over 400 passionate advocates gathered to stand with us and make their voices heard!

This event was a powerful reminder of the strength and unity of our communities. The energy, enthusiasm, and dedication from all those who attended were truly inspiring.

Highlights from the Event:

- **Over 400 Attendees:** We were overwhelmed by the turnout, with people from all walks of life coming together to advocate for change.
- **160th Proclamation:** Governor Kim Reynolds signed a proclamation declaring March 11 Lutheran Services in Iowa Day.

- **Powerful Speeches:** We heard from our three incredible Bishops—Bishop Current, Bishop Halaas and Bishop Jones—our President & CEO Renee Hardman, and Senator Sarah Trone Garriott, who inspired us with their words.
- **Impactful Conversations:** Advocates engaged in meaningful conversations with legislators, ensuring our message was heard loud and clear at the Capitol.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who attended and made this event such a success. Your support is what drives our work, and together we are making a real difference.

But this is just the beginning! The momentum from this event will carry us forward as we continue to advocate for Federal Funding. We're excited for what's to come and hope you'll continue to join us in making a positive impact.

CELEBRATING 160 YEARS

More exciting news is on the horizon! This October, we will be celebrating a monumental milestone—our 160th anniversary! This year is not just about looking back at our rich history but also about embracing our bright future ahead.

Make sure to follow us on social media and keep an eye on your inbox for all the latest news.

See the insert in this newsletter to learn how congregations of the Northeastern Iowa Synod support Lutheran Services in Iowa.

ADVOCATE WITH LSI

Advocating for federal funding is crucial to ensuring our Iowan communities and our values are represented. But we can't do this without your support. Your voice has the power to make a real difference in the decisions being made by our legislators, and we need you to speak up for action.

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

- **Phone Numbers:** Call the legislative offices directly to express your views or schedule a meeting.
- **Write or Email:** Send a letter or email your Legislators
- **Social Media:** Many Legislators are active on social media. Tag them on platforms like X (Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram to get their attention.

WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS

- **Strength in Numbers:** The more people speak up, the harder it is to ignore. Your voice and the voices of others who care about this issue can create real change.
- **Make Your Views Known:** Legislators are here to represent you. Your concerns matter, and they need to hear from you to understand the public's perspective.
- **Build Relationships:** Advocating doesn't end with a single phone call or email. Build lasting relationships with your representatives and make your voice a consistent presence.



Caring for Our Soil Through Conservation

by Donna Rasmussen, Care for Creation Network

"You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth." — Psalms 104:14

Soil is vital to our survival. Without it, there would be no food. This thin layer covering only portions of the Earth provides the medium for plants to grow, sustaining them with nutrients and water stored in the soil.

Iowa is blessed with some of the richest soils in the world, once abundant with organic matter created by the verdant prairies that covered the landscape. The organic matter in those native soils measured 8-9 parts per million, but over time, with cultivation and erosion, the organic matter now averages closer to 2-3 parts per million. Less organic matter means that nutrients need to be added to the soil in the form of fertilizers.

Organic matter also helps the soil hold and infiltrate water; low organic matter means that rain is less likely to soak into the ground (creating runoff and erosion), and water is less likely to be held in the soil profile for plants to use during dry periods. Being good stewards of the land requires that soil is conserved by preventing erosion and building up the health of the soil so it remains productive. Plus, keeping soil healthy and preventing erosion keeps sediment and pollutants out of our rivers and streams improving water quality and recharging our groundwater.

90 YEARS OF SOIL CONSERVATION

Soil and Water Conservation Week is April 27 to May 5, and this year marks 90 years since the Soil Conservation Act was passed by Congress and signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 27,

1935. The act established a permanent soil conservation agency, the Soil Conservation Service, now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In 1935, the nation was in the grips of the Dust Bowl due to an extended drought in the Great Plains that started in 1932. Widespread crop failures and exposed soil resulted in blowing dust clouds, one of which blew over Washington, D. C. in 1934 continuing 300 miles into the Atlantic Ocean. In 1935, on March 6 and then on March 21, dust clouds again passed over Washington and darkened the sky just as Congress held hearings on a proposed soil conservation law. Hugh Hammond Bennett, later the head of the Soil Conservation Service, used this opportunity to explain the cause of the storms and to offer a solution which convinced Congress to act.

The success of soil conservation in the United States is credited to the establishment of democratically organized Soil Conservation Districts led by local farmers and landowners. To create a framework for cooperation, the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law was sent to the governors of all the states in 1937 by President Roosevelt. The first soil conservation district was organized in the Brown Creek watershed of North Carolina on Aug. 4, 1937. Today, there are over 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across the country, of which 100 are in Iowa: one in each county with Pottawattamie County having two districts. Each district is managed by an elected board made up of five local SWCD Commissioners.

Of Iowa's 35.7 million acres of land, about 29 million acres (81%) are cropland. On those cropland acres, a vari-

SURVEY REMINDER

The Care for Creation Network Survey deadline has been extended to April 15!

Congregations should have received a request to complete the survey to share about their creation care activities. The Care for Creation Network will compile a summary of submitted responses for the Synod Assembly in June.

If your congregation or organization has not completed the Care for Creation survey, contact rdrasmussen@outlook.com for the survey link.

If completing the survey online is not your best option, print the survey and complete it on paper and send an email to the address above for further instructions to submit it. Thank you!

ety of soil conservation practices are needed and have been implemented, including terraces, grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, bio-reactors, grade stabilization structures, reduced tillage, no till, cover crops, contour strips, crop rotations, field borders, and nutrient management. Most of these practices are used in some combination because no one practice can do everything to prevent erosion and build soil health.

As our climate changes and weather patterns become more extreme, our soil needs extra care to remain productive into the future. If you see these soil conservation practices on the landscape, thank those farmers and the staff in your local soil conservation office for being good stewards of God's creation.

APRIL 2025

- 3 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY MTG.**, Synod Office, 9:30 a.m.
- 7 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 7-11 SYNOD OFFICE BUILDING CLOSED**, Staff working remotely
- 18 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Good Friday
- 24 DAY OF RENEWAL**, Ewalu, Strawberry Point
- 25-26 LAY TRAINING RETREAT**, St. John, Cedar Falls
- 26-27 WOMEN IN MINISTRY RETREAT**, Lutheran Lakeside Camp, Spirit Lake
- 29 SUBSTANCE ABUSE NETWORK**, Teams, 1:30 p.m.

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)
- 8 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**, Zoom, 3 p.m.
- 17 SYNOD COUNCIL**, Zoom, 9 a.m.
- 20 PRE-ASSEMBLY REVIEW OF BUDGET & COMPENSATION**, Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
- 22 DEANS & CHAPLAINS**, Synod Office, 10 a.m.
- 22 PRE-ASSEMBLY REVIEW OF RESOLUTIONS & VOTING**, Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
- 26 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Memorial Day

JUNE 2025

- 2 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 6-7 NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD ASSEMBLY**, Bien VenU Event Center, Cedar Falls
- 9 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**
- 14 SWO SHARING PARTY**, Zion, Oelwein, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 19 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Juneteenth Observance

JULY 2025

- 4 SYNOD OFFICE CLOSED**, Independence Day
- 7 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 17 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 19 SYNOD COUNCIL**, Zoom, 9 a.m.
- 24 IOWA BISHOPS ONE-DAY RIDE AGAINST HUNGER**, RAGBRAI
- 28-Aug. 3 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY**, Phoenix, Ariz.

AUGUST 2025

- 4 MEN'S MINISTRY BIBLE STUDY**, Mondays at Grace, Tripoli & Zoom, 7:30 p.m. (except holidays)
- 7 TRANSITIONAL/INTERIM MINISTRY**, Zoom, 9:30 a.m.
- 8 CANDIDACY COMMITTEE**, Synod Office, 9:30 a.m.

INSTALLATIONS

- **Rev. Jeanette Perrault**, Holy Trinity, Dubuque, March 23
- **Rev. Evan Meester**, St. John, Frederika, April 27
- **Rev. Kristen Larson-Schmidt**, Good Shepherd, Decorah, pending
- **Rev. Adam Starrett**, Elgin, Elgin & Highland, Elkader, pending

INTERVIEWING

- **Asbury**, Lord of Life, Rev. Karla Wildberger, 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
- **Joice**, Bethany; **Lake Mills**, Winnebago; **Northwood**, Silver Lake; **Albert Lea**, Minn., Lunder (One in Christ Lutheran Parish)

- **Lake Mills**, Salem
- **Leland**, *Our Savior & Garner, Faith (Miller)**
- **New Hampton**, Trinity, Rev. Sue Cira, contract
- **Osage**, Our Savior's
- **Ossian**, Ossian
- **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*

SELF-STUDY

- **Cedar Falls**, Bethlehem
- **Clarion**, First
- **Decorah**, *St. John's & Hauge**
- **Decorah**, Washington Prairie
- **Hawkeye**, *Trinity**
- **Oelwein**, Zion
- **Washburn**, *Redeemer**

ROSTER CHANGES

- **Deacon Marianne Beck**, deceased

*Part-time Call

Follow updates on open calls at neiasynod.org/open-calls.

CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

The 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly will take place July 28–Aug. 2 in Phoenix, Ariz., with the theme “For the Life of the World.”

Key actions during the assembly will be electing a new presiding bishop and secretary, considering a new social statement on civic life and faith, edits to the social statement Sexuality (2009) and recommendations from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church. Live video of worship and plenary sessions will be accessible at the Churchwide Assembly page, elca.org/about/leadership/churchwide-assembly_at_elca.org.



PRAYER CALENDAR

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

APRIL 1-5, 2025

- **H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders**
- Rev. Steve Jacobsen
- Rev. Al Bidne
- Ingham/Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milford
- University of Iowa Lutheran Campus Ministry, Iowa City
- Iowa State University Lutheran Campus Ministry, Ames

APRIL 6-12, 2025

- Jan Schumacher
- Martha Deines
- Rev. Amy Strydom
- Rev. Reed Pedersen
- Rev. Dan Gerriettes
- Rev. Marion Pruitt-Jefferson
- Threehouse Collaborative Campus Ministry, Cedar Falls

APRIL 13-19, 2025

- **Middle East Peace**
- Rev. Jim Gardner
- Jane Hoppenworth
- Rev. Grant Woodley
- Rev. Dr. Kristin Johnston Largen, President, Wartburg Seminary
- Lutheran Retirement Community, Northwood
- Lutheran Lakeside Camp, Spirit Lake
- Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL

APRIL 20-30, 2025

- Rev. Jerome Godson
- Judy Wogsland Foreman
- Rev. Jane Keel
- Rev. Ernest Elzey
- Rev. Rik Engebretson
- Rev. Scott Duffus
- Rev. Kristi Grieder
- Rev. Matt Agee
- Luther Manor Retirement Community, Dubuque
- Lutheran Services in America
- Lutheran Services in Iowa

MAY 1-10, 2025

- **H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders**
- Rev. Paul Fohs
- Rev. David Burling
- Rev. Randy Baldwin
- Rev. Mark Oehlert
- Rev. Mike Wilker
- Rev. Jim Magelssen
- Rev. Karla Wildberger
- Rev. Dale Halverson
- Lutheran World Relief

MAY 11-17, 2025

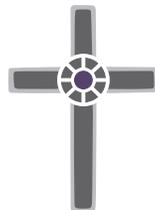
- **Middle East Peace**
- Galilean Lutheran Church, Clear Lake
- East Clermont Lutheran Church, Clermont
- West Clermont Lutheran Church, Clermont
- First Lutheran Church, Cresco
- Immanuel Lutheran Church, Cresco
- Canoe Ridge Lutheran Church, Decorah
- Portico Benefits Services

MAY 18-24, 2025

- Rev. Tim Malek
- Rev. Matthew Rossler
- Rev. Laura Gentry
- Rev. Dennis Hanson
- Rev. Nicole Woodley
- Rev. Gary Johnson
- Region 5, ELCA

MAY 25-31, 2025

- Rev. Russ Leeper
- Rev. Elizabeth Retz
- Rev. John Sheahan
- Glenwood Lutheran Church, Decorah
- Big Canoe Lutheran Church, Decorah
- Highland Lutheran Church, Decorah
- Hauge Lutheran Church, Decorah



Justice Committee

Check out these resources available on the Women of the ELCA website:

Called to be Political Bible Study:
[Calledtobepolitical.pdf](#)
Human Trafficking [Social Justice in Religion, Ending Trafficking | Women of the ELCA](#)
Racial Justice Bible Study [Racial Justice Advocacy Network resources - Women of the ELCA](#)
Domestic Violence [Domestic Violence - Women of the ELCA](#)

Stewardship Committee

As our faith journey continues toward Easter, how can we be good stewards of God's gifts?

Years ago, I clipped an article about being a good steward. The article listed one of the qualities as "generous: willing to share and to give what you have." This isn't just giving our weekly monetary offerings. It includes being generous with our talents that we can share with others. This could be volunteering to be a Sunday School teacher, joining the church choir, being an usher, volunteering to be on the church council or women's SWO board, offering to be a share-a-ride driver, etc. We can also give our time to visit shut-ins. What qualities would you include to define a good steward? I would add, being humble, grateful and prayerful.

When thinking of stewardship, this verse comes to mind. *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1Corinthians 10:31) Sharing our time, money, talents, and faith with others is being a good steward of gifts God has blessed you with!

Submitted by Jo Ann Brunsvold

LWR – 2024 Fall - In - Gathering

Saturday, November 2, 2024, was the LWR Fall In-Gathering at Olson's Explosives in Decorah. Along with donations from Upper Iowa River and Shepherds Of The Hills clusters, we also received donations from West Paint Creek, Waukon; Trinity and Black Hammer, Spring Grove, MN; Scheie, Mabel, MN; and St. Peter, Dubuque.

Thank you to workers from Postville, Calmer, Springfield, Burr Oak, and Hesper churches for unloading and stacking 930 boxes in the truck.

Donation Totals: 1650 Quilts, 762 Personal Care Kits, 1755 School Kits, 595 Baby Care Kits, 63 Fabric Kits & 7 Blankets. We CAN make a difference.....We DO make a difference. Next gathering will be Saturday, May 3.

*Submitted by
Carol Maki & Sue Darling*

CALENDAR

Apr 5	Cluster D Spring Gathering @ Highland Lutheran
Apr 12	LWR In-Gathering, St John Sumner
Apr 26	Cluster B Spring Gathering @ St John, Arlington
	Cluster G Spring Gathering @ Rock Creek, Osage
May 3	LWR In-Gathering, Decorah
May 17	LWR In-Gathering, Albert Lea
Jun 14	M & M Sharing Party @ Zion, Oelwein
Jul 15	2026 Triennial Registration opens
Oct 11	LWR In-Gathering, Albert Lea

NEIA Women of the ELCA Executive Board

Christine Schmitt, President

641-220-5361, candcschmitt2@gmail.com

Alice Greimann, Vice President

641-456-2973, algreimann@wbrec.com

Chris VanDeventer, Secretary

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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.WELCAtg.org

Contact NEIA Women of the ELCA:

neiasynod.org/women-of-the_-ELCA-

LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRY IN ACTION

Northeastern Iowa Synod

Thank you for partnering with LSI to empower individuals, strengthen families, and build communities.



Thanks to the generous support of our friends at the Northeastern Iowa Synod, thousands of Iowans were lifted up, supported, and empowered last year. In 2023 the Northeastern Iowa Synod gave \$11,550 and 85 churches gave a total of \$125,387; in 2024 the Northeastern Iowa Synod again gave \$11,550 and 76 churches gave a total of \$100,369 in support of LSI's mission: to respond to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service.

Thank you for your commitment to caring for those who are so often overlooked in our society.

YOUR IMPACT IN 2024

 **10,000+** HOME VISITS

for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through Early Childhood Services

 **726** NEW ARRIVALS RESETTLED

in Iowa with Immigrant and Refugee Community Services

 **366,400+** HOURS OF SERVICE

provided for Iowans with disabilities

 **19,000+** THERAPY SESSIONS

provided to children, adults, and families through our Mental Health Therapy program

 **620** FAMILIES SERVED

across kinship, foster and adoptive families in 38 western Iowa counties

2024 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Immigrant and Refugee Community Services Expands

LSI resettled 726 new arrivals in Des Moines, Sioux City, and Waterloo assisting newcomers in securing housing, employment and building new lives across Iowa. During the year, LSI re-established services in the Waterloo area and moved into a new office location to accommodate the growth in services. LSI also expanded its child care business development program from Des Moines to now include Sioux City, Storm Lake, Waterloo, and Davenport. The program assists refugee women in the process of becoming licensed home based child care providers.

Mental Health Services Expands

In 2024, Clinical Services have expanded their team by hiring ten new mental health therapists, bringing our total to thirty-seven dedicated professionals serving communities across Iowa. With therapy available in all 99 counties, both virtually and in person. We are committed to ensuring that every Iowan has access to quality mental health care. Additionally, we have enhanced our services within juvenile detention centers by adding another site, now totaling six locations statewide. Our community programs are nearly at full staff capacity, and we are proud to report positive outcomes across all initiatives. As we continue to meet the growing demands of behavioral and mental health services, clinical services remain steadfast in our mission to support the well-being of all Iowans.

Early Childhood Thrives

Since July 1st, 2024, the Muscatine Early Childhood service area has made a positive impact on 57 families and 60 children through 675 in-home visits, with 98% of those families remaining free from abuse and neglect. In October 2024, LSI began offering Coordinated Intake services in Black Hawk County. In just the first three months, over 450 new parents were provided with information about available Family Support Services in the community. LSI's Early Childhood Program went through Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process review in 2024 for the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Blue Ribbon Status was received. The PAT program recognizes Blue Ribbon Affiliates as exemplary programs that deliver high-quality services to children and families.

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations.



For more information, contact Deb Whitford, Senior Director of Philanthropy: 563.676.2065 | Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org