

Congregations find new life as ministry training sites

Seminary students gain ministry experience serving Northeastern Iowa Synod congregations

by Marcia Hahn

Pursuing a call to ministry in the ELCA is more easily done than ever, thanks to flexible learning options and opportunities for hands-on ministry experience in congregations. In many cases, students can begin serving congregations in their first year of seminary, filling part-time ministry needs for congregations that may otherwise go without.

"The pastor shortage is requiring everybody to do things differently," says Pastor Steve Brackett, assistant to the Bishop for Rostered Leadership. "More congregations are taking on the important role of forming future leaders."

St. John (Maxfield), Denver & St. John (Crane Creek), Tripoli

Ten hours of ministry per week may not sound like much, but it is making a big difference for two Northeastern Iowa Synod congregations that are helping a seminary student gain practical ministry experience.

St. John (Maxfield), Denver, and St. John (Crane Creek), Tripoli, serve as shared ministry training sites for Jared McLey, who is in his second year as a collaborative learning (CL) student through Wartburg Theological Seminary. McLey takes full-time coursework online toward a Master of Divinity degree and

does 20 hours of ministry per week as a synodically authorized minister, which means he can preside at baptisms, give communion and lead funerals.

"It's nice to have a minister to depend on who can provide a sermon every Sunday and serve as worship leader," says Karen Platte of Crane Creek, which has been without a pastor for several years. "We had been using supply pastors



Jared McLey



Jared McLey (center, back row) and members of St. John (Maxfield) are ready to ride on their float in the Denver Break-Away Days parade.

>> Continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Congregations find new life as ministry training sites
- 3 Coming Soon: New Training Program for Lay Ministers
- 8 Congregations brainstorm ideas for working together
- 11 Congregations
- 12 Prayer Calendar

and members of the congregation to lead services, so we were thrilled this agreement worked out with Maxfield.”

McLey is making the most of every minute he devotes to ministry, including taking communion to home-bound members, teaching confirmation, and starting a new Bible study. “He is always thinking of new things to try,” Platte says.

“I really like being able to learn outside of the classroom doing all the tasks and responsibilities of a pastor,” McLey says. “I am serving these great congregations while growing and developing my own pastoral skills.”

Each congregation has a site committee that meets regularly with McLey to discuss how the ministry is going, share feedback and help make sure he limits his ministry to 20 hours per week.

“It is a learning process for all of us to be encouraging, without being critical, in a loving and supportive way,” says Deb Pipho of Maxfield. “We don’t really expect a lot because we know that he is a student, but he has been an incredible blessing.”

Both congregations hope to someday call an ordained pastor, but for now hosting a CL student has been a good fit for their ministry needs and for their budgets. The congregations compensate McLey for his part-time ministry and provide housing for McLey and his wife at the Maxfield parsonage. He will continue to serve both congregations until his graduation in May 2025.

“The only drawback is we know we only have him for a short time,” Pipho says. “After a few years we will have to say goodbye.”

St. Paul, Wellsburg

After 13 years working as a registered nurse, Lisa Robison decided she was ready to answer the sense of call she had been feeling for ordained ministry.



Lisa Robison

“As a nurse, the transition to ministry seemed a plausible step to still care for people, just in a different way,” Robison says. “My nursing background gives me a unique opportunity to advocate for those I serve in ways that others may not.”

Robison enrolled in Wartburg Seminary’s Collaborative Learning program, which allows her to study remotely while living at home in Iowa Falls with her husband and three children. She is now in her fourth and final year serving in the internship portion as a part-time synodically authorized minister for St. Paul Lutheran, Wellsburg. She also helps as an interim lay minister for First Congregational United Church of Christ in Iowa Falls.

“I chose the collaborative learning program because there is such a need for clergy, and I value the lessons that can be learned while serving in context,” Robison says.

An internship committee, supervisor and mentor pastors, and the synod’s Candidacy Committee work with CL students during their 18-month internships to set service-learning goals, evaluate benchmarks in their progress, give feedback and guide the student along.

One of Robison’s passions is rural ministry, which she has been able to pursue while serving at St. Paul. She sits on the executive committee for the International Rural Church Association and is a member of the Rural Church Network, organizations that work ecumenically with other rural churches and leaders in the U.S. and around the world.

“The opportunity to serve while going to seminary is amazing,” Robison says “I can apply the things I am learning in real time in my ministry.”

St. Paul member Diane Ascher says that having a CL student serve St. Paul has been extremely beneficial to the congregation.

“I remember thinking when our last pastor retired we might not survive,” Ascher says. “Having Lisa here has been a tremendous blessing to our congregation. We thank God and the synod for connecting us with the CL program.”

A VARIETY OF PATHWAYS LEAD TO ORDAINED MINISTRY

Another remote learning path is through Wartburg Seminary’s Distributed Learning program, which combines online coursework with one intensive on-campus class

>> Continued on page 6

Coming Soon: A New Training Program for Lay Ministers

This year, more than 600 pastors will retire from full-time ministry in the ELCA. This fall, just 186 people were entranced into candidacy to become pastors and deacons in the ELCA. This is just one factor in the widening gap between the number of pastors and the number of congregations in our church and in our synod. If we doubled the number of people entering into ministry, we would still be falling behind by more than 200 pastors every year. (All mainline protestant denominations are experiencing this difficult reality. We are not alone.)

One way to bridge this gap is to train lay members of our congregations to lead worship and do some basic pastoral ministry when an ordained clergy is not available. This might be for an extended time while a congregation seeks a new pastor or for a few weeks when a pastor is on vacation or sabbatical. Lay ministers could assist pastors with home visits or by leading care center worship services. Or they might serve in a parish setting where one pastor is overseeing as many as six congregations.

LAY MINISTRY TRAINING

The Northeastern Iowa Synod is joining together with the Western Iowa Synod, Southeastern Iowa Synod, and South-Central Synod of Wisconsin to develop a Lay Ministry Training Program for all four synods. This program will have options for people who simply want to learn more about our Lutheran faith. Additional courses will pave the way for certified lay ministers who could serve as Synodically Authorized Ministers in specific cir-

"Keep your minds and hearts open to where the Spirit is leading in these interesting times."

cumstances. Our goal is to start this program in the fall of 2024.

The synod is beginning a \$50,000 Fall Campaign to help raise up lay leaders in our synod and to defray some of the costs of identifying and training people to serve our congregations as lay ministers. (See page 9 for more information.)

I encourage you to pray and reflect on how God is calling you to partici-

pate in this movement. Are you being called to serve your congregation or parish in one of these ways? Are you able to financially support those who are called, to ensure that our worship and proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are carried out faithfully? Keep your minds and hearts open to where the Spirit is leading in these interesting times.



— *Bishop Kevin Jones*

BISHOPS RIDE AGAINST HUNGER

Thank you, you amazing and generous people of God!

Together the three Iowa synods raised more than \$92,500 in support of ELCA World Hunger and anti-hunger programs in our communities. That almost doubles our goal of \$50,000!

Because of your generosity, \$50,000 is being sent to ELCA World Hunger. The remaining \$42,500+ is being evenly distributed to the three Iowa synods to be used for anti-hunger programs in our communities. I have asked the Northeastern Iowa Synod Hunger Network to recommend ways for this money to be allocated across the synod for food pantries, soup kitchens, and community meals.

Well done, good and faithful servants!



Take the 'Future Church' Survey

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is asking ELCA congregation members and rostered ministers to share their thoughts and ideas in a survey about how the ELCA is called to be a church in today's world.

This survey is part of the ELCA's initiative to look at the vision for the future of this church. Through deep listening, conversations, prayer and input, the ELCA is committed to learning how the spirit is calling us to be church together in the world today. Insights shared through this survey will help form better understanding about what is good about the church and where it needs to grow in Christ.

There are two versions of the survey—one for congregational members/ministry participants and one for rostered ministers. Please visit the ELCA website on "Future Church: God's Love Made Real" at <https://lovemadereal.elca.org> to watch a video from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton about the future church initiative and to give your input through the online survey.



SERMONS IN A PINCH

A new resource has been added to the synod website to help congregations when a supply pastor is not available.

The "Sermons in a Pinch" document contains a list of websites and books that provide free lectionary-based sermons that can be used for worship services. The sermons are available as manuscripts or downloadable videos.

Visit [www/neiasynod.org/download-category/worship-resources](http://www.neiasynod.org/download-category/worship-resources).

Register for Men's Retreat

Nov. 3–5, 2023

Ewalu, Strawberry Point



Early-bird registration for the "One Year to Live" men's retreat is open through Monday, Oct. 9.

The retreat will take place Nov. 3–5 at Ewalu Camp & Retreat Center, Strawberry Point. The retreat starts at 5:30 p.m. on Friday and ends at 3 p.m. Sunday.

This weekend retreat is an opportunity for men to join in group discussion and activities rethink how they set their priorities and discover how God has equipped them to live. It is presented by Lutheran Men in Mission, in partnership with the Northeastern Iowa Synod and Camp Ewalu.

Those who register by Oct. 9 will receive the discounted rate of \$175. Standard registration is due by Oct. 23 for \$200. To download the brochure and register online, visit www.neiasynod.org/2023/06/one-year-to-live-mens-retreat.

NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD

Bishop Kevin T. Jones – jonesk@neiasynod.org

Assistants to the Bishop

Rev. Liz Bell – belle@neiasynod.org

Rev. Steve Brackett – bracketts@neiasynod.org

Rev. Kristen Corr Rod – rodsk@neiasynod.org

Jan Glaspie – glaspiej@neiasynod.org

Star Editor

Marcia Hahn – hahnm@neiasynod.org

The *Star* is published bimonthly by the Northeastern Iowa Synod, 201 20th Street SW, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804; www.neiasynod.org, phone 319-352-1414, FAX 319-352-1416.

Send news for the Nov/Dec 2023 issue to Marcia Hahn by Nov. 6.

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. To request a printed version, call the synod office.



www.neiasynod.org

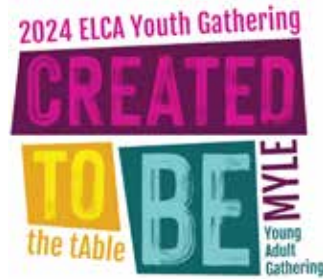
Volunteer for the ELCA Youth Gathering

The application deadline to serve on the Gathering Volunteer Corps for the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans has been extended to Nov. 1.

The Gathering Volunteer Corps serves in a variety of ways throughout the Gathering, such as ushering and assisting during Mass Gatherings, helping with Interactive Learning activities, directing foot traffic in the convention center, staffing the info booth or moving equipment in a Gathering venue.

GVCs must be at least one year past high school at the time of the Gathering and commit to being in New Orleans for one week, likely arriving Sunday, July 14, and departing Saturday, July 20, 2024. The Gathering will provide GVC volunteers with per diem or catered meals while on-site in New Orleans and shared lodging accommodations.

To apply or to learn more, visit www.elca.church/gathering/attend/volunteers.



YOUNG ADULTS SURVEY

Attention young adults! Interested in meeting other young adults from around the synod? Please take a moment to fill out a quick survey to let us know what kind of events you would be interested in!

Complete the survey at <https://forms.gle/ZQ6xCMPF6P6u6Ybq6>.

Got questions? Send an email to Robin Kime at robin@threehouse.org.

Portico Benefits Updates

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT

The annual enrollment process to select health care coverage, pre-tax contributions, vision care services and more begins in October. Retirees select Oct. 2–11, congregations/organizations select Oct. 2–13, and plan members select in waves beginning Oct. 19.

The 2024 contribution baseline rate for ELCA-Primary health benefits will increase 2.5 percent, which is lower than the 3 percent rate increase last year. Deductibles for the ELCA-Primary Gold+ option will increase to \$1,700 for members only, \$2,550 for member and children, and \$3,400 for member and spouse or member, spouse and children. Co-insurance, out-of-pocket limits and prescription drug costs-share will not change.

The 2024 rate for ELCA Medicare-Primary health benefits will increase or decrease, depending on which option is selected: Premium option is

up \$16 per month from the 2023 rate, Standard is up \$8 per month, and Economy is down \$27.

Watch for an email from Portico when your Annual Enrollment window is open. Questions can be directed to Jennifer Prinz, regional representative from Portico, at JPrinz@porticobenefits.org or 800-352-2876.

PERSONAL WELLNESS ACCOUNT

Personal Wellness Account balances need to be spent by the end of the year. Check your PWA balance on the Further site via myPortico, review the eligible expenses list, and be sure to use your PWA dollars before Dec. 31, 2023 and submit receipts for reimbursement by April 15, 2024.

FREE COVID-19 RAPID TESTS

As of Sept. 25, every U.S. household can again place an order to receive four free COVID-19 rapid tests, which are delivered directly to your home. COVID rapid tests can help you

know if you have COVID-19 when you have symptoms, have been exposed, or are going to meet up with others. Order online at www.covid.gov/tests.



NEW PODCASTS

Today's churches might count up to seven different generations in their membership — which brings both incredible opportunities for building bridges of understanding, and possible differences over communication styles, priorities and expectations. Two new episodes of the "Being Here" podcast explore this topic with generational-studies experts. Listen at <https://portico.thebigknow.com/home>.

— Jennifer L. Prinz, Regional Representative, Region 5

per semester and a one-year internship.

Those age 40 or older can qualify for Wartburg Seminary's TEEM Certificate program (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries), in which students take online classes toward a three-year certificate while doing ministry work in the congregation that will become their first call in ordained ministry.

West Clermont, Clermont

After a 20-year career in the Navy, Micheal Erickson returned to his roots in Northeast Iowa to settle into a new career.



Micheal Erickson

The retired Navy commander drove truck for a farmer friend for five years and did some substitute teaching before deciding to pursue a call to ministry.

"Even though I was involved in the church council and teaching Sunday school at East Clermont Lutheran, I felt that I was supposed to be doing something more," Erickson says.

Erickson shared his feelings with his pastor, who directed him to contact the synod office. Brackett suggested the TEEM program as a way for Erickson to begin on-the-job ministry training and fill a much-needed call for nearby West Clermont Lutheran.

"I was tired of moving all of the time with the Navy, so being placed

in a local church where I will be able to stay long term made TEEM a good fit," Erickson says.

Erickson started filling in to lead West Clermont's outdoor worship services in 2020 during COVID, so congregation members were already getting to know him when they formally welcomed him as their synodically authorized TEEM minister the following September.

"We committed to TEEM knowing Mike would be a full-time student and we would have to step up to take on some roles, but the benefit has been worth it," says Stephanie Spain, who chairs West Clermont's TEEM Internship Committee.

The West Clermont congregation helps Erickson with his educational costs and provides a salary; he receives health insurance through the Navy.

Erickson is now in his third and final year of TEEM, serving his internship with specific benchmarks to achieve. Spain says the internship is an opportunity for Erickson to broaden his ministry and outreach in the community, such as leading the school's baccalaureate program. Erickson recently started a book study on Islam so congregation members can learn more about their Islamic neighbors who live in nearby Postville. Ten people signed up right away.

"In three years we have seen a change as Mike has found his groove and niche," Spain says. "We already see him as our pastor, so it is going to be a smooth transition for him to become our ordained pastor."

"I started the program at the beginning of COVID, so West Clermont and I have worked through some interesting times together," Erickson says. "I think we are stronger and more resilient because of it."

St. Peter, Dubuque

Noah Dodd says he always had an interest in understanding theology and scripture, but he never intended



Noah Dodd

to pursue ministry professionally. By the time he was 17, however, friends and family could see how important faith had become to him, and they encouraged Dodd to explore the possibility of serving the church as a minister.

"This was later strengthened by my own sense of internal call, which ultimately led me to pursue my call to ministry," says Dodd, who grew up attending St. John American in Cedar Falls.

After graduating from Janesville High School, Dodd studied religion at Wartburg College in Waverly and then enrolled at Wartburg Seminary to study for his M.Div. degree. Dodd says that attending classes on campus as a traditional student was a natural fit for him and his family.

"I appreciate Wartburg's commitment to fostering both a strong

>> Continued on page 7

Learn about the Truth and Healing Movement

from the Racial Justice Advocacy Network

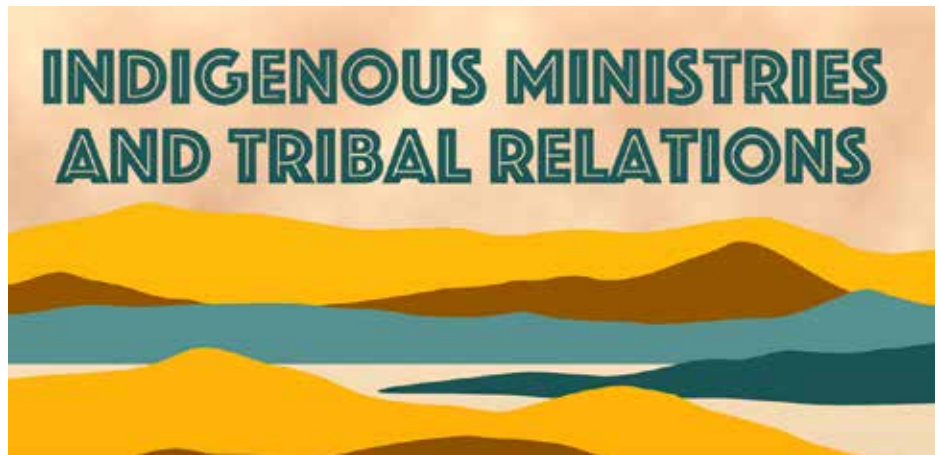
The Racial Justice Advocacy Network of the Northeastern Iowa Synod drafted a list of priorities to focus our efforts. Our Mission Statement is, "Empowered by the Gospel of Christ, we will challenge and encourage synod members to address issues of racial justice in Northeastern Iowa."

We plan to use this space in the *Star* to lift up the racial justice work of congregations across the synod, offer resources for congregational use, and share opportunities for engagement that may allow for mutual understanding of differing perspectives.

At the Synod Assembly, a brief video highlighting our mission was shared. To view the video and learn more about the Racial Justice Network, visit <https://tinyurl.com/29cmvdev>.

TRUTH AND HEALING MOVEMENT

The ELCA has recently launched the Truth and Healing Movement, which "is an opportunity for this church to increase our understanding of our



colonizing impacts on Indigenous people in the past and present. Over the next several months, there will be opportunities to learn, raise awareness and engage in other ways to impact hearts and lives across this church. We believe that the truth, and our knowing and embracing it, is the first step toward healing for all of us." (*ELCA Truth & Healing Webpage*)

The Racial Justice Network recommends the valuable resources that have been designed and presented through this movement, including an online two-hour learning

opportunity titled, "Indigenous Thought & Theology," which is being offered both Thursday, Oct. 26, and Thursday, Nov. 30. For information on this and other resources, visit the ELCA Truth & Healing Movement website at <https://tinyurl.com/4ku6whd6>.

If your congregation would like your work on behalf of racial justice shared so others may be inspired, or if you have requests or recommendations of resource topics we might share, please email us at neiasynodrjan@gmail.com.

Congregations find new life as ministry training sites
<< Continued from page 6

Christian community and strong academic tradition, and the campus housing options offered a place that was welcoming for a family with young children."

Now in his third year at seminary, Dodd has begun a full-time one-year internship with St. Peter Lutheran, Dubuque, where he will

apply his classroom learning to real ministry experiences with guidance from Pastor Matt Agee. Dodd will preach and lead worship every three weeks, help teach confirmation, serve on boards, lead meetings and have opportunities to lead small group ministry, book studies, retreats and other activities.

"Our ministry is for the greater church rather than trying to fill gaps in our ministry," Agee says. "We are here to help the intern learn all the things that a pastor does and let him develop what his passions are going to be."

>> Continued on page 9

Congregations brainstorm ideas for working together

by Pastor Kristen Rod

The evening of Sunday, Sept. 10, was an exciting one in Garnavillo. That evening, 61 people from 23 different area congregations of three different denominations gathered at St. Peter Lutheran Church to dream about the idea, “Maybe we could do more good together than apart.” The gathering began by a brief discussion of demographic realities in that part of Northeastern Iowa—many congregations are shrinking, and many communities do not have the numbers of people or financial resources that they had in the past.

However, despite the difficulties faced by many of these congregations, the mood of the evening was joyful and hopeful. Lay leaders from St. Peter and from St. Paul Lutheran Church, also in Garnavillo, emphasized the fact that God is still calling these congregations to share God’s love with their communities, even if that means sharing God’s love in different ways than have been done in the past. And so, people

gathered into smaller groups to brainstorm possibilities of ministries that could be done together.

There was lots of laughter and excitement during brainstorming, as people were encouraged to think of the silliest ideas they could, to get creative juices flowing. After 15 minutes of brainstorming, the small groups reflected on their ideas, and each small group shared one idea with the larger group.

Then the groups did a playful devotion that involved a group drawing activity. There was a lot of laughter about the silly art gallery that had been created, but it was a helpful exercise to remember that when we work with a group, things might turn out differently than we as individuals had expected—but that can be a wonderful thing! We finished the devotion by hearing scripture from St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 3, as he talked about how we are God’s co-workers,

working together, but God is the one who gives the growth, with Jesus Christ as our foundation.

The large group finished the evening by deciding on three concrete next steps:

1. Report back to each congregation and council on what happened during the meeting.
2. Do the brainstorming process with each congregation (as a whole or with the council).
3. Come back together before Easter 2024 to report back on what they found out with their congregations and to keep the momentum going.

Throughout the meeting, we felt the movement of the Holy Spirit, empowering our ministries and our discussion. People left the meeting feeling energized, hopeful, and excited about the future, knowing that it is in God’s hands.



Fall Campaign to support lay ministry training

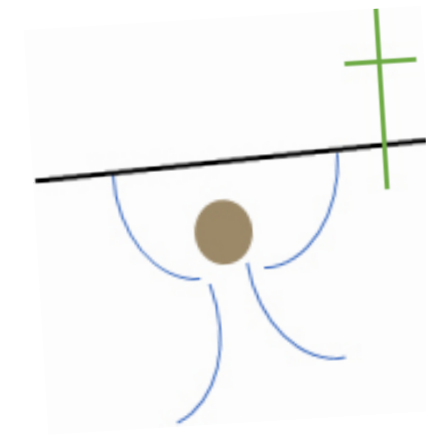
by Pastor Liz Bell

"I just need a pastor. Someone I can talk to, who can help, and is a steady presence!" exclaimed an exhausted lay leader whose congregation waited more than a year and a half to call their next pastor.

At any given moment, there are approximately 30 congregations in the Northeastern Iowa Synod who are being the Church without the leadership and care of a pastor. The average wait time between pastors is 18 to 24 months.

After listening to councils, call committees and congregations, Bishop Kevin reached out to the synods around us to learn about what they are doing to help bridge the gap when pastors leave a congregation.

In 2023, a joint task force with educators, lay leaders and pastors from the Northeastern Iowa, Southeastern Iowa, South Central Wisconsin, and Western Iowa Synods was



formed to explore and create a Lay Ministry Training program centered on preaching, worship leadership, and discipleship.

Students who complete the full program will be ready to preach and lead worship when the congregation is in between pastors, when the pastor is on vacation, and as an extension of the congregation's ministry into places like nursing homes, assisted living, hospitals, and jail ministries.

This fall, you will be invited to give seed money for this new lay training program through the 2023 Northeastern Iowa Fall Appeal. Please consider a financial gift to get this needed program up and running. The first group of students are projected to have their "first day" of the new lay training early fall 2024.



With your help, we can create a quality program with the best resources and teaching available while keeping the cost low for congregations and students.

Learn more at www.neiasynod.org/give.

Congregations find new life as ministry training sites
 << Continued from page 7

Agee says it's important for interns to learn the ministry year and the rhythm of a pastor's workday and schedule, such as working every Wednesday night. Agee and the St. Peter Internship Committee will give regular feedback to Dodd throughout the year and assist with setting goals that align with expectations from the seminary and synod.

"We are here to stoke the fire that led the student to seminary," Agee

says. "We want to make sure that when Noah leaves after a year, he has had a chance to experience the variety of ministry. That's joy."

Congregations that become teaching sites grow in new ways through renewed ministries and the rewards of helping students on the path to ordained ministry. Brackett says that offering more ministry training sites in this synod will make it easier for candidates to learn and serve in Northeastern Iowa.

"All of these teaching ministries give students fantastic on-the-job training and are a great benefit for congregations that would have difficulty filling a part-time call, or that have been without a called pastor for some time," Brackett says.

Learn more about Wartburg Seminary's educational pathways to ordained ministry at www.wartburgseminary.edu/academics.

New Federal Clean Energy Funding for Houses of Worship

by Donna Rasmussen, Care for Creation Network

The passage of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in November 2021 and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in August 2022 provide exciting opportunities for houses of worship to have easier access to clean energy funds.

The IIJA provides the Department of Energy with \$50 million over five years for a new program, the Renew America's Nonprofits program. This program will provide grants of up to \$200,000 to nonprofits to improve the energy efficiency of their facilities. Visit www.energy.gov/scep/renew-america-nonprofits or contact nonprofits@doe.gov for more information.

The IRA allows nonprofits and houses of worship to have access to clean energy funds and tax credits through its elective pay provision, more commonly known as "direct pay." Before the IRA, only homeowners and commercial entities with some tax liability could claim tax credits when installing solar panels, wind turbines, or other eligible technologies. Now, the "direct pay" option means non-taxable entities can also benefit from these credits. Unlike competitive

grant and loan programs in which applicants may not receive an award, direct pay allows entities to get their payment if they meet the requirements for both direct pay and the underlying tax credit. There are steps leading up to filing for direct pay, such as a required pre-filing registration process, which requires an EIN or TIN. More information about this pre-filing registration process will be available by late 2023.

Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) (<https://interfaith-powerandlight.org/federal-funding.org>) has compiled extensive information on its website to help houses of worship understand eligibility and application requirements. In order to prepare for implementing a project, IPL recommends lining up 12 months of utility bills, determining the construction date of your building, tracking occupancy rates, and using IPL's Cool Congregations Calculator to learn more about your congregation's carbon footprint. It is also helpful to learn what other sources of state, local, and utility funding you can leverage to go along with the federal funding.



Clean Energy Districts of Iowa are local institutions that can also provide assistance. As of 2021, there were nine established Energy Districts in Iowa (Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, and Johnson) and more are in the process of being established. To find the energy district near you, go to <https://energydistrict.org>.

These resources come at a critical time when God is leading us into action to address climate change. If your congregation has been considering implementing energy efficiency and/or clean energy projects, whether to save money or protect God's creation or both, the time is now.

SYNOD ROSTER CHANGES

Rev. Calvin Konop, transferred to Northeastern Minnesota Synod
Rev. Paul Amlin, transferred to Florida-Bahamas Synod
Rev. Daniel Baldwin, transferred from Central States Synod
Rev. Maggie Falenschek, transferred from Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Rev. David Efflandt, transferred from Northern Illinois Synod
Rev. David Lenth, on leave from call
Rev. Adam Starrett, on leave from call
Rev. Matthew Muters, on leave from call
Rev. Mark Anderson, retired

CLERGY APPRECIATION MONTH

October is observed as National Clergy Appreciation Month, with Sunday, Oct. 8, set aside as the day to honor rostered ministers. The synod invites congregations to join in lifting up their pastors, deacons, and lay ministers during October, and express gratitude for their caring, contributions and services.



OCTOBER EVENTS

- 3 Care for Creation Network, 4:30 p.m., Zoom
- 5 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
9:30-11:30 a.m., Zoom
- 6-7 Middle School Lock-In, UNI Wellness Center,
Cedar Falls
- 15-17 Fall Theological Conference, Holiday Inn/
Bien VenU, Cedar Falls
- 19 Youth Ministry Network, 10 a.m., St. Paul's, Postville

NOVEMBER EVENTS

- 1 Executive Committee Meeting, 1 p.m., Zoom
- 2 New to the Synod, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Synod Office
- 2 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
9:30-11:30 a.m., Zoom
- 3-5 "One Year to Live" Men's Ministry Retreat, Ewalu,
Strawberry Point
- 8 Racial Justice Network, 1 p.m., Hybrid meeting
- 9 Dean's and Chaplain's Meeting, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.,
Synod Office
- 11 Synodical Women's Organization Meeting,
8:30 a.m.-noon, Synod Office
- 16 Youth Ministry Network, 10 a.m., St. Paul's, Waverly
- 18 Synod Council Meeting, Zoom, 9 a.m.
- 23-24 Synod Office Closed, Thanksgiving
- 30 Youth Mental Health First Aid Training, 9 a.m.-
3:30 p.m., Decorah, Decorah

DECEMBER EVENTS

- 7 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 8 Candidacy Committee, Synod Office, 8:30 a.m.
- 21 Youth Ministry Network, TBD, 10 a.m.
- 22-29 Office Closed, Christmas Break

JANUARY 2024 EVENTS

- 1 Office Closed, New Year's
- 4 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 13 Synodical Women's Organization Cluster Meeting,
Synod Office, 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- 18-21 Extravaganza, New Orleans
- 20 Synod Council Meeting, Zoom, 9 a.m.
- 15 Office Closed, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 25 Youth Ministry Network, ThreeHouse, Cedar Falls,
10 a.m.
- 27 Synodical Women's Organization Cluster Meeting
(snow date), Synod Office, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2024 EVENTS

- 1 Transitional/Interim Ministry Colleague Group,
Zoom, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 9-10 Candidacy Retreat, Shalom Spirituality Center,
Dubuque
- 15 Youth Ministry Network, Synod Office, Waverly, 10 a.m.

ORDAINING

Matthew Rossler, Trinity, Mason City, Oct. 14

INSTALLING

Rev. Jason Davis, Holy Trinity, Dubuque, Sept. 10
 Rev. Daniel Baldwin, Immanuel, Cresco, Sept. 24
 Rev. Matthew Rossler, Glenwood & Canoe Ridge, Decorah,
 Oct. 15
 Rev. Maggie Falenschek, Dean of Spiritual Life &
 Moehlmann Chaplaincy Chair, Wartburg College, Oct. 23
 Rev. Charles Peterson, St. John's, Dubuque, pending
 Erika Breddin, invitation to extended service, Zion, Waterloo,
 pending

INTERVIEWING

Decorah, Big Canoe & Highland, Rev. Waldemar Gies,
 contract interim
 Decorah, Decorah, staff
*Eldorado, St. Peter**
 Elkader, Bethany & Strawberry Point, Emanuel,
 Rev. Katherine Longtin Johnson, interim
 Garnavillo, St. Peter & Clayton, Peace, Rev. Harold McMillin,
 contract interim
 Greene, St. Peter
 Hampton, St. Paul, Rev. Nikoli Falenschek, interim
*Janesville, Messiah**
 Jesup, American & La Porte City, Zion (Jubilee)
 La Porte City, American
 Lake Mills, Salem
*Leland, Our Savior & Garner, Faith (Miller)**
 Mason City, Trinity, staff, Rev. Dan Dahl, interim
 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
*synodically authorized minister**

SELF-STUDY

Asbury, Lord of Life
*Decorah, St. John's & Hauge**
*Dows, First, Rev. Anita Nuetzman, interim**
 Dubuque, St. Peter, staff
 Dysart, Zion
 Elgin, Elgin & Elkader, Highland
*Hawkeye, Trinity**
 Osage, Our Savior's
 Ossian, Ossian
Washburn, Redeemer
*Waterloo, Trinity**

ROSTER CHANGES

(SEE PAGE 10)

**Part-time Call*

PRAYER CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders Hanna Langholz, Decorah 1	Rev. Bruce L. Hanson, Garnavillo Rev. Dr. James B. Martin-Schramm, Decorah 2	Rev. Joel H. Becker, Waverly 3	Rev. James K. Knudson, Waterloo 4	Madison, Ridgeway 5	Rev. Melinda McVey, Clear Lake 6	Rev. Anita Nuetzman, Mason City 7
Orleans, Ridgeway 8	Peace, Ridgeway 9	Zion, Rockford 10	St. Peter, Rockwell 11	Rev. Jennifer J. Bohls, Mason City 12	St. Paul (Thornton), Rockwell 13	Bergen, Roland 14
Carol Hasvold, Decorah 15	Rev. James A. Mattson, Decorah Rev. Mark D. Walker, Kensett 16	Middle East Peace St. Peter, St. Ansgar 17	Deer Creek, St. Ansgar 18	Immanuel, Scarville 19	Zion, Sheffield 20	Rev. Mark A. Anderson, Waverly 21
Rev. Victoria L. Shepherd, Parkersburg 22	Rev. Elizabeth A. Olson, Waverly 23	Rev. Gregory T. Bjornstad, Dubuque Rev. Amy Zalk Larson, Decorah 24	Faith, Shell Rock 25	Rev. Larry A. Trachte, Waverly 26	St. Paul, Balltown 27	Rev. Dena M. Gable, Cedar Falls 28
Our Savior's, Stanhope 29	Rev. William J. Peters, Lake Mills 30	Rev. Dennis A. Hugdahl, Farmington, Minn. 31				

NOVEMBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders Rev. Leo E. Combs-Lay, Cresco Rev. Michael R. Blair, Waverly 1	St. Petri, Story City 2	St. Sebald, Strawberry Point 3	Rev. Calvin P. Konop, Dubuque 4
Ellen Ward, Decorah 5	Emanuel, Strawberry Point 6	St. John, Sumner 7	Rev. Jane Granzow, Iowa Falls 8	St. John (Buck Creek), Sumner 9	Rev. Ole Winter, Decorah Rev. Jeffrey D. Jacobs, Lime Springs 10	Rev. Dr. Jennifer E. Edinger, Decorah 11
St. Peter (Richfield), Sumner 12	Grace, Tripoli 13	Rev. William P. Thalacker, Waverly Rev. Robert L. Edwards, Story City 14	St. John (Crane Creek), Tripoli 15	Rev. Corey W. Smith, Waverly 16	Middle East Peace St. Paul, Volga 17	Rev. Katherine Longtin Johnson, Strawberry Point 18
Redeemer, Washburn 19	St. Ansgar, Waterloo 20	Rev. Gary G. Hatcher, Garnavillo 21	St. John (Bennington), Waterloo 22	Our Savior's, Waterloo 23	Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Waterloo 24	Trinity, Waterloo 25
Zion, Waterloo 26	St. John (Stapleton), Waucoma 27	St. John, Waukon 28	Redeemer, Waverly 29	St. Paul's Church & School, Waverly 30		



Good News

Sept/ Oct
2023

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.

From our New President

Introducing Sondra Nelson, newly elected president to NEIA SWO. She comes to us from Salem Lutheran church in Lake Mills IA where she has been active as a confirmation assistant, co-chair on the youth board, chaperone at the Houston youth gathering, financial secretary, church executive council, lay pastor, co-lead Bible study at Mills Harbor Assisted Living, Life and Growth board, visitation, representative to the LMAMA board and SWO WELCA gathering at Belmond.



She is retired from AT&T where she was an accounting and IT manager. Sondra has three grown children, Tony, Jennifer, and Jeanne. Eight grandchildren and one great grandchild. She is active in the community serving as an election official. She likes to sew and loves going to coffee with friends. Her home is always open to anyone wanting to visit.

Greetings! As fall has arrived, we're now in the middle of harvest season and thanking God for all the blessings He has bestowed on us. Please pray for our people in Florida and the coastal states that had damage from Hurricane Idalia. Even though we may not understand God's plan. The way neighbors help neighbors shows us the goodness of the world instead of the worst of it.

We had our first NEIA SWO meeting on August 26. We each introduced ourselves by giving our name, home church, location, and passion. It was a very productive and informative meeting. We worked together as a team to accomplish each item on the agenda. This is going to be an exciting and bold year for our SWO! We made plans for an appreciation event using Katie's fund grant. Our goal is to have this event sometime in the spring. We planned our future meeting dates up through June of 2024. We are planning a meeting with cluster leaders in January 2024. We are in the beginning stages of planning our convention in June 2024. Watch for more information

about our June gathering. Our next board meeting is scheduled for November 11, 2023.

May you all enjoy the beauty of fall and the joy of Thanksgiving! Don't forget your Thank offerings! May God's blessing be with you all.

Sondra Nelson, President

Justice Committee

Here is what I found on the "web" relating to a legal definition of justice: The quality of being just, impartial, or fair; the principle or ideal of just dealing; the administration of law; Fair, just, or impartial legal process.

I find that to be good information, yet I struggle to apply it on a personal level. So, rather than the web, let's look at what Jesus tells us through the writings in the Bible. Let's look at Matthew 22:36-39 when Jesus says, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" I understand that definition and can see how important it is to do. To further the understanding, Jesus went on and used the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate for the listener what it meant to "love our neighbor" – personally, sacrificially if necessary, and to act for the good of others – justice! Justice in everyday life to love your neighbor will go a very long way improving this world we live in.

Submitted by Donna Busch

Stewardship Committee

Good to see you at our gathering in Belmond earlier this summer. The worship and fellowship together was great! We look forward to working with our new president Sondra Nelson who comes from Salem Lutheran in Lake Mills. The board appreciated her willingness to step up to this leadership position. Here is the report of the offering taken that day: To the Iowa Bishop's ride against hunger we sent \$1,600.00 and the same amount to Churchwide

WELCA. The in-kind gifts gathered were designated to Colt's Daycare in Belmond and to the Hopes program that is administered by Wright County Public Health in Clarion. Both entities were appreciative of our donations. In the mail recently I received a sheet of construction paper with a vase and lots of flowers colored by the children, glued on the paper and titled "THANK YOU BUNCHES!"

Submitted by Nancy Poppe

Discipleship Committee

The 35th annual gathering of the Northeastern Iowa Women of the ELCA was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Belmond on June 17, 2023. I was a first-time attendee. The theme was "Stir Us, Free Us." This theme inspired me to be a better disciple of Christ. Our mission is "To mobilize women to act **BOLDLY** on our faith in Jesus Christ." I want to be bold in my faith. I want to be stirred and freed to be a disciple of Christ. That means I need to be willing to share my faith with the people I meet. I need to set a good example following Christ. I know I am not perfect as Jesus was, but I need to be willing to put forth the effort to interact and connect with people and to be open about my faith. Jesus has done so much for us-I need to be willing to spread that news to others instead of remaining quiet. I am reminded of a saying that I have seen- "if I were to be put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?" So allow yourselves to be stirred and freed in your faith!

Submitted by Karen Weltzin

Welcome to the Board, Chris VanDeventer

Chris and husband Dave have been married over 51 years and have two grown daughters, Kaci and Kelli and a son-in-law Richard as well as extended family. A retired teacher, she is interested in serving God, loves reading science fiction and fantasy books (movies too!), and going south each winter to Florida for four months. She and her husband have a beloved Corgi named Angel (that should have been named Rascal). She and her husband moved to Mason City in September where she is active at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, especially with the quilters, as handbell/chime choir director, and organizing a WELCA Bible study group. Prior to this, in Algona at First Lutheran, she was also very active: Beginners Bell Choir Director, vocal choir, Bible study, Council member, WELCA president, Western Iowa SWO



Board secretary several years, as representative at state and churchwide congregational conventions, and many other roles as well. She is honored to represent women's needs and would like to hear about any issues or concerns you feel the SWO Board should address. Chris would also like to help your unit with resources and information that you might need.

CALENDAR

- Oct 14 C/E/H LWR Ingathering
@ Redeemer, Waverly
LWR Ingathering @ Albert Lea
- Oct 28 Cluster B gathering @ Littleport
- Nov 4 B/D/I LWR Ingathering @ Decorah
- Nov 1 Deadline for Nov/ Dec *Good News*
- Nov 11 SWO Board @ Synod Office
- Jan 1 Deadline for Jan/ Feb *Good News*
- Jan 13 SWO/ Cluster Leadership @ Synod Office
- Mar 9 SWO Board @ Synod Office
- May 4 SWO Board @ Synod Office
- Jun 14 SWO Board @ Gathering Site (TBD)
- Jun 15 SWO 36th Annual Gathering (TBD)



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

NEIA Women of the ELCA Executive Board

Sondra Nelson, President

641-909-4596, snelson502@gmail.com

Alice Greimann, Vice President

641-456-2973, algreimann@wbfreq.com

JoAnn Brunsvold, Secretary

641-512-4236, sjbruns@wctatel.net

Nancy Poppe, Treasurer

641-257-8199, popcan1952@gmail.com
2775 Durham Avenue, Nashua, IA 50658

Checks payable to NE IA SWO, include Form A

Good News, Editor Diane Wills

641-425-8628, wills.dianes@gmail.com
1399 Beeds Lake Drive, Hampton IA 50441

Contact Women of the ELCA:

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

Contact NEIA Women of the ELCA:

neiasynod.org/women-of-the_-ELCA

Living Faith @



Dear Friends in Christ,

The season of Autumn has once again come to North Iowa. As I was talking with my grandkids about this season the other day, I asked why they thought it was called fall by most people. Their response was “because it’s the time the leaves fall off the trees!” They think grandma is silly sometimes with my questions. But, they’re correct! The leaves fall off the trees, the corn is being harvested in some places, the beans are being harvested in other places, the temperature at night gets low enough to make foggy early mornings, and with all the dust or smoke in the air, the sunrises and sunsets are very colorful!

Many people look forward to fall for the football and the cooler temps - while some others of us would be fine with keeping the warmer temps around for a while longer. The grass and other cover crops need this change in seasons to provide respite and recuperation for the land in order that the crops can be planted again next year ... just as our human bodies have the need for rest, recuperation, and refreshment. This time can be experienced in different ways. Reading books, sitting by a fire, watching a movie, or simply taking a nap are some of the ways to help our bodies with rest.

Fall brings the smells of cider and cinnamon, apple picking, and pumpkin flavored food and drink.

With school starting up again, though, the schedules are filling up with activities - both of school and of church varieties. This next month we can look forward to education classes, Reformation Sunday, and Fall Theological Conference.

What is your favorite part of fall? Are you ready to have new experiences, learn new skills, or put your God-given gifts to use in some new ways?

Take the time to enjoy the color changes going on around you, practice gratitude because gratitude draws us closer to God.

Have a blessed fall.

Rev. Sue Cira



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](#)



Find us on
Facebook

Reformation Day

October 31st is not only Halloween, it is also a time to remember the Reformation and its importance in church history. On this day in 1517, Martin Luther (the reformer, not MLK Jr. the civil rights leader) nailed his ninety-five theses (discussion points) to the door of the Wittenberg castle in protest of the abuses of the church. One of the main messages Martin Luther taught was that salvation cannot be purchased or earned. He said “We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” When Martin Luther nailed those 95 theses to the door the Protestant Reformation was born.



Rest Your Weary Heart

I have discovered that some weeks are more exhausting than others. By the time Sunday afternoon arrives, I sometimes feel like my reserve tank is empty. Whether your week has involved heart-break or victories; whether your laundry is all washed, folded, and put away; or whether your heart is full of disappointments and the weight of your to-do list; whatever your week has brought ... stop. Don't worry about what has already passed. Take the time to stop and rest. Rest from the trials - rest from the victories - and center your heart on God, our Maker.

“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ~ Isaiah 43:18-19

The week will fade away and like all of our days, they are being recreated. Your burden is no longer yours, it is being lifted up by the glory of the cross.



Rock Painting is one of the newer hobbies that I would

like to try. As you can see above, the website rockpaintingguide.com is one place to find painting ideas and tips. You are encouraged to find flat rocks and use Mod Podge Outdoors to seal the rock before painting your design. According to the directions, more than one coat of paint is a good idea. Once the rocks are dry, you can hide them in parks. How exciting to go for a hike and find some pretty painted rocks! And, maybe even some flowers ... or some kids playing on the swings ... or an interesting tree with leaves that are falling ... or just a bench — to sit and rest.

Hunger Hits Home

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Hunger Network thanks Bethesda Lutheran, Jewell, for sharing this article about a hunger activity they hosted to help people learn what it is like to face hunger. Some 22 people participated, including members from Bergan Lutheran, Roland, and St. Petri Lutheran, Story City.

Tuesday Together Time is a weekly community potluck event ongoing since its inception in January of 2012. Each Tuesday members of the community gather at noon for food, fellowship, and some fun. The event is held at Bethesda Lutheran Church in Jewell, IA. Tuesdays in August were set aside for unique events all leading up to "International Day" on August 29th. The participants didn't know it, but they were about to experience a simulation of what the hungry of the world live out on a daily basis.

This day, two volunteers came to be known as "typical Americans", two were "children of Iowa", and all the rest divided into two groups, or villages. Village elders, Pastor John Sheahan, Bergan Lutheran, Roland, and Pastor Tim Malek, St. Petri Lutheran, Story City, led their village groups following maps to a "well" outside on the church lawn. All sorts of clean containers were provided for the villagers to use to fetch water from the "well."

"Well Man" Don Rastetter of Bethesda filled containers. The Village Elders arranged for others to bring water back for those who could not manage the "3-mile" hike for water through dangerous lands.



The two Americans had already started to enjoy their special meal starting off with a salad containing fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, and green peppers with a red wine vinaigrette dressing from preparer Kris Koehn's garden. Each item was described for all and served at the beautifully set table with a pitcher of iced water and coffee poured to keep the cups full.

What started out for Shirley Isebrands and Nancy Johnson with statements of, "I'm so glad I volunteered to be an

American." and "Oh, my we are going to have such good food."; by the end of the meal turned into, "I feel so guilty." "I am eating and no one else gets to." and "I feel bad about this."



Two unknowing volunteers lived out the following "story" as the two children from Iowa: Their mother found herself pregnant at the age of fifteen and her parents lovingly supported her – at first. But, when she became pregnant a second time, the parents told her to leave the house and that she would be on her own.

She was struggling, could find nowhere to live with her two young children and they were living in her car. Because she could not afford the cost of daycare and did not have her GED, it was difficult to find employment. At last, she secured a 3-hour job at Sam's Club in Ames as a food demonstrator



The entree provided was grilled herb-rubbed pork loin, cheesy potatoes, garden-fresh steamed green beans with bacon and onion and fresh bread and butter. The dessert following was a brownie topped with vanilla ice cream.

and her supervisor allowed her two children to wait for her at the table in the employee break room providing they “made no noise and did not get into anything”. If they did not observe those rules, the mother would lose her job. The children knew how important the job was, so they did not even talk during this time. Their only food that day would come later if there was “demonstration food” left that would have been thrown out anyway; their mother’s supervisor allowed them to take it with them where they would eat in the car. This day, there was no food left after their mother’s shift and, again, they would go to bed in the backseat with hungry stomachs.

This village, with Village Elder John, was about to set out with their water containers to find the well man. After finding water, they returned for their meal for the day.

Once both villages had returned from getting water, Pastor Joy Edeker, Bethesda Lutheran Church, Jewell, offered a meal blessing giving participants reason to ponder and proclaim the blessings given by God. Then the villagers and their leaders were given their ration for the day of cooked white rice. Villagers were told as they came for their portion served in a paper bowl with a plastic spoon, they would be walking by the two Iowa children, and they could not talk with them because their mother desperately needed to hold on to her job. Also, as they passed by the table with the two Americans, they should not pause or make eye contact with them as those Americans did not want to be bothered with knowing their plight or seeing their great need.

Submitted by Donna M. Busch, Tuesday Together Time sponsor and founder.

Picture credit: Richard Steffen, Jewell



This village, with Village Elder John, was about to set out with their water containers to find the well man. After finding water, they returned for their meal for the day.



After all had eaten their ration of rice, the speaker for the day was revealed. Mr. Bob Forte of Clive, Iowa, a volunteer at Food Bank of Iowa and volunteer at Clive Food Pantries, brought information about food insecurity of Iowans. Looking on in this picture is Village Elder Tim. Bob told of the need across Iowa for food, the lack of food pantries in some areas of the state, and how the Food Bank of Iowa reaches out to get food to those in need.



A village resident, Eudene Lund, listens intently to what Bob Forte was saying.

- The event ended with the two Americans leaving with stomachs full and hearts uncertain.
- The two Iowa children left with no food in their stomachs, no water to drink, and could not talk until they were outside the building.
- The villagers left with rice in their stomachs knowing their next meal would not come until tomorrow