

Celebrating Renewal: Martin Luther — The Gospel

The Gospel is part of all we do

by Bishop Steven L. Ullestad, Northeastern Iowa Synod

Throughout this year we will be celebrating the Gospel, using the witness of Martin Luther as a symbol of how that Gospel transforms individuals and the church. The Gospel is woven into what Dr. Luther said and wrote. There are several phrases of Luther's theology that exemplify this and the real life impact these teachings have on people.

Saved by Grace Through Faith

Ruth's confirmation pastor was ordained by the Lutheran church, but was not a Lutheran. He taught her, among other things, that she would need to go into her clothes closet and pray until the "light of Christ" broke into her closet. She did exactly that because her pastor had told her to do so.

The light never shattered her closet door. Consequently, she went to college knowing that she was going to hell.

"For by grace you have been saved." This verse liberated Martin Luther and frees all who hear this Good News.

By the way, Ruth heard the Gospel while I was in seminary and it changed her life.

Simul Justus et Peccator

Luther introduced the concept that we are simultaneously saint and sinner. Again, this is a liberat-

"To God 'alone' be the glory."
This is the Gospel. Alone.
— Bishop Steven L. Ullestad



ing word to people who have been taught that you are either one or the other. Simultaneously we are saved and condemned. That is why we must rely on Jesus Christ to save us. Our righteousness, our works, our piety, our faithfulness do not save us. Only Jesus does.

Sola

Sola is the Latin word for "alone."

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Luther posting his 95 theses in 1517. Painting by Ferdinand Pauwels.

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Martin Luther claimed that we are saved by “Grace alone,” “Faith alone,” “Scripture alone,” “Christ alone.”

If “alone” means to be by itself, how could there be multiple “alone”s?

The answer rests in Luther’s understanding that salvation always comes from outside of ourselves. Grace, Faith, Scripture, Christ all bring the power of salvation to us apart from our own “understanding or effort” (Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Creed).

God is the actor. God makes the decision. “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). In the waters of baptism, it is God who makes the claim on our life.

God’s activity “alone” saves us. That adds the fifth “sola.” “To God ‘alone’ be the glory.”

This is the Gospel. Alone.

Alien Righteousness

“Righteousness” is a word that we in the church believe everyone understands. That may not be true for all.

I remember, as a young pastor, a presentation to the synod assembly by a seminary professor who told the story of his car breaking down in a Middle Eastern desert. The driver was able to repair the problem, clapped his hands and said in his native tongue, “righteous.” The car had been restored to its intended purpose. It was now “righteous.”

When God makes us righteous we are restored to our intended purpose. We become what God intends

“Someone asked Martin Luther what we contribute to salvation, and he said, ‘Sin and resistance.’”

—Michael Horton

us to be, human beings created in the image of God. We become “right with God.” Righteous.

Righteousness always and only comes to us from outside of ourselves, namely through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We live in a culture that seems to believe that we can become righteous through our decisions and our actions. Pray enough, go to enough Bible studies, be right on the pressing social issues of the day. Then you will be righteous. No, says Martin Luther. You have no hope for righteousness if it is left up to you. That will only bring on the sin of self-righteousness.

Righteousness always comes from outside of ourselves. It only comes from Jesus, and is given as a gift.

Vocation

Luther was raised in a church that used the word “vocation” to mean the callings of those who serve within the church. Priests, nuns and monks exercised their “vocations,” their callings from God, by serving

the institution of the church.

“Vocation” took on a new meaning for the Reformers. Each person who is baptized is called to a lifetime of service of others. That service is a “vocation,” a holy calling that is exercised in the baptized daily life, not simply within the structures of the church. Scrubbing floors, making shoes, teaching, parenting, farming, waiting tables, working in a factory are all “vocations” that serve others and, in so doing, serve God.

The Gospel that comes to us in the waters of baptism calls us to lives of service, our vocations.

Theology of the Cross

This is a very difficult challenge for us in a culture based on a theology of glory. The theology of glory begins with the phrase “If you only ..., then” Once again, grace is dependent on you and your decisions, rather than the unconditional love and grace of God in Jesus Christ. A theology of glory also

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Farming is a vocation that serves others and, in so doing, serves God.

There can be no shining stars without the servants

It takes eleven football players to make a field goal.

The focus is on the kicker. But he does not have a chance unless ten others do their jobs.

Each of the linemen must block their opponent. The center must hike the ball accurately.

Then, there is the holder. He must catch the ball, regardless of the accuracy of the hike. He must place the ball and then spin it so that the laces are pointed away from the kick. Finally, he must hold the ball

“Perhaps, that is why I have more admiration for those who make it happen, the servants, than the shining star.”

straight and tall for the kick, all within a second.

The kicker is important. But he does not have a chance without ten other teammates.

Perhaps, that is why I have more admiration for those who make it happen, the servants, than the

shining star. Stars are fine. However, they only shine because of the rest of us who quietly do our job for the sake of the team.



Thank you to all of the spiritual linemen, centers and holders. We are glad that the kickers do your job, too.

— Steven L. Ullestad
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod

Believing for One Another

by Rev. Dr. H. George Anderson

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”
Mark 2:5



Three days after the death of his teen-age daughter, Luther wrote to a friend: “I expect you have heard that my beloved Magdalena has been born again into Christ’s everlasting kingdom. Although my wife and I ought to rejoice because of her happy end ... we are almost powerless to lift our minds above our loss. So would you give thanks to God in our stead?”

Every one of us knows those times when we have been numbed by grief. Like that paralyzed man who could not help himself, in the Body of Christ we can

Gospel Reflection

The Northeastern Iowa Synod will celebrate the Renewal throughout 2017 by focusing on the Gospel and the witness of Martin Luther. Eleven rostered leaders will join in this celebration by offering “Gospel Reflections” to be shared in each issue of the *Star* newsletter. These reflections are based on familiar sayings and parables from Jesus, with personal insights from the writers.

Look for companion art work and reflections on the synod’s blog, <http://blog.neiasynod.org>.



depend on the faith of others to believe in our behalf. As we were once carried to our baptism, they can bring us to the One who heals our souls.

(Reflection based on Mark 2:1-12)

Celebrate the Reformation in Eastern Europe

Companion Synod Trip

May 12-24, 2017

Reservations accepted through Feb. 1, 2017.

Pastor Mark Anderson, assistant to the Bishop, can't think of a better way to celebrate the Reformation in 2017 than to join Wartburg College's "Reformation Then and Now" class to tour Lutheran-connected sites in Eastern Europe.

"This trip will offer the best of what Eastern Europe has to offer — beautiful cities, fabulous meals, landmark destinations, and opportunities to connect with our Lutheran companions in Hungary," Anderson says. "Even better, we will be traveling with arguably one of the greatest living experts on the Lutheran reformation."

Anderson is referring to the Rev. Dr. Kit Kleinhans, McCoy Family Distinguished Chair of Lutheran Heritage and Mission, Wartburg College, who with Anderson will lead 16 Wartburg students and other guests from the Northeastern Iowa Synod for 13 days through cities of Eastern Europe and ministry sites in Hungary where Young Adults in Global Mission are serving.

The synod-sponsored trip joins Kleinhans' and the Wartburg students in Nuremberg, Germany, on May 12 and ends May 24 with a flight home from Budapest, Hungary. Highlights in Germany include a guided tour of the concentration camp where Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned and executed; a visit to Herrnhut, home of the Moravian Brethren and the "Daily Texts;" and Dresden, which was rebuilt from ruins after being fire-bombed by Allied Forces during World War II.

Day of Renewal to look at 'Luther's Small Catechism'

Rostered leaders are invited to take a new look at *Luther's Small Catechism* during this year's Day of Renewal.

The event is set for Thursday, March 16, at Nazareth Lutheran, Cedar Falls.

Mark your calendars and watch for more information in upcoming issues of the *Star* newsletter and on the synod website.

The trip continues to the Czech Republic for a tour of Prague, where Jan Hus began a reformation of the church 100 years before Martin Luther, and the capital city of Bratislava. In Hungary, the group will visit the historical city of Sarospatak, Budapest and other cities where the Young Adults in Global Mission sponsored by this synod are serving.

"We will get to meet the YAGMs, see where they work, talk to them about their ministries, and learn about the Roma people and how the church is serving them and Syrian refugees," Anderson says.

The group will also meet with Bishop Tamás Fabiny and Pastor Erzsébet Molnár, who have both visited the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

To learn more or to register online, visit www.wartburg-seminary.edu/learningforlife/learning-for-life-events/come-to-the-castle-2.



Mark Anderson



Kit Kleinhans

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Send news for the February issue to Marcia Hahn by Jan. 10. We welcome story ideas related to the 2017 theme, "Celebrating Renewal: Martin Luther – The Gospel."

Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated for use in synod congregations and organizations, with credit to the *Star* newsletter.

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www.neiasynod.org

holds that our good actions bring us “blessings,” particularly financial success.

The cross, which includes the resurrection according to John’s Gospel, is about laying down your life in service of others — particularly “the least of these.” The cross is not about my personal financial success. It is about carrying the cross of Jesus Christ in service of others.

The Christian faith is a response to the Good News of Jesus Christ by serving those in need. Anything other than that is about self-interest and not about the Gospel.

We celebrate the Gospel each and every day. This year we give thanks in a particular way, even as we honor Martin Luther who led us into the reformation of the Christian church.



Resources offer ideas for celebrating the Reformation

Martin Luther posted his “Ninety-Five Theses” in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, and this year congregations, members, synods and other institutions of the ELCA will observe the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation with a variety of events and activities.

In all of these activities, the ELCA seeks to find in this historic milestone an occasion to give a confident and joyful witness of the life and freedom in Jesus Christ that is for all. The ELCA’s churchwide organization is using the theme “Freed and Renewed in Christ” in its observance.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Council adopted a six-year plan called “Celebrating Renewal,” which began in 2015, to recognize leaders who set the groundwork for the Reformation long before 1517. The synod celebrated Jan Hus and “Bold Leadership” in

2015, and Elizabeth of Hungary and her example of service in 2016. This year the synod focus is on Martin Luther and the Gospel.*

Congregations are encouraged to find ways to lift up any of these themes or use their own to celebrate the Reformation.

The www.elca500.org website offers articles and publications, celebration ideas, a list of events, tools to plan celebrations, and other resources to plan observances.

** The Northeastern Iowa Synod will focus on Philip Melancthon in 2018, Katherine Von Bora in 2019, and Johannes Bugenhagen in 2020.*

**Freed
& RENEWED
in Christ**
500
YEARS OF GOD'S
GRACE IN ACTION

Leaders invited to Anti-Racism Workshop

Feb. 3, 2017
Wartburg Theological Seminary
Dubuque, Iowa

Registration for the “Anti-Racism Workshop” at Wartburg Theological Seminary is due Friday, Jan. 27.

Rostered Leaders of the Northeastern Iowa Synod are invited to join WTS students for this special workshop Friday, Feb. 3, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The workshop will be led by the Rev. Marilyn Miller and the Rev. Mark Thompson, ELCA pastors and seasoned facilitators with whom the seminary has had a long-term relationship.

Cost to attend is \$75, which will include lunch. Maximum enrollment is 20 persons from the synod.

To learn more and to register online, visit www.wartburgseminary.edu/event/anti-racism-workshop-february-3-2017.

Congregations thrive when they focus on doing more

January is the month many congregations have their annual meetings, including passing the new budget. So, it's this time of year that the refrain "we have to cut the budget" is often heard. However, in this context it might be more accurate if the refrain were "let's do less ministry next year" or "we need to be less generous next year" or even "we need to respond to God's love less next year."

In addition to what this says about our faith and commitment, it is also a death toll for the congregation. New people in the community don't want to join a congregation that is being less of a blessing next year. Members of congregations don't become more engaged when the congregation announces it will be doing less ministry next year. People do not want to increase their giving

to a congregation that is being less generous next year — and probably the year after and the year after that.

Pastor Tom Berlin, writing for the Lewis Center for Church Leadership (October 2016), suggests that "when a church blesses the poor and vulnerable, then people are excited to join that mission." Berlin suggests that people want to belong to a congregation that is making a difference in the world. He further writes that a generous church people want to participate because it is exciting and important. They don't want to miss worship, because they might miss a chance to experience grace; they want to give, or some child may go hungry; they want to volunteer, or someone may not learn about God's love.

By contrast, when a congregation is focused on doing less, being less, serving less, and shrinking its mission down to just providing services to the existing members, it is a place of decay, not joy. In other words, generous congregations thrive and congregations with a declining mission decline.

— *Pastor Mark Anderson*
Assistant to the Bishop



Men are invited to the 'One Year to Live' retreat

Feb. 10-12, 2017
Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point, Iowa

Men of all ages are encouraged to register by Jan. 25 for the "One Year to Live" men's retreat set for Feb. 10-12 at Ewalu Camp & Retreat Center, Strawberry Point.

The OYTL retreat offers an opportunity for men to 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.

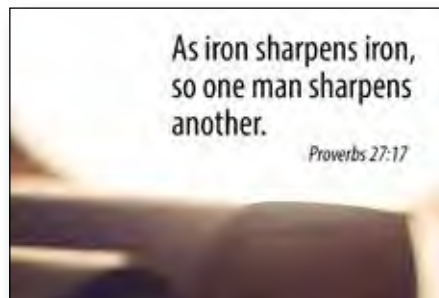
The retreat focuses on small group discussions and activities led by lay men who have attended previous OYTL retreats and rediscovered their own faith in Christ. Men who attend the 45-hour OYTL retreats leave with a new mission statement for life and a plan centered on how

they would live their lives if they knew they had only one year to live.



This weekend retreat starts at 5:30 p.m. on Friday and ends at 3 p.m. Sunday. Those who register by Wednesday, Jan. 25, receive the discounted rate of \$185. Standard registration is due by Feb. 3 for \$225.

To learn more and to download the brochure/registration form, visit www.neiasynod.org/ministries/mens-ministry.



JANUARY EVENTS

- 2 **Office Closed**
- 5 **Meeting**, Interim Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 5 **No meeting**, Youth Ministry Network
- 12 **Event**, New to Synod, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 14 **Meeting**, Synodical Women's Organization Cluster, Synod Office, 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.
- 16 **Office Closed**, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 18 **Event**, Safeguarding God's People, Jubilee Conference, Our Savior's, Waterloo, 1:30-4:30 p.m.
- 20-23 **Event**, Extravaganza, Louisville, Ky.
- 21 **Meeting**, (Snow Date) Synodical Women's Organization Cluster
- 21 **Meeting**, Treasurers, Redeemer, Waverly, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 26 **Meeting**, Deans and Chaplains, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

- 2 **Meeting**, Interim Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 2 **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, St. Paul's, Waverly, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 3 **Event**, Anti-Racism Workshop, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque
- 7 **Meeting**, Assembly Planning Committee, Luther, Decorah, 4-6 p.m.
- 10-12 **Event**, Lutheran Men in Mission "One Year to Live" Retreat, Ewalu Camp & Retreat Center, Strawberry Point
- 21 **Event**, Lutheran Day on the Hill
- 24-25 **Event**, Candidacy Retreat, American Martyrs, Cedar Falls
- 28 **Meeting**, Executive Committee, 9 a.m.-12 noon

MARCH EVENTS

- 2 **Meeting**, Interim Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 2 **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, Holy Trinity, Dubuque, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- 4 **Meeting**, Synodical Women's Organization Board, 8 a.m.-12 noon
- 5-7 **Conference**, Rural Ministry, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque
- 11 **Meeting**, Synod Council, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
- 16 **Event**, Day of Renewal, Nazareth, Cedar Falls
- 18 **Meeting**, (Snow Date) Synodical Women's Organization Board
- 18 **Meeting**, Resolution Committee, 9:30-11 a.m.

APRIL EVENTS

- 6 **Meeting**, Interim Colleague Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 6 **Meeting**, Youth Ministry Network, First, Northwood, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

INTERVIEWING

- Allison**, St. James, Rev. Paul Schaedig, interim
- Clermont**, West Clermont
- Decorah**, Decorah (staff), Rev. Charis Combs-Lay, interim
- Dubuque**, Lord of Life, Rev. Karla Wildberger, interim
- Frederika**, St. John
- La Porte City**, Zion (Jubilee), Rev. Daniel Mixdorf, interim
- Oelwein**, Zion
- Osage**, Our Savior's, Rev. Alan Schulz, interim
- Strawberry Point**, Emanuel, Rev. Jerome Godson, interim
- Sumner**, St. John

SELF-STUDY

- Alta Vista**, Zion and **Lawler**, Immanuel (Crane Creek), Rev. Vincent Fricke, interim
- Calmar**, Calmar and **Decorah**, Springfield, Rev. Phillip Olson, interim
- Charles City**, St. John, Rev. Bill Odermann, interim
- Chester**, United
- Coulter**, Nazareth; and **Hampton**, St. John's
- Decorah**, St. John's and Hauge
- Elma**, St. Paul
- Greene**, St. John (Vilmar)
- La Porte City**, American, Rev. Rick Biedermann, interim
- Lime Springs**, St. Paul
- Mason City**, St. Paul, Rev. Michael Last, interim
- Roland**, Bergen, John Sheahan, interim lay minister
- Ryan**, Peace and **Dundee**, St. John (Unity of the Cross Lutheran Parish)
- Waterloo**, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
- Waukon**, St. John
- Waverly**, Redeemer, Rev. Nancy Larson, interim

2017 Mileage Rates

The Internal Revenue Service 2017 optional standard mileage rate for the use of a car, van, pickup or panel truck is 53.5 cents per miles for business miles driven, down a half center per miles from 2016.

To learn more, visit <https://www.irs.gov/uac/2017-standard-mileage-rates-for-business-and-medical-and-moving-announced>.

- 11 **Meeting**, Assembly Planning, Luther College, Decorah, 4-6 p.m.
- 14 **Office Closed**, Good Friday
- 23-25 **Event**, First Call Theological Education Retreat, American Martyrs, Cedar Falls

| JANUARY 2017 | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
| Janet Benson, Cedar Falls 1 | EWALU Camp & Retreat Center, Strawberry Point 2 | St. James, Allison 3 | Rev. Kathleen J. Graves, Mason City Rev. Robert C. Gremmels, Waverly 4 | Ingham/Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, Milford 5 | Rev. Matthew L. Larson, Decorah Rev. Michael L. Sherer, Waverly 6 | Rev. Eric W. Biedermann, Cedar Falls Rev. Ruth Ann Shriver, Cedar Falls 7 |
| Rev. Gary C. Heidt-Johnson, Waterloo 8 | Immanuel (Crane Creek), Lawler 9 | Rev. Eugene Ketterling, Waverly 10 | Lutheran Lakeside Camp Assoc., Spirit Lake 11 | Zion, Alta Vista 12 | Riverside Bible Camp, Story City 13 | St. John, Arlington 14 |
| Rev. Dr. Arthur C. Bergren, Waverly 15 | Camp Shalom, Davenport 16 | Middle East Peace Lord of Life, Asbury 17 | Rev. Adam T. Starrett, West Union 18 | Rev. Kurt A. Hansen, Dubuque 19 | ISU Lutheran Campus Ministry, Ames 20 | St. Paul, Aurora 21 |
| Rev. Lois D. Knutson, Duluth, Minn. 22 | Jane Chilson, Rochester, Minn. 23 | U of I Lutheran Campus Ministry, Iowa City 24 | Rev. Nancy J. Larson, Waverly 25 | St. Olaf, Belmond 26 | UNI Lutheran Campus Ministry, Cedar Falls 27 | Trinity, Belmond 28 |
| Christian Crusaders, Cedar Falls 29 | Calmar, Calmar 30 | Grand View University, Des Moines 31 | | | | |

Portico introduces care coordinators service

Portico will begin a new, simpler approach to health care benefits in 2017.

New Portico health ID cards have been mailed to those who have ELCA-Primary Health benefits. Starting Jan. 1, this new card replaces both the Blue Cross and Express Scripts cards that were previously used. The new card can also be used for those enrolled in the fitness center discount program.

New SelectAccount debit cards for 2017 are being mailed to those who access personal wellness accounts or who use health flexible spending accounts.

Beginning Jan. 1, Portico introduces care coordinators as a new service to guide people through the health care system, answer questions, and assist in obtaining the best possible care at the right price. The care

coordinators are registered nurses and benefit specialists who can:

- help determine if certain tests or services are needed.
- help members find in-network providers to avoid being charged extra fees.
- verify if certain procedures are covered in-network to avoid surprise bills later.
- answer questions or make referrals related to treatment plans, medications and other health-related issues.

The care coordinators service is offered free. The phone number, 877-851-5656, is located on the new Portico insurance card.

To learn more about Portico benefits, visit <https://myportico.portico-benefits.org>.

Treasurers Meeting

Saturday, Jan. 21, 2017
Redeemer Lutheran, Waverly

Registration for the Congregation Treasurers Meeting is due Thursday, Jan. 12.

Congregation treasurers, pastors, financial committee members and others are encouraged to attend the Jan. 21 meeting to learn the latest about W-2 forms, church payrolls, and contributions. Information will also be presented about the synod's Minimum Compensation Guidelines, the Northeastern Iowa Synod H. George Anderson Fund for Leaders, and Mission Support.

The meeting will take place at Redeemer Lutheran, Waverly. There is no charge to attend. A light lunch will be served. To register, contact Linda Hudgins, assistant to the Bishop, 319-352-1414 or email hudginsl@neiasynod.org.



Good News

January 2017
Volume 30
Number 1

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

From the President:

Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? Isaiah 43:19 (*The Message*)

It was no coincidence that God sent Jesus to us during the "darkest" time of the year. The nights are the longest of the year starting the end of December. But once January comes, the daylight begins to increase until we reach the longest days in early summer. We have been in the darkness and now it is time for the light to burst forth and start a new thing in us! No wonder we call this season Epiphany, the season of LIGHT! Time for a brand new year, brand new habits, brand new ideas, brand new Children of the Light, born anew in Jesus!

Find time to search out the Light in your life. Jesus is always there, waiting only for us to search Him out. Pray, Sing, Quilt, Collect, Share, Shine! Try something new..... Maybe a circle or cluster meeting or attending Convention in June or Triennial in July. Be bold in your faith and let the light of Christ shine through you to those in need!

All anew, Diane Wills

Mission Area: Discipleship

November 5, 2016 found us set up at Olson's Explosives in Decorah. Donations from Upper Iowa River Cluster D, Little Flock, and Shechem soon began rolling in. We were blessed with fine weather and plenty of great help.

Totals: 1,101 quilts, 478 personal care kits, 1,880 school kits, 469 baby care kits, 39 fabric kits, 34 blankets, and 60# of soap.

A sincere thank you to the pastor and youth group from Big Canoe Lutheran Church and to volunteers from Zion Lutheran church in Oelwein and Luther College in Decorah for helping load the semi truck. WELL DONE. Thanks to all. *Submitted by Dee Wyatt & Sandy Gavle, Big Canoe Lutheran Church, Decorah, IA*

Mission Area: Justice

Doing what is right for another person. Micah 6:8 had a prescription for right living: "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your GOD." Nothing we do can make us right with GOD. Paul taught, "By Grace are you saved through

faith; and that is not of yourselves, it is a gift of GOD." (Ephesians 2:8)

So, to let GOD'S justice flow through us, I have selected several hymns from the Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship which support justice:

#704 "When Pain of the World Surrounds Us" with darkness and despair, when searching just confounds us with false hopes everywhere, when lives are starved for meaning and destiny is bare, we are called to follow Jesus and let GOD'S healing flow through us.

We see with fear and trembling our aching world in need, confessing to each other our wastefulness and greed.

May we with steadfast caring the hungry children feed.

We are called to follow Jesus and let GOD'S justice flow through us.

#715 (st. 2,3,4) "Christ, Be Our Light"

Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has power to save us. Make us your living voice.

Refrain: Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

Longing for food, many are hungry. Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed. (Refrain)

Longing for shelter, many are homeless. Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone. (Refrain)

Many the gifts, many the people, many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another, signs of your kingdom come. (Refrain)

Other suitable hymns that I like are #s 716, 717, 720, 725. *Submitted by Millie Dieter*

The SWO Board will be meeting with cluster leadership on January 14 (snow date 21) to begin plans for our next gathering in June. If you are a cluster president (or her representative), we invite you to attend from 9-3 at the synod office. Bring your own coffee mug and reusable water bottle! We look forward to sharing lots of new information with you! Please pray for safe travels and wisdom to abound!

CALENDAR

2017

| | |
|------------|--|
| Jan. 14 | SWO Board with Cluster Leaders, Synod office, Waverly, 9-3 (snow date 1/21) |
| Feb. 26 | Bold Women's Day |
| Mar. 4 | SWO Board, Synod office, 9-12 (snow date 3/18) |
| Apr. 22 | Shechem Cluster Spring Gathering, St. Peter's - Richfield, 24124 220 St., Sumner |
| Apr. 29 | Upper Iowa River Cluster Spring Event, St. Paul's LC, Lime Springs |
| May 20 | SWO Board, Wartburg College, 9-12 |
| June 16 | SWO Board, Wartburg College, TBD |
| Jun. 17 | NEI Synod WELCA Convention |
| Jul. 13-16 | Triennial Convention and Gathering, Minneapolis, MN (welcatg.org) |

Mission Area: Stewardship

"I AM ABOUT TO DO A NEW THING!"

In Isaiah 43:18-19a, the prophet reports God's word: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing!"

It's a new year. We can take that as a reminder that we can do a new thing too—a new thing for our beloved community of women.

What might that be?

One of the principles enshrined in our constitution is **interdependence**. That means we're not in this alone; we have each other. We need each other. That goes not just for individuals or for circles or congregational units; it means the same thing for synodical women's organizations and the churchwide expression of the organization, too. Our three expressions (congregational, synodical and churchwide organizations) depend on each other.

How do we live that out? We receive from each other, but do we support each other in equal measure? Do we support the three expressions of our own organization as generously as we support other organizations and ministries? Why wouldn't we?

So there's the new thing we can do. We can give to support our own community of women in all its expressions as generously as we give to other ministries. We can give Regular Offerings whenever we gather, and share them between our congregational unit and our synodical women's

organization. We can give Thankofferings and undesignated gifts marked "where needed most" whenever the Spirit moves us, and send them to our churchwide women's organization. In Isaiah 43:18-19a, God says: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing!" We are created in God's image. Let's thank God for the opportunity for us to do a new thing, too! *Reprinted from www.womenoftheelca.org-pages-216.php*

Congratulations to our Triennial Scholarship recipients:

Linda McMillin, Jane Godson, Sonia Bockhoven, Carol Holtz, Deb Jacobsen, Becky Fuelling, Betty Zumbach, Jennifer Larson, Nancy Miller, Vicky Jaeger, Carol Burnikel, Sue Easler and Cindy Pogge!

Triennial:

Going to the Tenth Triennial Gathering? Need a ride or a roommate?

If you are interested in either of the above options, or both, please contact me as soon as you can. The stops for the bus will depend on the locations I have as I gather your information. Hawkeye Bus Co. tells us a 56-passenger bus would be \$3,796, or about \$85 per person, round trip. A 36-passenger bus would be \$3,448, or about \$115 per person, round trip. There would be no extra charge for convenience stops along the way.

I will keep your information, so if you are looking for a roommate, I will try and find one for you with the information I have, and try to make it a convenient match in case you would also like to carpool. This offer is not limited to just NEIA Synod women, but includes other areas also.

My contact information is:

e-mail: jpogge1233@gmail.com or my cell number is 515-571-2827.

There is a lot to learn and see at the Triennial, connect with old friends and meet new ones. Also there will be lots of exciting speakers to hear. Hope to see you there.

Submitted by Cindy Pogge

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Good News

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Articles are due the 1st of the month for the next month's newsletter (e.g. April 1 for May issue). Please put WELCA in your subject line. (You can also send paper copies by "snail" mail.)

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neiasynod.org/women-of-the-ELCA

Dear Faith Shapers,

I'm not a fan of New Year's resolutions (namely, because I can never manage to keep them past a week or two), but there is something refreshing and invigorating about a new year. It feels, at least momentarily, as though anything is possible. All those blank squares on my calendar call out to me that this is a fresh start. Sometimes, the year before has been so challenging, that a new year presents itself as a chance to wipe the slate clean and begin again—praying for positive change.

But do we really need to wait for a new year, or a new job, or a new relationship, or a new hobby, to get that fresh start that we desire?

Baptism offers us a new beginning daily.

On January 8, we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. We will remember Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. But every day is a day to celebrate our own baptism, to remember that God has named us and claimed us as God's beloved children.

Remember and rejoice!

Peace,

Stacey Nalean-Carlson
Pastor, Glenwood & Canoe Ridge
Lutheran Churches, Decorah

Washed in Grace

Martin Luther insisted that every time we wash with water is an opportunity to remember our baptism and the promises God made to us in it.

So when you take a bath or a shower or when you wash your hands before

meal time, trace the sign of the cross on your forehead and say out loud to yourself, "I am God's beloved child." And then add



whatever you need to hear that day about God's grace poured out for you.

- * I am God's beloved. I am free.
- * I am God's beloved. I am whole.
- * I am God's beloved. I am found.
- * I am God's beloved. I am forgiven.

To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism, which no other kind of life on earth can acquire.

—Martin Luther

This information is prepared for you by the
Northwestern 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 [Northwestern Iowa Synod Home Life Network ELCA](#)

Godparenting 101

Godparents, or baptismal sponsors, promise to nurture their godchildren in the Christian faith. But how? What does that really look like? Where to begin?

1. **Pray.** Prayer doesn't have to be anything elaborate or eloquent. As you talk to God, mention your godchild by name. Thank God for your godchild. Ask God to help him grow in faith, hope, and love. Then, in conversation with your godchild, let him know you've been praying for him.

2. **Celebrate baptismal birthdays.** A card, a small gift, or a phone call on the anniversary of your godchild's baptism day will help her to remember her baptism. Tell her what you remember about that special day. Over time, the story of her baptism will become a cherished story, persistently reminding her of how much she is loved.

3. **Educate yourself.** There are some terrific resources available to assist you in this role. Here are just a few:

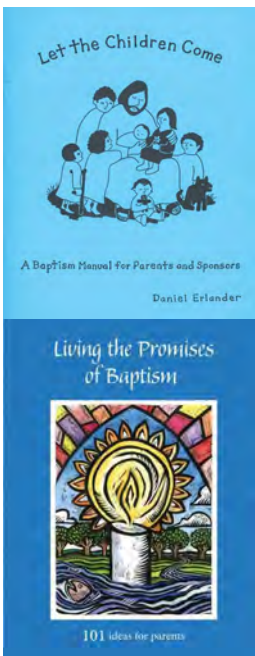
Let the Children Come: A Baptism Manual for Parents and Sponsors by Daniel Erlander. Lots of great, accessible information here.

Splash! We Do!: A Guide for Godparents is part of a series of resources published by Augsburg Fortress. Other resources in the series include greeting cards, cds, and a keepsake book for parents to record memories of their child's first three years.

Living the Promises of Baptism: 101 Ideas for Parents is, as the title suggests, geared toward parents, but could certainly be used by godparents as well.

All these resources are available at augsburgfortress.org.

4. **Remember you're not alone.** You're part of a team—complete with parents, congregation members, and others—intent on raising this child in the Christian faith. The Holy Spirit empowers all of you!



Baptism Reunion

The Baptism of Our Lord is a perfect time to host a Baptism Reunion in your congregation. Send special invitations to all those baptized during the past year. Invite them to come forward for a blessing and time of baptismal remembrance during the worship service. Host a brunch after worship, with those baptized during the past year as the guests of honor. If many of the guests of honor are toddlers, serve apple sauce, Cheerios, and other toddler-friendly food! This is a great opportunity to check in with families, reminding them that the congregation supports them on this baptismal journey!