

# Northern HIGHLIGHTS

Winter 2025 -- Volume 28, Number 1

NORTHERN ILLINOIS SYNOD WELCA

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*Jeana Fors*

As I said in my President's Report at our 2024 Convention in Kewanee, Illinois, according to scripture, the eye is not the whole of the body, nor is the hand or feet. The same can be said for the NISWO President and any officers or board member. We each need the other to make the whole. We need each other to make a plan come together. Each of us does not spring up from the earth whole and complete. We have Venerated elders who come before us, teaching and modeling our faith and how we are to take action.

I've been known to say that going to Convention is like going to a family reunion. I stand by that statement. I had the greatest pleasure this last September of being NISWO Board President and, therefore, running the business meeting while looking out on the sea of my WELCA family. Actually, it did start with my family. My mother, Barbara, was the person at Bethany, my home congregation, who nominated me for Board President. Not too far from her, was my Congregational Unit President, Barbara McNeil, who originally nominated me a year earlier for the one-year term of NISWO Board President. Barb also encouraged me to attend a Triennial the first time to St. Louis, MO, and then eventually as a voting delegate.

Amongst the congregation were women I worked with for years in our Southwest Conference when I was able to serve as Conference Convener, Sharon Courtwright and Myrna Sandburg and current Presiding Conveyor, Katherine Jansen. There was Jan Butterfield and Amy Laurin my first NISWO Board presidents when I worked as the board secretary. Esther Prabacher, an encourager and leader during the NIS visit to the Arcot Synod in India when we signed a pledge of Companion Synods in January 2008. Fellow board members Judy, Margaret, Kim Choin, Ann Terry, RuthAnn Hartman and Sharon Waddle. This cloud of witnesses supported me before being board president was a twinkled in my eyes. I thank you for being my encouragers and my backbone then and now.

Grace & Peace,

*Jeana*

Jeana Fors, WELCA President

**TREASURER'S REPORT***Kim Choin*

	2024/25	2/1/24-1/18/25	2025/26
<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>APPROVED</b>	<b>\$3,347.10</b>	<b>APPROVED</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>INCOME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>
Regular-Conference Offerings	\$10,000.00	<b>\$11,485.10</b>	\$11,000.00
Convention Offerings	\$2,000.00	<b>\$2,614.00</b>	\$2,000.00
Convention Registrations	\$2,000.00	<b>\$2,170.00</b>	\$2,000.00
Conv Guest Expenses Donation		<b>\$206.50</b>	
CW Thankoffering		<b>\$884.75</b>	
Conference Offering-100% to CW		<b>\$1,083.00</b>	
Board Expense Reimbursement		<b>\$307.00</b>	
Retreat Registrations	\$2,000.00	<b>\$2,016.00</b>	\$2,000.00
2024 Retreat Offering-to LOMC	\$500.00	<b>\$195.00</b>	\$500.00
Northern Highlights subscriptions	\$50.00	<b>\$20.00</b>	\$50.00
LSSI Story BookPrison Ministry	\$500.00	<b>\$350.00</b>	\$500.00
OSLC, Rocky Boy	\$500.00	<b>\$365.00</b>	\$500.00
Tanzania North Central Diocese Woman's Dept	\$500.00	<b>\$414.00</b>	\$500.00
India-Arcot Women's Desk	\$500.00	<b>\$535.00</b>	\$500.00
Grace Place (Formerly-NIU Campus Ministry)	\$500.00	<b>\$75.00</b>	\$500.00
Dollars For Our Daughters	\$500.00	<b>\$445.00</b>	\$500.00
Triennial Voting Member	\$750.00		\$750.00
Triennial Offering	\$100.00		\$100.00
Triennial International Guest	\$1,250.00		\$1,250.00
ELCA Federal Credit Union Dividend Interest		<b>\$4.49</b>	
Where Needed Most		<b>\$150.00</b>	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$21,650.00</b>	<b>\$23,319.84</b>	<b>\$22,650.00</b>

**DISBURSEMENTS**

		<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>	
Regular Offerings to CWO (78%)	\$7,800.00	<b>\$6,637.90</b>	\$8,580.00
SWO Convention Offerings to CWO (50%)	\$1,000.00	<b>\$1,307.00</b>	\$1,000.00
Conference Offering to CWO (100%)		<b>\$1,073.00</b>	
2024 Retreat Offering-to LOMC	\$400.00	<b>\$500.00</b>	\$400.00
Thankofferings Received from Conferences (100%-CW)		<b>\$380.75</b>	
2122 Growing Katie's Fund For the Next 100 Years		<b>\$592.50</b>	
Convention Expenses	\$2,000.00	<b>\$1,665.14</b>	\$2,000.00
Convention Scholarships	\$500.00		\$500.00
Retreat Expenses	\$1,500.00	<b>\$1,823.08</b>	\$1,500.00
Retreat Scholarships	\$100.00		\$100.00
Nominating Committee	\$100.00		\$100.00
Board Expenses	\$800.00	<b>\$1,780.65</b>	\$1,000.00

Financial Records	\$100.00		\$100.00
ELCA Insurance	\$100.00		\$100.00
Communications	\$100.00	<b>\$81.96</b>	\$120.00
Northern Highlights	\$100.00		\$100.00
Triennial Scholarships	\$800.00		\$800.00
Triennial Offerings	\$100.00		\$100.00
Triennial Promoter	\$50.00		\$50.00
Triennial International Guest	\$1,250.00		\$1,250.00
Triennial NIS Voting Member	\$1,000.00		\$1,000.00
Discipleship	\$250.00		\$250.00
Justice	\$250.00		\$250.00
Stewardship	\$250.00		\$250.00
LSSI Story Book-Prison Ministry	\$500.00		\$500.00
Global Refuge (20% of Convention Offering)		<b>\$525.00</b>	
AMMPARO(15% of Convention Offering)		<b>\$400.00</b>	
ELCA World Hunge(15% of Convention Offering)		<b>\$400.00</b>	
OSLC, Rocky Boy	\$500.00		\$500.00
Tanzania North Central Diocese Woman's Dept	\$500.00		\$500.00
India-Arcot Women's Desk	\$500.00		\$500.00
\$4Daughters Scholarship-Trinity, Elizabeth/First, DeKalb		<b>\$309.85</b>	
Grace Place	\$500.00		\$500.00
LOMC Gift	\$100.00		\$100.00
NIS Assembly Expenses	\$400.00		\$400.00
NIS Assembly Offering	\$100.00		\$100.00
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$21,650.00</b>	<b>\$17,420.10</b>	<b>\$22,650.00</b>
<b>Total Income less Disbursements</b>		<b>\$5,401.36</b>	
<b>Balance in ELCA Federal Credit Union Checking Acct</b>		<b>\$3,374.00</b>	
<b>Balance in ELCA Federal Credit Union Savings Acct*</b>		<b>\$2,027.36</b>	
<b>Total Bank Balance</b>		<b>\$5,401.36</b>	

	<b>Disbursed Funds</b>	<b>Designated Funds Balance</b>
Computer Fund*		\$1,000.00
LSSI Story Book-Prison Ministry		\$260.00
OSLC, Rocky Boy		\$365.00
Grace Place		\$75.00
2024 Retreat Offering-to LOMC	\$195.00	\$0.00
Tanzania North Central Diocese Woman's Dept		\$414.00
India-Arcot Women's Desk		\$535.00
Dollars 4 Daughters-50% already sent to CW	\$309.85	\$342.65
Dollars 4 Daughters-50% to be sent to CW WELCA		\$0.00
Triennial Conference Scholarships*		\$250.00
Triennial Guest (2022 Budget-\$3,000.00)*		\$500.00
Triennial Voting Member (2022 Budget \$1,700.00)*		\$250.00
		\$3,991.65
Outstanding Due Churchwide:		\$0.00
Undesignated Funds Total:		<b>\$1,409.71</b>

\*Money held in ELCA Federal Credit Union Savings Account

## BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

*Sheila Keene, Secretary*

The NISWO Board met Saturday, January 18, 2025, on Zoom. Devotions were led by Jeana Fors.

Minutes of the regular board meeting held November 9, 2024, were approved.

The Treasurer’s Report will be filed for audit.

Debra Quinn shared a written Discipleship report and Ann Terry spoke on Stewardship. Advocate articles are included in this newsletter.

2025 will be filled with several opportunities for learning, fellowship and personal growth. Our Retreat will be at LOMC on Saturday, April 26; we will be represented at the CRE on March 22, at Sauk Valley College and at Synod Assembly on June 13 and 14, at Au-

gustana College; and our Convention will be September 20, at First Lutheran, Rockford.

Nominations are needed for North Conference (1 year term) and for two-year terms for Central Conference, Northeast Conference, Southwest Conference, West Conference, Vice President and Treasurer. Prayerfully consider whether you or someone you know is called to serve in one of these roles.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord’s Prayer.

The next Board Meeting will be held Saturday, May 17, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Dixon.

## DISCIPLESHIP

*Debra Quinn, Discipleship Advocate*

In January of 2025, I traveled with Bishop Fidler and other synod staff to India. The mission is to reestablish and reinforce our relationship with the Arcot Lutheran Church and their new Bishop. In honor of this trip I would like to reprint a portion of my first article for Discipleship in Highlights about Accompaniment.

*“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” John 13:34*

*“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” John 20:21*

These two verses sum up our mission as members of Christ’s family. Missionary work has long been a part of the ELCA and supported by its members. As members of the body of Christ, we are all part of God’s mission whether it is through financial support, travel, or just through relationships with one another. Historically, mission work meant spreading the Gospel to those who hadn’t heard His message. Today, the ELCA supports an Accompaniment Model where the sharing of the Gospel is more of a relationship model. It is not “my story” or “your story”, it is “God’s story.”

**Historical Practice**



**Accompaniment Model**



\*2013 ELCA Global Mission Gathering - Accompaniment

Accompaniment Model has five core values:

- \* Mutuality – valuing everyone’s gifts and expertise, giving and receiving trust
- \* Inclusivity – address those in communities who are excluded
- \* Vulnerability – opening up ourselves to relationships, relinquishing power
- \* Empowerment – build upon one another’s strengths, balance of power

## STEWARDSHIP

*Ann Terry, Stewardship Advocate*

In her sermon today, our pastor talked about the late former president, Jimmy Carter, and his book "Living Faith." At some point during the sermon, I thought to myself, "living your faith" is what stewardship is all about. This verse from 1 Peter 4:10 pretty much sums it up, "*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*" President Carter stood up for injustice, taught Sunday School for a large portion of his life, worked tirelessly with Habitat for Humanity to provide housing for low-income families, and did many other noteworthy acts. While we cannot all carry out the things famous people can do with their influence and wealth, each of us can still strive to find ways in our own church and community to use what

we have, material, spiritual and talent-wise, to "live our faith." That may be helping an "older than we are" person in some small way, praying for the youth of your church, helping out at a local food pantry, adding one charity to your list of contributions that you make, or any idea that you come up with by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Think about making a personal contribution to NIS WELCA or attending the Retreat or Convention if you haven't before. Everything we do for others enriches our own life and glorifies God. Make the year 2025 a year with your faith more alive!



## CENTRAL CONFERENCE

*Connie Seavey, Central Representative*

**Immanuel, Rock Falls** continues to meet the third Tuesday morning of each month at 9 a.m. Pastor Bree leads the Bible study from the *Gather* magazine that we all enjoy. You are welcome to join us as we dive into God's Word and share life together.

baptisms, high school graduates, weddings, new members and church staff. We were delighted to wrap 28 people in God's love with quilts from Immanuel in 2024. HUGE THANKS to all quilters for their generous service!

This past year, we sent \$10 Subway gift cards to each of 10 college students; organized, prepared and served Ash Wednesday soup and sandwich lunch; collected and sent a \$359 Thank offering to the Women of ELCA outreach ministries; and organized, prepared and served 5 funeral lunches.

We appreciate everyone who helps and supports the WELCA. Thanks to all who contribute to the Thank Offering each fall! The Thank Offering provides crucial support for ministries that include *Gather* magazine and Bible study; ministry resources for women's health; human trafficking; outreach through social media and partnerships with other Christian women's organizations. All women of Immanuel are members of WELCA and are invited to attend the monthly Bible studies and participate in our activities and projects. We are church together!

The quilt group meets weekly on Wednesday mornings to create, sew and tie quilts that have been gifted to



Quilters with their quilts!



Graduates with their quilts!

We were blessed with donations and Thrivent Action Team cards this year! With this generous support we were able to purchase two new sewing machines as well as a long-arm quilting machine, supplies and fabric for special quilts. Thank you so much to everyone who blessed us with donations as well as fabric and other materials! Our prayer shawl ministry continues to flourish. Prayer Shawls are a tangible reminder that recipients are wrapped in God's love and held in prayer. As the shawls are crafted they are prayed over and the future recipients are prayed for without their names or needs known; God knows. You are welcome to pick up a prayer shawl to share with someone in need. So that we do not have multiple shawls going to the same people please indicate who the shawl you pick up is going to on the clipboard by the shawls. If you knit or crochet and would like to make prayer shawls please contact Karen Goss or Barb Smith. Many thanks to all the knitters and crocheters who create them and continue to bless others with their handiwork!

## NORTH CONFERENCE

**First, Rockford** -- Our women are involved in several outreach projects... Men help, too!

Constance Lane Elementary School -- On December 18, we dropped off 12 bags full of the Hershey bar/glove snowmen our congregation had assembled, along with five back packs full of school supplies. We were able to bless four kindergarten classrooms, four first grade classrooms and four second grade classrooms with these special gifts! There were 302 in all!

63rd Annual Lucia Celebration -- We held a smaller version of Lucia on Sunday, December 15, right after worship. We invited those in our community to attend, and we did have a few visitors. We held a bake sale, which

## Carolyn Ciaccio, North Representative

brought in \$403 over two Sundays. We gifted Vicar Leslie with \$400 to use toward her seminary trip to Greece and Turkey.

Prayer Shawl Ministry -- We were able to give away eight prayer shawls this past year. Our Vicar, Leslie Aska, blesses our prayer shawls and blankets before we give them away. We give the prayer shawls to those who we hear are in need of a special blessing. Many are given to those facing cancer treatments and/or surgery. As we knit or crochet a prayer shawl or blanket, we pray for the one receiving it. After it has been blessed, we send it on with a special card that includes a message and Bible verse for the one receiving the shawl or blanket. Thank you to those who continue to provide us with these precious labors of love!

## NORTHEAST CONFERENCE

**First, DeKalb** Women at First Lutheran are very active in three Love, INC (Love in the name of Christ) Ministries to provide needs for families in DeKalb area. In 2024, two new ministries were added and housed. Each month the Men's Furniture Ministry delivers needed furniture, but AS they deliver beds they also needed pillows, sheets, mattress pads, and blankets to make them usable rather than on the floor where they are often found sleeping. The Linen Closet Ministry has been active at First for many years!

The three women's Love, Inc Ministries now are: Lights for Life, Linens, and Kitchen ware. Love, INC coordinates the needs from community and then contacts the three First Lutheran Women's Ministries to communicate with the clients as to specific needs. The items are collected and packaged for the Men's Furniture Ministry to deliver usually one time a month.

It has been very wise for First Lutheran's Council to request there be at least a group of 3 to coordinate the Women's Ministries. Teamwork is very beneficial and with busy schedules all may not be available at a specific time. We are grateful for generous donations of lamps, linens, & kitchen items in all three ministries and the dedicated time provided. We women do love to provide when we see the need!

Dollars for Daughter's Grant One Sunday in January, and hopefully more, First Lutheran/DeKalb Mothers of Sunday School Students will gather while their kids are in Sunday School following worship. They will be

## Deb Quinn, Northeast Representative

introduced to Women of the ELCA/NIL Synod and start communication about fellowship and possible study with other young mothers. Seeds will be planted by members of our Prelude Bible Study group.

We women all need community and time to share with others. May God be present!!

**SAVE THE DATE!** All are welcome to join the Northeast and South regions for a Retreat on April 12, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. RSVP is not required but appreciated – but don't let that hold you back from coming! For more information and to RSVP email Deb Quinn (NE Rep) at [debraquinn1@comcast.net](mailto:debraquinn1@comcast.net) or Sandie Weckerly (South Rep) at [san2one@aol.com](mailto:san2one@aol.com).

### Schedule:

- 9:00 Registration
- 9:30 Breakfast
- 10:30 Storytelling & Music with Jen Miller and her band
- 11:30 Closing – Pastor Megan Vaughan

We hope to see you there!

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## NORTHWEST CONFERENCE

*Christine Beyer, Northwest Representative*

**Good Shepherd, Lena** Hannah Circle is now regularly meeting after worship on the first Sunday of the month. We currently use resources from the Women of the ELCA website and *Gather* magazine. Our Piece Corps quilters continue to meet weekly. If your congregation doesn't have an active unit at this time or you want to be part of an additional unit, please feel free to come join our activities. Contact our church office for more information. The more the merrier!

## SOUTH CONFERENCE

*Sandie Weckerly, South Representative*

The holidays are past, the lights are down, our homes return to normal as we face early nightfall, cold, snow and ice. It is a new year, a time of new beginnings. Yet, outside, the world lies dormant. During this time when all is quiet the familiar Psalm 46:10; *"Be still and know that I am God..."* reminds us, in the calm that is winter, our hearts can turn to God and reflect on his word, His plans for us and how we as women can be of service in our churches and communities. Whether you are making dinner for a meal train, sewing quilt blocks, serving on a committee, or lifting your voice in song, your gifts are being used. In this new year, let us all pray to find new ways to use the gifts God gave us. Let us also find new ways to engage and support other women in our churches. Retreats are a wonderful way to inspire and bring us all together. Join the South and Northeast Conferences on April 12, as we join together for a retreat of food, music, storytelling, and fellowship. It will be held at First Lutheran in Dekalb (see additional details in the North Conference report. We look forward to bringing the ladies of WELCA together!



# Northern Highlights

c/o Kell Impens, Editor  
175 Jupiter St.  
Holts Summit, MO 65043



Women  
of the  
**EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
IN AMERICA**

## **SPRING RETREAT 2025**

Our annual Spring Retreat is just around the corner on Saturday, April 26. Please be sure to mark your calendars and fill out the registration form included with this newsletter as soon as possible!

Registration is from 8:30 - 9:00 AM in the dining hall at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center (LOMC). Breakfast-type treats and beverages will be available upon your arrival. The program will begin at 9:00, and it is promised to be something really special! Our presenting guests are from PATHWAYS, a center for Spiritual Renewal, in Belvidere (<https://seekthepath.org>), and they will be sharing with us a program called **“Walking in the Ancient Path.”** This presentation includes the history of a variety of prayer practices, as well as how we can experience them. This may include gratitude prayers, lectio divina, prayer beads (I am really excited to hear all about Lutheran Prayer beads!), and even some poetry. We will also have the opportunity to experience ways that we can connect with the Spirit. The day will be wrapped up with some music, the sharing of upcoming events and, of course, we will all gather around the Lord’s Table as Bishop Assistant Julie Monnard leads this service.

The day will be full, but there is always time to reconnect with old friends, as well as meet new ones, and we are certainly looking forward to seeing and visiting with you again! Bring a friend or two!

The cost for the all-day Retreat is \$30 (Half Scholarships are available). This includes your breakfast snacks, our program guests’ presentation and lunch, as well as our usual programming for the day. We will collect an Offering during the event which will be divided equally between Rocky Boy Mission and our Dollars for Daughters program.

LOMC -- Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center is located at 1834 Illinois Route 2, Oregon, Illinois.

All Spring Retreat information and registration forms will be emailed to churches.

*The day is planned by your NIS WELCA board.*