

Southwestern Minnesota

# Women of the ELCA



## The Communicator



**2026 SW MN  
SWO Convention**  
Date: Saturday May 2, 2026  
@ Calvary Lutheran  
Church  
302 Olena Ave SE  
Willmar MN  
Theme: "Rising in Faith  
Leading with Courage!"

Use Link Below Tap on HOME  
Open the Registration Packet  
<http://www.swmnwelca.org/>



Take time  
to do what makes  
your soul happy

**The Thirteenth  
Triennial  
Convention**  
July 13-14, 2026

**Women of the  
ELCA  
Gathering**

Theme "I am worthy"  
July 16-19, 2026  
Des Moines, IA



july 16-19, 2026 ✝️ des moines, iowa

Copy and Paste in your Browser  
<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/new-triennial-event-page>

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# Mission Action/Stewardship



## LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

### LWR Donations

- Pack completed quilts and kits separately in boxes. Pack like items together (School Kits separately from Personal Care Kits, etc.).
- Label each box in large, block letters with the contents and the name and address of your congregation.
- Use strong cartons secured with packing tape, not exceeding 40 pounds. Do not use plastic or paper bags to pack donations.
- See <https://lwr.org/kits> for specific LWR requirements.
- Monetary donations to LWR are always needed and appreciated as well. See [www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org) for more information.

### LWR Quilts

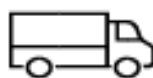
- It is recommended (but not required) that quilts be tied in square knots or double knots, no more than 6-8 inches apart.
- Finished quilt size must be 60" by 80".
- Quilts must be sturdy and warm.

### LWR Kits

It is recommended (not required) that all personal care items be wrapped in a towel and secured with ribbon or yarn.

### In-Kind Offering reporting

It really is easy to do! Take a look at <https://forms.gle/7Sy4ncDuQfdHHUiTA>



## LWR & GHM Quilt and Kit Drop-Off

Quilts and kits for both Lutheran World Relief and Global Health Ministries will be collected from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. on the day of the convention. Follow the signs in the church parking lot to the drop-off site.

**Please note that each organization has its own requirements for donated items.** Consult their websites for details.

### Focus Kits

This year's focus kits are:

- Personal Care Kits for LWR
- Newborn Kits for GHM



### GHM Donations

To learn more about GHM's projects, go to [www.ghm.org](http://www.ghm.org). Click on

- "Get Involved," then
- "Service Projects," then
- "Download Project Instructions"

### Canned Goods Donations

You are invited to bring canned goods for Hope for Our City in Willmar.

# Highlights & Special Items



## OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

*“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.”*

### **1. A Prayer for the Ukraine and Russia**

Pray that Ukraine and Russia would be places without corruption. Pray for leaders of both countries to know God’s truth and peace and be transformed by his Holy Spirit, that they would seek to lead their countries in the way of peace. ***In your name, Amen.***

### **2. A Prayer for the senseless deaths caused by gun violence**

God, our hearts are broken with pain at the senseless deaths caused by gun violence. Families mourn and children live in fear. Let our hands reach out and connect with those who feel alone, those who live in fear, and those suffering from mental illness. Let our voices be raised asking our Lord to protect all in our society, especially those most vulnerable. We ask this in the name of God, who desires that we live together in peace. ***In your name, Amen.***

### **3. A Prayer for Resurrection**

Dear God, Thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for the victory and power in your Name. Thank you that you hold the keys over death, that by your might, Jesus was raised from the grave, paving the way for us to have new life with you. We also confess our need for you...fresh...new...again. We ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives, for the days ahead. Shine your light in us, through us, over us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. ***In your name, Amen.***

### **4. A Prayer for The Women of the SWMN Synod**

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Our desire is to be women of gratitude and thanksgiving for the countless ways you have blessed us throughout our lives. As your children, we pray that we would reflect your love in every thought, word and deed. We pray that you would guard our hearts against jealousy and help us have compassion for each other. Strengthen us in our areas of weakness, so that we may develop strong character in your likeness. Fortify our minds to protect us against the attacks of the enemy and the lies of the world. Thank you, that you care for us as we walk in your path. May we be women of prayer in constant communion with you. ***In your name, Amen.***



### o Offering Objectives:

- 1/2 to CWO
- 1/4 to LWR Shipping
- 1/4 to Hope for Our City – a project in Willmar supported by Calvary
- In-Kind Offerings: quilts and kits for LWR and GHM, especially
- Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief
- Newborn Kits for Global Health Ministries
- Canned goods for Hope for Our City

### **Katie’s Cans:**

Bring your loose change for Katie’s Fund.



# Mission Community/Justice

## JUSTICE

In 2021, the women's organization recommitted itself to viewing all its work through a racial justice lens.

For 35 years, Women of the ELCA has been a leading force in anti-racism work within the Lutheran community, with trainings, networks, resources, articles, and advocacy. And yet, we've only scratched the surface. We need only look at recent happenings within our church and society to know so much more needs to be done.

Our organization, **through the churchwide executive board**, has committed itself to undergird our mission and ministry with three anti-racism foci: awareness-raising, accompaniment, and advocacy. The work is all ours to share, in congregational units, in synodical organizations, and in the churchwide women's organization.

With awareness-raising, we are called to educate ourselves and others about racism in the church, the society, and the world. We are to enable ourselves and others to see everything through an antiracist lens. Women of the ELCA has curated a **list of books, podcasts, and other resources to use** in educating ourselves.

With accompaniment, European descent women (the majority within our organization) are asked to walk in solidarity with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) women in the struggle for racial equity. The bottom line is developing authentic relationships with BIPOC women.

With advocacy, we are called to live out our Lutheran belief that governments can help advance the common good, focusing specifically on anti-racism issues. You'll want to sign up to **join the ELCA e-advocacy network** today so you can remain informed and be a ready advocate.

To help you work towards all three objectives, **join Women of the ELCA's Racial Justice Advocacy Network**, a network of bold women working towards systemic change through racial justice education and advocacy. Take time now to learn more about the network.



Come to the Convention  
May 2 and enjoy some great  
Entertainment by:

**Sweetwater Revival**

## Mission Growth and Discipleship

I think I am a dinosaur. I love getting letters in the mail and I write them to others. I know that I have E mail and texting capabilities but I love letters. In a letter I can take some time to refresh and renew a friendship. I can affirm someone's gifts and challenge questionable behavior, ending with a renewal of friendship or support.

In the March, April, May Gather Magazine, there is a devotional study about letters. The study is about the letters of Paul from the New Testament. Paul usually starts with a greeting and a reminder of how he and the recipients are connected. He affirms the work that they are doing. And then he does the hard stuff. He talks about the problems and difficulties of the church to whom he is writing. He reminds them of the good start they had and encourages them to return to faithfulness and following his teachings. I encourage you to explore this devotional lesson. Not only to look at what Paul says (although that is very important) but to encourage you to reach out to others with a meaningful letter.

Even if your content has some controversy, think of how meaningful it will be to them to know that you were concerned and cared enough to take the time to write to them. Time is one of the more precious gifts we can give. Fill someone's life with the joy of a letter.

### **Bible Study and your Gather Magazines**

Perhaps there is someone in your church with whom you could share your Gather magazine when you are done reading it.

Passing it along helps others to learn of the work of the Women of the ELCA and can strengthen their faith.

You are doing good work at your Circle and WELCA Bible Studies! Keep it up.

Brenda Danielson

Mission Growth and Discipleship

**Next business meeting of  
the SW MN SWO board  
will be Friday, May 1, at 3 p.m.,  
At Calvary Lutheran Church  
in Willmar.**

# DATES & SPECIAL ITEMS TO REMEMBER

## FAITHFUL FRIENDS

“Faithful Friends” is an easy way for you to support Women of the ELCA – automatically! You can start giving online right now.

“[Faithful Friends](#)” supports the Women of the ELCA general fund, which makes it possible for your church-wide organization to act quickly and flexibly in response to any need that may arise.



<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/category/daily-grace>

The 2027 SWO Convention will be Saturday, May 1, 2027, at First Lutheran Church, 100 Church Street, Marshall, Minnesota.



**The Thirteenth Triennial Convention**  
July 13-14, 2026,  
**Women of the ELCA Gathering**  
Theme “**I am worthy**”  
July 16-19, 2026  
Des Moines, IA

July 16-19, 2026 ✨ des moines, iowa



# News & Notes



Southwestern Minnesota  
Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA  
**Spring 2026**

## Women of the ELCA Mission Statement

Mobilizing women to act boldly  
on their faith in Jesus Christ.

## Women of the ELCA Purpose Statement

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.

## SWO & LMM Convention Collaboration

On May 2, both the Synodical  
Women's Organization (SWO) and  
Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM)  
will host their conventions  
simultaneously at the same  
location. While we'll share  
worship and meals, each group  
will focus on its own theme and  
conduct separate business  
meetings.

*The complete SWO convention  
publicity packet has been emailed to  
unit contacts and/or churches  
in the synod and will be posted at  
[www.swmnwelca.org](http://www.swmnwelca.org).  
LMM will send their information via  
the US Postal Service.*



## 2026 SW MN SWO Convention

When: Saturday, May 2, 2026

Where: Calvary Lutheran Church  
Willmar, Minnesota

Theme: "Rising in Faith, Leading  
with Courage"

Theme Verse: Psalm 139:14 NRSVue  
"I praise you, for I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made."

Time: Registration begins - 7:30 AM

Cost: \$40.00

Pre-registrations are preferred  
by April 21, but walk-ins are  
welcome.

Who should attend?

--1 voting member from each unit  
--All others are welcome!

Speakers:

Bishop Dee Pederson  
Anna Jetson, Executive Board  
Member - Women of the ELCA

Musicians:

Pianist Naomi Baker  
Sweetwater Revival

## Katie's Cans

Bring spare change for Katie's  
Fund—collection cans will be on  
lunch tables.

## Convention Offerings

Offering designations will be 25%  
to LWR for shipping costs, 25%  
to Hope for Our City, and 50% to  
Churchwide Women. Canned  
goods will be collected for Hope  
for Our City in Willmar.

## In-Kind Offerings

Quilts and kits designated for  
Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and  
Global Health Ministries (GHM)  
will be collected in the parking lot  
between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m. on  
the day of the convention.

*Please label all boxes clearly and  
keep each under 40 pounds!*

This year's focus kits are:

- Personal Care Kits for LWR
  - Newborn Kits for GHM
- All kits and quilts are still needed.

Kit and quilt requirements are  
different for each organization.  
See their websites for more  
information:

- For Lutheran World Relief go  
to <https://lwr.org/kits>
- For Global Health Ministries  
go to [www.ghm.org](http://www.ghm.org).

## In-Kind Reporting

Remember to track your unit's  
service projects and donations  
since the last convention.

It is preferred that units submit  
their In-Kind Offering Reports  
electronically to Emilie Brustuen  
by April 15 in one of two ways:

- Fill out the Google Form at  
<https://forms.gle/7Sv4ncDuQfDHHUITA>. It's really easy to  
do!
- Email your report to  
[ebrustuen@gmail.com](mailto:ebrustuen@gmail.com)

Reports may also be submitted at  
the convention.



## SWO Convention Schedule Saturday, May 2, 2026

7:30 – 9:00 a.m.

Truck Open for In-Kind Offerings  
Registration/Coffee/Displays

8:30

Deadline for voting member  
changes

8:45

Voting Member Orientation/  
Opening

9:00

Worship with Holy Communion,  
Bishop Dee Pederson and Rev.  
Heather Culuris presiding, Rev.  
Seyward Ask preaching

10:15

Plenary Session for voting  
members. Several displays and  
hands-on activities will be  
available for non-voting guests.

12:00 p.m.

Lunch, Katie's Cans Collection

1:00

Gathering Music

1:15

- Plenary Session Continues
- Installation of SWO Board
  - Commissioning of Triennial Voting Members
  - Speaker from Churchwide Women of the ELCA
  - In-Kind Offering Report

2:00

Concert by Sweetwater Revival

3:45 – Announcements, Closing

## Conference Banners

Conferences are asked to bring their conference banners to the convention. They should be in place at the front of the sanctuary before the opening worship service.

Last year we commissioned a new SW MN SWO banner, and it is the inspiration for our 2026 convention logo.

## Conference Assignments

Conference Presidents are needed to help with ballots for the convention. Conference Treasurers assist with counting money. Some conferences have other special duties:

- Registration – Shetek
- Table Decorations – Prairie
- Dining Hall Hostesses – Crow River
- Greeters – Lac Qui Parle
- Ushers – Great River
- Clean-up – MN Valley



## Spring Gatherings

April 11 - Great River Conference  
8:30 AM, Atonement, St. Cloud

April 11 – MN Valley Conference  
11:30 AM, American, Gaylord

April 18 – Prairie Conference  
8:30 AM, Our Savior's, Canby

April 18 AM – Glacial Ridge,  
9:00 AM, First, Morris

April 18 – Shetek Conference  
9:30 AM, American, Worthington

April 21 – Lac Qui Parle  
9:30 AM, Grace, Dawson

April 25 – Crow River Conference  
8:00 AM, St. John's, Annandale



## Resources for Women of the ELCA

Below is a list of helpful online resources from Women of the ELCA:

### Women of the ELCA Website:

(Includes a wealth of resources for ministry, action, programming and study)

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org>

### Bold Café (online magazine):

<https://www.boldcafe.org/>

### Bold Connections (monthly e-newsletter):

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/publications>

### Gather Magazine (subscription

is needed for the print copy, but many resources are available without a subscription):

<https://www.gathermagazine.org>

### Daily Grace (Daily email devotions):

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/category/daily-grace>

### SW MN Synod Women (Lots of

information including *The Communicator* and a Speaker List): [www.swmnwelca.org](http://www.swmnwelca.org)

## Dates to Remember

### 2026 SWO Convention

Saturday, May 2, 2026  
Calvary Lutheran Church, Willmar

### 2027 SWO Convention

Saturday, May 1, 2027  
First Lutheran Church, Marshall

## 2026 Spring Conference Gatherings

- ♦ Saturday, April 11: Minnesota Valley Conference at American Lutheran, Gaylord. 11:30 Registration, 12 noon lunch. Pr. Fred Vanderwerf from Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church will speak on work in Ukraine.
- ♦ Saturday, April 18: Prairie Conference at Our Savior's, Canby. 8:30 Registration. "Make a Joyful Noise" will be presented by Hooligan's Noise.
- ♦ Saturday, April 18: Glacial Ridge Conference at First Lutheran in Morris. 9:00 Registration (\$15), 9:30 Brunch. Theme: "This Is My Father's World" 10:00 Program free and open to the public: "If Wishes Were Horses: Empowering Dreams, One Hoof Beat at a Time" and music by Ken /Linda Hodgson with Lisa Winter.
- ♦ Saturday, April 18: Shetek Conference at American Lutheran, Worthington. 9:30 a.m. – Registration (\$16.00), 10:00 – Opening session. Noon meal will be served. The theme will be "God Is Always Near" and "European Trip" will be presented by Pastors Chuck and Stephanie Swanson.
- ♦ Tuesday, April 21: Lac Qui Parle Conference at Grace, Dawson. 9:30 Registration, 10:00 Program. The theme will be "Be Still and Know that I Am God". Jess Berglund will speak about ways to relieve stress.
- ♦ Saturday, April 25: Crow River Conference at St. Johns, Annandale. 8:00 a.m. Registration. The speaker will be author Gaye Lindfors.

# SYNODICAL BOARD 2025-2026

## **President:**

### **ILENE PENK**

11168 Hwy. 15, Brownton 55312  
320.510.1261

[ilenepenk45@gmail.com](mailto:ilenepenk45@gmail.com)

Grace Lutheran/ Brownton  
Minnesota Valley Conference  
Reelected in 2024 for a two-year term

## **Vice-President:**

## **Secretary:**

### **GWEN DEGNER**

408-8th St. N., Benson, MN 56215  
701.261.8920 [gwen.degner@gmail.com](mailto:gwen.degner@gmail.com)

Trinity Lutheran/Benson  
Glacial Ridge Conference  
Reelected in 2025 for a two-year term

## **Treasurer:**

### **KAREN QUISTORFF**

10704 Co 95, Sauk Centre, MN 56377  
320.282.6368 [quistorffk@gmail.com](mailto:quistorffk@gmail.com)

First Lutheran Church/Sauk Center  
Great River Conference  
Reelected in 2024 for a two-year term

## **Board Members at Large:**

### **CATHY BLAIR**

10222 Paul Ave., Fulda, MN 56131  
507.370.2909 [cjblair68@gmail.com](mailto:cjblair68@gmail.com)

Christ Lutheran Church/Slayton, MN  
Shetek Conference  
Elected in 2024 for a two-year term

### **BRENDA DANIELSON**

304 Polar Circle, Arlington, MN 55307  
952.956.2954 (Cell)  
507.964.1021 (Home)  
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Zion Lutheran Church, Arlington  
Minnesota Valley Conference  
Reelected in 2024 for a two-year term

### **KATHY HARWICK**

724- 7TH Ave., Madison, MN 56256  
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Faith Lutheran/ Madison  
Lac Qui Parle Conference  
Reelected in 2025 for a two-year term

### **EMILIE BRUSTUEN**

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First Lutheran/Morris  
Glacial Ridge Conference  
Elected in 2025 for a two-year term

### **LOUISE FERRY**

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Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church/Benson  
Glacial Ridge Conference  
Elected in 2025 for a two-year term

### **PHYLLIS LINDSTRAND**

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River of Hope Lutheran Church/Hutchinson  
Crow River Conference  
Elected in 2025 for a two-year term

### **JANE TONGEN**

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Grace Lutheran Church/Brownton  
Minnesota Valley Conference  
Elected in 2025 for a one-year term

## **SW MN Synod Staff Liaison:**

### **PASTOR HEATHER CULURIS**

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