

SOUTH DAKOTA SYNODICAL Women of the ELCA



VOLUME XLIII NUMBER 2

Fall 2025



Co-President
Sherry Archer

Greetings! Our SD Women of the ELCA 38th Synodical Convention is in the rear view mirror. We are already in the planning stages for next year's 39th Synodical Convention.

Yes, it takes the whole year to plan this convention, lining up the speakers, awareness sessions, vendors, food, entertainment, etc. We put a lot of time and effort into giving you a great experience when you attend the convention.

If you came to this year's convention, and thoroughly enjoyed yourself, PLEASE spread the word that it is a worthwhile event. Tell your friends about it! Encourage the women in your church to attend next year. It will be at Grace Lutheran in Watertown, June 17-19. The

theme will be the same one that is being used at Triennial: I Am Worthy. Put it on your calendar now, and make plans to attend. You won't regret it!

Also consider attending the Triennial Gathering in Des Moines, on July 16-19. You will join over 1,000 Lutheran women for worship, singing, advocacy, inspiration, sisterhood and more. You won't want to miss it! Go to WELCATG.ORG for more information and to register.

We checked into hiring a bus to travel from Rapid City, making stops to pick up people on the way to Sioux Falls, and from there to Des Moines, but the cost was more than people would probably want to pay. Now we are checking into the possibility of having everyone drive to Sioux Falls and taking a bus from there. Hopefully you can carpool to SF, and the travel expense will be more affordable. If you are planning on going to Triennial, please tell your Conference Advisor or someone else on the Synodical Board as soon as possible, so we will know if we have enough interested women to warrant getting a bus. Maybe we could fill up two buses. Wouldn't that be awesome?! Stay tuned for more information in the next newsletter.



Co-President
Lois Storm

Our Southeastern Conference had the 38th Annual Convention on June 18-20 in Yankton at Trinity Lutheran. It was attended by 95 ladies with 40 evaluation sheets turned in. I'm sharing with you the schedule and some evaluation comments in hopes you will be at our next Convention in Watertown,

(Prairie Coteau Conference). I went to my first one in 2010 and haven't missed one since. It's the highlight of my summer and hopefully it will be yours also.

On Wednesday evening our Spirit-filled Vespers Service, on how we are Lights in the World, was led by Pastor Elan and Vicar Brent. The ladies loved the inspiring songs and faith message. Thursday, we opened with more inspiring hymn singing. Then Diane Gubbels shared her Stories of Inspiration, while displaying 80 some quilts she'd made.

After lunch, Anghy Aragon, our Nicaragua Companion Missionary, gave an interesting talk and

CONVENTION WRAPUP, continued on p.6



Vice President

Wanda Biel

Greetings, my dear sisters in Christ! On Labor Day we honor the workers who build this nation and protect its peoples. All types of labors and workers are required and necessary to function together to provide a society where all people are granted opportunities to develop into their full potential.

And so it is with Christians. We are commissioned into service through the baptismal covenant, answering a call from God to spread his love and mercy and to thwart Satan's mission on earth. We, as Christians, are gifted by God to work through our chosen vocations to bring glory and honor to a forgiving compassionate God and to fulfill our earthly mission. It is through God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit that we are strengthened to accomplish this .

We are bound together by God into a sisterhood, called the Women of the ELCA, to be God's messengers. Please join with us as we support each other, cooperate with one another and work together to bring God's mission into fruition. God's richest blessings to you.



Outgoing Treasurer

Darla Toben

Greetings,

The ELCA held its synodical convention in Yankton, with 95 attendees registered. Two registration scholarships for first-time participants per conference were available, but only 7 of the 14 were awarded. The recipients were Helen Merriman (Bear Butte), Rosalie Gerdes and Millie Horter (Crossroads), Rachel Hemke (Northern Plains), Deanell Backlund (Prairie Rivers), and Cynthia Marohl and Deborah Pravecek (Southeastern Conference).

The SWO convention provided \$4,213. Another \$895 was given as a love offering to Sleep in Heavenly Peace, along with quilts and other items. Donations to Katie's Fund totaled \$316. Thank you all! This shows

our organization's energy and generosity.

I encourage all women to participate in your conference Fall meetings or retreats. These events offer valuable opportunities for networking, learning more about Women of the ELCA, and engaging in enriching experiences. Unit treasurers who attend the Fall meetings will receive updated forms, as Kathy Otterby was elected as the new synodical treasurer at the June convention. I am confident you will appreciate working with her.

I have formally resigned as synodical treasurer effective September 30, 2025, and Kathy has been designated by the board to fulfill my term until her elected term begins in February 2026. It is important for unit treasurers to attend upcoming conference meetings in order to receive the most current information needed as of October 1, 2025.

I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me as synodical treasurer. I look forward to collaborating with Kathy during this transition and to seeing many of you at future synodical conventions. Best wishes to all.



Incoming Treasurer

Kathy Otterby

I am the newly elected Synodical Treasurer, and have some big shoes to fill. Thanks to Darla Toben

for her excellent work the last four years.

My husband Steve and I live in Mitchell. We have a son and daughter-in-law in Casper, Wyoming, and a daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren in Mitchell. We feel very blessed to be able to follow our grandkids' activities. We own a condo on Lake Okoboji, Iowa, and since Steve has recently retired we plan to spend much of the summer there.

INCOMING TREASURER, continued on p.3



Director for Justice Kathy Heffernan

God has told you what is good. He requires of you to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

Embedded within this verse are God's expectations for humanity, referred to as **Three Core Behaviors**: to act justly, show heartfelt loving kindness toward others, and to rely on God's wisdom when pursuing fairness and kindness toward others.

Serving the South Dakota Women of the ELCA, as the State Director for Justice is to be an active communicator for you and with you. In today's world we see, hear, and are witnesses to conflicts that feel

overwhelming. Where are justice, loving kindness, and humility? Know that all three are interconnected.

I am ready to encourage South Dakota's WELCA to have this conversation: "How can we as church units, conferences, and as the South Dakota Women of the ELCA use Micah 6:8's Three Core Behaviors and to rely on God's wisdom to guide us to be servants modeled by Christ?"

So, here I am, 32 years of loving life in Wecota, SD. My faith life is worshipping and wearing several hats volunteering at Zion Lutheran in Aberdeen. My husband, Steve, passed away in 2004. My son Tom is an independent contractor and musician in Mankato, MN. My daughter Lisa is the campus pastor at the USD Luther Center and the ELCA Coordinator for Disabilities Ministries. I am a substitute teacher for the Aberdeen School District, sharing the knowledge and experience of 34 years as an educator. I also teach driving lessons for the Aberdeen District!



Member at Large Beth Nielsen

Greetings from the Bear Butte Conference!

Recently, the Synodical Board hosted its biannual Leadership Workshop at Trinity in Chamberlain. This event provided a valuable opportunity for fellowship and learning about their roles and responsibilities.

At the workshop we were introduced to a new online learning platform available through the SD Synod's website. This platform, called "Pasque," features a dedicated hub for Women of the ELCA (WELCA). Within this hub, members can exchange ideas, share concerns, ask and answer questions, and connect.

To join, visit www.sdsynodlearns.org or access the platform via the homepage at sdsynod.org. Click on 'All Resources' and find the WELCA online community. Creating a free account is easy—simply sign-in using your email address.

Ways to Participate

- ☐ Explore the platform, leave comments, and introduce yourself to the community.
- ☐ Share your thoughts and let others know why you appreciate WELCA.
- ☐ If your Unit needs advice or assistance with any issue, post your question to receive suggestions from others.
- ☐ Units seeking new ideas or churches without active WELCA groups can connect for support—just let the community know who needs to be contacted.

Join the Conversation! See you on Pasque!



INCOMING TREASURER, cont. from p.2

I'm looking forward to working with the Synodical Board. Their dedication and leadership continue to enrich the South Dakota Synodical.

*For the Lord grants wisdom!
From his mouth come knowledge and
understanding.
Proverbs 3:5-6*

2025 Convention Photos



Bernie Hunhoff, storyteller



Mary Milroy, Sleep in Heavenly Peace



Top: Visiting during Wednesday night meal

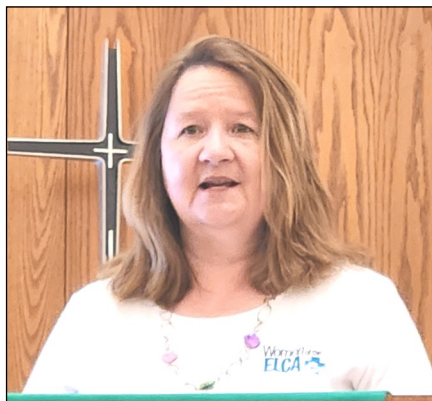
Above left: Vicar Brent, music leader.

Above: Diane Gubbels, quilter

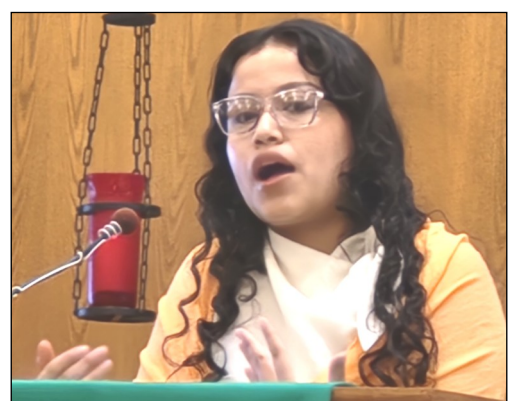
Left: Assistant to the Bishop Renee Splichal Larson



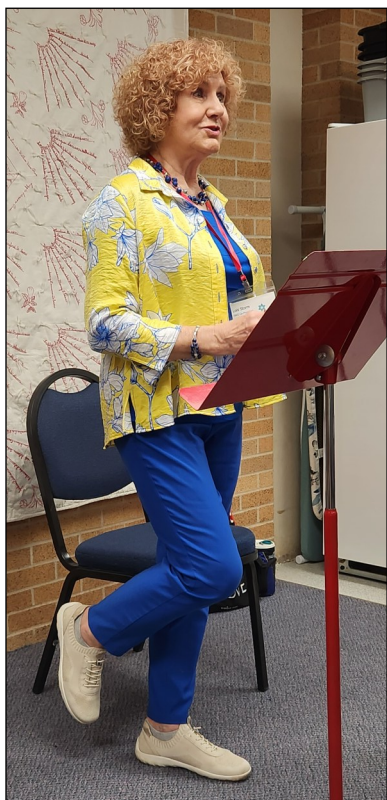
Kevin Watt, fraud expert



Gwendolyn Edwards, Churchwide



Anghy Aragon, Nicaragua



Above left: Lois Storm demonstrates balance exercises.

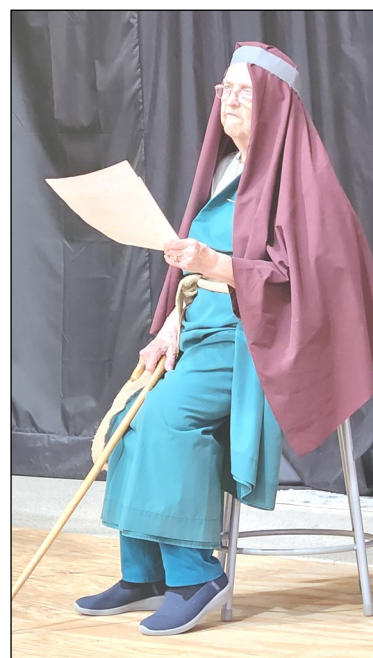
Above: Several ladies enjoyed a tour of the Gavins Point Dam.

Lower right: Outgoing Director of Justice Connie Matzner and Outgoing Treasurer Darla Toben were recognized.

Bottom right: Ladies from Spirit of Hope, Scotland, portrayed Women of the Bible.



New synodical officers: Connie Bickett, Kathy Heffernan, Kathy Otterby, Sherry Archer, Lois Storm, Erika Lehmann, with Gwen at the podium.



Voting members and alternates to the 2026 Triennial: Sherry Archer, Lois Storm, Erika Lehmann, Cheryl Lundeen, Connie Matzner, and CW rep Gwen Edwards.

CONVENTION WRAPUP, cont. from p.1

ways to help in this mission. After that, Kevin Watt was our speaker on scams and fraud, and how important it is to know about all the ways you can get scammed. He shared interesting information we all needed.

In the afternoon we had 3 Awareness Sessions. Kevin's sessions gave the ladies more time to ask questions and share stories. The Awareness sessions with St. Dysmas Ministry had great information and stories. The Balance and Exercise session practiced and had informative handouts with exercises for better balance. The session of the ELCA World Hunger was informative and it made them realize the need to be supportive. Ladies liked the Women of the Bible portrayal after the Banquet. On Friday morning we heard from the Churchwide Rep., Associate to the Bishop, and then closed with the inspirational Communion Service.

The Evaluation sheets confirmed that you ladies loved reconnecting with friends and coming every year. You loved meeting new ladies, making new friends, and singing and worshipping together. You had lots of fun, loved the fellowship over coffee breaks, lunch, and the banquet meal. You are ready to go to the next one! (Maybe you're ALL hooked like I am!) Shalom!

Time for more fun and fellowship at your Fall Retreat !

Bear Butte: Sept. 5-6, Our Savior's, Spearfish
Crossroads: Oct. 11, East Side Luth., Sioux Falls
Medary: Sept. 16, Our Redeemer Luth., Bryant
Northern Plains: Oct. 4, Good Shepherd, Aberdeen
Prairie Coteau: Oct. 9, NeSoDak, near Waubay
Prairie Rivers: Oct. 4, St. John Luth., Dimock
Southeastern: TBD

Contact your Conference coordinator for info. See page 7



Lutheran Partners
in Global Ministry

Greetings from LPGM in Minneapolis!

What a wonderful gathering the SD WELCA Convention was!

As a first-timer, I felt so welcomed and included. Thank you for stopping by LPGM's table, whether to learn about us, share your own story of ministering to people at the margins, or to enter our raffle drawing. Lynne Bye of Gayville won the raffle.



LPGM can be a resource for your WELCA group or congregation.

Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry began 34 years ago, and we've built relationships around the globe, helping people at the margins get what they need to thrive. We've realized that sustainable change boils down to quality education. We work alongside Christian partners who provide access to education to students at the margins - *especially* women and girls. We lead trips to visit these partners, encourage them, learn from them, build relationships with them, challenge (and grow!) our faith, and open our eyes to how God would have us respond. To learn more, visit lutheranpartners.org. Blessings to you as you continue to let God's light SHINE through you!

Renewals due...

Please send the \$6 annual subscription to

Kathy Otterby
1401 Firesteel Drive
Mitchell, SD 57301

For a free, e-mailed newsletter, send your name, church and conference to sdwelcanews@gmail.com

Alice Anderson
Ruth Anderson
Connie Bickett
Donna Crook
Mary Fristad
Brenda Glasford

Myla Kneeland
Marilyn Nelson
Janet Nygard
Mickey Schlecht
Margene Thompson
Vivian Westgard

2025-2026 Synod Officers

Co-President Lois Storm

39885 273 St., Corsica SD 57328
605-933-1243 thestormfarm@hotmail.com
2025 elected to 2nd term. Southeastern Advisor

Co-President Sherry Archer

2204 E 52nd St, Sioux Falls SD 57103
605-310-0153 ladnred2023@gmail.com
2025 elected to 2nd term. Crossroads Advisor

Vice President Wanda Biel

205 N Leslie Ave., Oldham SD 57051
wandabiel402@gmail.com 402-883-0474
2024 elected to 2nd term. Medary Advisor

Secretary Teresa Mikkelsen

PO Box 94, Webster SD 57274
605-345-2912 teresalm82@hotmail.com
2025 elected to 2nd term. Prairie Coteau Advisor

Treasurer Kathy Otterby

1401 Firesteel Dr., Mitchell, SD 57301
605-999-3453 otter@mit.midco.net
2025 appointed to 1-year term. Prairie Rivers Adv

Director of Discipleship Erika Lehmann

913 3rd St., Garretson, SD 57030
605-338-4737 Bear Butte Advisor
elehmann1869@icloud.com
2025 elected to 2nd term. Crossroads Advisor

Director of Justice Kathy Heffernan

35338 153rd St., Faulkton, SD 57438.
605-450-8782 kheffernan1957@gmail.com
2025 elected to 1-year term. Northern Plains

Director of Stewardship Darlene Bresson

621 S. Lake Drive Watertown, SD 57201
1-605-421-1258 dbress20@gmail.com
2025 elected 1st term.

Member-at-Large Beth Nielsen

1540 Buena Vista Road, Spearfish, SD 57783
bethn2005@gmail.com 605-381-8695
2024 elected 1st term. Bear Butte Advisor

Member-at-Large Connie Bickett

45041 217th St., Arlington SD 57212
605-270-9967, cell 605-315-2402
conniebickett452@gmail.com
2025 elected 1st term.

Nominating Committee (2-yr term)

Darla Toben (2025) 605-880-3506

dgtobin@itctel.com Medary

Janet Lustig (2024) 818-571-2594

jjehrtig@gmail.com Bear Butte

Loretta Greni (2025) 605-645-1536

dlgren@midco.net Bear Butte

Conference Coordinators

Bear Butte: Beth Nielsen

1540 Buena Vista Rd, Spearfish, SD 57783

bethn2005@gmail.com 605-381-8695

Crossroads: Sandy Sorum

47510 258th St., Renner, SD 57055

dssorum5@gmail.com 605-201-4334

Medary: Connie Bickett

45041 217th St., Arlington SD 57212

605-270-9967, cell 605-315-2402

conniebickett452@gmail.com

Northern Plains: Rachel Hemke

2017 N. Jay St., Aberdeen 57401

rachel.hemke@gmail.com 605-252-0915

Prairie Coteau: Cindy Hofland

44473 107th St., Veblen, SD 57270

hofland@tnics.com, 605-626-1178 and

Diane Odland, 11570 468th Ave., Sisseton, SD

57262, odlandjoel@yahoo.com 605-268-1123

Prairie Rivers: Pastor Becky Senner

PO Box 932, Parkston, 57366

sennermom@hotmail.com 605-480-4553,

Southeastern: Joyce Vasgaard

28746 462 Ave., Centerville, SD 57014

605-359-0386 joycevasgaard@iw.net

Communications

FACEBOOK GURU: Erika Lehmann

605-338-4737

elehmann1869@icloud.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Lilah Gillis

605-660-8418 sdwelcanews@gmail.com



South Dakota Synodical

Lilah Gillis, Editor

1202 E 15th St.

Yankton, SD 57078

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED