

SOUTH DAKOTA SYNODICAL Women of the ELCA

VOLUME XIX NUMBER 2

Spring 2026



Co-President
Lois Storm

COME, JOIN US: At the SD WELCA Convention on June 17-19, 2026, at Grace Lutheran in Watertown, SD in our Prairie Coteau Conference. I'm personally warning you that if you come: you may get hooked! I went to my first one 15 years ago, fell in love with it all, and haven't missed one since. Imagine: faith-filled speakers and worship, fellowship with wonderful ladies, good food and fun!

There will be an evaluation sheet at the end, which is very important to fill out. The Synodical Board faithfully went over all suggestions and used that information to set up last year's conference and will use it again for this year's agenda and schedule.

We've made so many improvements with your feedback:

- changed our beginning times to later and ending times to earlier
- lengthened break times to allow for more visiting vendors and friends
- shortened newsletters by just including facts and information without any devotions

SURVEYS, continued on p.3



Co-President
Sherry Archer

Greetings! Spring is just around the corner, and I'm looking forward to getting my hands dirty in the garden again!

I'm also looking forward to our next Synodical Convention, June 17-19, in Watertown. Hopefully, you have it blocked off on your calendar and are already making plans to attend! We are making several changes this year. We really do read the

evaluations, and try to incorporate your suggestions in our future planning. Of course, if someone wants more of something, and someone else wants less, we aren't able to please everyone!

The first change is we are moving our business meeting to Thursday morning at 9:00 instead of Friday. Registration will still start at 8:30.

The second change is that we are asking for your input for what we sing at our two music sessions. Do you have a favorite hymn or song that you would like us to use? If so, please send your suggestion(s) to me via email at ladnred2023@gmail.com by April 30, so our pianist has time to rehearse them. Depending on

CHANGES, continued on p.3



Vice President

Wanda Biel

Greetings, dear sisters in Christ! March is the month of St. Patrick's Day, the beginning of spring, my birthday, a Lenten journey with Christ, and time for a Spring Newsletter.

Preparations are underway for another amazing Synodical Convention. As your Vice-President and the leader of the Nominations Committee, I will briefly outline the vacancies for our upcoming Synodical Board and for each office, two elements of the job description.

We are seeking candidates for Vice-President, Secretary, Director of Stewardship and two positions for the Nominating Committee.

The Vice President acts in the absence of the President and acts as Nominating convener.

The Secretary keeps a written record of meetings and records and distributes minutes of the convention.

The Stewardship Director encourages and equips women for their responsibility for stewardship and helps to plan the convention.

The Nominating Committee members identify potential candidates for leadership, nominating two persons for each vacancy. Nominating Committee needs two candidates. Janet Lustig may run again if she so chooses.

As we are moving into our Spring Gatherings, I encourage all women to prayerfully consider these roles of leadership to keep our organization vibrant and growing.

Blessings, Wanda



Treasurer

Kathy Otterby

Spring is around the corner, which means it's time to start planning your trip to Watertown for the SD Synodical convention, June 17-19, 2026.

Registration fees include many great speakers, Thursday noon meal and Thursday evening's banquet meal. **Early registration is \$50 if paid before June 1.** Registrations after June 1st will be \$65 You may register by mail or online using <http://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/10938644>.

Voting delegates: Each unit may register one voting delegate to the convention. Voting delegates must register by June 1, 2026.

Delegate information will be mailed to the delegates prior to the convention.

Synodical Offering: Please bring your unit's and personal synodical offerings to the convention. If sending an offering from your unit, please complete Offering Form A with your check so your donation can be recorded. The SWO offering will be split 50/50 between Churchwide and the SD WELCA.

Love Offering: Beacon Center (domestic abuse shelter) is the recipient of the Love Offering. See the list of items they're requesting on the convention poster, page 5

There will be no silent auction.

ATTENTION CONFERENCE & UNIT

TREASURERS: There will be a Treasurer's Training via Zoom on Saturday, April 25 at 1:00 pm (CST) Go to the WELCA website to register.



SD W/ELCA Triennial Event Coordinator

Darla Toben

Have you registered for the 2026 Triennial in Des Moines, IA yet? If not, there is still time. Register online at <http://welcatg.org/>.

Motels: Do not forget to book your room as well. The Hilton Des Moines Downtown is already full so check out the Des Moines Marriott Downtown. **DES MOINES MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN**
Reservation phone number: 800-514-4681
Online reservation link: [Book your group rate for](#)

[Women of the ELCA: Triennial Gathering Room Block 2026](#) Group reference code: **WELCA2026** (or Women of the ELCA) Hotel reservation deadline: **June 25, 2026**

Travel: We have planned for a bus to travel from Sioux Falls to Des Moines, leaving Thursday July 16th and returning after the gathering on Sunday July 19th. There is still plenty of room on the bus. Ask a friend to join you – you will not regret the time spent with wonderful women. If you have not signed up to ride the bus, please send me a text or call, 605-880-3506. You can email me as well, dgtoben@itctel.com. So far, we have twenty-six ladies registered from South Dakota attending Triennial. Keep checking the website for updated information on the gathering. If you have any questions, please contact me. Darla Toben

SURVEYS, continued from front

- created a mailing list that includes conference presidents and churches
- ensure the selected hotel has a hot breakfast and elevator
- changed the business meeting to 9:00 am Thursday
- made time cards now for all awareness sessions and speakers
- make sure we stay on schedule
- keep upbeat spiritual songs for our singing time together
- include one awareness session on exercise and good health

This year there will be a designated place to put your evaluation sheet, and after doing that, you will put your name in a raffle (names are not required on the evaluation sheet). The prizes will be displayed on a table. The names for prizes will be drawn after Friday's break time before our closing Worship Service.

We thank everyone for taking the time to fill them out and helping us in planning the next one. Shalom!

CHANGES, continued from front

how many we get, we can't promise that we'll be able to sing every one, but we would love to hear from you. You get bonus points if your favorite aligns with our theme: I Am Worthy!

The third change is that we are not having a program following the banquet on Thursday night. Several of you have asked for a "sharing" time, to exchange ideas on what the different units are doing. We will do that instead of a program. Please come prepared to speak on what your unit is doing that works well, and bring pen and paper to take notes. We might not have time to allow everyone who would like to speak, so please plan to keep your presentation around five minutes.

On Saturday afternoon, February 28, I attended the 2026 Conference of Presidents, done via ZOOM, which is for all the Synodical Presidents nation-wide. It's always informative and interesting to hear from our churchwide leaders and visit with other Synodical Presidents.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Watertown in June!



Director for Stewardship

Darlene Bresson

Greetings Ladies!

Isn't it wonderful to see the first signs of spring and the rebirth of the earth after the long winter? I love spring, which reminds me of our wonderful rebirth in Christ!

Our plans for the 39th SD Synodical Convention are falling into place. Activities will start on Wed afternoon for those who would like to tour some unique places in Watertown.

We'll gather at Grace Lutheran (202 2nd St SE) at 1:00 pm on Wed to consolidate rides. Our first tour will be at the Redlin Art Center where you'll see 160 original oil paintings by Terry Redlin, a nationally known wildlife artist. Then we'll travel to the Goss Opera House in downtown Watertown.

It was built in 1889 and has been restored to its original beauty – lovely to see. Our final place will be the Mother of God Monastery, home to the Benedictine sisters who created the community in 1961. Seeking God in community is a primary value of the sisters so they are very hospitable and welcome all.

At 4:30, we'll join the sisters in celebrating vespers, after which we'll return to Grace. Registration will be from 5:15 to 6:00, followed by a casual dinner. Afterwards you can enjoy a relaxing evening and visit with other guests. And of course, we'll have refreshments to end the evening!

We have established a block of rooms at the Quality Inn, which is located close to I-29, and north of Hwy 212. You can reserve a room by calling 605-886-3010 and ask for the WELCA rate of \$107/night. This rate will only be good until May 17th, so call now! Please tell them whether you're reserving 1 or 2 nights.

Grace Lutheran is looking forward to hosting the 2026 convention, so I hope you can join us!



Member at Large

Beth Nielsen

Greetings from the far west—Bear Butte Conference! I'm looking forward to joining several conference members at the Synodical Convention this year, after a few years away. I'm eager for the speakers, breakout sessions, and most of all, connecting with people from across the state.

Serving as Member at Large on the Synodical Board and as Bear Butte Conference President

has taught me a great deal through valuable connections and mentoring from past and current colleagues.

Women participate in WELCA for reasons including family tradition, the opportunity to build new relationships, and the desire to collaborate with others in support of those in need. At the heart of these motivations is the belief that every woman is worthy—worthy of belonging, worthy of forming meaningful connections, and worthy of making a difference in the lives of others. The "I Am Worthy" theme reminds us that our contributions, our stories, and our presence matter, empowering us to serve with confidence and compassion as we uplift one another and our communities.

BBC members, if you would like to carpool with others, please let me know and we will arrange it.

**SOUTH DAKOTA
SYNODICAL
39TH Annual Convention**



June 17-19, 2026

“I Am Worthy”

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14

Wednesday, June 17 1 pm Meet at Grace to consolidate rides to

1:15 Redlin Art Center

2:15 The Goss Opera House

3:15 Mother of God Monastery

4:30 Vespers at Monastery

5:15 – 6:00 – Registration back at Grace

6 pm – Dinner, visiting afterwards with coffee & cookies

Thursday, June 18 8:30 am—8 pm

Friday, June 19 8:30 am to noon

**Registration: \$50 if paid by May 31; \$65 if paid June 1 or later
(one voting member per unit, must be paid by June 1)**

Sneak preview of the Main and Breakout Sessions:

Stavig Letters

SD Synod Pasque learning

“Where They Last Saw Her” book

Chair yoga by SALT Yoga Studio

World Hunger/Disaster Relief by Pastor Erika Lehmann

S. Barbara Younger

Glacial Lakes Suicide Line

Beacon House

CONVENTION OFFERING: Split 50/50 between Churchwide and Synodical

LOVE OFFERINGS: Ziplock bags, detergent, paper towels, mini pads, shampoo, toilet paper, lotion for Beacon Center (domestic abuse shelter).

NO bar soap, NO hand sanitizer, NO food.

HOTEL: Quality Inn - \$107/night 605-886-3010. Has elevator, hot breakfast. Call before May 17, and tell whether you're staying for 1 or 2 nights. 20 rooms are available under the name WELCA

**Grace Lutheran Church
202 2nd St SE, Watertown, SD**

Register at <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/10938644>

Find our newsletters and more at sdsynod.org/ministries/welca

REGISTRATION FORM

SD Women of the ELCA 39th Synodical Convention**June 17-19, 2026**

Grace Lutheran Church, 202 2nd St SE, Watertown, SD

Theme: I Am Worthy

Please **Circle** one: Voting Member Non-Voting Member (One voting member per unit)

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Congregation _____ Conference _____

Registration fee: \$50 by May 31 \$65 June 1 or later
 includes Thursday noon meal and Thursday evening Banquet meal

Wednesday eve grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, baked beans and chips—
 to join us for this meal, send an additional \$10 by June 13

Register online at: <https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/10938644> or

Mail to Kathy Otterby 1401 Firesteel Dr., Mitchell, SD 57301, 605-999-3453 otter@mit.midco.net

On-site registration starts at 5:15 pm Wednesday, June 17th

Renewals due...

*Please send the \$6 annual subscription to
 Kathy Otterby, 1401 Firesteel Dr.,
 Mitchell, SD 57301*

*For a free, e-mailed newsletter, contact
sdwelcanews@gmail.com*

*Donna Crook
 Deb Feldhaus
 Lorna Harstad
 Deborah Hesla
 Janet Nygard
 Carol Osterman*

*Charla Rye
 Mickey Schlecht
 Margene Thompson
 Grace Wangberg
 Vivian Westgard*

Don't miss your Conference Spring Gathering!

Bear Butte: April 25 at Our Savior's, Spearfish

Crossroads: April 25 at Beaver Valley, Brandon

Medary: April 11 at First Lutheran, Brookings

Northern Plains: April 11 at Emmanuel Luth., Groton

Prairie Coteau: April 25 at American Luth., Milbank

Prairie Rivers: April 18 Salem Lutheran, Parkston

Southeastern: April 18 at Trinity in Yankton

Contact your Conference coordinator for info.

See page 7

2025-2026 Synod Officers

Co-President Lois Storm

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2025 elected to 2nd term. Southeastern Advisor

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2024 elected to 2nd term. Prairie Coteau Advisor

Treasurer Kathy Otterby

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2025 appointed to 1-year term. Prairie Rivers Adv

Director of Discipleship Erika Lehmann

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2025 elected to 2nd term. Crossroads Advisor

Director of Justice Kathy Heffernan

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605-450-8782 kheffernan1957@gmail.com
2025 elected to 1-year term. Northern Plains

Director of Stewardship Darlene Bresson

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2024 elected 1st term.

Member-at-Large Beth Nielsen

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2024 elected 1st term. Bear Butte Advisor

Member-at-Large Connie Bickett

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2025 elected 1st term.

Nominating Committee (2-yr term)

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dgtoben@itctel.com Medary

Janet Lustig (2024) 818-571-2594

[jehrtig@gmail.com](mailto:jiehartig@gmail.com) Bear Butte

Loretta Greni (2025) 605-645-1536

dlgren@midco.net Bear Butte

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED