



The Bulletin

January 2026

*“Mobilizing women
to act boldly on
their faith in Jesus
Christ”*

Our Purpose

“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.”



Happy New Year, my sisters!

As I write this and prepare to send the BULLETIN out, it is the eve of Martin Luther King Day.

Dr. King was a man of God, a man of peace, a man of courage... We sure could use some of his wisdom and courage these days, in times such as these when the world is uncertain and unsettling.

I believe many of us have forgotten what peace is. As a group of Tibetan monks make their way to Washington, promoting peace, I am inspired. I believe Dr. King is watching their steps, smiling.

This quote crossed my path today and reminded me what peace means: "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice."

In our time, it seems to me that peace has come to mean acquiescence to power for the sake of avoiding conflict. Is that the world we want to live in?

*Blessings and peace,
Julie Arndt
Secretary, NC WELCA*

The Bulletin is published monthly by the North Carolina Women of the ELCA. Submissions for photos, news stories, and other items of interest are welcome. Please limit stories to 500 words. Photos should be submitted with a brief caption that explains what is shown, date of the event, and who is shown.

Deadline for monthly submissions is the **6th of each month for publication on or about the 15th of each month.** Send submissions to Julie Arndt, Secretary and Bulletin Editor, at the following email: secretaryncwelca@gmail.com as either word documents or Google documents.



Dear Sisters in Christ,

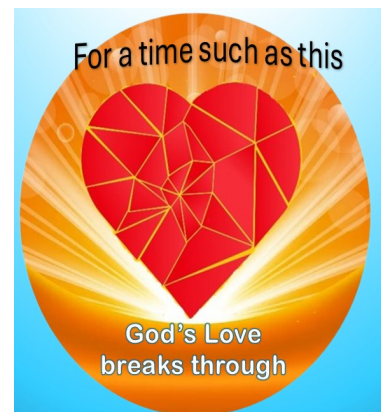
Happy New Year!

We have so much to look forward to in 2026—time with our families and friends, trips to exciting places, and plans for our homes. We also have many wonderful opportunities ahead with NC WELCA.

- In **February**, we will offer **One-Day Retreats** on **February 7 or February 21**. These retreats invite you to discover how living boldly can be a faith-filled celebration.
- In **March and April**, **Spring Gatherings** will be held in each conference. Please watch for information from your conference leaders and for a list of locations in the Bulletin.
- **From April 10–12**, our **Spring Retreat** will be held at Isle of Palms, the South Carolina Synod retreat center. This retreat will be presented by the women of Trinity, Sanford.
- On **June 12–13**, please plan to attend the **NC WELCA Annual Gathering** at Lenoir-Rhyne University. This will be a new and improved format, beginning at noon on Friday, June 12. Voting members are encouraged to attend Friday for a shortened business session. Awareness sessions and a special program will be held on Saturday, and the Gathering will conclude with closing worship.
- **In July**, we look forward to the **Thirteenth Triennial Convention and Gathering**. The theme, “I Am Worthy,” comes from Psalm 139:14: “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” This theme reminds us that God is with us, even in times of devastation and division.
- The business portion of the Convention will be held virtually on Monday, July 13, and Tuesday, July 14. North Carolina voting members—who were elected at last year’s Annual Gathering—will meet at the NC Synod Office in Salisbury. On Wednesday, July 15, those attending the Gathering will travel to Des Moines, Iowa, where we will worship together, attend awareness sessions, participate in servant events, and reconnect with old friends while making new ones from across the country.

Get ready for a busy and exciting year with NC WELCA!

***Your sister in Christ,
Terri Brown
President
NC Women of the ELCA***



Spring Gatherings are upcoming

Spring hasn't sprung quite yet, but plans for spring gatherings are underway in our conferences.

The theme for this spring's gathering is "*We Stand for Her*," an exploration of the pervasive issue of missing and murdered indigenous people, especially women and girls.

The ELCA study is built around the documentary "*We Ride for Her*," follows an Indigenous women's motorcycle group as they ride to end the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR). The film also intimately follows a community member searching for her missing sister while trying to heal her shattered family.

Directed by Prairie Rose Seminole and Katrina Lillian Sorrentino, this documentary sheds light on the United States' history of genocide and systemic oppression of Indigenous people and the continued dark reality of violence against and consistent devaluing of Indigenous women.

Indigenous women and girls in the United States are more likely to experience violence



than non-Indigenous women and girls. Eighty-three percent of American Indian Alaska Natives experience violence in their lifetime while 80 percent of sexual violence is perpetrated by non-Indigenous people. The vast majority of women and children who have endured sexual violence never see their abusers brought to justice.

The reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and relatives is a horrific one with its origins in the violence brought upon Indigenous communities by colonizers. A history of violence and devaluation of Native bodies, combined with a justice system that was never established to protect Indigenous people, created the epidemic we see today. There are over 5,500 missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls. And that number is conservative. Most cases are closed prema-

turely by law enforcement; this results in Native families putting little faith and trust in a justice system that has failed them. That is why the women in this film take matters into their own hands to see what impact they can have.

Spring Offerings

Offerings collected during Spring Gatherings will support Reading Connections, a non-profit which seeks to improve adult literacy and promote educational equity.

Volunteer tutors assist students in students in one-on-one sessions or in small class settings. Together, student and tutor create a learning plan to map short-and long-term objectives. This individualized plan is based on the student's goals, like reading to their children, earning a GED, or obtaining a job.

Conference Dates

Dates for your conference gathering will be announced by your conference leaders. Host churches will announce the recipient of in-kind offerings, lunch plans, and locations for gatherings.

Get ready for your conference gatherings, attend, and bring a friend!

Spring Gathering honors Maxine Amos

By Karen Birkedal, Discipleship Committee

This year's spring gathering program, *"We Stand for Her"* is offered through churchwide Women of the ELCA and chosen in memory of Maxine Amos, who passed away in July 2025 at age 89.

Maxine was a third-generation educator, woman of God, elder of the Lumbee tribe, and mentor to many, including many Women of the North Carolina ELCA and women in ministry in our state. She left a legacy of love, boldness and faith in the many she encountered on her journey.

Maxine was a native of Pembroke, North Carolina and a proud member of the Lumbee tribe. Maxine was among the first American Indian women to

attend Coker College in Hartsville, South Carolina in the mid-1950s. She earned a bachelor's degree and later a Master's degree from East Carolina University.

Maxine was a fixture at NC Synod Gatherings and Assemblies, and never missed a WELCA event. She never missed a Triennial Gathering. She was an active supporter of UNC-Pembroke and worked as a member of the board of Givens Performing Arts Center, established scholarships, and supported athletic programs.

Maxine advocated tirelessly for causes affecting women, especially women of color, and encouraged women to pursue their callings and use their talents to serve God and their communities.

The program is designed to help support our efforts in educating ourselves in standing for and bringing justice to missing and murdered indigenous women everywhere. This study was writ-

ten by the director of the documentary *We Ride for Her*, Prairie Rose Seminole.

We will watch this video at our gatherings. In addition to the video and discussion guide participants will be given on a pamphlet about Adults Saving Kids, an organization that works to prevent human trafficking. To end the program each participant will be given the opportunity to express future actions through an art activity.



Educate yourself! Reading suggestions from the Justice Committee



By Patti Schmid, Justice Committee

The Justice Committee offers some book recommendations for the new year. You don't have to agree with the content but rather be informed. Broaden your perspectives and check these out.

- **Strongmen** by Ruth Ben-Ghiat examines authoritarian leaders of the past century and the blueprint these

leaders followed over the past 100 years, and empowers us to recognize, resist, and prevent their disastrous rule in the future.

- **Hillbilly Elegy** by J.D. Vance examines a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The disintegration of this group, a process that has been

See "Books," next page

“A penny saved is a penny earned:” *Change for Change* campaign

By Lori Schaefer, Stewardship Committee

Given the news that our country will no longer be minting pennies, it is time to give you an update on our “Pennies Project.”

Starting in 2026 the pennies campaign will be known as “Change for Change.” Recipients will be Robeson County Church and Community Center in Lumberton, NC and the Fuller Center for Housing/Disaster Rebuilders. Total offerings will be equally split between the two organizations.

The **Robeson County Church and Community Center** is the

oldest and largest faith based non-profit emergency social assistance organization in Robeson County. They operate a large food pantry with three food assistance programs, provide emergency assistance with utilities, rent, and medicine, and build handicap ramps, perform small home repairs and install grab bars and other safety for equipment for seniors. In addition, they operate a thrift shop to assist those who cannot afford typical retail necessities, are burned out of their homes or are moving out of the Southeastern Family Violence Center facilities.

Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders is a 501(c)(3) Christian organization dedicated to serving the victims of major disasters in the United States. Organized in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we have supported rebuilding in most major hurricane disaster

areas since then. We serve uninsured, low-income homeowners using volunteer labor to make our rebuilding effort more affordable. The program is financed from donations and grants.

Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders is currently operating in eastern North Carolina (Hurricane Florence), Dawson Springs, Kentucky (EF-4 tornado), and western NC (Hurricane Helene).



Books for January reading

slowly occurring now for more than forty years. It is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

- ***Angry White Men*** by Michael Kimmel examines the demise of the white American male voter as a dominant force in the political landscape. The
- ***Hate Inc.*** by Matt Taibbi reveals that what most people think of as “the news” is, in fact, a twisted wing of the entertainment business. In the Internet

election of Donald Trump proved that angry white men can still change the course of history. Here, Kimmel argues that they should walk openly and honorably alongside those they've spent so long trying to exclude, in order to be happier and healthier.

age, the press have mastered the art of monetizing anger, paranoia, and distrust. Taibbi, who has spent much of his career covering elections in which this kind of manipulative activity is most egregious, provides a rich taxonomic survey of American political journalism's dirty tricks.

Agree? Disagree? Need something to think about? Check these books out and decide for yourself.

Don't forget Supporting our Sisters!

Our North Carolina WELCA sisters are creative, visionary, loving, and always looking for ways to help their community.

Got an idea for a new ministry and need a little help getting the ball rolling? Is there an area where you see a need, and would like to help out? Are you collecting quilt supplies for the quilters in your church? Thinking about making food bags to hand out at your soup kitchen?

Does your congregation have an existing knitting or quilting group, a meal ministry, or children's ministry that needs a shot in the arm?

"Supporting our Sisters" is ready and willing to help!

The Supporting our Sisters Mission Campaign provides financial resources women in North Carolina to support ministries, existing or new, throughout the synod, to bring

gifted speakers to our Gatherings, to provide faith and leadership learning opportunities for Women of the ELCA, and provide "seed" money for women to either enhance a ministry in their church or community, or start a new one... a quilt ministry or snack program for child and adult daycare.

There are infinite ways to further God's mission and the North Carolina Women of the ELCA want to support that work.

State treasurer Nena Babb, explains, "Think of SOS Grants as equivalent to the Thrivent grants so many of us get every year to help support our projects. Supporting our Sisters is an great way to assist women in their community ministry efforts."

It's easy to apply. Just visit the website, ncwelca.org, print the form and provide some basic information, and mail the application. After all, that's what it's for: to support YOU, our sisters, in living out our WELCA mission statement. Send us your ideas! We're here to help!

Contributing to the fund helps keep the work going. "We originally asked each woman to contribute \$10, or whatever you can, the fund," Nena Babb explains. "The drive was set for fall, but you can contribute any time. We also ask that you pray for all our sisters and their work in the world. Supporting one another in our work is a part of our mission statement."

Make your contribution to Support Our Sisters.

Send checks to Nena Babb, 6130 Heavner Road, Vale, NC, 28168 or use Tithe.ly, our on-line giving app.



Important Note:

Please make sure that all checks are sent to current treasurer Nena Babb, not former treasurer Debra Weinell.

The address is:

**Nena Babb
6130 Heavner Road
Vale, NC, 28168**

Save the date! Annual Gathering plans are coming together!

By Tamarah Hefner, Gathering Planning Committee

Thirty-eighth Annual Gathering of the North Carolina Women of the ELCA is set to take place at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina beginning Friday, June 12 at noon and wrapping up on Saturday, June 13 5:00pm.

While not all details are final at this time, we are excited about our plans so far.

- The gathering theme- “For Such a Time as This, God’s Love Breaks Through.”



- The offering will be divided: 50% will support MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/People) People of the Dark Water (Lumbee

Tribe), while 30% will go to the Churchwide women’s organization, and 20% will go to the Triennial Gathering.

- Keynote Speakers and Program-People of the Dark Water (Lumbee Missing and Murdered Indigenous People. Members of the Lumbee Tribe will talk about tribal traditions, history of MMIW, Personal story, Healing Dance, Friendship dance, Drummers and Miss Lumbee.
- We will be voting for President, Treasurer and four board members. If you would like to nominate someone for one of these posts, contact Robin Stuart at ncwelcawebmaster@gmail.com.

- Deacon Wendy Roberts will serve as chaplain. Music Director will be Emily Copeland with Jenna Waters as pianist.
- Bishop Emily Hartner will conduct worship and deliver a message. Vicki Marthaler will lead dorm devotions and Tonie Neal will present Matins devotions.
- Awareness sessions are in the planning stages with details forthcoming. Plan

to visit the gift shop provided by Leap of Faith and a variety of display tables.

- Three meals are included: Friday supper, and Saturday, breakfast and lunch. A snack will be provided Saturday afternoon before worship.
- We will be hanging red dresses to symbolize and recognize MMIW and will tracing the Red Hand to emphasize the need to speak out and not be silenced.



- Business meetings and Bible study will be on Friday. Awareness sessions, Keynoters and program and worship on Saturday.

We are so excited about this year’s Gathering and hope you are too! The committee has worked hard to put together an exciting event.

Registration will be forthcoming. Don’t miss this year’s gathering!

Walking Alongside...

By Rev. Denise Henry, Discipleship Co-Chair

Ever wonder why so few young women and girls involved with the NCWELCA? Or better yet, where do we go from here?

As I began my latest tenure on the SWO Board, one thing I noticed was the goals from 10 years ago were the same: “get more women involved”; “increase the number of young women.”

But there was no plan. We still don’t have a plan to achieve this.

There is no plan because we have to be open to change. We can’t keep doing what we were doing over ten years ago. We need to throw out the idea of “we’ve always done it that way.”

There are youth and young adults “out there.” There are young working mothers “out there.” This is clear if you fol-

low Children, Youth and Families ministry or the NC Young Adults Connect (Young Adult Outreach Ministry).

- Take time to watch videos of the ELCA Youth Gatherings. They are attending YouthQuake and Youth Gatherings. The Women of the ELCA has begun a campus ambassador program to connect college age girls with elementary and middle school girls. The youth are out there!

At the Fall Convocation for NC Synod Rostered Leaders, I attended a breakout session on Children, Youth and Family. I was the only one there who didn’t work directly with youth. I came out of the session with renewed hope, ideas and support. I learned that we need to walk along side our children, youth and young adults.

Jesus walked alongside and with two disciples on their way to Emmaus. He walked in their direction and He listened to what they had to say.

We need to listen and maybe ask some really good questions like:

- “What seems hard to make sense of lately?”
- What groups of people or communities are you drawn to helping or serving?” (from Fuller Youth Institute).

We need to assume the best of them and their ideas. We need to provide leadership that guides them and lifts them up. And, we need to let go of our own expectations and the versions of the NCWELCA that we have created. I

also learned we can connect with the staff at Lutheridge. We can utilize their programming and camp counselors. I hope to be able to report more about this after our March Board Meeting.

Our world has changed. But God’s promises and the Love of Christ hasn’t. Let us connect, listen, invite and lead so that all can see their part in the stories of God.



“I am She!” is theme of one-day retreats 2026

“I am She!” Called to be Bold for Such a Time as This” is the theme for upcoming one-day retreats, the Discipleship Committee’s annual retreat held in various locations across the North Carolina Synod.

The program combines churchwide Women of the ELCA’s program “I am She” and “We Stand for Her,” written by Prairie Rose Seminoles, who will be familiar to participants in Spring Conference Gatherings.

Our mission statement calls us to act boldly. Boldness is a call to action. As Women of the ELCA, claimed and alle by God, we believe that a life lived boldly is a faith-filled celebration and an investment in the world we want for ourselves and our children. This program will help you discover it and put it into action!

Dates and locations are as follows:

February 7: Holy Trinity Lutheran, 2723 Clark Ave., Raleigh, NC 27607

February 21:

- **St. Mark’s Lutheran, 454 Fieldstone Rd., Mooresville NC, 28115**
- **Salem Lutheran, 3410 Startown Rd., Lincolnton, NC 28092**
- **Nativity Lutheran, 2425 Hendersonville Rd, Arden, NC 28704**

Light breakfast and lunch will be provided. The cost is \$10. Check-in will begin at 8:30 AM and the program will last from 9 AM-1:30 PM. Register for any location by returning a completed brochure to WELCA of the host church by January 26.

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Since 2005, Women of the ELCA has been actively working to end human trafficking. Some work on education and awareness. Others provide support to agencies helping women to leave or who have left human trafficking. Others still are working to change laws that criminalize the victims of trafficking.

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month in the United States, a designated time for raising awareness about modern-day slavery, educating the public on how to spot signs of trafficking, and reinforcing efforts to support survivors and combat exploitation. The annual initiative focuses on teaching people about various forms of trafficking (sex, forced labor) and recognizing red flags. It is a time to honor survivors' resilience and support anti-trafficking organizations and serves as a crucial reminder that human trafficking affects people of all backgrounds and locations, requiring collective action to end it.

According to the US Department of State, there are estimated to be more than 27.6 million people — adults and children — subjected to human trafficking around the world, including in the United States. Traffickers often take advantage of instability caused by natural disasters, conflict, or a pandemic to exploit others. During the COVID-19 pandemic, traffickers are continuing to perpetrate the crime, finding ways to innovate and capitalize on the chaos.



Did you miss Committee Day II?

If you did check out these photos from the event that took place couple of weeks ago at Lord of Life Lutheran in Garner! **Photo credits: Kristin Overcash. Thank**

President Terri Brown, board member Lori Schaefer, and treasurer Nena Babb making plans for the Stewardship Committee.



Your talented and hard-working NC WELCA board for 2025-2026!



Conference leader hard at work preparing for Spring Gatherings.



Wrapping up the day with updates from committees.



Events like the annual gathering at L-R don't just happen. It takes a team, like this one led by Tamarah Hefner and Jane Cadwalader. Thanks ladies! We can't wait!



Articles from Justice Committee members like Patti Schmid and Tonie Neal give us plenty to think about every month and keep us informed.



Martin Luther King, Jr., April 4, 1968

A man went forth with gifts.

He was a prose poem.

He was a tragic grace.

He was a warm music.

He tried to heal the vivid volcanoes.

His ashes are
reading the world.

His Dream still wishes to anoint
the barricades of faith and of control.

His word still burns the center of
the sun
above the thousands and the
hundred thousands.

The word was Justice. It was spoken.

So it shall be spoken.

So it shall be done.

Gwendolyn Brooks

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929. A fourth-generation Baptist preacher, King was a 25-year-old pastor in Montgomery, Alabama, recently married and with a newborn daughter at home, when a local woman named Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man.

The Montgomery Bus boycott, which resulted from Rosa Parks' act of defiance, was originally intended to be a short term protest. However, it lasted for over a year and turned King into a national civil rights leader; he was then 27 years old.

In 1963, at the age of 34, King delivered what is arguably the most famous speech of the twentieth century at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He stirringly spoke of having "a dream" for America, but the heart of the speech was about how African American civil rights were being nightmarishly, systematically denied.

King led nonviolent protests, sit-ins, and marches, instrumental in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

On April 4, 1968, King was assassinated just outside his Memphis motel room, having travelled to Memphis to lead a march in solidarity with striking garbage workers.

King said: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Martin Luther King Day became a federal holiday in 1986. It honors the civil rights leader's birthday (Jan 15, 1929).

