



The Bulletin

March 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.”



Dear Sisters,

Happy Women's History Month! As I was working on this month's bulletin, I found so many interesting and overlooked accomplishments by women through the years. We all know of famous women from history, or at least can find them. But I want to pay homage to two important women in my own history.

My great-grandmothers were both strong and resilient women, women of faith and courage who formed the backbones of their families.

My grandma's mother, Sue Dantzer Huffman was born into a prominent family in Calhoun County, SC. She was a young mother in 1918 when her husband died in the infamous flu epidemic. She was left with three children to raise alone at a time when women's options for employment and education were limited. Her family urged her to place her children in an orphanage and marry again. She refused, and raised her family on meager wages from her skills as a seamstress and laundress. My grandmother was the baby of the family, only six months old when her father died.

My granddaddy's mother, Lily Tucker Lancaster, was a farmer's wife and school teacher who raised five children, buried two infants, and taught each of her children in a one-room schoolhouse in Spartanburg, South Carolina. All three of her daughters, and many of her granddaughters (and great-granddaughters) went on to become teachers. Her sons did not become teachers, but one of them helped keep the family farm running and served in the U.S. Navy during WWII, and the other, my grandfather, joined the Civilian Conservation Corps.

I am proud to be their great-granddaughter and to carry their strength and courage, and to learn from their faithfulness to their families. This month, let's celebrate the women in our own heritage, our own history, who helped us become who we are.

In 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,

Prices on so many items continue to rise. In spite of that, the Gathering Planning Committee has been working diligently to plan a wonderful and meaningful time together in June. They recently met with me to review the proposed registration costs, and I would like to share with you how those figures were determined.

We have followed the guidelines set forth by Lenoir–Rhyne University. Although this will be a two-day gathering, the cost will be slightly higher than last year due to increased expenses.

NC WELCA is now required to pay rental fees for the use of campus facilities, including Belk Centrum, Grace Chapel, Cromer Center, and the dining room. The total rental cost for Friday and Saturday in June is approximately \$5,500. This amount must be included as part of the registration fee.

In addition:

Meals for the two days are approximately \$66 per person.

Lodging for Friday night is \$35 per person.

After carefully reviewing these expenses and estimating attendance, **the committee has set the registration fee at \$220.** This covers **Friday and Saturday programming, meals, and lodging for Friday night.**

For the Annual Gathering on June 12–13, some attendees may need to arrive on Thursday evening. If so, you will need to reserve a room for that night. The cost is:

\$35 for a double room

\$40 for a single room

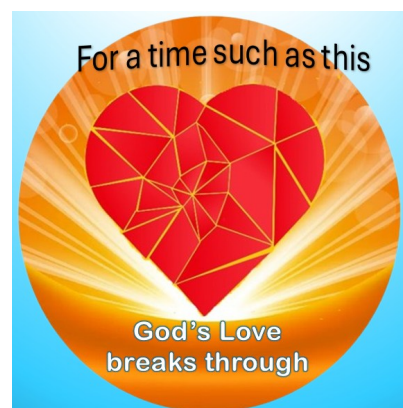
This Thursday night lodging fee is separate from the \$220 registration fee. Also, this will be the only time you are able to order the tee shirts with our theme. We received a Thrivent Action Team card to help with the cost of tee shirts, so be sure to take advantage of this special price. Tee shirts must be ordered by May 10 so that they are ready for us to wear at the Gathering. The registration form is included in this edition of the Bulletin, and we encourage you to complete and return it promptly to reserve your place.

All voting members are asked to be present on Friday. Most of the business session will take place that day so that Saturday may be devoted to awareness sessions, keynote speakers, and a special program by the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina.

I look forward to seeing each of you at our Annual Gathering in June at Lenoir–Rhyne University. It will be a meaningful time of fellowship, learning, and shared purpose.

A registration form will be included in this mailing.

With appreciation, gratitude and love,
Terri Brown
President, NC WELCA



Oh, SNAP!

By Patty Schmid, Justice Committee

It's clever retort, but not if you need assistance buying food and struggling to make ends meet.

SNAP is an acronym for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (previously known as food stamps) which provides monthly funds to qualifying clients, allowing them to buy groceries for their families. It is the largest anti-hunger program in America, helping over 45 million people in 2025.

The minimum benefit for households of one or two people is \$24. The average federal SNAP benefit amount for residents of North Carolina is about \$171 per person or \$344 per household. Benefits are based on household income, expenses, and how many people live in the house. The food provides for low-income families, especially children, older adults and people with disabilities. The cash value is an estimated \$5.70 per person, per day.

Thirteen percent of NC population relies on this benefit. Eighty percent of families had one member working, but still needing help.

Ways to help...

As federal government shutdowns and benefit cuts loom, requests for help at non-profits like food banks and housing programs soar.

In North Carolina, there are many non-profit agencies and state-supported programs offer assistance with housing, food, and utilities.

Consider offering free child care for working moms a day or two a week. Join forces with other congregations to feed the hungry through either a food drive or a free community meal.

Collect gift cards to be used for food, gas, or clothing.

Prepare gift bags of things like canned food,

Not only do participants receive food, but the shopping and availability of this food provides work experience for store/warehouse employees with jobs (a benefits for the economy.)

But in late 2025, President Trump's so-called "Big Beautiful Bill" passed in Congress and introduced new challenges to members receiving benefits.

Over the next 5 years SNAP benefits will decrease and eligibility will become stricter to receive these benefits. Each state will be required to contribute to the "pot." For North Carolina, that contribution comes to \$70 million.

Recovery benefits for Hurricane relief and disasters will also be lessened or shuttled. However you view this issue SNAP and the feeding of children, veterans and older adults etc. are effected and the need will only grow. Contribute to local food pantries, food banks, and have food drives for your local communities. There is no easy answer, but the impact of any vote lessening the availability of money and food for our population is shameful.

toiletries, baby items like diapers and wipes or formula , or household items for someone you know has lost benefits.

Also, donate to local organizations like food banks. Many churches have programs that assist those in need in their community. There are many ways to help our neighbors who need it!



Change for Change: Helping families go home

By Nena Babb, Treasurer, NC WELCA

Collections for the NC Diaper Bank totaled \$4,465.25!! Thank you so much to all the women and churches who made donations to this worthy organization. Not only do they supply diapers to needy infants, but they also provide feminine supplies and adult incontinence products.

We are now turning our attention to two causes that are working in NC to alleviate housing issues and provide emergency social assistance. Fuller Center Disaster ReBuilders is currently operating in eastern North Carolina (Hurricane Florence), and western NC (Hurricane Helene). The Robeson County Church and Community Center operate a large food pantry with three food assistance programs, provide emergency assistance with utilities, rent, and medicine, and build/install safety accessories for seniors. In addition, they operate a thrift shop to assist those in

need.

I personally had a wonderful mission trip experience this summer as six members of our church joined two other churches to work with Fuller Center in Swannanoa and Black Mountain. We worked with many experienced volunteers to install flooring, windows, and siding. Our crew painted doors and trim, blew insulation, and organized tools and supplies. Our tasks kept us busy during the week.

Two of the homeowners gave us a detailed description of watching the waters rise until they were at the point of drowning. A man and his elderly mother held on to the metal porch post while the river rose inches from their porch roof. Rescue came in the form of kayakers who managed to help them get on the roof of their home. They were so excited to see their home near completion after the flooring was installed. And, I just found out that we are going back again this summer to volunteer! How exciting to be able to assist someone to come home again.



Wonder Watcher photos sought for Triennial Banner

Remember the Wonder Watchers program from last year's Spring Conference Gatherings and Fall Gathering (Northern Conference)? It is the program where we exchanged names to become conference prayer sisters and wore those funny glasses.

Karen Birkedal has been invited to present at the Triennial Gathering for the organization Adults Saving Kids. Adult Saving kids would like to highlight North Carolina Synod and its work with prayer partners across the Synod.

A banner will be displayed showcasing Wonder Watchers participants in those goofy glasses.

If you have any photos that you would like to submit for this banner, please contact Karen

Birkedal at pkbirke@gmail.com

Thank you for your help with this project. It is going to be great fun and will potentially connect women across the entire church in prayer.



Everyone has a part to play as disciples of Christ

By Pam Pittenger, Discipleship Committee

You have come across the word discipleship before –we talk about it a lot. You might have read it in a book or magazine, heard it in a sermon or a podcast. We say in our mission statement as Women of the ELCA, we are “called to discipleship in Jesus Christ.” Our mission statement also says, we “... support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.” That definitely seems like a call to discipleship. A call that we answer together.

In Luther’s Small Catechism, in the section about the Ten Commandments, he explains that each commandment means not only “don’t” but what “to do” instead! For example, “you shall not murder” also means to “help and support [others] in every physical need.” Supporting “Change for Change”, making Lutheran World Relief quilts and kits, and providing food for your family are some of the ways we provide for others’ physical needs. I am sure you can think of even more ways we provide for others’ physical needs.

Think about Luther’s explanation to “you shall not give false testimony against your

neighbor.” Luther says we are to “defend [others], speak well of [them], and explain everything in the kindest way.” Trying to think about others with positive intent can be challenging, but when we take time to understand each other, this too, is discipleship.

At the February One-Day Retreats “I Am She: Called to be bold for such a time as this,” we were asked to think about what we are and do, and realize that it looks like discipleship. In the retreat, some leaders asked the participants to think about women who were examples for us; bold women! At the retreat I attended, some of those responses ranged from ones perhaps only church women would recognize (Esther Arne, Pastor Louise Hilbert) to women who have used their energy and influence to shape our world (Anna Rosenberg, Helen Keller, Anne Sullivan).

March is International Women’s History Month and the theme is “Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future.” As I consider the Women of the ELCA organization, our mission, the lessons from the One-Day Retreat, and Luther’s Small Catechism, I am convinced we all have a part to play in shaping the future. I pray you will take some time to look at your life, realize your gifts, and recognize how you are shaping the future by your discipleship.



“A woman’s heart should be so close to God that a man should have to chase Him to find her.”

C.S. Lewis

A brief theology of St. Patrick's Day

From the SALT project blog

The lives of the saints are full of stories passed down for generations, stories so polished that the lines between history and legend are blessedly impossible to find. And so in honor of St. Patrick's Day this year, three ancient, delightful stories — but first, a little background.

St. Patrick is one of the patron saints of Ireland. He died just over fifteen hundred years ago, reportedly on March 17, and he is closely associated with the growth of Christianity throughout the Emerald Isle, the rise of Celtic styles of Christianity, and of course that famous shamrock (more on that in a bit).

He first encountered Ireland as an enslaved young man. Patrick was born in the Roman imperial province of Britannia (today known as Great Britain), and as a youth he was captured by Irish raiders and forced to serve as a sheep herder. After six years of captivity, he escaped and made his way home — only to return to Ireland years later as a bishop and missionary.

St. Patrick's Walking Stick

Patrick was an itinerant preacher, and it is said that he carried a walking stick made of ash wood. In his travels between Britannia and Ireland, whenever he would stop to preach, he would plant the stick beside him, upright in the ground. At the English site now called Aspatria ("ash of Patrick"), he preached so patiently, the story goes, that when at last he finished, he couldn't remove the stick. It had sprouted roots, you see. It was already on its way to becoming a tree.

St. Patrick's Bell

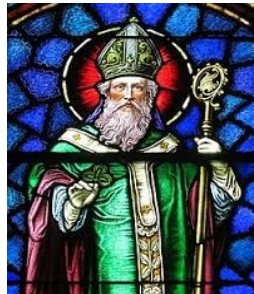
In his life as an enslaved sheep herder, St. Patrick was quite familiar with the sheep bell: a simple bell of hammered iron with a small handle on top. As a bishop, that bell continued to have great meaning

for him, perhaps because it reminded him of his youth, or of the ringing good news of the gospel, or of his ongoing role as a pastor (from the Latin *pastorem*, "shepherd"). Whatever the reason, he was laid to rest with one resting on his breast: the dead shepherd, buried with his bell.

Sometime later, the bell was removed from the tomb as a precious relic. And in the eleventh century, artists intricately covered the bell in bronze, gems, and Celtic designs of crosses and birds — not to make the bell appear more holy, it is said, but rather to shield the eyes of onlookers from the brilliant holiness of the iron original. Now on display in Dublin's National Museum, St. Patrick's Bell is considered one of Ireland's signature treasures.

St. Patrick's Shamrock

The Christian idea of the divine Trinity — God's simultaneous threeness and oneness as Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit — has always been a great challenge for preachers to grasp and explain. St. Patrick did it this way: he looked around, and then plucked a shamrock from the ground at his feet. Three leaves, he said, and yet one stem, one life. Add to that the shamrock's vibrant shade of green, the color of growth and vitality — and while it's easy to imagine a more technical, lengthy explanation of the Trinity, it's hard to imagine a better one.



Questions about angels

Of all the questions you might want to ask about angels, the only one you ever hear is how many can dance on the head of a pin.

No curiosity about how they pass the eternal time besides circling the Throne chanting in Latin or delivering a crust of bread to a hermit on earth or guiding a boy and girl across a rickety wooden bridge.

Do they fly through God's body and come out singing?
Do they swing like children from the hinges of the spirit world saying their names backwards and forwards?

Do they sit alone in little gardens changing colors?

What about their sleeping habits, the fabric of their robes,
their diet of unfiltered divine light?
What goes on inside their luminous heads? Is there a wall these tall presences can look over and see hell?

If an angel fell off a cloud, would he leave a hole in a river and would the hole float along endlessly filled with the silent letters of every angelic word?

If an angel delivered the mail, would he arrive in a blinding rush of wings or would he just assume the appearance of the regular mailman and whistle up the driveway reading the postcards?

No, the medieval theologians control the court.
The only question you ever hear is about the little dance floor on the head of a pin where halos are meant to converge and drift invisibly.

It is designed to make us think in millions, billions, to make us run out of numbers and collapse into infinity, but perhaps the answer is simply one: one female angel dancing alone in her stocking feet, a small jazz combo working in the background.

She sways like a branch in the wind, her beautiful eyes closed, and the tall thin bassist leans over to glance at his watch because she has been dancing forever, and now it is very late, even for musicians.

Billy Collins

About the poet...



Dubbed “the most popular poet in America” by Bruce Weber in the New York Times, Billy Collins is famous for conversational, witty poems that welcome readers with humor but often slip into quirky, tender, or profound observation on the everyday, reading and writing, and poetry itself.

He served two terms as the US poet laureate, from 2001-2003, was New York State poet laureate from 2004-2006, and is a regular guest on National Public Radio programs. In 2002, as US poet laureate, Collins was asked to write a poem commemorating the first anniversary of the fall of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on September 11. The reading was in front of a joint session of Congress held outside of Washington, DC.

Though Collins published throughout the 1980s, it was his fourth book, *Questions about Angels* (1991), that propelled him into the literary spotlight.

Collins has taught at Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence, and Lehman College, City University of New York, where he is a Distinguished Professor. He is also Senior Distinguished Fellow of the Winter Park Institute in Florida, and a faculty member at the State University of New York-Stonybrook.



What the world needs now... is love

How do you show love? Are you a hugger? Do you like to give gifts? And what makes you feel most loved?

This year's spring retreat, ***Speak Love, Show Christ*** at the Coastal Retreat Center on beautiful Isle of Palms, SC April 10-12, 2026 will take a new look at a familiar concept.

The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman is a popular book that identifies five ways people express and receive love:

- words of affirmation
- quality time,
- receiving gifts
- acts of service
- physical touch.

The core idea is that partners may speak different "love languages," and understanding your own and your spouse's primary language is key to communicating love effectively and strengthening the relationship, preventing misunderstandings and fostering deeper intimacy.

While the concept is familiar to many of us, you've NEVER experienced them like this! Come prepared to learn about those love languages in ways that will transform your life.

Through six thoughtfully planned sessions of Bible study, discussion, games, crafts, music, encouragement, and worship, this weekend will equip you to Speak Love so that you can better Serve Christ.

The program presenters are the Trinity Lutheran Friends of Trinity Lutheran, Sanford Deanna Deaton,, Heidi Gibson, Jes Sloan, and Carolyn Miller, a diverse and talented group who frequently lead workshops together.

Registration pamphlets have been sent everyone on the BULLETIN mailing list.

Cost for the weekend is \$210, which includes materials and supplies, housing, and meals. Learning, laughter, and enlightenment are free!

You can by completing your form and sending it and payment to:

Alecia Harrison

204 Windsor Wynd Place
Fuquay-Varina, NC 27526
Phone: 919-333-6734

[email: alecia.a.harrison@gmail.com](mailto:alecia.a.harrison@gmail.com)

Or, if you pay online through Tithe.ly, be sure to include processing fees and let Alecia know.

Scholarships are available and can be requested in **single paragraph describing your current need** by email to dhenry001@luthersem.edu

So come breathe in some salt air, experience Lowcountry charm, and soak up some sun with your sisters!

"Love one another as I have loved you" – John 15:12



March celebrates women: Women's History Month, International Women's Day

Women deserve a month of our own!

So Women's History Month is celebrated annually in March, to honor the often overlooked contributions of women to history and society, stemming from a 1978 Sonoma County weeklong event to the national recognition in 1987.

The 2026 theme is "*Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future*," emphasizing innovation and leadership, with International Women's Day on March 8.

The United Nations has sponsored International Women's Day since 1975. When adopting its resolution on the observance of International Women's Day, the United Nations General Assembly cited the following reasons: To recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security.

The theme for 2026 is "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future," highlighting the role of women in environmental, economic, and social sustainability, according to the National Women's History Museum website and the National Women's History Alliance website.

International Women's Day (March 8th) serves as a key date for action on gender equality. Events focus on both historical figures—such as suffragists, activists, and inventors—and contemporary leaders making strides in various industries.

Key Moments and Milestones in U.S. Women's History

- 1848: The first women's rights convention is

held in Seneca Falls, New York, producing the Declaration of Sentiments.

- 1920: The 19th Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing women the right to vote.
- 1963: The Equal Pay Act is signed, prohibiting sex-based wage discrimination.
- 1972: Title IX is passed, banning sex discrimination in federally funded education programs.
- 1973: Roe v. Wade ruling establishes constitutional protection for abortion access.
- 1981: Sandra Day O'Connor is sworn in as the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 1983: Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in space.
- 1996: Madeleine Albright is appointed the first female Secretary of State.
- 2021: Kamala Harris is sworn in as the first woman and first woman of color Vice President of the United States.
- Marie Curie (1903/1911): First woman to win a Nobel Prize and the only person to win in two different science fields
- Amelia Earhart (1932): First woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.
- Rosa Parks (1955): Known as the "mother of the freedom movement" for sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- Shirley Chisholm (1968): First Black woman elected to Congress.
- Misty Copeland (2015): First African-American woman to be named a principal dancer in the American Ballet Theatre
- 1940s: Women's job opportunities expanded significantly during World War II, moving into roles traditionally held by men.
- 1912: Girl Scouts of America is founded to encourage community service and outdoor activities.

Women in the ELCA: strong in progress, challenges

In the Lutheran church, women serve in all areas of ministry and leadership. In North Carolina, we elected a woman to the office of Bishop for the first time last year.

In 2013, the ELCA's first female Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton was elected and served from 2013 until 2025, when she was succeeded by Bishop Yehiel Curry.

The ELCA consists of 65 regional synods and one non-geographic synod totaling 66 synodical bishops. As of August 2025, there are 38 women serving as synod bishops in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). This number represents approximately 57.5% of the 66 total synodical bishops within the denomination. The number of women serving as synod bishops has seen significant growth, rising from 7 in 2012 to 38 in 2025.

As of 2022, approximately 40 percent of pastors in the ELCA are women. This represents a significant increase from 2018, when women made up nearly 32 percent of the clergy roster.

- Women are more likely to serve as associate or assistant pastors (54%) than as senior pastors (22%).
- Women are more likely than men to lead smaller congregations.
- In 2020, 27 percent of all female pastors served in small congregations.
- By 2019, approximately 39 percent of Black pastors, 37 percent of white pastors, and 30 percent of Hispanic pastors in the ELCA were women.

Despite gains in representation, women in the ELCA continue to face specific professional

and systemic challenges:

- **Pay Inequity:** In 2016, female clergy were found to earn approximately 86 percent of what their male counterparts earned.
- **Discrimination:** Approximately 92 percent of surveyed female pastors reported experiencing challenges such as resistance to their authority, unequal compensation, and stereotypical gender expectations from congregations.
- **Call Process:** Some congregations remain hesitant to interview female candidates, with some specifically requesting additional male names during the call process.

Lutheran women in the United States have been gathering in mission since the 1800s, and we owe much to our foremothers who responded to God's call, created a place and lived out a purpose when women had no voice in the church.

American Lutheran Church Women (of the American Lutheran Church), the Lutheran Church Women (of the Lutheran Church in America) and Women in Action for Mission (of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches). came together in 1987 to form Women of the ELCA.

Various program initiatives were launched in 1988, some of which continue today such as our scholarship program. Initiatives came and went, meeting the needs of the women at the time. Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls, the organization's health initiative, began in 2005. Bold Women's Day, an annual celebration of our mission and the women who accomplish it, launched in 2007.

Today the organization is active in approximately 7,000 of the 9,200 ELCA congregations and in 64 of the 65 synods.

No matter how we serve, we are all part of doing God's work. We are strong!