



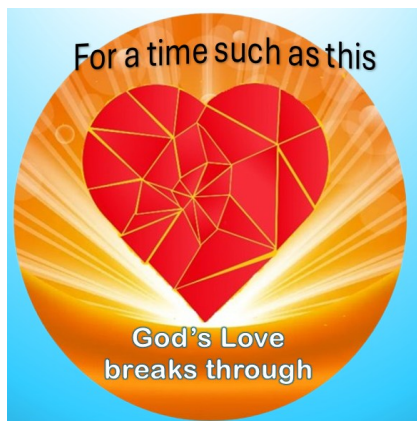
The Bulletin

May 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,

I love how we, as women, come together. When we get together, we talk about our lives, we share stories, we laugh, we empathize, we unite. Maybe it's shared experiences: being a wife, being a mom, being active in our congregations, wondering about the future, growing our faith, growing older.

When I was elected as your secretary last year, asked the question, “What have I gotten myself into?” I didn't even realize I had said the words aloud. Newly-elected Vice President Robin Stuart was sitting beside me, and she replied, “You have joined a group of women who love and support each other while we work for God's kingdom.”

That's what we are. That's what the Women of the ELCA is.

I am excited about our Gathering in June. As we get closer, I look back on this year.

This year, as your secretary, it has been my great privilege to work with some wonderful ladies on the WELCA board and its committees, to communicate with our members around the state, to grow in faith and expand my circle of friends to include all of you.

In the uncertain times we are living... it's good to have supportive friends who love and pray for you.

I am glad you're all there.

*In God's 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,

I am so excited about the Annual Gathering on June 12 and 13!



This year's Gathering will be a shortened version,

but it will still include the voting, Bible study and keynote addresses that have been part of past Gatherings. We will begin at noon on Friday and conclude with the worship service on Saturday afternoon.

The Spring Gathering program offered a preview of what is to come at Lenior Rhyne. The presentation on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) program and the video *"We Ride For Her"* provided important background about what has been happening to our sisters.

At the Annual Gathering, we will welcome members of the Lumbee Indian Tribal Council, who will share the keynote address and provide information about MMIW. The mission of the North Carolina MMIW is to bring the missing home and to help the families of the murdered find understanding and healing.

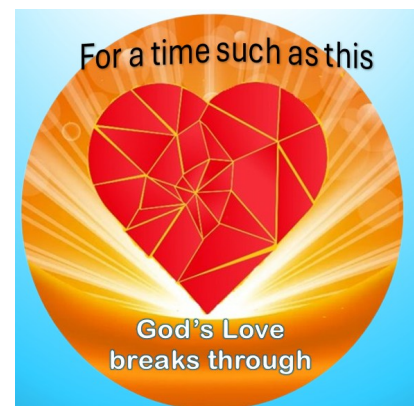
I hope each of you will be able to attend the Annual Gathering and learn more about the North Carolina WELCA and our programs. Registration forms have been included with the Bulletin and are online on the website. **Please note that tee shirt orders are due by May 15** (deadline has been extended).

I look forward to sharing this meaningful time together and celebrating the work of our organization.

God's Peace,

Terri

President, NC WELCA



North Carolina Women of the ELCA Gathering at a Glance

When: June 12-13

Where: Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina

Quick Packing and Planning Notes:

- sheets to fit a twin bed (full size ; flat sheets work well), blanket, pillow, towels comfortable clothes and shoes; Belk Centrum can be cold, so you may want to bring a sweater or shawl.
- A printed Gathering Program and Reports (GPR) will be given to all registered participants.
- Tee shirts must be ordered before May 10
- Robeson Church & Community will be collecting gift cards from Walmart, VISA or any chain grocery store.
- Fuller House will be collecting gift cards from Lowes
- Bring your Red Dress to display. These will be displayed in the Belk Centrum Lobby to bring awareness to Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women/People
- Leap of Faith Bookstore will be in Cromer Center

Friday, June 12

Registration 10:30am-4:00pm Belk Centrum
 Voting Member Orientation 11:45am Belk Centrum
 Opening of Gathering 12:00 noon Belk Centrum
 Greetings
 All voting is completed on Friday
 Bible Study by Gathering Chaplain
 Dinner 4:30-5:30pm Cromer Center
 Choir Practice 5:30-6:00pm Belk Centrum
 Evening Session 6:00pm Belk Centrum
 Special Guest Greetings

SWO Board Skit
 Address by CWO Representative
 Dorm Devotions Fritz Conrad Meeting Room
Saturday, June 13
 Breakfast 7:30-8:30 am Cromer Center
 Registration 7:30-9:00 am Belk Centrum Lobby
 Morning Matins 8:45-9:15 am Grace Chapel Prayer Garden (Alternate location- Fritz Conrad Mtg Room)
 Friday Recap 9:30 am Belk Centrum
 Awareness Sessions I 9:45-10:30am Rhyne Building
 Awareness Sessions II 10:45- 11:30am Rhyne Building
 Lunch 11:30 am-12:30 pm Cromer Center
 Keynote/Program by Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina 1:00-2:15pm Belk Centrum
 Snack Break 2:30-2:45 pm Belk Centrum Lobby
 Choir Practice 2:30-3:00pm Grace Chapel
 Worship Service 3:00pm Grace Chapel
 Installation of Officers and Board Members
 Close of Gathering 5:00pm



North Carolina Women of the ELCA 2026-2027 Calendar

May 2026

May 5	MMIW Day of Awareness
May 5	Cinco de Mayo
May 10	Mother's Day
May 24	Pentecost
May 25	Memorial Day
May 28-30	NC Synod Gathering

June 2026

June 12 & 13	Annual Gathering at Lenior Rhyne
June 14	Flag Day
June 19	Juneteenth
June 21	Father's Day
June 26-27	Board Meeting at Synod office

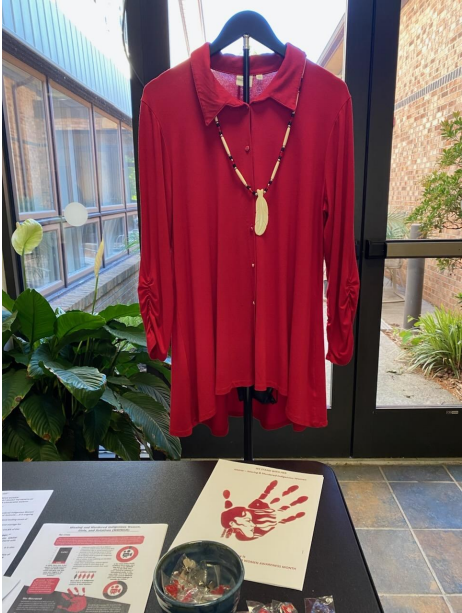
July/August 2026

July 12-14	Triennial Convention (voting)
July 15	Travel Day
July 16-19	Triennial Gathering
August 15	Committee Day I, Sardis/Hickory



Smoky Mountain spring gathering

The Smoky Mountain conference of NC Women of the ELCA gathered on April 11 at Grace Lutheran Church in Hendersonville. The ladies viewed *We Ride for Her* and explored the topic of missing and murdered indigenous women. Red dress pins were available for all participants and red dresses were displayed to promote the cause.



Come and see, go and tell:” Synod Gathering 2026 Registration closed

Registration for this year’s synod gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne closed on Tuesday, May 5. There will be no on-site registration.

Gathering is more than a meeting. It is an invitation. With no business to conduct this year, it’s an opportunity to enjoy and renew friendships across the synod, learn, and explore resources for worship and missions.

Come to the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory Thursday - Saturday, May 28-30. Each day is designed to stand alone. Come for one, two, or all three days. The cost is \$55 per day OR \$140 for all three days.

Workshop topics for this year’s Gathering include:

- Biblical Storytelling
- Your Matter Matters: Science and Faith
- Rooted in Who You Are: Strategic Branding for Ministry
- Come and See: Reaching the Unchurched in a Digital World
- Welcome to Christ
- Cultivating Awe
- Mindful Leadership
- Curiosity Crushed the Conflict
- Church Leadership and Politics Today
- Reclaim the Sacredness: Exploring Green Burial with Heart and Purpose

Thursday’s opening worship will feature musicians from across our synod and a message from missionary to Jerusalem Rev. Christy Lohr Sapp. A new Director for Evangelical Mission and assistants to the bishop will be installed. The offering from Thursday’s worship service will be directed to the Bishop’s Discretionary Fund, which allows Bishop Emily to provide monies to rostered minis-

ters and congregations experiencing difficulty.

Saturday’s closing worship music will be led by Dr. Ryan Luhrs of St. Andrews, Hickory and Lenoir-Rhyne University. A new class of lay preachers will be commissioned and we will remember with gratitude the pastors and deacons in our synod who have joined the Church Triumphant this past year. All will receive a sending word from Bishop Emily Hartner, calling us to go and tell the good news until we gather again. Saturday’s offering will support an effort to help send NC Synod youth to the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering!

Come and learn how we can move forward together, and how we can share the good news of Christ in new and exciting ways.



Rev. Christy Lohr Sapp, NC Synod missionary to Jerusalem, will speak at opening worship.

NC Presiding Bishop Emily Hartner will speak at closing worship on Saturday.



May is Mental Health Month

In 2025, over 1 billion people worldwide are living with mental health disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most common. Yet, access to mental health care remains a major issue, as 40% of the U.S. population live in an area where mental health services are limited in availability.

For women, mental health can be a challenge

Nearly one in ten US adults experienced a mental health crisis in 2025, according to statistics reported by the Mental Health Foundation. And women are roughly twice as likely as men to experience depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Mental health issues are often driven by unique hormonal, biological, and social factors.

Some mental disorders are unique to women: depression during or after pregnancy, around the time of their period, or during menopause. More than half (54%) of 40-49 year old women experience mental health issues during this time.

PTSD (post-traumatic stress) is likely to be experienced by women due to increased exposure to violence, and eating disorders, more common in women than in men, are often paired with depression.

Women are at increased risk of mental health crisis due to higher rates of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and poverty. PTSD (post-traumatic stress) is likely to be experienced by women due to increased exposure to violence, and eating disorders, more common in women than in men, are often paired with depression.

Mental Health Awareness Month, observed in May since 1949, aims to fight stigma, provide support, and educate the public on mental health.

The 2026 theme, "More Good Days, Together," encourages us all to reflect on what a "good" day looks like, both for ourselves, and for our communities. The theme focuses on community and resilience, with a green ribbon as the international symbol.

Many women experience high levels of stress and anxiety as they often serve in multiple roles. Many are primary caregivers, managing both work and home, which leads to high stress levels.

For women, mental health care and treatment face critical challenges. Access can be a significant barrier to care, with 32% of women unable to access services, often due to cost, stigma, or inability to take time off work. Forty percent of the U.S. population live in areas with shortages of mental health professionals.

When women seek help, they often turn to other women in their social groups, or in support groups for postpartum health, menopause, or general anxiety offer community support. If there is access, individual or group therapy can address specific issues or traumas reproductive issues, and anxiety. Women are more likely to be prescribed psychotropic medication for depression and anxiety.

Primary care doctors or OB-GYNs can bridge the gap between patients and mental health professionals, by making recommendations for lifestyle changes, including regular exercise, a healthy diet, adequate sleep, and limiting alcohol and caffeine.

The Crimson Worm: A unique story of motherhood and sacrifice

by: Eleanor “El” Ernst for Discipleship Committee

The Crimson Worm undergoes a unique life cycle where the female attaches to a tree, lays eggs, and dies, providing protection and nourishment for her larvae while producing a crimson dye.

The Crimson Worm, scientifically known as *Coccus ilicis* or *Kermes ilicis*, is more like a grub than a typical worm and is commonly found on oak trees such as *Quercus ithaburensis* in Israel.

Its life cycle is remarkable for its reproductive strategy and the production of a crimson dye. The female Crimson Worm reproduces only once in her lifetime. When ready to lay eggs, she climbs a tree or fence and attaches herself firmly to the wood. Once attached, a hard protective shell forms over her body, securing her to the tree. Under this shell, she lays her eggs, which remain protected beneath her body.

After hatching, the larvae stayed under the mother’s protective shell for about three days. During this period, they feed on the living

The "crimson worm" (Tola'at Shani) in the Bible is a powerful, symbolic image used in Psalm 22:6 to illustrate the sacrifice of Jesus. The mother worm attaches herself to a tree, similar to the cross. She dies to provide food and protection for her young. Her dead body releases a red fluid (blood) that stains the wood and her offspring. After three days, her body turns into a white, waxy substance, symbolizing cleansing.

body of the mother, which provides both nourishment and protection. This unique maternal sacrifice ensures the survival of the next generation.

After three days, the mother worm dies. Her body excretes a crimson or scarlet fluid that stains the tree and her offspring, giving the young worms their characteristic crimson color. This dye was historically used in ancient Israel for garments, including the High Priest’s robe and coverings of the Tabernacle. The dye was also used in the ritual cleansing of leprosy.

On the fourth day, the mother’s body undergoes a transformation: it loses its crimson color and turns into a snow-white waxy substance that flakes off the tree, resembling snow. This waxy residue eventually falls to the ground, completing the life cycle.

The Crimson Worm’s life cycle is characterized by:

- Single reproductive event: Female lays eggs once in her lifetime.
- Maternal sacrifice: Mother provides protection and food for larvae.
- Crimson dye production: Body excretes scarlet fluid after death.
- Transformation: Mother’s body turns white wax and flakes off.



North Carolina's job creation lags in uncertainty

by **Tonie Neal, Justice**

Syndicated columnist John Hood wrote in a piece published May 3, 2026 in the *Fayetteville Observer* "Over the past year North Carolina has posted one of the largest employment gains in the country. Alas, that's not saying much."

The figures Hood cites here cover February 2025-2026. During that time period, nationwide, employers added 149,00 new jobs to the economy. This represents a growth rate of only 36,000. That's one tenth of 1 percent (0.1%) nationwide. By comparison, North Carolina's 0.7% growth rate looks pretty good, right?

But the reality is, it's not.

In a typical year, when the state is not in a recession, North Carolina adds 80 to 90,000 new jobs. This number plummeted during 2020, then rebounding slightly the next two years. Over all three years, the total of jobs created only reached 90,000.

So employment has been flat within "goods-producing, manufacturing, agriculture, mining" and the service sector added positions though not at the level of pre-COVID.

The workforce has changed since the pandemic. Conditions for businesses, workers, and families have not entirely returned to pre-COVID norms. They may never do so. Sidelined older workers opted for retirement and young mothers returned but only at part-time status. The increasing influence of AI has added to worker productivity so fewer workers are needed. This is a benefit for employers who hire fewer workers while they grow, and keep payrolls smaller. Some firms are reluctant to hire workers they may have to lay off sooner than later.

Agriculture is a major force in North Carolina, with a \$69.6 billion annual economic impact. North Carolina is one of the top states for migrant labor, with an estimated 70,000 to 150,000 farmworkers and dependents. While critical to the \$100-billion-

a-year agricultural industry, these workers face significant challenges, including low wages, lack of overtime pay, dangerous working conditions, and limited access to healthcare.

Farmworkers in NC are part of the lowest-paid workforce in the nation, with an average annual income sometimes cited as low as \$11,000 for some workers. Most farmworkers are exempt from federal minimum wage and overtime laws. Only 15% of farmworkers nationwide have health insurance. Many farmworker households report being unable to afford enough food.

While farm acreage has decreased by 14% since 1997 farms have become larger and more reliant on hired labor for hand-harvesting 85% of fruits and vegetables. The NC Department of Commerce projects a slight decrease in overall agriculture employment from 2021-2030, but this includes a slight increase in specific crop production jobs.

The Trump administration's crackdown on illegal immigration results in lower employment in many areas, including agriculture.

The administration's policies regarding tariffs add to economic uncertainty. This makes for an uncertain environment for businesses to plan ahead.

But North Carolina's news is not all bad. While job creation is fairly low, so is the jobless rate. We're not in a recession.

We're just stuck.

So what do we do about it? Write to our policy makers about concerns. Inform yourself on economic issues, and vote.

Pray for our state. Pray for lawmakers to find sane, reasonable solutions to problems and paths forward for the benefit of our state.

Pray for workers, many of whom struggle to get by in industries that do not pay them a decent wage.

Know that God wants the best for his creation.



Briefly It Enters, and Briefly Speaks

I am the blossom pressed in a book,
found again after two hundred years. . . .

I am the maker, the lover, and the keeper....

When the young girl who starves
sits down to a table
she will sit beside me. . . .

I am food on the prisoner's plate. . . .

I am water rushing to the wellhead,
filling the pitcher until it spills. . . .

I am the patient gardener
of the dry and weedy garden. . . .

I am the stone step,
the latch, and the working hinge. . . .

I am the heart contracted by joy. . . .
the longest hair, white
before the rest. . . .

I am there in the basket of fruit
presented to the widow. . . .

I am the musk rose opening
unattended, the fern on the boggy summit. . . .

I am the one whose love
overcomes you, already with you
when you think to call my name. . . .

Jane Kenyon



About the poet

Jane Kenyon was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1947, the granddaughter of a fiery Methodist preacher, whose severity frightened her as a child, eventually leading her to turn away from religion for a time. But as an adult, she rediscovered Christianity, and many of her poems reflect her theological imagination (here's another example). She once was asked how her faith shaped her writing, and she said, "My spiritual life is so much a part of my intellectual life and my feeling life that it's really become impossible for me to keep it out of my work." This idea of faith as part of both "intellectual life" and "feeling life" is worth contemplating.

