



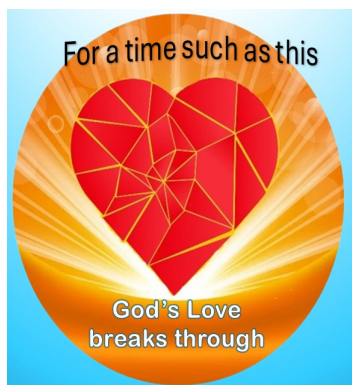
The Bulletin

June-July 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.”



Get ready for Committee Day 1

With the annual Gathering behind us, it's time to plan for the coming year.

Committee Day 1 for the 2026-2027 year happens on Saturday, August 15, 2026 at Sardis Evangelical Lutheran Church located at 6103 NC Hwy 10 West, Hickory, NC. Sign in will start at 8:30 AM. Light breakfast and lunch will be served. Cost will be \$10 per person to offset the cost of food.

For those traveling more than 150 miles one way NC WELCA will reimburse \$50.00 per person for a hotel room to attend Committee Day. The Reimbursement Policy and Expense Forms will be available at Committee Day I. If you need a hotel room, we no longer get a discount at any hotel. An online search will offer a number of options for hotels in Hickory.

Committee Days happen twice a year to allow opportunities for collaboration and planning, as well as training for leaders and important updates from the Board.

You are welcome even if you have never been to a Committee Day, Gathering, or Retreat. Choose your committee and get involved.

Registration is easy: visit our website, NCwelca.com, find the COMMITTEE tab, and look for COMMITTEE DAY 1.

WELCA Committees:

Conference Leaders are Conference Presiders or Director of Communications. Together, conference leaders plan conference events and activities.

Gathering Planning works year-round to plan, promote and conduct the annual NC SWO gathering.

Justice strives to educate, inform and advocate for women to be active in their communities and advocate for justice, nonviolence and peace.

Discipleship supports spiritual education and growth through retreats, Bible studies, devotions.

Stewardship encourages and equips women to consider their responsibility and capacity for stewardship and faithful giving.

Media-Outreach seeks to inform, enlighten, and educate by disseminating information in multiple ways.

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.

From your President

July Greetings

Greetings, Dear Sisters!

It has been one month since our North Carolina Women of the ELCA Annual Gathering at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Although it was a shorter Gathering, we consider it a great success. The voting process moved quickly, allowing us to spend more time enjoying fellowship, participating in the Awareness Sessions, and hearing the inspiring keynote presentation by members of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina.

Your Board is listening to you, our members. Through your evaluations and feedback, we are exploring new ideas and making changes to improve your Gathering experience. We hear your concerns about the cost of attending, and we are working to make the 2027 Gathering more affordable while continuing to provide meaningful opportunities for worship, learning, and fellowship. We are excited for you to experience some new things in 2027!

Planning is already underway for the 2027 North Carolina Women of the ELCA Annual

Gathering, which will be held June 18–19 at Calvary Lutheran Church in Concord. Elections will be held for Vice President, Secretary, and Board Members. We are also planning engaging Awareness Sessions, an inspiring keynote speaker, a light lunch and dinner on Friday, and lunch on Saturday.

Your Gathering Planning Committee will be working diligently and will continue preparing for what promises to be a wonderful event. Information about nearby hotels, along with Gathering registration materials, will be available in early 2027. In the meantime, please mark your calendars and plan to join us.

If you have comments, suggestions, or ideas for speakers or workshop topics, I would love to hear from you. Your input helps shape our Gatherings, and I always enjoy hearing from our sisters across North Carolina.

May God continue to bless you and your congregations as we serve together.

In Christ,

Terri Brown, President

NC WELCA Calendar (Through September)

JULY 2026

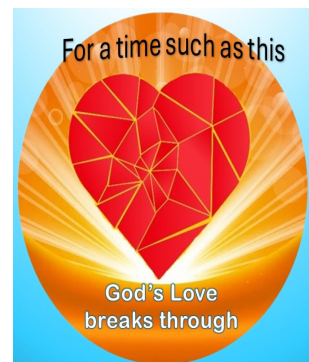
July 13–14	Triennial Convention (voting)
July 15	Travel Day
July 16–19	Triennial Gathering

AUGUST 2026

August 15	Committee Day I, Sardis, Hickory
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September 2026

Sept. 13	Suicide Prevention Month God's Work Our Hands Sunday
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Holy moments from the NC WELCA Gathering: Worship

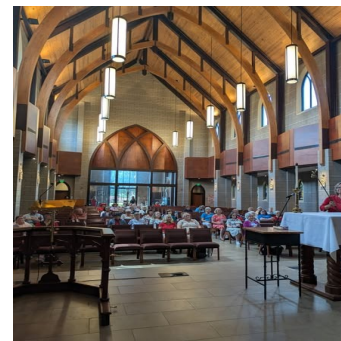


Gathering Chaplain Deacon Wendy Roberts led a Bible study based on Esther 4:14 and Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Deacon Wendy invited us to consider how our lives might be different if one certain person had not been part of it. Time and seasons reveal different spiritual gifts that I can share at different times. God's light can shine through a heart to reveal the breaks/ cracks in that heart. She invited us to "live in the shape of God." We are in the ongoing process of "becoming" what God meant for us to be, when our life grows in righteousness.

Right, top to bottom:
Grace Chapel, Lenoir-
Rhyne.



Morning Matins outside Grace Chapel, as sisters in Christ encourage one another as we grow in faith in order to be the hands, feet and heart of Jesus .



Bishop Emily led closing worship on Saturday, sharing her stories of the women who had influenced and nurtured her along the way, and inviting us to live God's calling in our lives... in such a time as this.



Offerings Breakdown from the Annual Gathering

By Nena Babb, Treasurer, NC WELCA

Here's the final tally of your offerings from the Annual Gathering. Your generosity will help support some great causes in our state.

- The regular offerings totaled \$1688.
- Change for Change (formerly Pennies) totaled \$20.00
- Missing/Murdered Indigenous Women totaled \$844.00. They received 50% of the regular offering.
- WELCA Churchwide Organization received 30% of the total offering, which was \$506.40.

- Our contribution to the Triennial Gathering will be \$337.60, which is 20% of the total offering.

In addition, gift cards were collected as In-Kind offerings.

- Gift cards for the Robeson County Church and Community Center totaled \$515.
- Gift cards for the Fuller Center for Housing totaled \$325.

North Carolina Women have generous hearts and your support is, as always gratefully received.

President, treasurer return for another term; three board members elected

A total of 25 voting delegates re-elected President Terri Brown and Treasurer Nena Babb for two more years in their current positions.

Terri has served the Board in various positions since 2012. Nena was elected to the position of Treasurer in 2024.

Named to the board for two-year terms were Anita Miller, Alecia Harrison, and Eleanor Ernst. All three have served previously. Leaving their board positions were Lori Schaefer and Patty Schmid.

Elections this year were conducted "en bloc", meaning that all named candidates were considered collectively and elected as a group. En bloc voting streamlined the voting process.

No nominations were received from the floor.



Presenting your North Carolina Women of the ELCA Board Members, officers, and visiting WELCA Churchwide representative Merrily Burmeister.

Back: Eleanor Ernst, Patty Schmidt, Lori Schaefer, Alecia Harrison, Vice President Robin Stuart, Tamarah Hefner, Treasurer Nena Babb, Rosie Schieber, and Merrily Burmeister. Front: Secretary Julie Arndt, President Terri Brown, Anita Miller, Denise Henry, Jane Cadwallader, and Karen Birkedal.

God's love breaks through: NC WELCA gathers for 38

By Julie Arndt, Secretary NC WELCA

When sixty women from Lutheran congregations all over North Carolina came together on the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne University in June, there were elections to be held, stories to share, information to gather, and friends to be remembered.

The 38th annual Gathering of North Carolina's Women of the ELCA was planned as a memorial to our beloved friend Maxine Amos, who passed away last year. Maxine had been a faithful supporter of WELCA at all levels, a fixture at Gatherings and retreats, and a mentor to many women in the organization. "Almost all of us currently on the Board, and many women serving as pastors, SAMs or as preachers have a Maxine story to share, of how she encouraged us to follow God's calling. This organization meant a lot to her, and we felt that this was a way to honor her," said NC WELCA President Terri Brown, who was elected to a second term as President at the Gathering.

In addition to Terri Brown's re-election, Nena Babb was re-elected as treasurer, with Alecia Harrison, Anita Miller, and Eleanor Ernst joining the board for the year.

The board announced the establishment of a scholarship in honor of Elizabeth Drum, daughter of past NC WELCA president Lisa Philbeck. "Lizzie" was an active participant in NC WELCA and a leader for younger women. The scholarship will assist young women who wish to attend NC WELCA events.

Churchwide representative Merrily Burmeister shared her experiences as a young mother in a new community, and the support she found in the ELCA. She invited participants in an Awareness session later to do the same. Other sessions focused on the causes supported through the year. Lutheran Disaster Relief, Lutheran Services Carolinas, Robeson County Church and Community Center, and the Fuller Center for Housing Rehabilitation shared updates, information, and ideas.

Throughout the year, conferences across the

synod supported and studied Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women with offerings, and a Spring Gathering program that helped us understand the breadth of the issue. Organizers put together a display of red dresses to represent the absence of those lost to violence. The color choice is deeply rooted in Indigenous beliefs. According to tradition, red is the only color that the spirit world can see. Using red dresses is a spiritual practice designed to call the spirits of the missing back to their loved ones, help them find peace, and invoke the protection and guidance of ancestors. Red handprints represent silence, a barrier to reporting and resolving thousands of cases nationwide.

A powerful keynote presentation by a delegation from the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina gave insight into tribal traditions and further focused on MMIW, as individual representatives spoke of personal experiences with missing family members and neighbors. "In our community, neighbors are family. Jesus taught us to look out for each other," Lumbee tribal leaders Yvonne Dial and Celeste Hunt shared. "That's what we do, it's what you do. You care for people." A traditional Friendship Dance concluded the program as participants joined together to circle the Belk Centrum, stepping to the beat of a native drum.

Worship is integral to the Gathering. This year that included a Bible study led by Deacon Wendy Robert which invited us to consider the ways, and the direction where God leads us in the light of His love. As our gifts are revealed, His love shines through and we "become" when we follow where he leads us.

Bishop Emily led closing worship, reminding the women in Grace Chapel that Saturday afternoon that our calling is not for some other time and place, but for our "here and now," as we extend love, grace, and care to the community.

"For such a time as this," she said, "for any time, God's love breaks through when we welcome strangers, care for those in need, and come together. God's love breaks through in each of you."

38th Annual Gathering honors beloved friend

By Julie Arndt

When the 2025-26 board met for the first time last summer to plan our year, we knew that we wanted to honor Maxine Amos, our dear friend who had recently passed away.

Nearly every member of the board knew what it felt like to have the support and feel the encouragement Maxine gave to so many women across the state in her many years of active work at all levels of the Women of the ELCA. She never missed a conference Fall or Spring Gathering. It seemed a fitting tribute to her to build the 38th Gathering in a way that would honor causes that mattered to her and since she was a proud member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, to honor the Native American culture that formed her.

Everywhere, especially at the registration table this year, were reminders of our dear friend. It felt as though she was there with us in more than spirit.

In the display of red dresses that hung on the stage, the red hand prints we made to support Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, in the presentation from the Lumbee tribal delegation, many of whom shared their own "Miss Maxine" stories, we hear her voice, felt her presence, knew her pride, and saw her smile from heaven at the continuing legacy of the organization she loved so deeply.



In many Native American traditions, the color red is profoundly significant. Culturally, it is believed to be the only color that spirits can see. Wearing or displaying red is a way to ensure the spirits of victims are visible and to call home the spirits of missing and murdered loved ones.



Remembering Maxine as we signed in at the registration table.



"Always remember that Jesus loves you, and I do too."

Elizabeth Drum Memorial Scholarship established

The Stewardship Committee and the NC WELCA Board 2025-2026 voted earlier this year to rename the Memorial Scholarship fund in memory of Elizabeth Drum, daughter of past WELCA president Lisa Philbeck.

“Lizzie was part of a vibrant group of young women who, some years ago, were part of the North Carolina Women of the ELCA,” committee chair Rev. Denise Henry said when making the announcement. “These young women went to retreats and Gatherings and breathed so much life into our organization. Lizzie was a leader among them, heading Bible studies and leading activities. She planned to continue working with young women after her graduation from high school, and to pursue the work in her college studies.”

Lizzie died in a car crash just before her graduation.

The scholarship will aid young women in need of financial support to attend WELCA events in North Carolina.



Lumbee tribal delegation delivers powerful keynote



The jingle dress is a sacred healing regalia and dance originating from the Ojibwe people. The Ojibwe oral tradition says a medicine man received a dream from the Creator showing four women wearing dresses that made a tinkling sound. He was taught how to make the dresses and the accompanying songs to heal his critically ill granddaughter.



A delegation from the Lumbee tribe of North Carolina presented the keynote, sharing insights on missing loved ones and Lumbee culture.



Friendship dance through Belk Centrum.

Saturday afternoon the representatives of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, based in Pembroke, NC, shared the realities of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) in Robeson County.

Robeson County faces a severe MMIWP crisis. Advocates report that Indigenous women and girls in the region are vastly disproportionately impacted by violence, with historical state data estimating 600 missing or murdered cases involving American Indians in North Carolina.

A high-risk segment of the population, indigenous women face significantly higher rates of violent crime, experiencing murder rates up to 10 times the national average in some regions and more than twice as likely to experience violent crimes that other populations.

The Lumbee tribe regularly organizes marches and vigils that give families space to seek justice, share memories and ensure their loved ones are not forgotten.

The tribe also strives to support affected families and encourage tribal communities to unite in protecting Native women, children and

families.

"These are our daughters, our sisters, our friends, our neighbors. If we stop trying, if we remain silent, we are doing them as great an injustice as the system that tries to erase them," Virginia Locklear told the women's gathering. "This is a national crisis. We can't turn away from it." Locklear is the executive director of the Rape Crisis Center of Robeson County.

Tribal representatives displayed native crafts, medicinal plants, and regalia, including a traditional jingle dress worn in ceremonial dances. Rows of metal cones sewn onto the dress create a rhythmic "jingle" as a dancer moves.

At the end of the presentation, the delegation led everyone in a traditional Friendship Dance around the Belk Centrum with a native drumbeat in the background.

"In our community, neighbors are family. Jesus taught us to look out for each other," Lumbee tribal leaders Yvonne Dial and Celeste Hunt summed up. "That's what we do. And it's what you, the Women of the ELCA, do. You care for people."

Awareness sessions: time for learning, sharing stories



Brianna Goodwin, executive director of Lumberton's Robeson County Church and Community Center, presented an awareness session that focused on adjusting service efforts to changing community needs.



WELCA Churchwide representative Merrily Burmeister hosted an awareness session that allowed participants to share stories about what WELCA has meant to them and how their congregational units serve their communities.



Beth Huber of Lutheran Services Carolinas led an instructive session about the services available for senior adults, and the importance of caring for the caregivers in our communities.



Bartow Tucker of the Fuller Center Housing led an awareness session explaining what the Fuller Center does. The faith-based organization works to rebuild homes destroyed in natural disasters. His current project focuses on rebuilding homes in Western North Carolina and South Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene.



Ruth Ann Sipe of Lutheran Disaster Relief updated us on Hurricane Helene recovery efforts in North and South Carolina, reminding us that recovery is a long-term effort, taking as long as ten years post-storm.



Signing up for Awareness Sessions.

Looking back at the Gathering... this is what you missed!

The littlest, and possibly cutest, Woman of the ELCA!



The best part of the Gathering? Catching up with friends and sharing stories and memories. God's love breaks through in the relationships we enjoy and the times we share.

