The Bulletin

October 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."



Fall Retreat reminder: "Just breathe!"

By Alecia Harrison, Discipleship Committee Co-Chair

Thirty-four women from eighteen North Carolina ELCA churches arrived in Blowing Rock on Friday, October 2, 2026, for a weekend retreat entitled *"Nurturing the Mind, Body and Spirit"* led by Pastor Judy Drysdale.

From beginning to end, the weekend was filled with relaxing and soul-filling activities. We enjoyed our traditional soup dinner at former WELCA President, Susan Harris' house on Friday night. We began our journey into removing negative thoughts and filling our minds with positive and encouraging thoughts. Pastor Judy taught us to be mindful; notice what is around us NOW. Be present! Do not dwell on the past that cannot be changed or worry about the future that you cannot control.

Our focus verse for the weekend was Matthew 11:28 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

We learned to use our breathing to slow down the thoughts flooding our minds and refocus on our current space. We are beloved children of God. He loves us always. He has given humanity REST as a gift; we should incorporate rest into our everyday lives. We practiced doing something less; notice, breathe, release and receive. Our worth does NOT depend on what we accomplish! Rest is not a weakness!

Where does stress live in your body? It shows up in different places. What does stress sound like in my thoughts? What do I tend to do when I am stressed? Usually something unhealthy! We talked about being kind to ourselves. What am I carrying into today that I want God to hold for me? And do NOT pick it back up! It is okay to say that it is something important to you, but not yours to carry. What is your body telling you? Are you listening? What is your mind asking for? What is your spirit longing for?

We practiced taking something we might perceive as "bad" and reframing it. And then help others going through the same issue. Change *"I haven't had time to get to that"* to *"I was not ready to do that."*

See **"Just breathe,"** next page

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.** end submissions to Julie Arndt, Secretary and Bulletin Editor, at the following email: **secretaryncwelca@gmail.com** as either word documents or Google documents.

Just breathe… cont'd from front

We also talked about our diet. The gut is our secondary brain. Inflammation in the gut is the primary cause of most illnesses. Pastor Judy reminded us to eat colors on our plates….2/3 veggies. And remember the 80/20 rule when it comes to sugar. Cut out sugar when you can, but some sugar is not bad (about 20% of the time).

It is very important that you answer the question of WHY you live the way your do. Who or what do you want to live for?

Start your morning with a mindfulness exercise. Sit still for as long as you can…what do you hear? Note what you hear, but do not try to explain it away. Just listen. Don't miss the gift of Creation. Practice a Sacred Pause at least three times a day. Stop for at least 30 seconds, notice your feet, then notice your breathing, then look carefully at what is around you. Where is God in that moment? Give thanks to God for His Creation.

Our minds are busy, full of regrets, lists, fears, etc. The loudest voice in our mind is our own. Ask yourself, *"Is this thought true? What evidence supports this thought?"*

We are kind to others but not ourselves. Practice choosing a different voice. God gives us grace. Don't pretend that everything is fine. God is with us, helping, guiding us.

Nurturing the spirit is the hardest because it is the deepest part of our being. Our Spirit longs for purpose, meaning, God and peace. We long for happiness, but only God can fill us with what makes us whole and happy.

A relationship with God is absolutely vital. Talk to God often throughout the day. God is still working in your life, even when you don't perceive it. Sit quietly and ask What do I need from God right now?

Even in a difficult season, God is beside us, working for us, giving us the best plan.

Final thoughts:

- I am here.
- I am loved.
- I am not the sum of my mistakes.
- I can ask for help!
- I can begin again.
- I am held by God. I am enough because I am God's beloved child!

Reflecting on the Fall Retreat

By Rev. Denise Henry

What happens when thirty-five women from eighteen North Carolina ELCA churches gather in Blowing Rock over an October weekend? Healing, rest and fellowship happens. The first weekend in October, we gathered for the 2026 Fall Retreat. Every retreat is special and brings with it its own gifts of the Spirit.

Somen were attending for the first time; others have never missed a retreat. But together, we learned that we are beloved. We are beloved and created to be worthy of rest and ability to be gentle with ourselves. We truly connected our mind, body and spirit. We blessed each other using stones and putting our hands in each other's. We blessed each other with the words, "You are a child of earth and of Spirit, you are grounded in both today."

Pastor Judy Drysdale led us on a beautiful, Spirit filled journey. We can take personal, gentle steps toward healing. We can breathe in God's love and calm when the chaos around us becomes overwhelming.

I chose to take a "gentle step" for myself: "For my mind I will put down my phone". I guess the Spirit knew I needed that, because I arrived at Lutheridge for Fall Convocation, to no internet. Almost nothing on my phone would connect.

Sisters, breathe, be kind to yourself, and know that you are beloved!



Greetings from the President:



Dear Sisters,

I just arrived home from the Fall Retreat at Blowing Rock, where I spent the weekend with 34 wonderful women. Together, we explored how to nurture our bodies, minds, and spirits.

Pastor Judy Drysdale guided us through Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Our weekend centered on coming to God with the assurance that He always receives us and will take care of us. We were also reminded that He is the source of our strength.

Many of the women at the retreat had attended other meetings and retreats so we were familiar with each other and at least recognized each other. In talking with these women, we discussed the importance of women's relationships. We discussed how these relationships are built on emotional safety and meaningful connections, which can often be communicated without words. Women develop trust and closeness through regular interaction, and we are often sensitive to one another's body language and tone of voice. Many of us in the group felt that this was how our relationships through WELCA were and are. We see each other several times a year at gatherings and retreats, and we can catch up with each other and continue a relationship.

We care for one another, recognize when someone needs support, and help each other work through life's challenges. What a blessing it is to share these connections and to be reminded that, just as we support one another, God welcomes us, strengthens us, and gives rest to our souls.

Is there a woman or a group of women who are supportive of you and have been there for you? Please let me know your story. Email me and tell me your story of WELCA and the support you have received. Tmbrown366@gmail.com

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



Supporting Our Sisters

Does your women's group need a little seed money to start a new project? Or, do you have a project in the works and need a little extra support financially?

If you answered "Yes" to either of these questions, you need to apply for a Supporting Our Sisters (SOS) Grant. The application is on our website under the Scholarships and Grants tab. Once you complete the fillable form, send a copy of it to Debra Weinel. You will find all the information on the SOS site.

Several women's group applied this summer after hearing more about it at the annual Gathering. There is around $2,500 available. Each Grant is $250. After your project is completed, you will send a short report about who benefited and how the money was spent. Please send pictures to be used for publicity purposes.

The fall is also the time that we ask for donations to the fund. Could you send a yearly $10 donation? Or maybe your women's group wants to send a lump sum.

Send your contributions to NC WELCA Treasurer at this address and help your sisters:

Nena Babb
6130 Heavner Rd.
Vale, NC 28168.



Your gifts matter!

We are inching our way to the end of the fiscal year (January 31, 2027) and our Regular Offerings to date are $8,182.83. That amount is close to last year's offerings for the same period. This is good news since, at our Board meeting, we voted to increase offerings to Churchwide from 30% to 40% of our Regular offerings.

Change for Change offerings currently stand at $3,279.24. We can collect until the end of January, so get those offerings in! Fuller Disaster Response and Robeson County Church and Community Center will be blessed with the funds we send. They are working hard in their communities to provide resources to needy families.

Our grant program, Supporting Our Sisters (SOS) received a very generous donation of $5000.00 from a WELCA member. Our balance in the fund is $5,360. We have given seven grants totaling $2250.00 since the inception of SOS, and hope to give many more. Please go online to fill out the application OR print a copy than can be mailed. Encourage your church women to consider a project that fulfills our WELCA purpose and apply for an SOS grant to jumpstart it!

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed among women in the United States, with about one in eight women developing invasive breast cancer in their lifetime.

In 2026, the American Cancer Society estimates that 321,910 women and 2,670 men will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in the United States.

An estimated 42,140 women and 530 men will die from breast cancer although breast cancer death rates have dropped by 44% from 1989 to 2023 due to early detection and better treatments.

There are currently over 4 million breast cancer survivors living in the U.S.



Patterson Memorial scholarship awards total $70K to twenty applicants

By Anita Miller, Patterson Scholarship Committee

Twenty gifted and well-qualified students applied for funds from eleven Lutheran congregations across the state of North Carolina, from Sylva, in the west, to Fuquay Varina in the east, and all points in between will be blessed with funds totaling $70,000 from the Patterson Memorial Fund scholarship this academic year.

“We are pleased to report that all twenty applicants, including two sets of siblings, received scholarships this year,” said Susan Harris, chair of the scholarship committee. “When we met in July to review the applications, we were so impressed with the caliber of student applicants and are grateful that we could bless these deserving college students with a scholarship from the Patterson Memorial Fund.”

The scholarship is available to members of a NC Synod, ELCA congregation, who plan to attend an accredited four-year college or university for a bachelor's degree or one of the accredited seminaries, with financial need being a requirement. The scholarship funds come from the investments of the Karl B. Patterson and Family Estate, administered by Wells Fargo Company.

Additional Guidelines for Applicants

- Assistance is available for 3 of the 4 seminary years: assistance is not available during the intern year.
- Applicant should be prepared to show evidence of financial need
- Application Deadline: June 25th

For the Patterson Memorial Fund Application, go to our website **www.ncwelca.com**.

Please see the application for details regarding submission.

Susan Harris, Debra Weinel, and Anita Miller serve on the Patterson Scholarship committee.





Indigenous People’s Day

"Give thanks for Indigenous communities that have lived in the Americas and other parts of the world for thousands of years. Pray that we will not overlook them in our telling of history and that we will honor our church’s commitment to repentance, reconciliation, healing, respect and unity as children of God."

—Prayer Ventures

“Shine On”: Fall Conference Gatherings Encourage, Uplift, Empower



Sandhills Fall Conference Gathering: Twenty-one women gathered at Living Word/Laurinburg on September 26 to explore the Bible study “Shine On,” which reminded us that in the light of God’s love, we are valued and accepted as we are, and can be assured of our importance to ourselves and others. Conference leaders say this was the most-attended Fall Gathering the Sandhills Conference has had in several years.

The ladies of the Catawba Conference at their Fall Conference Gathering .





Cabarrus/Stanley ladies enjoy the Bible study “Shine On” during their Fall conference Gathering.

What about our veterans?

By Patty Schmid, Justice Committee

When American soldiers went to fight in World War II, they returned home hailed as heroes. When our soldiers went to Viet Nam a generation later, they did so without the support of the American public and returned home to harsh disrespect.

Now, half a century later, American soldiers, both male and female are once again engaged in outside conflicts and are, once again, treated with disrespect while on duty.

Consider, as we approach Veteran's Day next month, the ship USS Abraham Lincoln. The USS Abraham Lincoln is a Nimitz-class, whose homeport is San Diego, California. The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier carries a crew of roughly 5000 sailors and Marines.

The **Lincoln** departed San Diego in November 2025 and served a grueling 321-322 day deployment centered around operations in the Middle East and the conflict with Iran. They spent 286 consecutive days at sea more than 200 days in a combat zone and a record-breaking number of days at sea without a standard port call during this stretch, making it one of the longest modern carrier deployments. They returned home to Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego, California, on Thursday, October 8.

The Lincoln crew endured food and water shortages, disrupted mail service and long workdays with little time off as the Navy scrambled to address logistical challenges. Those and other problems eventually were worked out, but sailors struggled with exhaustion and declining morale, including reports of suicidal thoughts and eight suicide attempts during the record-setting deployment.

Sailors were fed with MRE's, packaged meals-ready to eat, instead of nutritional, balanced meals. Basic plumbing and drinking water was unavailable occasionally, ship wide. When questioned about the shortages and length of time at sea, both our president and our secretary of war maintained a strong denial and suggested the troops were not at sea long enough.

"Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group sailors and Marines met every challenge of the deployment with professionalism, quiet resilience and sustained excellence," said Rear Adm. Robert Loughran, strike group commander, speaking pier side to reporters. He added that the strike group's successful deployment could not have been possible without the support of families and friends back home.

"They bore an extraordinary burden during these 10 months," Loughran said. "Their patience, sacrifice, steadfast support were the foundation of every mission we accomplished."

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said that the crew "changed the arc of history" by assuring that nuclear weapons are kept out of the hands of "crazy people."

Among the carrier strike group's achievements: sustaining 40 days of continuous combat operations and helping enforce a maritime blockade of Iranian ports. Those efforts included 3,693 combat flights, sinking 64 Iranian warships, launching 450 Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles and shooting down 77 one-way aerial attack drones, a demonstration of service member grit, determination and professionalism in battle. The accomplishments came without the loss of lives or aircraft and no combat damage.

Yet, in spite of these remarkable achievements, the **Lincoln** stands as a shameful reminder to all of us that we have learned nothing.

While hailed as heroes, many of these sailors return home in need of treatment for PTSD. Many other well-qualified and experienced military personnel refuse to re-enlist.

Teddy Roosevelt said that we don't vote for a man, but for our country. Remember that when you vote on November 3rd and then celebrate Veterans Day on November 11th.

If we are to have a stable country, a stable and effective military we must take responsibility and care for our military. Part of this responsibility is clear. Our military men and women, our citizens, should never be left stranded on foreign land/sea with no support as the **Lincoln's** crew was.

Be proud to be an American and a responsible citizen.

Get ready for mid-term elections! November 3 is coming!

As the mid-terms approach, we are hearing more about fraud votes. Consider the latest statistics for NC from the right-wing foundation Heritage Foundation.

In the last 38 years, counting 39 elections, with 81,677,000 ballots cast, five cases of fraud were reported. That is 0.00000710%.

It's time to start doing our homework to be prepared for 11/3 election.

- Check NCSBE voter search to check your registration. When sample ballots become available, you will be able to get them at this site.
- Research who your state and federal representatives are and which are up for reelection. Study the voting record of each to see which agree with your needs and concerns.
- Study those newcomers in your distract to determine what they plan to support.
- Roy Cooper and Michael Whatley are running for Senate.
- If you are able, financially support a candidate you feel strongly about.

But without doubt, the most important action any of us can take is just to get out and cast a vote.

We women need to be sure that our voices are heard.

Women matter at the polls

Women make up the outright majority of registered voters in North Carolina, accounting for approximately 54.8% of the state's total electorate. They consistently register and vote at higher absolute volumes and percentages than male voters.

The demographic breakdown, turnout habits, and political status of female voters in North Carolina reveal several distinct patterns:

- Women vastly outnumber men on North Carolina's voter rolls, with men making up roughly 44.1% of registered voters.
- Roughly 31% of registered female voters in the state are under the age of 37.
- Unaffiliated registration rises dramatically among younger women. Barely 20% of the youngest female voters choose to register as Republicans.
- Younger registered voters show significant diversity. Fewer than 60% of Gen Z registered female voters are white, while 32% identify as persons of color.
- Women historically outpace men during North Carolina's early voting window. During general election cycles, women have been tracked casting roughly 55% of early and absentee ballots, often outpacing men by hundreds of thousands of total votes.
- Registration among women varies drastically by county. The highest female registration rates are traditionally found in northeastern and southern border counties like Hertford County and Robeson County (at 56%). Conversely, counties like Anson and Madison average lower concentrations.
- Despite making up 51% of the state's total population and the majority of active voters, a deep representation gap persists for North Carolina women in elected office.
    - Women hold roughly 25% of the total seats within the North Carolina General Assembly.
    - Women fill only about one-third of statewide elected executive office positions.
    - North Carolina has zero female representation in the U.S. Senate.



Love doesn't hurt: October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

More than one in three women and nearly one in six men experience physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking of by an intimate partner within their lifetime, according to the National Coalition Domestic Violence (NCADV).

On average, 20 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States—more than 10 million women and men a year, according to the NCADV.

Approximately 35.2% of North Carolina women and 30.3% of North Carolina men experience intimate partner physical violence, sexual violence, and/or stalking in their lifetimes. The NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence, reports that domestic violence-related homicides in the state surged by nearly 70% from 2018 to 2024, reaching a record 90 to 94 cases tracked via public records. According to the NC Department of Health and Human Services, intimate partner violence accounted for 42.7% of all female homicides and 10.8% of male homicides in recent state violent death reporting.

What does that mean? Here are some numbers to bring it into focus:

Frequency: A domestic violence homicide occurs approximately every 5.5 days in North Carolina.

Firearm Involvement: Over 70% of domestic violence homicide cases involve a gun.

State Bureau of Investigation (NCSBI): Law enforcement reporting captured 155 domestic violence-related victims in 2024 (up 14.8% from 135 victims in 2023).

Demographics (2024 NCSBI): Victims were 60.6% female and 39.4% male; offenders were 71.6% male and 28.4% female.

Domestic violence involves a pattern of behavior used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner or family member. It includes several primary forms

- Physical Abuse: Hitting, slapping, shoving, punching, kicking, strangling, using or threatening with weapons, and denying medical care or forcing drug/alcohol use.
- Sexual Abuse: Non-consensual sexual acts, marital rape, sexualized demeaning behavior, reproductive coercion (tampering with birth control), or forcing sexual acts with others.
- Emotional or Psychological Abuse: Name-calling, constant criticism, public or private humiliation, extreme jealousy, threats of harm to children or pets, and gaslighting.
- Coercive Control and Isolation: Restricting who a partner sees or talks to, monitoring their movements or communications, and tracking their daily activities to make them dependent.
- Financial or Economic Abuse: Withholding access to money, controlling or forbidding employment, sabotaging a partner's job, or ruining their credit score.
- Tech-Facilitated Abuse: Using spyware, hidden tracking devices, hacking accounts, or sharing private and intimate images without consent.
- Spiritual or Cultural Abuse: Restricting religious or cultural practices, using faith traditions to justify abuse, or mocking someone's beliefs.

If you or someone you know is affected by domestic violence, or you suspect that someone is, support is available 24/7 through the National Domestic Violence Hotline by calling 1-800-799-7233 or texting "START" to 88788.





About the poet...

Tacoma, Washington native Scott Cairns is the author of eight books of poetry, including *The Theology of Doubt* (1985), *The Translation of Babel* (1990), *Philokalia* (2002), *Idiot Psalms* (2014), *and Slow Pilgrim: The Collected Poems* (2015). His writing has appeared in *The Atlantic, The Paris Review, The New Republic, Poetry,* and elsewhere, and has been anthologized in Best Spiritual Writing and Best American Spiritual Writing.

Besides writing poetry, Cairns has also written a spiritual memoir, *Short Trip to the Edge* (2007), and the libretto for the oratorios *"The Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp"* and *"A Melancholy Beauty."*

Spirituality plays an integral role in Cairns' writing; in an interview, he said, *"I've come to think of beauty as how God woos us to himself. One doesn't so much create it or illuminate it as partake of it. Thereafter, one participates, collaborates, in its endless development."*

Among other honors, he was the 2014 winner of the Denise Levertov Award. Cairns writes some of the most interesting Christian poetry around. This mind-changing reflection on *metanoia,* the opening word (as the Gospel of Matthew tells it) of Jesus' opening sermon (Matthew 4:17) will change the way you thin about "repentance" (or "sin," for that matter.)

Adventures in New Testament Greek: Metanoia

Repentance, to be sure,
but of a species far
less likely to oblige
sheepish repetition.

Repentance, you'll observe,
glibly bears the bent
of thought revisited,
and mind's familiar stamp

— a quaint, half-hearted
doubleness that couples
all compunction with a pledge
of recurrent screw-up.

The heart's metanoia,
on the other hand, turns
without regret, turns not
so much away, as toward,

as if the slow pilgrim
has been surprised to find
that sin is not so bad
as it is a waste of time.

Scott Cairns

