



LWML
Iowa West District

LWML Iowa West District



December 2025/January 2026

THANK YOU!

Thanks for all the extra gifts in October!
They helped a lot. We are still a few thousand behind with 4 months to go.

LWML Iowa West District Mission Goal 2024-2026 Biennium

Progress as of November 25, 2025

\$222,853.68

\$179,841.19



ATTN ZONE PRESIDENTS

2026 IWD LWML Convention Memorial Display

Please contact each of your Group Presidents within your Zone and ask them to submit names of those LWML sisters in Christ who have passed away during the period of May 15, 2024 to May 15, 2026. Those names, along with their respective Zone and Town, should be submitted to Deanne North at dlnnorth@aol.com or Jackie Hembry, at hembrys@msn.com.

Deadline to submit: May 15, 2026.

The February/March eNews articles will be due to Editor Lisa Wilson by January 20.
Send articles to lisawilsonlwml@gmail.com

From our Iowa West District President

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” I Peter 2:9

“Why? Why are we getting up to go to church on Sunday? Why is it time to go to bed? Why do I have to go to school?” children ask. “Because I said so,” parents say. Why do we need to share Jesus with our neighbor? Because Jesus says we are to do that. In this passage from Peter’s first letter, we are told, “...a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Our Lord tells us that we are to share His excellencies. What are those excellencies? They are the good news of the gospel that He died upon the cross to be our Savior. That is the word that brings us the Light of the Gospel. That is the word that needs to be shared. We share it because Jesus tells us that He called us out of darkness to share that message of light.

Why do we have the Iowa West District convention every two years? We meet each biennium to be filled with the Word and Sacrament with our sisters in Christ. We meet to share His marvelous light serving Him in gladness. We meet to choose mission projects, opportunities to share that marvelous light of the gospel in this dark world. We meet to enjoy the fellowship with one another.

Be sure to put June 11-13, 2026, on your calendars. Register to come to Camp Okoboji where you will be filled with His marvelous light. Then you will go and share His light with those you see in the community in which you live.



Penny Schuessler
LWML - Iowa West District
President

Financial Reports

Gifts received October and November 2025

Mission Account		LWML Sunday	
Memorial/Honor District 75%/National 25%		Holy Trinity Farnhamville	\$ 44.44
Louise E Piper	\$25.00	Trinity Fort Dodge	\$130.00
Marge Fogler	\$25.00	St Peter Sac City	\$180.00
Dora Steeve	\$20.00	Pilgrim Lake City	\$145.00
Joyce Meyer	\$20.00		
Memorial Mites District 100%		Rally Mites	
Myra Frank	\$10.00	Humboldt, Boone, Mapleton	
Jackie Van Manen	\$30.00	Cherokee, Spencer zones	\$1,482.44
Marie Lichtenberg	\$25.00		
Marjorie Alliger	\$25.00		
Gifts District 100%		Light That Endures Fund	
Southwest Zone	\$479.00	Legacy	
St. John’s Clarinda	\$947.37	Qualified Charitable Distribution	\$3,000.00
		Endowment	
		Marian Drake Memorial	\$25.00
		General Account	
		Inreach gift	\$25.00
Other Mites			
St. Paul Boone Sunday mites	\$207.00		
Zion Humboldt Noisy Mites	\$238.32		

O Christmas Tree

“O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree. How lovely are your branches.” A very familiar song for us during the Advent and Christmas season, but why sing about a tree, and why do we cut down trees and drag them into our homes and decorate them with lights and ornaments?

In the 16th century it is believed that Germany was the first to start the tradition of bringing an Evergreen into the home. Actually it is thought that Martin Luther was the first to put candles on the Evergreen. It was said that Martin Luther was walking home one evening and while working on a sermon he looked up and was struck in amazement how beautiful the stars looked amid the Evergreens. So he duplicated it by putting an Evergreen in their home and wiring candles to it.

The Evergreen is looked at as a symbol of life. As we go through winter and everything else has “died” off until spring, the Evergreen stays green, it continues living and reminds us that life continues to go on. A great reminder the of True Life that came into this world, Jesus Christ.

As we put up Christmas Trees this year and look at the green branches we remember Jesus who is True Life, that

was brought into this world to bear our sin, to teach us God’s Word, to show us the way to Eternal Life. Then let us look at the wood of the tree and let that remind us of Love of Christ, so much love that thorns were put on His head, that He was nailed to a tree so that all sin would be put to death once and for all. As Jesus says, “I am the way the truth and the life.”

Yes, the branches of a Christmas tree are beautiful because everything about the Christmas tree reminds us of the entire life of Christ from the beginning at Christmas and the road He lead to the Cross. The Christmas tree shows and reminds us of the Life we have in the Love of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Let the true reason for Christmas fill your hearts and minds as we begin this New Church Year and continue in our lives of Faith.



Rev. Nicholas Thackery
LWML IWD
Junior Counselor

Young Women IN MISSION

LEADER DEVELOPMENT

Young Women Representatives Wanted! Attention Zone Presidents and Leader Development chairs. It’s time to start thinking about growing our numbers! We are looking for young women representatives (YWRs) for our upcoming District LWML convention. An ideal candidate would be a Lutheran woman in good standing, who your Zone Board believes has leadership potential within our LWML. The age range should be between 18 and 35ish (if they are a little older, that is fine). It is up to each Zone to pick their YWRs using whatever process works for them (for many of us, it requires some recruiting!). Please contact Martha Sunderman or Cayleigh McBee if you need some guidance on recruitment. The District Leadership team would like to have names of YWRs by April 4, 2026, if possible. We will provide zone presidents with a form to fill out, providing us with contact information for our new YWRs, at our next BOD meeting. In the meantime, prayerfully consider who might be led to join our YWRs this summer!



Martha Sunderman
Leader Development
Chair



Are you protected?

Sally called her daughter to let her know a company had just installed an alarm system on her house. It was complete with motion sensors, door sensors, window sensors, a panic button, and even glass breakage sound sensors. Sally remarked, "After the rash of break-ins in the neighborhood lately, I installed this to give me peace of mind. But now that I have all these protections in place, I almost feel captive in my home, not feeling safe to go outside anymore."

Sally's experience is what happens when we focus our lives merely on "protecting what is ours." God has not given us blessings to store them, but to use them. With his blessings,

we bless our families, and we bless ministries so that the life of Jesus is shared in our communities and world. While there is no harm in taking precautions in an often-dangerous world, our hope is not found in those precautions. We never want those precautions to take the place of active blessings.

That same thing is true about putting together our Christian Estate Plans. It is easy to get caught up in all the "what-ifs" of life, trying to protect against them that in the end we lose our focus on blessing the next generation with Jesus. Your LWML Gift Planning Advocate can help. Contact Ann Carrick at acarrick324@hotmail.com or 515-360-0709.

Historian's Queries

By Gretchen Sump, IWD LWML Historian

The current LWML Quarterly has a Bible study on using our hands and feet or talents. My Evening circle studied that topic this week. I would like to know who among you in Iowa West District have written Bible studies, skits, litanies, or devotions that have been published by national LWML? As I looked for a skit for our society Christmas celebration, I found some names of IWD women such as Kristen Kaldahl, Suzanne Winterhof, and Celeste Cummins. I know there are others. Please let me hear from you and the titles of what you have written.

Let us share these blessings as a special gift this Christmas.

From the Nominating Committee

GRATEFUL

Special Thanks from your Nominating Committee!

We are Sharing the Light of Christ!

With grateful hearts, your nominating committee is pleased to announce the names have been selected for the slate and with the approval of the LWML IWD Board, will be placed on the ballot at the LWML IWD Convention next June.

WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO THOSE WHO HAVE SAID YES!

Thanks for all your prayers and patience from each of you.

Your Nominating Committee,

Julie Carstens, Chr. Jill Feilmeier, Nancy Schoen, Carmen Theidemen, Breanna Wetzler



Julie Carstens
Nominating Committee
Chairman

Organizational Resources

Blessings and peace to our Lutheran Women in Mission members who have been newly elected or re-elected to zone and group offices this fall. For those who are preparing for an office they have not held before, this may seem daunting. Even seasoned officers will come upon challenging moments. When this occurs, I encourage you to turn to God's Word for comfort and strength. One of my favorite verses in these moments is Isaiah 41:10 [ESV]:

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Not is God working on your behalf; but also keep in mind that you have a team of people to work with in the other elected members in your group/zone; the officer that held your position before your and your sisters in Christ. Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek their advice.

Lastly, I encourage you and all members to request the following information from LWML to help you "Stay in Touch" and to be encouraged by these brief messages throughout the year: 2-minute Tuesday emails, eNews, Leadership Tips, LWML General News Mailing, and Mustard Seed Devotions. To connect, go to lwml.org. Scroll to the bottom of the page to locate the "Sign Up Today!" button located under the "Stay in Touch" label.



Jeanette Hinkeldey
VP Organizational
Resources and
Christian Life

Christian Life

Well, this year has certainly gone by in a hurry! Even though I've spent more than half of 2025 "in retirement", it doesn't seem as that the pace of life has slowed down at all.

As we head into Advent, Christmas and the New Year, my prayer is that we can all take some time to reflect on the things we want to be more intentional about in 2026. My personal list would include prayer, gratitude and learning from God's Word, the Bible.

The LWML website, www.lwml.org has several One-Session Bible Studies geared toward the Advent/Christmas/New Year Season. One of the is titled "We Begin Anew", based on the text from Luke 17: 11-19. It is the story of the 10 lepers Jesus encounters while traveling between Samaria and Galilee. The story focuses on the new hope we have in Christ, and in His promises to guide and bless us. And in the story, we are also called to share our stories of grace and hope with others, providing them with their chance to "Begin Anew". This Bible Study is a free download, and can be copied for use in your groups.

A few of the seasonal devotions for winter include:

Advent, a Time for Preparing

God's Perfect Gift

Love Explained

And The Old Barn.

These and many other resources are available free on the LWML website, for individual use, or for your groups' gatherings this winter season.

Wishing you and yours a Blessed Christmas and Joyful New Year!



Deb Rouse
Christian Life
Co-Chairman

Do you know someone who is not receiving the LWML IWD eNews?

Have them send their email address to: Lisa Wilson at lisawilsonlwml@gmail.com and ask to be put on the distribution list. **Do you know someone who does not have email but would like to receive it?** Print it for them or print it and post it on your church's bulletin board. We want everyone to have access to the latest LWML IWD news.

Gospel Outreach

2026 – 2028 LWML Iowa West Grant Application Update

The October 31st grant application deadline is behind us. In total we received requests amounting to \$324,300. The submitted applications are reviewed for completeness and then forwarded to the Assistant to the President for Missions, Stewardship and Human Care for Iowa District West – LCMS (now that’s a title!), Pastor B. Keith Haney for doctrinal review. All passed!

At our August LWML District Board meeting we approved the following people to serve on the Mission Grants Committee:

- Rev. Paul Egger, President of the Iowa District West • Rev. B. Keith Haney
- Penny Schuessler, President, LWML Iowa West District
- Brenda Dryer, Vice President, Gospel Outreach, LWML Iowa West District
- Marilyn Bernard, Northwest Zone • Angela Wilkinson, Storm Lake Zone

In addition to the above members our District Counselors, Pastor Durand and Pastor Thackery will serve in an advisory role. It has been the practice in our LWML Iowa West District to have our candidates for the Vice President of Gospel Outreach observe the committee’s work.

The committee members will each score the applications, once scores are submitted, they are combined and ranked. The Mission Grants Committee will convene early in January to review the ranking and act on their ballot recommendations. Our ballot for the June’s District Convention will be finalized at our February District LWML meeting.

Please include the Mission Grants Committee in your prayers as they will be beginning their individual grant application review in December.

What a blessing it has been to lead the District’s grant making process for the last two biennium’s. I have learned so much about the missions here in Iowa West and those supported by our LCMS church across the world. While much is being done to spread the Gospel there are so many opportunities from our local communities to the other side of the World to proclaim the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!



Brenda Dryer
VP of Gospel Outreach
& Special Focus
Ministries

2024 – 2026 LWML Iowa West District Mission Grant Update

Grant Recipient	GRANT TOTAL	BALANCE
Rev. Bryan & Deaconess Keah Payne – Tanzania	\$ 10,000	\$ -
Fund Haitian Seminarians	\$ 8,000	\$ -
Serving Hungry & Starving Children With Nutritious Meals and the Gospel	\$ 10,000	\$ -
Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch: Nutrition Center Transformation	\$ 2,000	\$ -
Unity Ridge Lutheran School Scholarship Assistance	\$ 17,120.05	\$ -
Project Equip with Truth for Children, Families, and Church Workers Facing Gender Identity Challenges in Today’s Culture	\$ 19,400	\$ -
Financial Assistance for Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School – Expansion and Curriculum	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Hispanic Ministry Outreach – English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in different churches of the IDW	\$ 20,000	\$ -
Serving “Our Elders” through Meals on Wheels Perry Lutheran	\$ 25,000	\$ 5,000
Financial Aid for Iowa District West Students Pursuing Full-time Church Work	\$ 25,000	\$ 12,500.00
	\$ 161,520.05	\$ 42,500.00

WISHES Scholarships Balance

\$ 8,250

Mission Servants

Change- It is everywhere and something we experience every day. Changes in job, schedules and plans, relationships, and seasons. We had a spectacular fall with beautiful color changes of the trees from that summer green to fall reds, oranges, golds and browns. Areas just beamed of those fall colors against the blue sky. And, recently we were able to observe beautiful masterpieces in the sky- the Northern Lights. As I reflect on these changes and the beauty they bring, I know it was all God and how we can marvel at the gifts He shares through nature. "Only God can do this", as we look in awe.

We, too, have had a change with our process of sharing your mission projects with our Iowa West LWML Zones and District. Nancy Medick, Mission Servant Chair, emailed the new form to the Zone Presidents and Mission Servant leaders in November. This change eliminated having to share specific dollar amounts, item counts, weight, and getting all that information sent to the district. As we found out, the details were not needing to be reported at a district or national level. We still want to hear from each of you about the awesome mission or servant events you are doing which can create ideas for all groups and zones across the district. Please feel free to write a short article for the E-News or we will write an article with information provided on the form.

Please share up to 3 projects per Zone. Please have your Zone President or Zone Mission Servant Chair forward the document to the District Mission Servant Chair and Vice Chair (see contact information below). We will continue with the dates of November 15th and May 15th but we can now be flexible with those dates. Please contact us with any questions.

Send to: District Mission Servant Chair and District Mission Servant Vice-Chair

Nancy Medick
nmedick@yahoo.com
4654 NE White Oak Dr
Elkhart, Iowa 50073
515-371-4639

Ann Schauer
schauerann@gmail.com
2095 Roundtable Rd
Sergeant Bluff, Iowa 51054
712-490-7129



Ann Schauer
Mission Servants
Vice Chair

Ladies' Evening of Fellowship

The Sioux City Zone Development Leader, Jennifer Copenhaver, along with ladies from Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux City, held a woman's evening event. It was a fun get together with delicious soups, along with appetizers and Christmas goodies brought by ladies within the zone. A devotion on God's gift of music looking at Psalm 108:1 and how David sang through his battles as an act of worship. We sang various Christmas hymns along with others such as It is Well with My Soul which was a great way to praise our Lord and get into the Christmas spirit. And sticking with the theme of Christmas, each lady was able to create a beautiful Christmas ornament. A monetary in-gathering was collected for the music department at St. Paul's Lutheran School, Sioux City. What a fun time and a great way to spend an evening with our sisters in Christ.

I will end with one of the songs we sang at the ladies' fellowship. Sing loud and strong the praises to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

LSB, 387

News from the Zones

Denison Zone Fall Rally

The Women of Christ hosted the LWML Denison Zone Fall Rally at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Denison on September 25th. The rally theme was based on Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you." Forty-two attended the morning event.

The day began with Pastor Ted Torreson leading the opening devotion reading from Jeremiah 29:4 through the theme verse, Jeremiah 29:11. Pastor pointed out this scripture was not written to us, but rather for us. The devotional time ended with those present singing, "God Loves Me Dearly." (LSB #392)

Denison Zone President, Deb Green, led the group in reciting the LWML pledge expanding on the full meaning of the pledge.

President-Elect Cindy Gray introduced the guest speaker, Reverend Pedro Lopez. He shared an in-depth background on when, how, and why the Hispanic population in our area has grown and the many problems surrounding the Hispanics as they strive to live, work, and worship in our communities. Pastor Lopez thanked the LWML for their understanding and prayers, as well as their support through mite grants and donations.

Chris Mahnken, the District Financial Secretary brought greetings from Iowa West District LWML. She reported that the district mite giving has fallen short of fulfilling the mission grants awarded in 2024. She suggested that groups should consider having fundraisers, etc. to help achieve the 2024 mission grant goals.

A humorous skit, "Conversations at the Beauty Shop", based on the theme verse from Jeremiah and written by Deb Preul, was performed by women from St. John's Kiron and Faith, Deloit.

President Green opened the business meeting by introducing the Denison executive board members and giving a brief description of responsibilities of each board member. She then invited all those present who had attended the International LWML Convention in Omaha this past summer to come forward and share their individual highlights of the convention. Peggy Wunschel, the Denison Zone co-chairperson for the 2026 Iowa West District Biennial convention at Okoboji this coming June, was invited to share progress on the planning with shared hosts from the Council Bluffs Zone.

Pastor Mahnken installed the Denison Zone officers, with Breda Miller as the zone secretary, and Pastor Ted Torreson as the pastoral counselor. Pastor Mahnken led the closing devotion by explaining how Jeremiah 29:11 particularly pertains to his future and his impending retirement. He trusts that God has a plan for his future and that is all that is necessary. The closing devotion ended with the hymn, "Seek Where You May Find a Way" (LSB #557), and the Lord's Prayer.

The morning event ended with a delicious smorgasbord of chicken casseroles, salads, and desserts served by our gracious hosts, the Women of Christ from Christ Lutheran Church.

A Reminder from the Financial Secretary

Mail all mites and memorials to Chris Mahnken, the financial secretary.

They can be sent to LWML Iowa West District % Chris Mahnken, PO Box 6, Schleswig, IA 51461

Please remember to make all checks payable to: LWML Iowa West District.

PLEASE MAIL CHECKS BY THE 20TH OF EACH MONTH, since our month gets closed around the 25th, so we can send our mites to National before the end of the month.

News from the Zones

Des Moines East Zone

The Fall Rally of the Des Moines East Zone was held on October 18 at Peace Lutheran Church-Des Moines and there were 24 in attendance. The theme was.....for the Lord Your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9.

After breakfast, we went into the sanctuary for our Opening Devotions led by the newly installed Pastor at Peace, Rev. Matthew Tooman. We sang some hymns and had a very timely Bible study led by Pastor Tom Vandebilt, our Pastoral Counselor, on the Rally theme. Our Vice President and Secretary were re-elected for another two-year term, and we elected a new Pastor Counselor, Pastor Tooman.

At each Fall Rally, we select a mission project that will receive that day's offering as well as provide the speaker for the Rally the following Spring, and that Rally will be held at St. Paul-Ankeny on April 25, 2026. The two preschools in the Zone (at Christ The King-Altoona and Hope Lutheran-Des Moines) was chosen and will receive the offering of \$455.00.

The Rally ended with the showing of a PowerPoint presentation about Forged By Fire Ministries. The ladies made dozens of 'Benny's crosses' that will be given as a reminder of God's love and a symbol of hope to those who receive meals from the ministry.

We had a wonderful morning studying God's word and were able to spend some valuable time with our fellow LWML sister, Becky Sponsler. She was very involved in LWML serving as our Zone Treasurer from 2020-2024 and was the current President of her LWML Group at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church-Indianola. Little did any of us know that she would pass away unexpectedly that afternoon. What a blessing it is to know we will see her again.

ELECTED OFFICERS

President	Penny Schuessler	IWDprespenny@gmail.com
VP Organizational Resources & Christian Life	Jeanette Hinkeldey	hinkeldeyharmonies@gmail.com
VP of Gospel Outreach & Special Focus Ministries	Brenda Dyer	bsdryer50@gmail.com
Secretary	Deb Schmidt	iwdsecdeb@gmail.com
Financial Secretary	Chris Mahnken	iwdlwmlfinancials@gmail.com
Treasurer	Sharon Hamann	iwdlwmltreasurer@gmail.com
Senior Pastoral Counselor	Rev. Edward E. Durand III	durande@ymail.com
Junior Pastoral Counselor	Rev. Nicholas Thackery	pastor@goodshepfortdodge.org
Nominating Committee Chairman	Julie Carstens	carstensjulie50@gmail.com

APPOINTED PERSONNEL

Christian Life Chairman	Sherrill Phillips	sherrillphillips2@gmail.com
Christian Life Co-Chairman	Deb Rouse	gdrouse1281@ncn.net
Mission Servants Chairman	Nancy Medick	nmedick@yahoo.com
Mission Servants Co-Chair	Ann Schauer	schauerann@gmail.com
Leader Development Chairman	Martha Sunderman	mgraham1783@gmail.com
Leader Development Co-Chair	Cayleigh McBee	cayleigh.mcbee@gmail.com
Structure Committee Chairman	Marilyn Kuehnast	marilyn1945@ncn.net
Editor/Information Technology Chairman	Lisa Wilson	lisawilsonlwml@gmail.com
Parliamentarian	Sue Ackerman	sjackerman99@gmail.com
Historian	Gretchen Sump	gretchensump3@gmail.com