

SHARE

Fall 2026

Upper Susquehanna Synodical Women's Organization

President's Prose

As I checked my email while traveling once again, I realized it was already time for another issue of *SHARE*. This trip brought me to South Carolina to attend our granddaughter's graduation from Army National Guard basic training. What an amazing experience! It was heartwarming to witness the pride these young people felt after completing such demanding training. Krista's next step will take her to Alabama, where she will complete her Advanced Individual Training. The experience was a welcome reminder of the dedication, strength, and positive spirit of young adults today.

It is easy to become discouraged when we think about what is happening in the world, in society, and even within the church. Yet, if we believe that God is in charge, we must remain open to new ideas and look for ways to bring hope, joy, and renewed energy to our gatherings.

If you have an idea that might encourage more women to become involved with WELCA, we would love to hear it. Please contact me or any member of the Executive Board and share your thoughts.

Your SWO President,
Kathy Whitesel

Excerpts from the President's Report to the USSWO Convention in July

This year, we hosted the Day of Learning and Renewal at Messiah Lutheran Church in South Williamsport. Pastor Ken Elkin shared his inspiring experience of walking the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Spain, and Keith Whitesel guided participants in creating beautiful stained-glass angels. It was both an enlightening and enjoyable day for all who attended. In fact, the experience inspired me to begin planning a trip to Spain within the next few years to walk a portion of the pilgrimage trail myself.

It has been a very busy and productive year of planning and preparation. We always welcome new ideas and suggestions, so please feel free to contact me or any member of the Board with thoughts about future activities or events. Your input is both valued and appreciated. As we look ahead, may we continue to lead with wisdom, serve with humility, and move forward with purpose.



Upper Susquehanna Synodical Women's Organization

Women Of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In America

Officers And Executive Board 2026/ 2027

PRESIDENT	Term Ends
Kathy Whitesel, 337 Hammer Hollow Road, Mifflintown, PA 17059 717-436-2401 (home) 717-363-6144 (cell) jkwhitesel@embarqmail.com	2027
VICE PRESIDENT	
Elizabeth (Sue) Baylor, 364 Kaseville Rd., Danville, PA 17821 570-279-4766 (home) 570-204-8320 (cell) sueb123@ptd.net	2027
SECRETARY	
Rita Avery, 771 Foye Rd., Sunbury, PA 17801 570-286-6827 (home) 570-850-8346 (cell) tnravery@ptd.net	2028
TREASURER	
Allison Whitmoyer, 602 W. Front St., Berwick, PA 18603 570-752-2533 (home) 570-380-3474 (cell) taillightman@yahoo.com	2028
<u>BOARD MEMBERS</u>	
Robin Latsha, 507 Slutter Valley Rd., Dornsife, PA 17823 570-758-4610(home) 570-556-7691(cell) rlatsha@tds.net	2027
Karen McAfee, 562 Martzville Road, Berwick, PA 18603 570-759-8016 (home) 570-245-8111(cell) karenmcafee@pa.metrocast.net	2027
Tonya Tabb, 159 Swamp Road Apt. 3, Mifflintown, PA 17059 717-436-8916 (home) 717-994-4702 (cell) tabbtonya@gmail.com	2027
Carol Winter, 70 Maplewood Dr., Apt 3, Lewisburg, PA 17837 570-447-2176 (cell) cekwmw@gmail.com	2028
Wendy Zajac, 792 Hetlerviller Rd., Nescopeck, PA 18635 570-759-1304 (home); 570-336-7023(cell) wzajac61@gmail.com	2027

Installation of USSWO Executive Board for 2026-27



*Sue Baylor, Rita Avery, Carol Winter, Kathy Whitesel,
Karen McAfee, Robin Latsha, Tonya Tabb, Wendy Zajac, Alison Whitmoyer*

MINUTES OF THE THIRTY EIGHTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Women of the ELCA Upper Susquehanna Synod

United Lutheran Church, Sunbury PA

Saturday, July 25, 2026 *Theme: "I Am Worthy"*

President Kathy Whitesel welcomed those in attendance. A brief orientation for delegates was offered to acquaint those attending with the Bulletin of Reports and Recommendations (BRR).

President Kathy offered congratulations to Ruth Doran, our newsletter editor (and a long-time active member of Women of the ELCA of the Upper Susquehanna Synod), upon her recent achievement of becoming a United States Citizen. Ruth has been a resident of our community since 1958. Those in attendance offered their joy for her achievement with a round of applause.

The Order for Opening of Convention was led by Pres. Whitesel.

First Business Meeting

Report of the Committee on Credentials

Robin Latsha reported the following to be in attendance: 8 Delegates, 4 Officers, 5 Board, 10 Participants, 1 Guest for a total of 28. It was determined a quorum was present.

On behalf of the Executive Board, Rita Avery gave the Presentation of Standing Rules for the Convention, the Presentation of Agenda for the Convention, and the Appointment of Committees of the Convention. All were approved unanimously.

Vice President Sue Baylor gave instructions for elections to be conducted during today's convention.

On behalf of the Executive Board, Rita Avery presented the motion that the minutes of today's event be reviewed by the Administrative Committee and following approval be distributed to all congregational/intercongregational units. Motion carried. The minutes will be printed/distributed in the Fall edition of the SHARE newsletter.

President Kathy introduced our guest and representative of the national organization of Women of the ELCA, Lorie Garcia. Lorie served as Vice President of the national organization until the Triennial Convention held 7/13 - 7/14/26 when she completed her term. She is currently a seminarian at United Lutheran Seminary/Gettysburg, PA.

Robin Latsha introduced our worship leader and Bible Study leader, Rev. Beth George and our organist, Judy Updegrave.

The first ballot for treasurer was held.

President Kathy Whitesel presented her report (printed on page 14 of the Bulletin of Reports and Recommendations).

On behalf of the Committee on Conduct of Elections, Robin Latsha returned the results of the first ballot for Treasurer: 17 valid votes were submitted with 16 voting for Alison Whitmoyer. There was one voter who abstained. President Kathy declared Alison Whitmoyer elected.

The first ballot for secretary was taken.

On behalf of the Committee on Conduct of Elections, Robin Latsha returned the results of the first ballot for Secretary: 17 valid votes were submitted with 16 voting for Rita Avery. There was one voter who abstained. President Kathy declared Rita Avery elected.

Sue Baylor presented the report of the Vice President as found on page 15 of the Bulletin of Reports and Recommendations.

Sue Baylor also presented the report of the Mission: Action Committee found on page 20 of the BRR. She additionally noted the change of where the Lutheran World Relief donations are delivered (now to Church World Services at the location/address of Mission Central, 5 Pleasant View Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050) and reviewed changes to the composition of kits as defined by Church World Service. She encouraged all to review the

information provided in the BRR on page 20 with these updates. October 19th, 2026, will be the collection date in Lewisburg at Faith Lutheran Church on Route 45 for kits, blankets and other much needed items as has been held in previous years.

Rita Avery presented the Report for Mission: Community as presented in the BRR on page 21. This report detailed the Day of Learning/Renewal held in April 2026. Treasury activities are managed by a subcommittee of Mission: Community. Communications, specifically, the SHARE newsletter and its composition and distribution are also managed by a subcommittee of Mission: Community. Many thanks to those who perform the duties of these functions.

President Kathy reviewed the list of prior Presidents of our USSWO as presented on page 8 of the BRR and offered a prayer of gratitude and special memory for the women who have served in this position.

President Kathy also reviewed the list of prior locations for our convention events.

Wendy Zajac recognized women present who have been attending our conventions over the years – as far back as our first one in 1987! A lovely reminder of the strength and devotion that has carried us over the years.

Our churchwide representative, Lorie Garcia, offered us an informative and encouraging presentation. As she spoke, she paused for us to consider with each other why WELCA is, or has been, important to each of us. She recommended the book titled “See Me, Believe Me” as a good “read”. Her presentation also highlighted that the National Board has worked diligently to help our organization overcome the financial losses that had primarily occurred because of the COVID pandemic effect on the 2023 triennial event. Transitioning to a virtual convention for the 2026 convention helped the organization realize savings of \$300,000. Through this effort as well as other cost-saving measures along with donations from women and units throughout our membership, the financial position of the national organization has recovered.

Treasurer Alison Whitmoyer invited those in attendance to bring forward their monetary offerings toward our Mission: Ingathering. Funds received will be used to cover the expenses incurred to gather items for school kits which will be put together during the afternoon workshop today.

Those in attendance proceeded to the church sanctuary for worship with communion led by Rev. Beth George followed by a Bible Study she offered on our theme and scripture selection of 1 Corinthians 15:10. The offering received during our worship service will be directed to the treasury of our USSWO.

A lunch of baked potato bar with assorted pies and ice cream were offered following the Bible Study.

When we had finished lunch, the afternoon workshop of completing and packing school kits proceeded. With the supplies that had been brought, 150 school kits were prepared. There were a few extra items and plans were to complete these last couple kits before they were transported to the Church World Service location in Mechanicsburg.

Second Business Meeting

The meeting was opened with devotions led by Sue Baylor.

Robin Latsha brought the report of the Credentials Committee: 8 Delegates, 4 Officers, 5 Board, 10 Participants, 1 Guest for a total of 28.

Sue Baylor reported for the Committee on Nominations, introducing the one nominee for our Executive Board, Carol Winter.

The first ballot for Executive Board was taken, President, Kathy Whitesel again introduced Lorie Garcia, our churchwide representative. Lorie brought additional greetings from the WELCA Board and ELCA Bishop Curry. Lorie asked us each to reflect on who originally connected us to WELCA and to embrace where we are even if we are not doing things the way we always did in the past.

Sue Baylor, on behalf of the Committee on Reference and Counsel, expressed gratitude to all who contributed to the planning and success of our event.

Robin Latsha reported on the ballot for Executive Board – 17 valid votes were received for Carol Winter. President Kathy declared her elected.

Third Business Meeting

The third Business Meeting was opened with devotions led by Linda Leister.

On behalf of the Executive Board, Treasurer Alison Whitmoyer presented the report of the accountant, Darlene C.Gabsewics, CPA, on her review of statements of cash receipts and disbursements for our organization, for approval. (This was printed on pages 16-18 of the BRR.)

This report was approved.

On behalf of the Executive Board, Treasurer Alison Whitmoyer presented the proposed budget for the 2027-2028 budget year for adoption. The adoption was approved.

Robin Latsha offered the final report of the Committee on Credentials. Attendance for today’s event was composed of representation from clusters as follows:

Buffalo Valley	1
Juniata Valley	8*****
Middle Creek	2
North Branch	7
Tulpehocken	4
West Branch	5*****
Total	27

*It was noted after convention closed that the numbers noted with an asterisk were reported incorrectly. Due to an error by the registrar, Juniata Valley was originally reported as 7 and West Branch as 6. The numbers listed above are the correct tally.

Treasurer Alison Whitmoyer reported the following monetary receipts today:

- Offering received during our Worship service: \$183.00
- Ingathering support for the school kit supplies: \$1255.00
- In-kind offering for animal shelters: \$325.00. This will be divided with half (\$162.50) to ARC and other half (\$162.50) to Haven to Home. The donated items will also be divided between these organizations.

Under unfinished business, President Kathy offered the reminder of the bus trip which has been arranged for our Fall event. Currently the sign-up number is small and if more do not sign up by the end of August, the trip will be canceled.

Rita Avery offered the opportunity for those attending to consider hosting future convention events at their church, or, if anyone could suggest a minister who may be willing to lead our worship and Bible Study.

President Kathy expressed our gratitude to Linda Leister who completed two terms on our Executive Board. Churchwide Representative, Lorie Garcia conducted the Service of Recognition and Installation of Officers/Board Members.

The Order for Closing of Convention was held, and the event was closed at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Avery, Secretary, USSWO

Note to Units ...

Please send information and pictures (if possible) about your WELCA programs and activities to Ruth Doran (email ruthedoran@comcast.net) for future issues of SHARE.





"Selfie" by Lorie Garcia, Churchwide Representative



Ingathering: Assembling LWR School Kits

July 25th Convention



Bible Study led by Rev. Beth George



Kathy Whitesel presiding



In-kind Offering: Pet Supplies

News from the Units

Suzanne Firth-St. John's, Lewistown

Our WELCA group sponsored a Spring Tea and Fashion Show in May to benefit our church organ restoration project. The tea was in memory of Janice Brisbin White, a beloved member of the community whose vintage clothing collection dates back 1890. Each of 12 hostesses from St. John's took on the responsibility of decorating a table for the Victorian tea. The church social room was transformed into an elegant display of hospitality with each table highlighting china, silver, linens and florals bursting with color. Between the three courses that were served, teens from the church provided choral and dance presentations and models from young to old showcased the history of clothing through the 1960s. Many people worked together to make the project a success: church staff, models, musicians and dancers, kitchen staff, hostesses and Thrivent. The tea was a sellout and a total of \$2000 was raised for the organ restoration. In addition, a wonderful afternoon of Christian fellowship was enjoyed by all who attended.

Mission and outreach are also important to women in our church family. We have recently organized a closet at the church supplied with items that would be appreciated by someone who is a shut-in, at a care facility or who may just need some cheer. Volunteers can make up bags for visits as needed. Items for the bags are funded by donations and a designated church fund. At Easter, 58 Easter baskets were filled to distribute to the Girl Scout troop at our church as well as the LUMINA Center (Lewistown United Ministries in Action). Thirty Christmas at Sea bags were sent to Seafarers International. We are hoping to assemble 100 personal care kits this year. Last year we contributed 66 quilts for Lutheran World Relief. In addition, we support the Mifflin County School District Homeless Student Project, the LUMINA Center, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and Crossroads Pregnancy. We are now partnering with Wesley Chapel in a mission to help the families of children who are in the Janet Weis Children's hospital in Danville. Water, snacks, energy bars, microwave soups and heat and serve meals are being collected. We support the Adalyn Rose Foundation Empty Stroller Walk which is designed to help parents who have lost a child under the age of 5.

An annual fundraiser for our WELCA group is the Ice Festival Cookie Walk. Our congregational cookies are quite in demand as we generally make over \$1000 on homemade treats.

Faye Harpster -WELCA of Holy Spirit Evangelical Lutheran Church, Watsontown, PA

We have a group that varies in monthly meeting attendees, averaging approximately eight, that participate in various ways, some being World Relief projects. Monthly meetings include prayer, a shared message/program, saying the WELCA Purpose Statement, take up Katie's Fund collection, reading of last meeting Minutes, discussion of accomplishments (old business), and thoughts of upcoming projects/support ideas/needs (new business), followed by a snack.

Activities/Support/Outreach areas we have been involved in include Soup for the Shut-ins; clothes shopping for needy children; support Liberia missionaries; Prayer Chain; provide Baptismal Medallions for those baptized; send cards to the sick, hospitalized, or in nursing home.

We also organize collections of personal care items (and assemble), Blanket Sunday collection, school supplies for children, Seafarer Bags, Operation Christmas Child, and supplies/food for pets, deliver items or sending monetary donations to designated places.



Himmel's Celebrates America Through VBS

This summer, Himmel's Church celebrated Vacation Bible School with a special **"God Bless America"** theme. Rather than using a purchased program, a dedicated team from the congregation created the entire experience themselves. From the lessons and activities to the decorations and music, each part of the program was thoughtfully planned to provide the children with a meaningful and memorable week.

Throughout the week, the children enjoyed Bible stories, crafts, games, music, and fellowship while learning about God's love and reflecting on the many blessings we enjoy. The program offered a wonderful opportunity for children of all ages to grow in their faith, build friendships, and celebrate their community and country.



Preschool Class Himmel's VBS 2026



Water Balloon Fun to end VBS



Fifty Reasons to Love God



Himmel' Church 1773....three years before the Declaration of independences was signed.



Today's Heroes from local Fire company gave rides.



Creating a personal patch for a Patriotic quilt



Group standing by Klingerstown Firetruck

**The Women of the ELCA, The Committee for Global Missions,
and the Upper Susquehanna Synod**

Blanket Sunday



will be held on Sunday, October 4, 2026

Blanket Collection will occur on Saturday, October 17, 2026

at Faith Lutheran Church, Route 45, Lewisburg, PA (2349 Old Turnpike Road)

OR ITEMS MAY BE TAKEN TO : Church World Service Mission Central

5 Pleasant View Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

HOURS:

Monday to Friday – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Closed on weekends and holidays)

You may mail or drop off Kits directly at this location.

Please plan to arrive by **2:30 p.m.** so our team has time to assist you before closing.

Look for the **orange door** for CWS Kit deliveries.

*** If your delivery fills more than an SUV, please call **717-766-1533** in advance.



Christmas-at-Sea Satchels
due at Synod Office
by November 5

100 Mahoning St., Milton, PA
Phone (570) 524-9778



GLUTEN-FREE PECAN BARS

Barbara Shipman, Rita Avery's sister-in-law

These Gluten-free Bars were a refreshment delicacy at the Convention

CRUST:

- 1 cup GF flour
- 1/3 cup light brown sugar
- 7 Tbsp butter, cubed
- ½ tsp salt

Combine above until crumbly. Press in bottom of 9x9 pan prepared using a "sling" of parchment paper and spray. Bake in 350° oven for 15 min.

FILLING:

- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1/3 cup dark karo
- 2 eggs
- 3 Tbsp melted butter
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp GF flour

Combine above (can use mixer) and add 2 cups of chopped pecans. Pour over prepared crust and bake for another 20-25 minutes at 350°. Allow to cool for 4 hours before lifting out of pan with parchment paper "sling" and cutting into squares.



2026 Lutheran World Relief Donations Form

Please COMPLETE and RETURN this form.

You may take the form to the collection point at:

Faith Lutheran Church, 2349 Old Turnpike Road, Lewisburg, PA,

October 17, 2026, from 9 a.m. until noon, and give it to the person who receives your donations. The container should be there from October 14 until Oct 21. Please check to see if the container is there before you make the trip. If you take your donations directly to the Church World Mission Central 5, Pleasant View Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA please mail this form to:

Elizabeth A Baylor
364 Kaseville Rd.
Danville, PA 17821
Phone 570-279-4766 (home)
sueb123@ptd.net

Packing Instructions Are on Reverse Side

Name of Congregation	
Address of Congregation	
Cluster or Conference	
ELCA Congregation #	
NAME AND PHONE NUMBER OF PERSON COMPLETING REPORT	

CHECK ONE (x)	
Our donations were taken by us to the collection point	
Our donations were taken by us directly to New Windsor	
Our donations were given to a different agency for disaster relief.	

NO ITEMS WILL BE ACCEPTED IN PLASTIC BAGS AND NO FLEECE BLANKETS OR FABRIC.

Only the kits listed below

Number of Mission Cotton Quilts 60 by 80	
Number of Personal Care Kits	
Number of School Kits	
Number of Fabric Kits	
Number of Baby Care Kits	
Number of Bars of Soap (NOT POUNDS)	

PACKING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose boxes that can be easily carried by one person. PREFERRED boxes can be requested from the dairy section of your local grocery store. Eggs are crated in boxes that have hand-holds at both ends of each box and can be easily carried when loaded with In-gathering donations. They hold a great deal of material, can be stacked easily, and fit into cars and trucks easily. If you cannot carry the box, it is likely that our movers cannot carry it either.
2. Boxes must have solid lids.
3. Sort and pack each kind of item in separate boxes. PLEASE DO NOT MIX SEVERAL THINGS IN THE SAME BOX. Please label boxes accordingly or place a bar code label on the top and cover with clear tape.
4. **Boxes are not to weigh more than 40 pounds.**
5. Tape boxes securely with packing tape. This holds the lid on and reinforces the boxes.
6. Mark boxes “LWR” and list the general contents (i.e. “personal care kits,” “school kits,” “soap,” “quilts,” etc.) on the outside with a marking pen.

You can expect that each box will be handled and stacked and moved several times, just like it moves through a post office. It can be dropped, pushed, heaved, lifted, and stacked numerous times by numerous people – from your church to Church World Service Mission Central, Mechanicsburg. Your care in packing and labeling is greatly appreciated!

To finish the job:

Complete the form on reverse side and take with you when you deliver your boxes to the collection point. If you take donations directly to Mechanicsburg, mail this form to the address on the reverse side.

Deliver to the collection point during the hours specified.

PLEASE NO ITEMS IN PLASTIC BAGS AND NO FLEECE BLANKETS OR FABRIC.

DO NOT TAKE ITEMS TO NEW WINDSOR! THAT SITE IS CLOSED.