The Sower

Newsletter for the Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes & Prairies

May, 2026 Kathleen Keefer, Editor

Moderator's Musings

Hello from sunny South Dakota:
We have had several days in the high 70s and 80s. I love this time of year because there are no bugs yet. My Sunday School kids gave me some petunias I planted in pots on my back porch. I have been sitting out there with my coffee and book [and cat].
I know many of you have had or will be having spring gatherings. Please send some photos to Kathleen for the next Sower. I like to see everyone's faces and hear what you've been up to: guest speakers, projects with our mission partners, helping a local group. Let's make an effort to stay connected.
And in the same vein, if you ever get the opportunity to serve on the Synod level, grab it. This work has been such a joy and blessing to me. All the wonderful women I have met and now call friends, the chance to learn from other PWs, the ability to work together to make life a little better for others. Each one of us can make a difference.
I keep ruminating on the daughters of Zelophehad in Num. 27. They saw an injustice in Jewish society, but instead of accepting it and moaning, "What can I do?" they made plans. They strategized. They prayed and had faith. Then they confronted Moses and the other men, but instead of whining or yelling or making demands, they calmly laid out their case and asked for justice. And Moses took the matter before God who agreed with the women. And the inheritance laws for all Isreal were changed. The weak and powerless can make a difference. Never give up, never give in.
Our Synod Gathering team has started making plans in earnest for 2028. By the end of this month, we should have a venue selected and we have been making plans for our mini-trip, which is shaping up nicely. We even have a couple of dates picked out. Hello Mankato, here we come! Let me know if you have an idea for a workshop or speaker so we can add it to the mix.
At our last CT meeting in Lincoln, we assembled more than 100 period packs to take to Synod School with offering money donated to make up several more. We tied some fleece blankets and put together 50 or so 'bolt bags.' These are kits with the hardware required to put together the beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. The chapter in Lincoln received a Birthday Offering and spoke to us about their work and the need. We also toured a local food pantry where I got a lot of ideas. There are so many places where we can make a difference in people's lives.
The Presbytery of South Dakota recently held a continuing education event for CREs in Watertown. The topic was mental illness and addiction. It was very informative. One comment that stuck with me, "Using for the first time is a choice, addiction is not." Neither addiction nor mental illness are choices or failures. They are diseases we must diagnose and treat just like diabetes or heart disease or high blood pressure. Let's encourage more dialogue and education about this issue in our communities.
I was on a Presbytery Committee meeting this week when a woman asked, "Where would the Presbyterian church be without women?" Looking at the all-woman Zoom group, we decided, "Not very far."
Thank you to each and every one of you for the work you are doing. I thank God each and every day for you.

Blessings on you,

Louise

lcvanpoll@gmail.com
605-354-2397

Angi Sullins in her new book "Unmasking the Myths"
AVAILABLE HERE: **https://angisullins.com/shop-3-2/**

yes
let's unbutton the collar
of the story
let the river rush back
into the pages
where it was once dammed
let's speak of Jesus
not as a man nailed to doctrine
but as a wild god
muddy-footed laugh-lined
riotous with love
that couldn't be tamed
by temple or sanction
not sanitized not separate
but rooted
relational
ravishing in his refusal
to leave the lepers behind
he was never tame
they just wrote him that way
so they could sell him in pieces
at the market stalls of capitalism
he was wild
like sap in springtime
like a boy laughing
with wine on his lips
and dirt in his beard
because he'd been
walking too long
with women who wouldn't
stop weeping
he knew stories
like they were animals
feral things
with teeth and grace
he never offered purity
he offered belonging
not the kind you earn
with good behavior
and pressed robes
but the kind you fall into
weeping
because you didn't think
anyone would choose you
he touched the ones
everyone else refused
to look at
called them kin
not project
not charity
not immigrant
not sinner
kin
he was not a ladder
to heaven
he was wild vine
and kiss
loaf and fish
the breath of spirit
when it cloaks
itself in humanity
he broke the rules
to make a table wide enough
for us all
then threw the table
when they tried to turn it
into a tollbooth
don't look for him
in the gilded cathedral
look for him
in the hospice room
in the alley
in the mother who sings
to her hungry child
with no more food
in her hands
look for him
in the wild woman
who knows how to anoint
a broken god
with oil and story
look for him
in the man who
votes for kindness
instead of profit
look for him on that
old red couch
in the center of your heart
the one with the slouching pillows
stuffed with grace
and unearned mercy
it's his favorite hangout
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REQUEST FOR PRAYERS for healing for hope Dougherty. She had a fall and injured her leg and will have surgery soon. Prayers for healing and patience!! And for others who are experiencing health issues!

First Nations Version Philippians 4:11-14
You should not think that I am looking for you to take care of my needs, for I have learned how to be at peace with whatever the Great Spirit has provided. I have lived with less than I need, and I have lived with more than I need. I have learned the secret of walking the road of life. Whether I am well-fed or hungry, whether I have more than I need or not enough, I can do all things through the Chosen One who gives me strength! All the same, you have done well to help me during my time of trouble.

Respectfully submitted by Hope Dougherty

TOGETHER IN SERVICE

By Pat McKisson, Committee Chair

'Answering the call to be the hands and feet of Christ in
The Community,
Our Church,
Our Nation, and
The World.'

Presbyterian Women are asked to respond to God's love for us by offering our many gifts to ensure wholeness for all. We bring Christ's love to the world. Here are some missions we can embrace.
Sleep in Heavenly Peace
There are so many opportunities in our cities to be the hands and feet of Christ.
At the last coordinating team meeting of our P.W. in the Synod, we had a mission project to help the Sleep in Heavenly Peace organization located in Lincoln, NE. We put together bolt bags and learned about the local chapter's mission and vision through a presentation by Rhonda Obermeier, co-president. She shared photos of their team and beds they had built.
Who is Sleep in Heavenly Peace?
The only charity which provides hand-made bunk beds to children who don't have beds of their own.
What else do they supply?
Donated sheets, blankets, and pillows.
How do they build the beds?
Through volunteers, both members of the organization and other groups in the community.
How can you find a chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace in your state?
Visit their website at: shpbeds.org.
There are numerous chapters in MN, NE, SD, and WI.
There you will find out more about the organization and how to get involved through volunteering, donating, and applying for a bed.
Gift of the Heart Kits – Church World Service
Period Packs, Cleanup Buckets?
Statistics on the CWS website help us realize how much we all care, not just P.W., but others in our nation who support the causes.
Here are the statistics for kits received in 2025:
--71,760 Hygiene Kits
--39.300 Kid's Kits
--6,147 Period Packs
--5,400 Cleanup Buckets.
As stated on the CWS website, "Because you shared so generously, hope showed up when it was needed most. Your compassion brought comfort, care, and the promise of a new beginning to neighbors facing a challenging time."
Note: This year P.W. is asking for support for the Period Packs. Period packs are in high demand because of period poverty, the lack of affordable, accessible menstrual products, is a widespread and often overlooked issue that affects people's health, dignity, and

daily functioning. It affects girls missing school and women missing work because of the lack of period products. Please make this a priority for you mission day.
Other Missions of P.W. of the PCUSA

- Heifer International

Heifer is an international organization that works with communities to end hunger and poverty and to care for the earth.
They work to end hunger and poverty in partnership with the communities they serve. Their programs support entrepreneurs around the world, creating lasting change from the ground up.
It begins with a seed investment in livestock or agriculture, followed by mentorship to help project participants build a business, and ultimately to gain access to supply chains and markets.
These families are able to earn a living income and continuously lift up their communities as they train the next generation of leaders. By supporting and training the world's farmers, ranchers, and female business owners, we're investing in a new breed of success.

- IMA World Health Organization

IMA World Health provides essential health care services and supplies to vulnerable and marginalized people the world over. They:
--Improve maternal and child health
--Promote nutrition
--Strengthen healthcare systems

- Fellowship of the Least Coin

Fellowship of the Least Coin is a global, ecumenical prayer movement. Founded on the belief that prayer unites a worldwide family of faith, women from around the world pray for peace and reconciliation and set aside the least coin of their country as a symbol of that prayer.
The coins collected are used for grants for post-secondary education and training for women; grassroots projects that empower women and girls, advocates for their rights, and work to end gender-based violence and poverty; and provide relief in times of natural and human-made disasters.
In this way, all coins collected can contribute to *real* justice, peace, and reconciliation in the lives of women and girls all over the world!
Help your TIS team promote more organizations that serve the needs of others. . . If you have a mission that you would want to share contact me directly by email: **pmck1947@gmail.com** or phone - 651-773-5107.
May Peace be with all of you.

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2026 PWS Native American Partnership Opportunities

The following are PW Synod sponsored and verified Native partnership opportunities. If you have questions, please contact PWS Native American Concerns Committee (NACC) chair, Marilyn Stone at mmstone52@att.net or 262-763-0918 (home – leave a message). When mailing items to any of the places listed below, please include a self-addressed and stamped postcard that can be returned to you as acknowledgement that donations were received.

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College Scholarships for Native Students

- ***Sisseton Wahpeton College, Sisseton, SD***
- ***Oglala Lakota College, Kyle, SD***
- ***Ihanktonwan Community College, Marty, SD***

Financial contributions are being received by *PW Synod of Lakes and Prairies* to create a sustaining Native student scholarship fund. These funds make it possible to award $500 scholarships each semester to one Native student attending Sisseton Wahpeton College, another attending Oglala Lakota College and yet another student attending Ihanktonwan Community College. Criteria for selection by a college selection committee is in place. Ongoing funds are needed to sustain granting scholarships each semester for each college. The first scholarship was awarded in Fall 2023. Scholarships for a third college, Ihanktonwan Community College, will begin with the 2026 Fall Semester.

Contributions can be mailed to: Terri Sherman, PWS Treasurer, 12244 N. 84th Street, Lincoln, NE 68517. Check made out to: PWSLAP; note on memo line: *"Native College Scholarship Fund".*

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Iglutheca *(ee-gloo-teh-chah) – a Lakota word meaning "to renew yourself"*
PO Box 5005, Pine Ridge, SD 57770 (Pine Ridge Reservation)

Iglutheca provides a pathway for homeless Lakota people out of addiction and poverty. It offers the basics: meals, safety, sleep, showers, and community. It also provides case planning and management tailored to each person's needs, which may include: addressing addiction, mental health, spiritual support, grief groups, health care, housing, GED completion, job search and assistance obtaining vital documents. Meeting basic needs is a huge advantage as it enables individuals to plan for their next steps. Monetary donations are needed to sustain these critical services.

Monetary donations can be sent to: Iglutheca, % Abram Neumann, PO box 5005, Pine Ridge, SD 57770
While reestablishing 501(c)3 status, tax deductible donations can be sent to: Pine Ridge Reconciliation Center, PO Box 862, Pine Ridge, SD 57770. Be sure to write "Iglutheca Donation" on the memo line.
Learn more at: https://www.facebook.com/iglutheca or https://www.iglutheca.org/

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Sweetgrass Wačaŋga
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Prevention & Shelter Services (Lake Traverse Reservation)

Sweetgrass Wačanga offers a safe shelter for women and children affected by domestic violence and sexual assault. It provides emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, and support services to help survivors rebuild their lives. Wačanga Community Closet provides clothing for women, children, and infants free of charge.

Items needed are: women's and children's socks, personal care and hygiene items, feminine care products, baby items and baby hats, paper products, and Walmart gift cards.

Mail items to: Sweetgrass Wačanga, 205 E. Oak St, Suite 121, PO Box 230, Sisseton, SD 57262
Learn more at: https://www.facebook.com/sweetgrass.wacanga/

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Red Cloud Renewable
P.O. Box 1609, Pine Ridge, SD 57770

Red Cloud Renewable (RCR) helps address the severe housing crisis on the Pine Ridge Reservation with the construction of affordable, sustainable (cellular concrete), energy efficient, culturally compatible homes built by Native workers. RCR provides the workforce development and training of local Native people to construct these energy efficient homes, producing much needed jobs as well. RCR offers vital education in solar installation and weatherization techniques as well. Visit: https://www.redcloudrenewable.org/

Contributions can be mailed to: Red Cloud Renewable, PO Box 1609, Pine Ridge, SD 57770

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Bdecan Presbyterian Church – Funds to purchase items for backpack giveaways
Chandra Mendieta, Ministries and Outreach Coordinator
Mailing Address: PO Box 141, Tokio, ND 58379
Phone: (701) 230-1560 Email: bdecanpresbyterianchurch@gmail.com

Bdecan Presbyterian Church, the only Native Presbyterian Church in North Dakota, hands out backpacks to children on the Spirit Lake Reservation the 3rd Saturday of August. Last year, 160 backpacks were distributed, an increase from previous years. Financial donations assist the church in purchasing backpacks and school supplies.

Financial donations to purchase the backpacks and supplies can be sent to:
Bdecan Presbyterian Church, PO Box 14441, Tokio, ND 58379. Write "Backpacks" on the memo line.

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Children's First - Wakanhja Tokahepi (formerly Gather the Children Home) - Emergency Foster Care
Porcupine, South Dakota (Pine Ridge Reservation)

*Children's First (*formerly *Gather the Children Home)* is a culturally appropriate emergency foster care home for children ages birth to age 13. It provides a caring, immediate safe environment for children removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect, until a suitable foster or relative's home becomes available. *Children's First* is once again a 501(c)3 nonprofit agency.

There is an urgent need for a safe, reliable passenger van to transport children in emergency care to court hearings, medical and behavioral health appointments, school, family visits, cultural/community outings, shopping for basic needs, and longer trips to Rapid City and other regional service centers. The Pine Ridge Reservation covers a large rural area of

approximately 4,342 square miles, with limited public transportation and long distances between homes, schools, courts, clinics, pharmacies, and regional services. The van will meet a critical need in helping children attend required appointments and maintain connection to family, culture, school, and community.
Monetary donations should be sent to: Barbara Dull Knife, PO Box 230, Oglala, SD 57764
Learn more at: https://www.lakotafriendscircle.org/organizations-we-serve/children-in-need-of-care/
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Families Working Together
356 SD Hwy 44, PO Box #321, Wanblee, SD 57577 (Pine Ridge Reservation)

Families Working Together (FWT) strives o empower Oglala Lakota people to become self-sufficient. The FWT community building offers classes and opportunities for sewing and quilting, canning and dehydration of foods, gardening skills and raised garden space, along with classes for children, youth and adults to learn to prepare healthier foods. Weekend food packs are prepared for all elementary students for distribution every Friday. A reading mentor program assists children and youth with increasing reading skills.

Children's books reflecting accurate Native culture and characters are needed. Books can be purchased online and shipped directly to FWT, to avoid postage costs. Contact Marilyn for a list of books that meet their specific needs with a focus on culture as well as science. A library at the elementary school just opened and donated books will go there. Learn more at: https://www.familiesworkingtogether.org/
Monetary donations can be sent to: Mary Grimme Epps, PO Box #321, Wanblee, SD 57577
Books should be shipped to: Families Working Together, 356 SD Hwy 44, Wanblee, SD 57577
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Baby Welcoming Ceremony
Pine Ridge, SD

A "Baby Welcoming" Ceremony is the oldest and most significant ceremony in Lakota culture. It teaches the role of motherhood and the sacredness of caring for the child. Teachings include the Lakota cultural traditions of protecting the baby's fontanel ("soft spot") from harm or sickness, and the sacred connection to walking in balance. In addition to cultural teachings, this ceremony celebrates the birth and offers support with parenting skills (nutrition, nurturing baby care, build/maintain healthy relationships), helping mothers get their GED or high school diploma, develop job and coping skills.

Gift baskets are given to each mother and these baby layettes are needed for the baskets: Clothing sizes 6 months ONLY – 2-onesies, 2-sleepers, 1-outfit (either winter or summer), 2-pair socks, 2-bibs, 2-receiving blankets, 1–baby blanket, 1-hooded bath towel, and a baby cap/hat.

Contact Marilyn Stone for updated address when you are ready to ship items.
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Reflections on my journey to the Pine Ridge Reservation

By Pat McKisson, Together in Service Committee Chair

In early May, I was blessed to be able to accompany Marilyn Stone on a trip to check-in with the partnerships that have been established on the Pine Ridge Reservation. I was invited to meet, listen, and interact with the leaders of the organizations as they shared accomplishments and ongoing needs. Every leader impressed me because of their passion and dedication to the work they do to help our Native American sisters, children, and families.
As all journeys start, we drove an entire day through Minnesota and across South Dakota to Rapid City. We stopped along the way to see the Dignity site. It is truly a beautiful tribute to all Native American women, to their courage, perseverance, and wisdom of the Lakota and Dakota culture in South Dakota.
The next day we drove through the northwest portion of the Pine Ridge Reservation so I could get a first-hand feel for the land. It was beautiful with rolling hills, a slight view of the badlands, pine and cedar trees dotting the landscape. But livestock and cultivated fields were not present. It is a hard land to grow anything on.
After driving further into the reservation, there would be an occasional trailer or small house scattered over substantial distances from each other.
Pine Ridge Reservation is in southwestern South Dakota and has over fifty distinct communities and neighborhoods across its vast 3,468 square miles. It is large and rural but does have several towns and named areas which are central to life on the reservation. Out of the 22 towns on the reservation, only 3 are considered large.

Partnership Visits

- *Iglutheca* -Town of Pine Ridge.

This organization provides housing and support for those with chemical dependency or mental health issues. Their mission statement is 'to provide a pathway for homeless Lakota's out of addiction and poverty;.

- *Children First* – Town of Oglala

Children First's is an emergency shelter, group home, and safe house located on the Pine Ridge Reservation serving children ages 0 – 12 years-old. They provide shelter and culturally appropriate care for children in need and help families create healthy pathways forward toward reunification when possible. They provide a safe, child-centered environment where children can begin to heal and thrive. Additionally, they facilitate cultural and educational programs and participate in events that promote their mission throughout the community.

We visited the house where the children reside and met the founder of the organization, Barbara Dull Knife. At the time of our visit, there were two children present, ages one and a half and two. Barbara told us that they had 9 children housed and the other seven were at school.

The needs are great for taking care of these children. We were able to deliver several twin sized blankets. They also have other needs which we heard about.

- *Families Working Together* – Town of Wanblee

This organization is amazing in all they do for their community. Upon arrival, we got to help Mary, the founder and leader of the organization, and Georgia, a staff member, put together weekend food packs for 120 students who go to school in the community. Food insecurity is always a problem on the reservation.

We were given a tour of the building which houses the organization and serves as Mary's home. Mary's husband built the structure with help from volunteers and today it has many purposes.

The main room is where people from Wamblee can come, talk, and rest. Several children came in to watch TV and to talk, a safe and welcoming place to hang out.

The rest of the main floor is for two dormitories, which can house volunteers, Mary's rooms, and storage shelving for supplies.

The second floor consists of more storage for supplies, clothing, medical items such as walkers, canes, crutches, and food. There is also a multipurpose room for sewing projects. There is a loom for making rugs, a large table for quilt making, several sewing machines, a place to sit and knit or crochet, and a place to do special projects such as painting.

Mary has a garden with a vegetable garden, fruit trees, and grape vines. She cans everything and uses a dehydration machine to pack even more.

She has goats from which she gets milk to make lotions and other products.

- *Welcome the Child* – Town of Pine Ridge

We met with Lisa and delivered baby layette kits for the upcoming welcoming the child home ceremonies.' These ceremonies are about celebration, connection, and belonging. They give the child their first formal introduction to family and community, and can serve as a cultural or spiritual anchor, especially for families with heritage traditions. Even if the child is not yet aware, these rituals help shape their sense of identity and belonging.

For me, the work which Lisa and her staff do is so important to reaffirming the traditions of the Lakota/Dakota people.

- *Red Cloud Renewable* – Town of Pine Ridge

Red Cloud Renewable empowers Native American communities by offering vital education in solar installation, sustainable building practices, and weatherization techniques. Through these initiatives, we equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement renewable energy solutions, construct environmentally friendly structures, and improve the resilience of homes against harsh weather conditions. This impactful work benefits Native American communities by fostering self-sufficiency, reducing energy costs, and promoting sustainability within these populations. They are in the process of creating a new facility on acreage that has been purchased. They also want to introduce a herd of buffalo on the site, too. So many new projects are key to the education and employment opportunities for the residence of Pine Ridge.

- *Oglala Lakota College* – Town of Kyle – Existing scholarship funded.

Ihanktonwan Community College – Town of Wagner – Met to see if a scholarship would be a fit with the Native American Concern Committee guidelines.

Parting Thoughts

I am so thankful for this opportunity to finally see Pine Ridge Reservation and meet the incredible women and men who are working so hard to bring changes to the residents of this forgotten land. They inspired me, they transformed me, they made me want to continue my work through mission no matter how challenging it can sometimes be. But through God's grace and the dedication of all the Presbyterian Women I have met, I can and will continue to do the best I can to be the 'hands and feet of God'.

NOTE: If anyone is interested in learning more about our Native American Concerns Committee and the partnerships they have formed, please reach out to Marilyn Stone. The work the committee does is so important and supports what mission is all about.

Register today to join a book study . . .

Healer: Susan LaFlesche Picotte

by Nancy Waltman

This book study is sponsored by Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and led by members of the PWS Native American Concerns Committee. **It is open to interested women and men across the synod,** via Zoom
There is no charge to participate, yet registration is required.

Dates for 2026: June 8 and 22
Daytime study begins at 1:30-2:30 PM (CST)
Evening study begins at 6:30-7:30 PM (CST)

Synopsis: This book is a tribute to Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte, the first Native American doctor in the United States. She became a physician in 1889, at a time before either Native Americans or women had been given the right to vote. After graduating from medical school in the East, she returned to Nebraska to serve her Omaha people at the Macy reservation. At a time when her tribal people were in desperate need of medical help and leadership, she was a healer and an advocate for their welfare.

There are four stories in the book. The first story is about the Omaha people, their history as a noble tribe, and their challenges in interacting with a white culture that invaded their territory. The second story describes deadly infectious diseases that were brought to the continent by Europeans, and that have greatly impacted all Native Americans. The third story is about Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte and her family. The fourth story examines "historical or intergenerational trauma" as one cause of mental health and societal problems that continue to be experienced by Omaha people today.

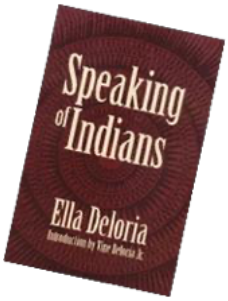
The first settlers of our land, the Native Americans, have suffered great losses since the 1700s. Americans today can help Native people to heal from this "trauma of the soul." The Omaha tribe of Native Americans are surviving and growing.

Register by contacting Marilyn Stone at mmstone52@att.net
Provide your name, email address, cell phone, and presbytery.
Also, please indicate your afternoon or evening preference.

Register today to join a book study . . .

Speaking of Indians

by Ella Deloria



This book study is sponsored by Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and led by members of the PWS Native American Concerns Committee. **It is open to interested women and men across the synod,** via Zoom
There is no charge to participate, yet registration is required.

Dates for 2026: July 6 and 20
Daytime study begins at 1:30-2:30 PM (CST)
Evening study begins at 6:30-7:30 PM (CST)

Synopsis: Ella Deloria could speak intimately about Indian ways because she belonged to a Yankton Sioux family. A distinguished scholar who studied with Franz Boas at Columbia University, she had the gift of language and the understanding necessary to bridge races. Originally published in 1944, this book is an important source of information about Dakota culture and a classic in its elegant clarity of insight.

Beginning with a general discussion of American Indian origins, language families, and culture areas, Deloria then focuses on her own people, the Dakotas, and the intricate kinship system that governed all aspects of their life. She writes, “Exacting and unrelenting obedience to kinship demands made the Dakotas a most kind, unselfish people, always acutely aware of those about them and innately courteous.”

Deloria goes on to show the painful transition to reservations and how the holdover of the kinship system worked against Indians trying to follow white notions of progress and success. Her ideas about what both races must do to participate fully in American life are as cogent now as when they were first written.

Register by contacting Marilyn Stone at mmstone52@att.net
Provide your name, email address, cell phone, and presbytery.
Also, please indicate your afternoon or evening preference.

Join us for another Native Mini-Trip July 31-August 2, 2026!

The PW Synod Native American Concerns Committee (NACC) is planning a mini-trip to visit the newly renovated **Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte Center in Walthill, NE, July 31-August 2, 2026**. It has been almost four years since our initial visit in the early stages of the renovation process and we look forward to seeing how Dr. Susan's vision for a hospital to serve her people has been multiplied to not only provide for medical needs, but so much more!

DR. SUSAN LaFlesche Picotte CENTER

You may recall that Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte was the first Native person to complete medical school and she happened to be a woman. She built a hospital in Walthill, NE on the Omaha Reservation which implemented various practices that improved the health and recovery of those served. Dr. Susan taught Sunday School and preached at the Presbyterian Church in Walthill.

The Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte Hospital has been restored to serve as a medical and behavioral health center, as well as serving as a hub for creativity, skill-building, and entrepreneurship, offering a space for community members to learn and showcase their talents.

We plan to meet at a hotel in Sioux City, IA for dinner and an evening briefing on Friday, July 31st. On Saturday, August 1, we'll carpool to Walthill, NE to tour the Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte Center, learning more about all the services and cultural offerings provided at the center and visit the Dr. Susan historical museum. Box lunches will be provided. Dinner on Saturday evening will provide an opportunity to debrief and process our experiences. Participants can leave anytime on Sunday.

Please let Marilyn Stone (mmstone52@att.net) know if you are interested in joining us **no later than June 19th.** A registration form will then be forwarded to you with reservation options for lodging.

To learn more about Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte. . .
Join us for the PWS Native Book Study when we read and discuss **Nancy Waltman's book, *Susan LaFlesche Picotte, Healer* June 8 and 22 at either 1:30 PM or 6:30 PM**. See attached flyer for additional information on how to register!

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SOCIAL ISLOLATION AND MENTAL HEALTH:
In 2023, a national poll reported that about 37% of older US adults (aged 50-80 years) experienced loneliness and 34% reported feeling socially isolated. Loneliness affected women more than men and was particularly common among individuals with poorer physical and mental health, those with a health condition or disability that limited daily activities, and those who were unemployed, lived alone, or were aged 50 to 64 years (compared with 65-80 years).
Older adults are also at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness because of factors such as the loss of a partner or other loved ones, decreased mobility, worsening vision and hearing, chronic illness, inability to access transportation, or cessation of favorite activities.
As we navigate the complexities of aging, one concern that often arises or intensifies is the social isolation of older adults. Social isolation can significantly impact mental and physical health, lowering quality of life and creating a sense of disconnection from the community.
Growing older often leads to significant changes in one's social landscape. As seniors retire, move, or face health challenges, their opportunities for social interaction may diminish, potentially impacting their mental and overall health. Fostering connections and ensuring seniors remain socially engaged is crucial, offering numerous benefits that enhance their quality of life.

Thankfully, there are plenty of ways to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for older individuals. By exploring practical strategies and actionable steps, we can help prevent isolation and promote a sense of belonging. Some options include:

- Regularly scheduled times with friends and family
- Group programs at libraries or senior centers
- Online spaces, lectures or faith-based activities
- Group exercise classes
- Volunteering with local organizations
- Support groups for navigating loss or grief

"SPRING-CLEAN YOUR MENTAL HEALTH"

Excerpt by Charley K. Murphy (*Woman's Day*, p.14, April-May 2026)
"Every spring we declutter closets, wipe down shelves, and open the windows for a fresh start. What if we brought that same energy to our mental health?
5 ways to spring-clean your mind:
(1) **Start with gratitude**. Each morning, name three things you're grateful for.
(2) **Release lingering stress.** Write down what's been weighing on you, then let the paper go. Naming the stress can be a reset.
(3) **Move.** A short walk, stretch, or even a kitchen dance party can help you shake off mental fog.
(4) **Set one boundary**. Say[ing] no to something that drains your energy [can] feel like a warm hug.
(5) **Add a playful pause.** Do something just for fun with no goal attached."

Rev. Suzanne Malloy and Marilyn Stone presented a webinar to Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care Academy, a partner of PDA. The link below (Ctrl+Click) provides highlights of their discussion on how building resilience can be a useful tool in the midst of stress. Be sure to click on the helpful resource lists at the end of the article.

https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/2026/4/22/webinar-lays-out-tools-resilience?utm_content=376459290&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&hss_channel=fbp-22627435207

>>

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

MISSION OPPORTUNITY

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE
OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

Synod School is held annually at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa the last week in June. With the weather-related disasters in the US and around the globe, the Mission Team from Synod School is encouraging participation in preparing Gift of the Heart Kits. Their goal is 800 Hygiene kits, 375 Kid's kits, and 500 Period packs.

Presbyterian Women in the Synod of Lakes & Prairies administrative team invites all congregations to participate in preparing/packing the Period Packs. At the time of this newsletter, it is the highest requested and lowest inventory kit.

Below you will find the items to be included in each kit. Please include ONLY the SPECIFIC items on the list. Because these kits may be shipped internationally, uniform weight is appreciated.

PWS Moderators have a Coordinating Team meeting April 17-19, 2026 in Lincoln, Nebraska. You can send completed kits along with your Moderator/Representative and it will get shuttled to Synod School. If you or someone from your Presbytery is attending Synod School in Storm Lake, July 25 to July 30---please have them delivery the kits to BOXANNA. She's Ferncliff Camp/PDA Warehouse's truck that will be transporting the Synod of Lakes & Prairies Gift of the Heart kits collected during Synod School.

Period Packs (Menstrual Hygiene Kit)

In many parts of the world, people who menstruate live in period poverty — lacking access to necessary period care supplies. During the menstrual cycle, these hygiene materials are especially important to healthy practices. Not having supplies like sanitary napkins, tampons, soap, and disposable plastic bags can create challenges that lead to unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

Now you can help people who menstruate living in period poverty. The Period Pack provides the essentials they need to feel clean, be healthy, and live with dignity during the menstrual cycle.

- One 1-gallon size resealable bag
- Two 2 oz. bottles hand sanitizer
- Three 4-gallon bathroom trash bags
- 5 regular tampons
- 5 super absorbency tampons
- 12 pads (Unscented. Long super ultra-thin.)
- Bath-size soap (3 oz. bar or larger. No Ivory or Jergen's soap. Do not remove from packaging.)
- One pack of flushable wipes (Unscented. 42 count.)
- Six fragrance-free laundry sheets (placed in small, Ziploc bags. Example)

Assembly Tips

- Place all items in the plastic bag, remove air, and seal.
- All items must be new.
- Do not enclose personal notes, money, or extra items in the kits.

If you have any questions, please contact Maggie Horak

If you/congregation/presbytery would like financially support this opportunity: Please make checks payable to PW SLAP and send to PW Treasurer Terri Sherman BEFORE July 1 st .

##

PW SYNOD NEWS

- A return mini-field trip is being planned for July 31-August 2, 2026 to the Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte Center in Walthill, Nebraska. Please see flyer and please share!!
- At its April meeting, PWSCT packed 50 bolt packs for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, 36 Gift of the Heart period kits, cut 2 fleece blankets and collected 55 completed period kits from Presbyteries around the Synod.
- Newly installed officers to PWSCT are: Judy Rops, Vice Moderator; Maggie Horak, CW Board of Directors Rep.; and Judy Bell, Search Committee
- The Search Committee continues to look for persons to serve on Search. Please contact Teresa Bartlett (tbartlett98@gmail.com), Linda Anthony (lmhanthony72@gmail.com) or Judy Bell (jmoinebell@aol.com) with names of interested persons, including your own, and the contact info.
- The next PWSCT meeting is set for October 16-18, 2026 at Manitowish Waters Community Presbyterian Church in Manitowish Waters, WI.

The Presbyterian Women of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies created a new Facebook page to keep you informed on all the exciting things happening with PWSLAP! The page can be found by clicking on this link: https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61552522904776 or by searching for Synod of Lakes and Prairies Presbyterian Women on Facebook. Once you find the page, please "Like" it and updates will appear in your Facebook feed.

If you have any items you would like to add to the PWSLAP Facebook page, please send them to Christy Abraham, PWSLAP Facebook Coordinator at christylou71@gmail.com

General Assembly is the highest council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As an event, General Assembly meets every two years to conduct the business of and to discern the future of the denomination.

As the PC(USA) in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, we are fortunate to have the General Assembly meeting in the **Presbytery of Milwaukee**.

Learn about GA

As the PC(USA) in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, we are fortunate to have the General Assembly meeting in the **Presbytery of Milwaukee**.

On the Road to GA

On the Road to GA is a monthly newsletter, keeping you informed on all the latest information leading up to the 227th General Assembly.

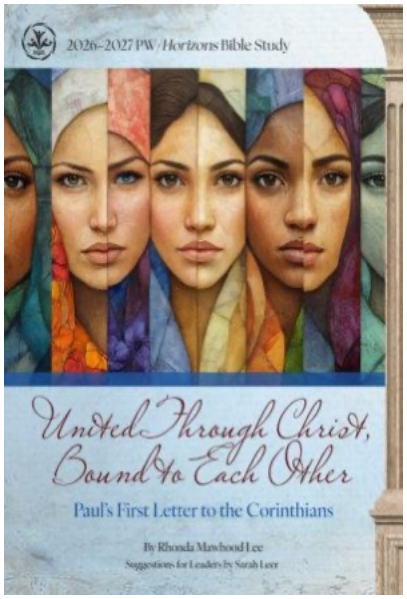
Sign Up Today!

See you in Milwaukee, WI -- June 22 - July 2, 2026

2026-2027 PW HORIZONS BIBLE STUDY

"UNITED THROUGH CHRIST, BOUND TO EACH OTHER
PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS"
By Rhonda Mawhood Lee

Study Facilitator: Kathleen Keefer



LESSON 1: Monday, August 24, 2026 – "United in Christ, Wisdom From God"

LESSON 2: Monday, September 21, 2026 – "Connected In Christ"

LESSON 3: Monday, October 26, 2026 – "Freedom In Christ"

LESSON 4: Monday, November 9, 2026 – "Living Freely And The Responsibility To Care"

LESSON 5: Monday, December 14, 2027 – "For The Good Of The Community"

LESSON 6: Monday, January 18, 2027 – "Now You Are The Body Of Christ"

LESSON 7: Monday, February 22, 2027 – "Christian Love"

LESSON 8: Monday, March 22, 2027 – "Hope In The Resurrection"

LESSON 9: Monday, April 19, 2027 – "Connected By God's Love"

We meet via Zoom at 6:30 PM CT.

AS CUSTOMARY: An e-mail reminder to the group approximately one week before our gathering and lesson! The email will have the Zoom link.

QUESTIONS? Contact Kathleen Keefer or Maggie Horak

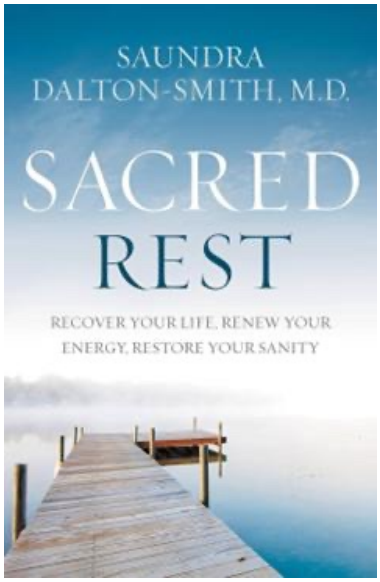
The Synod offers this Bible Study because so many of our groups do not provide this opportunity. If you have a group in your congregation that is great. You are still welcome to participate via Zoom with us.

You can purchase the 2026-2027 Bible study (cost is $14.00) through Presbyterian Women - https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/current-bible-study/. Or better yet, get a subscription to Horizons Magazine, the magazine for Presbyterian Women, and the next Bible study is included. Be sure to speak to PW staff so that your subscription includes the Bible Study. Late subscriptions may not!!

Join other Presbyterian Women from the Synod of Lakes and Prairies for a monthly round table discussion on issues prominent in today's world.
Our Sit & Sip events will be held via Zoom from 11 a.m. to noon Central Time on the last Saturday of each month. So, grab your favorite beverage, get comfortable, and join the conversation!
Our next meeting is on June 27th. No topic has been chosen as yet. If you have an idea of an issue to be talked about, please let me know. You know, sometimes it is just great to be with each other!!
To register, please contact Kathleen Keefer or Maggie Horak for the Zoom link.
****

Opening Borders organizes border immersion trips to the U.S.-Mexico border and one is being planned for October 30-November 6. Travel leaders with Abriendo Fronteras-Opening Borders have a combined history of over 30 years leading experiential immersion trips to the United States-Mexico border. A member from Northern Plains Presbytery has participated in previous border immersion trips with Opening Borders and highly recommends the organization to provide you with a life-changing experience. The cost for the trip to El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico has not been set, an estimate is $750-$950, plus airfare. Registration opens in June by contacting founder, Vicki Schmidt, who has led many trips to the U.S.-Mexico border. (veschmidt45@msn.com). More general information, feedback from prior trips, and frequently asked questions can be found on the group's website at www.openingborders.com. Its mission statement reads: Cultivating peace and justice by creating opportunities for building relationships of mutual respect and dignity. Watch their video here: https://youtu.be/5KBn91zJASI?si=NPLfmSine5CaQHGQ

Pages Worth Turning: I just started reading this book, and since I haven't read the whole book, I have taken the summary from Amazon.com:



Staying busy is easy. Staying well rested-now there's a challenge.

How can you keep your energy, happiness, creativity, and relationships fresh and thriving in the midst of never-ending family demands, career pressures, and the stress of everyday life?
In *Sacred Rest*, Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, a board-certified internal medicine doctor, reveals why rest can no longer remain optional.

Dr. Dalton-Smith shares seven types of rest she has found lacking in the lives of those she encounters in her clinical practice and research-physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, sensory, social, creative-and why a deficiency in any one of these types of rest can have unfavorable effects on your health, happiness, relationships, creativity, and productivity. *Sacred Rest* combines the science of rest, the spirituality of rest, the gifts of rest, and the resulting fruit of rest. It shows rest as something sacred, valuable, and worthy of our respect.
By combining scientific research with personal stories, spiritual insight, and practical next steps, *Sacred Rest* gives the weary permission to embrace rest, set boundaries, and seek sanctuary without any guilt, shame, or fear.

Threads of Compassion

Recently, the dedicated **Presbyterian Women of Frankville Community Presbyterian Church** (rural Postville, Iowa) gathered for a Mission Day that beautifully embodied faith in action. This small but remarkably active group spent their time sewing adult clothing protectors for a local senior hospice center, offering a simple yet deeply meaningful expression of care. With steady hands and generous hearts, they transformed fabric and thread into tangible signs of dignity and comfort for some of the community's most vulnerable neighbors. Frankville Presbyterian continues to demonstrate that ministry is not measured by size, but by spirit. Through projects like this, the congregation lives out Christ's call to compassionate service—quietly, faithfully, and with great love. Their Mission Day stands as a reminder that even the smallest acts, stitched together with intention and prayer, can wrap others in warmth, respect, and the presence of God's care.

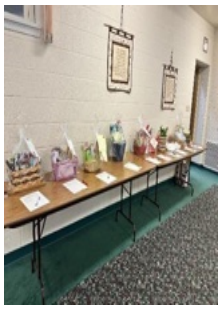
****

2026 Northern Plains PWP Spring Gathering
In E. Grand Forks, MN
April 25, 2026

"No Greater Joy"

3 John 1:4

The silent auction gift basket fundraiser has become an annual event and highlight at the Spring Gathering. A creative and fun way to raise money for our PWP's annual mission partner. This year's proceeds and offering, totalling $974, will be given to our Presbytery's Chogoria Kenya Ministry Team and the Youth Friendly Center they are helping to build there.



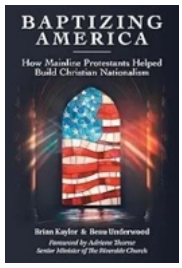
JUSTICE & PEACE BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

SYNOD OF THE LAKES & PRAIRIES – All are welcome

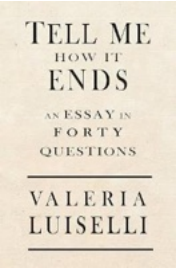
Justice & Peace Book Discussion Group will begin in January, 2027. This will give you several months to obtain the books and read them. We will split the discussion between two meetings of one hour each. We will meet using Zoom from 6:30 TO 7:30pm CT. If you don't get a chance to read them, join us for the discussion anyway! We are great company!! Kathleen Keefer will facilitate. Sign up with Maggie Horak (mmhlin@outlook.com) Summaries of the books are from Amazon.com.

1/12 and 2/9 - *To Do Justice,* by Rebecca Todd Peters and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty (Christian Life)
Encouraging Christians to call for public policies that benefit those most vulnerable in our nation, To Do Justice offers tools for studying complex domestic social problems such as Social Security, immigration, the environment, and public education, and serves as a guidebook to becoming involved in social action. Rooted in Christian tradition, each essay analyzes a contemporary problem from social, biblical, and theological perspectives before providing directions for public policy.

3/9 and 4/13 - *Baptizing America,* by Brian Kaylor and Beau Underwood (Christian Nationalism)

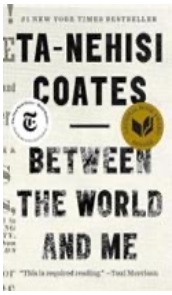


In the face of a rising threat to both church and democracy, Baptizing America provides an urgent examination and an enlightening critique exposing the dangerous undercurrents of Christian Nationalism. How can Mainline Protestants spot such practices in their own activities? A crucial call to reckon with influences before it's too late. Christian Nationalism presents an existential threat to both Christ's church and American democracy. Now is the time—before it is too late—to reckon with all the places its pernicious influence arises. On full display in recent elections, Christian Nationalism also exists in sanctuaries where an American flag has been displayed for decades, when we pledge allegiance to one nation "Under God," or when the U.S. is called a Christian nation.



5/11 and 7/13 - *Tell Me How it Ends,* by Valeria Luiselli (Immigration) American Book Award Winner: A "moving, intimate" account of serving as a translator for undocumented children facing deportation (The New York Times Book Review). Nonfiction Finalist for the Kirkus Prize Finalist for National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism Structured around the forty questions volunteer worker Valeria Luiselli translates from a court system form and asks undocumented Latin American children facing deportation, Tell Me How It Ends humanizes these young migrants and highlights the contradiction between the idea of America as a fiction for immigrants and the reality of racism and fear—here and back home. General Assembly is June 11-22 in Puerto Rico, no meeting in June!

8/16 and 9/26 - *Between the World and Me,* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Racism) ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR: The New York Times Book Review, O: The Oprah Magazine, The Washington Post, People, Entertainment Weekly, Vogue, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Tribune, New York, Newsday, Library Journal, Publishers Weekly



In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

10/12 and 11/9 - TBA; looking for Women's Rights/Gender Justice/Violence Against Women - trying to find something new. Any ideas? We could even read a Spiritual Growth book???

Look for these books at your local library, PC(USA) Store, Alibris.com (used books, very cheap, Half-Priced books, or Amazon (Kindle)

Presbyterians have been giving a **Land Acknowledgement** for some time now to give honor to the Indigenous peoples who lived on this land before us. PW Synod meetings/events now begin with a land acknowledgement. Your PWP/PWC meetings/gatherings can begin with one too. An example can be found at www.presbyterianwomen.org/downloads/land-and-history-acknowledgement

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN ARE BOLD – AROUND THE WORLD

CELEBRATING A BOLD PW

"PW are uniquely BOLD" is a short yet powerful two-minute video that highlights the unique and important witness that PW brings to the church and world. Available at youtube.com/presbyterianwomen/videos (PW's YouTube channel), the video debuted at the 225th General Assembly (2022) and is an excellent tool for showing why Presbyterian Women matters. Share a link for the video in your next personal email, church newsletter or minute for mission. Use it as a tool to raise awareness about and invite others to participate in our life-changing organization.

READY FOR DOWNLOADING

"PW Essentials" (formerly PW Manual) is available at https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PWR23120-PW-Essentials.pdf for downloading. In the future, any changes or new editions will be available in a downloadable format only.

Living in a world without violence against women and children. Pause for a moment of silence on Thursdays at noon your local time to remember and honor those who have died at the hands of sexualized or gender-based violence. Go online at https://www.ecumenicalwomenun.org/thursdays-in-black and commit to the pledge below:

I commit to: **Thursdays in Black.**
In solidarity. In protest. In mourning. For awareness and In hope.

By supporting to wear black on Thursdays, I stand
- In solidarity with 1 in 3 women worldwide who face violence in their lives
- In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form
- In mourning for men, women, and children who are harmed and killed in sexual violence
- For awareness and knowledge about the challenges of sexual and gender-based violence.
- In the hope that a different reality is possible.

MAKE THE PLEDGE. #THURSDAYS IN BLACK. STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE.

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center in Little Rock is ready to host church mission trips to help replenish the stock of disaster kits

To watch the video, copy and paste the link below into your browser.

https://youtu.be/tBQV9PdoaKY

You can download the Justice & Peace Calendar for the entire year. **Click here to download the PDF.**

Visit the Justice and Peace webpage for more information at **presbyterianwomen.org/justice.**

NEW IN 2026! *You can sign up to receive the monthly calendar through the app!!*

Click here to subscribe to the PWPCUSA calendar or visit the events calendar webpage at **presbyterianwomen.org/events** for Justice and Peace observances and other dates relevant to your PW ministry!

https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/downloads/2025-justice-and-peace-calendar/

We'll see you there!

Pam Snyder, 2024-2027 PW Moderator
Kelsey Law, 2024-2027 PW Vice Moderator

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

2027 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women

The 2027 Churchwide Gathering will be an exciting faith-filled time for Presbyterian women to gather for worship, education, community building, fun and renewal.

August 5-8, 2027

Save the date and stay tuned!

presbyterianwomen.org/gathering

PWSCT Moderators/Reps. 2026-27 CHANGES ARE HIGHLIGHTED

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4/23/2026

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2028 Synod Gathering Comm.
Louise Van Poll
Terri Sherman

Maggie Horak
Gloria Rust
Pat McKisson
Marilyn Stone

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