

Moments with Mary Jo

Convention recap

Wow ... it's already been three months since the 2025 national convention in Omaha! What a wonderful convention it was. Some of the highlights include:

- The election of new officers. Serving a term through 2029 are Shari Miller (vice-president of Christian Life), Linda Guteres (vice-president of Communication), Anne Hartman (vice-president of Gospel Outreach), Dianna Just (recording secretary) and Rev. Michael Schmidt (pastoral counselor). Elected to the the 2025-2027 Nominating Committee are Deaconess Raquel Rojas (chairman), Nicole



Mary Jo Stier
LWML District President

Dowdell, Karen Drury, Katy Gifford, and our very own Patty Peters.

- The approval of a record \$2,622,270 Mission Grant goal to fund 33 Mission Grants for the upcoming biennium
- The largest Mission Walk in LWML history! More than 1,627 men, women and children raised \$73,610 (preliminary amount) as they trekked across the beautiful Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge. Between all walkers, about 3,436,224 steps were taken, which is more steps than it takes to walk from St. Louis to Los Angeles. The bridge connects Nebraska and Iowa, making this a doubly historic mission walk that spanned two states. Lush gardens and green spaces, well-groomed trails and stunning sculptures made the one-mile walk enjoyable for all.

Other fun statistics include 272 singers in the choir, 806 attendees at the *Wake Up in the Word* Bible study, 2,439 attendees using the Whova app (used to network with other attendees and to access convention information), about 73,680 hugs given, and perfect scores for everyone brave enough to sing karaoke.

We now focus on the 2025 Prayer Service — “Blessed are They” — based on the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:1-12. The Beatitudes are some of the most beloved words of Jesus. In them, Jesus highlights people in various situations of life, situations that are not always easy to endure — or even envision — as a child of God. Yet our Lord calls the people in each condition “blessed” and assures each of them of their place in the kingdom of heaven.

As you hear the precious Beatitudes from our Lord and pray for people in the various stages of life, may you indeed be blessed and encouraged in your life of faith. May your mind be drawn to the work of Christ, His life and His death and resurrection, which bless you each day until He brings you home to the kingdom of heaven forever.

The 2025 LWML Prayer Service is designed to be used at any time by large or small groups. The use of this prayer service outside of LWML events requires permission from the LWML and other copyright holders. For more information, visit lwml.org/prayer-service.



Danaca Schettler (left) and Katie Utecht are pictured at the 41st Biennial LWML Convention, held June 26-29 in Omaha, Neb.

‘Growing in grace’

Katie Utecht (St. Paul, Spearfish) and **Danaca Schettler** (Zion, Sioux Falls) attended the LWML national convention in Omaha, Neb., in June, as Young Woman Representatives. Following are their reflections.

By Katie Utecht

The LWML national convention was a unique and unforgettable experience. As a Young Woman Representative (YWR), I learned so much about the LWML’s goals and purposes, and about the organization’s deep desire to share God’s love with people.

The worship services were a highlight for me. I love that one of the first things we did together was the opening worship service. Praising God for His good and

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COUNSELOR'S CORNER



This fall, we look forward to many upcoming events as there is much rejoicing in the Word and work of our Lord Jesus Christ! Our task of supporting the proclamation of the Gospel at the Puppet Place at the South Dakota State Fair is now complete. LWML Sunday is coming up on the first Sunday of October (Oct. 5) with the mission theme of "Go!" (Luke 24:44-53). The focus is on proclaiming Christ and His message of repentance and forgiveness. And of course, right around the corner are the thrilling and inspirational Christian Life Workshops (Oct. 4 and 18), in which we learn evermore of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Speaking of His grace, Jesus, fresh from the Resurrection, is giving His apostles the ultimate Bible study in Luke 24:44-53. He opens their minds to see how the Scriptures all point to Him. "Everything written about me ... must be fulfilled," He



Rev. Brian Mosemann
LWML District Counselor

says, connecting the dots from Moses to the prophets. Then, He commissions them to proclaim the Good News of repentance and forgiveness. Their days of shadowing Jesus are over. Now they're sent to witness His life, death and resurrection. Talk about a career change! But they're not flying solo — Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will guide, teach and remind them of His Words. Through the Spirit, Jesus' saving work continues until His glorious return.

The apostles faced daunting challenges — persecution, martyrdom ... the works. Yet as Jesus ascends, they're bursting with joy. Why? Because those nail-scarred hands, once lifeless, are now ruling all things for our good. Jesus isn't AWOL; He's closer than ever, filling every baptismal font, pulpit and altar with Himself, His Word, His forgiveness. In Baptism, He washes us into His death and resurrection. In the Lord's Supper, He serves us His body and blood, which strengthens our faith. When the apostles preach, baptize or absolve, it's Jesus Himself at work, using His church as His hands and voice.

The apostles were to go by faith. As do we. It means we go with confidence and a sure and certain hope. What Jesus has said, He will do. And what He will do is for our good. So let's not mope like we missed the last bus to heaven. He's not lounging in heaven, twiddling His thumbs. He's ruling all things, ensuring every trial we face serves our good. So we don't stand around, star-gazing for His return. We go where He puts us — to our families, workplaces, communities — carrying His love. Through our hands, His work continues. And when He returns, our joy will be complete, transitioning us from this life to the next, which has no end.

gracious gifts to us correctly placed our focus on the fact that Christ is our Savior, provider and perfecter of our faith. It is amazing that God chooses to use us sinners as His Kingdom workers. The convention also closed in worship, reminding us that the work we do in sharing the Gospel as we go back to "normal life" is because of the Holy Spirit guiding and allowing us to do these good works.

I also loved hearing the Mites in Action speakers report on what they were able to do with the grant money provided by the LWML. I had no idea the LWML raised so much money — what a huge blessing to grant funding to so many ministries that are dedicated to sharing the saving Gospel message and meeting the needs of their communities!

We heard from the Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, missionary Chelsea Irwin, Lutheran Braille Workers, Lutheran Deaf Outreach and Forged by Fire Services. All

the speakers shared how the Gospel was being communicated to the people they serve and the ways they work to meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. After seeing the video that shared the various organizations the LWML will be providing grants for in the next biennium, I became excited about the work that God will do in those ministries!

It was a joy for me to connect with old friends at the convention and make new ones. There was so much excitement and kindness shown to everyone. I was also amazed at the generosity shown to the YWRs. We received so many gifts, kind words and financial support from ladies in the South Dakota District and beyond.

Thank you for supporting my trip to the LWML national convention. I look forward to seeing how I can be involved in this wonderful organization!

By Danaca Schettler

The convention brought together thousands of women from across the country who are committed to serving Christ through missions, fellowship and spiritual growth. As a YWR, I joined a group of young women from every district — each of us eager to grow in our faith and better understand LWML's mission. One of the most impactful moments was the announcement of the new mission goal: over \$2.6 million to fund 33 Mission Grants. Seeing how mite offerings from around the country are used to support ministry and outreach was a clear reminder of the reach and purpose of this organization.

Worshiping with over 3,500 people and 122 pastors during the opening service was something I won't forget. Hearing Scripture read and voices raised together in praise on that scale was powerful.

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Celebrating freedom in Christ

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. Acts 3:19

This was the theme of the Faith Lutheran Church, Pierre, float, which traveled the Fort Pierre Fourth of July parade route on a beautiful sunshine-filled Independence Day. Thirty ambitious ambassadors for Christ handed out more than 1,000 "Celebrate Freedom! Freedom in Christ!" Gospel tracts, along with treats and other fun items. It was incredible to walk the parade with the joy that can only be found in the Lord. To God be the glory!

— Submitted by
Carolyn Ryckman

LWML

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I also appreciated the sessions in which past and present YWRs shared their experiences and answered questions. Their honesty and encouragement made a big difference as I considered how to stay involved beyond the convention.

It also meant a lot to spend time with LWML President Eden (Keefe). She was approachable, kind and incredibly down-to-earth. It was encouraging to see someone in her position take time to connect with us personally.

Another highlight was the evening Bible study with Donna Snow. Her teaching on the book of Joshua was practical, grounded in Scripture and easy to connect with. Being surrounded by so many women studying God's Word together created a strong sense of unity.

Throughout the week, I had the

chance to get to know other YWRs — sharing stories, praying together and building new friendships. We talked about what it looks like to serve as young women in the church and how we can continue supporting LWML's work in our own districts.

I came home thankful for the experience and more motivated to stay involved. Representing South Dakota was a privilege, and I'm excited to keep encouraging other young women to find their place in LWML.

Through this experience, I was reminded again and again that God is at work — in the LWML, in our churches and in each of us. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve, to grow and to walk alongside other women who are striving to live out their faith boldly. My prayer is that we continue to trust where He leads, serve where He calls and encourage one another as we share the love of Christ in all we do.

To Him be the glory!

Yankton Zone update

The Yankton Zone LWML Christian Life Workshop was held at Zion, Avon, on March 22. Twenty-two ladies and Rev. Matthew Bless were in attendance.

Rev. Bless, Yankton Zone counselor and pastor of Concordia, Vermillion, conducted opening devotions and shared a Bible study titled "Jonah: God is Merciful ... Even to Our Enemies." Pastor Bless identified the parallels between the Jesus' and Jonah's story, and covered themes such as God's omnipresence, death and resurrection, repentance and faith, and God's mercy.

Many non-perishable food items, paper products, cleaning supplies and toiletries were collected to support the food pantry in Vermillion.

Several of our members attended the LWML convention in June. I represented the Yankton Zone as a delegate and thought the convention was awesome! The opening worship service, the Bible studies, the servant events, the luncheon speakers, the mite speakers — all of it was valuable. I pray that everyone who attended the convention, or who participated by watching the live stream, had a renewal of the Holy Spirit.

The Yankton Zone was slated to work at the Puppet Place at the South Dakota State Fair on Aug. 27. We held a zone board meeting in August to plan our fall rally. — *Sandy Brandt, Yankton Zone President*