

HISTORY OF WOMEN'S MINISTRY AT NAZARETH

Women's ministry has been in existence at Nazareth since 1881. While it has been known by different names, and the purpose and objectives have changed over the years, one thing has remained steadfast and that is, the women of Nazareth study the Word of God.

In February of 1881 the first Ladies Aid was organized and in 1893 became known as **the Nazareth Danish Evangelical Lutheran Dorcas Ladies Aid of Cedar Falls, Iowa**. In addition to devotions, study of the scriptures and prayer, these women supported orphanages, hospitals, and foreign missions. Their members numbered 76.

In 1930, 16 younger women formed the English Dorcas Aid Society where English was the primary language spoken. Their purpose was to work for the spiritual, social and common good of all concerned and to further God's Kingdom here and abroad.

In addition, in the early 1900's, there was a Sewing Circle (later named the Sunshine Club) that existed for more than 45 years. Consisting of mostly young women and girls, they met to do needlework. They supported mission work. Their fundraisers included bazaars, Mother-Daughter banquets, a Christmas party, smorgasbords, silver teas, and bake sales. The money raised was used to support missions as well as the church building and improvement fund.

In 1946, the Missionary Guild was formed to promote the Kingdom of God in connection with home and foreign missions. That year the Guild sponsored a program promoting the work of Lutheran World Action – which was later administered by the Lutheran World Federation until 1977. Lutheran World Relief was formed in 1945, so we at Nazareth have been involved in that organization for over 70 years.

Since 1982, we have been known as Women of the ELCA. Some of our purposes have evolved and we know there are many circumstances that have created change in our organization. This year your Board will be working to create a more meaningful and streamlined version of WELCA. It is because of those BOLD women back in 1881 that we gather today – still studying God's word, still supporting local and foreign missions and still supporting marginalized women and children.

One of the ways we support women and children in need in developing countries is through our work with Lutheran World Relief. We welcome women – and men – of any age to join us as we create quilts, school kits, personal care kits and baby care kits. We also welcome all women to join us at one of our Gather Groups (formerly Circles) held monthly.

