



The President's Pen

NCCW's Monthly Newsletter

March 2026

From the President

As we continue our journeys in this sacred season of Lent, the Church invites us to slow down and listen more intentionally for the Lord's voice. Lent is not only about sacrifice; it is about surrender — making space for God to work in us and through us and being open to the continuing call to conversion.

Servant leadership begins there.

On February 11, one of our upcoming Convention speakers, Kevin Matthews, met with the Holy Father Pope Leo XIV to receive a blessing for his *Broken Mary* statue. It was a meaningful moment, not because of recognition, but because of what the statue represents: bringing what is wounded or imperfect before Christ and trusting Him to transform it. Kevin's journey is a simple but powerful reminder that leadership in the Church is rooted in humility and faithfulness.

As we continue our Lenten walk, may we consider where the Lord is inviting us to serve — in quiet ways and unseen acts of love. May we respond with confidence and trust:

Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.

Yours in Christ,

Amy Kennedy



From the Chair of Spiritual Advisors

LENT: IN THE THICK OF IT

Dear Sisters in Christ,

As we turn the calendar to March, we find ourselves no longer at the threshold of Lent, but deep within it. The ashes have long since been brushed from our foreheads. The early enthusiasm for resolutions may have faded. And yet, this is precisely where the grace of Lent becomes most real — not at the beginning, but in the middle, when the journey feels long, and the desert stretches out before us.

Lent is not a sprint; it is a pilgrimage. And as women of NCCW, you understand pilgrimage well. You know what it means to walk faithfully, even when the path is uneven. You know what it means to carry responsibilities for family, parish, community, and Church — often

quietly, often without applause. Lent meets us there, in the ordinary sacrifices and hidden offerings of daily life.

By now, some of us may be asking: *How am I doing?* Have I been faithful to prayer? Have I made room for silence? Have I practiced charity with patience and generosity? If we find ourselves falling short, that is not failure — that is an invitation. The heart of Lent is not perfection; it is return. Each day is a new opportunity to begin again, to soften our hearts, to listen more closely to God's voice.

In these weeks, the Church gently but firmly turns our eyes toward the Cross. Not as a symbol of defeat, but as the measure of love. In a world that often glorifies noise, speed, and self-promotion, Lent teaches us the strength of quiet fidelity. It reminds us that real transformation happens slowly — like seeds buried in the earth, unseen but alive.

Now, in the thick of Lent, keep walking. Trust that even when we feel weary, God is at work. No prayer is wasted, no sacrifice unnoticed, no act of love too small. And hold fast to the promise that beyond the desert lies Easter — not only as a date on the calendar, but as a renewed heart.

May these remaining weeks of Lent deepen our faith, strengthen our resolve, and draw us ever closer to the Lord who walks beside us — quietly, faithfully, always.

JOURNEY TO IRELAND. A reminder that there's still time to join me and Immediate Past President **Beth Mahoney** for *A Journey Through Ireland*—a faith-filled pilgrimage through one of the world's most spiritually rich and breathtakingly beautiful lands. From October 4–15, we will travel together through the rolling green countryside, historic cities, and sacred places that have shaped Ireland's deep Christian heritage. For more information or to register, visit:

<https://marianusa.com/destinationIndiv.asp?id=Ireland&tour=7385>

Peace, love, and prayers,

Fr. Tom Washburn

National Spiritual Advisor

From the President-Elect

By President-Elect Jane Schiszik

“Speak, Lord, Your Servant is Listening”

NCCW Convention: August 26 – 29 2026

Continue to check the NCCW website – details will be published soon.

2026 NCCW Convention Tours

Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park

“Experience the Beauty of Nature and Art”

Tuesday, August 25, 2026

Join us as we embark on a journey Tuesday morning to the Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park. This tour combines the beauty of nature with stunning works of art, making it a unique destination for people of all ages. This remarkable attraction is not just a

botanical garden; it is also a prominent sculpture park featuring nearly 300 sculptures crafted by some of the most respected artists in the world.

Meijer Gardens includes Michigan's largest tropical conservatory; five indoor theme gardens; outdoor gardens, nature trails and boardwalk; sculpture galleries and permanent sculpture collections. Both indoors and outdoors, the 158-acre main campus is barrier free and handicap accessible.

Some of the features of the Conservatory and indoor gardens feature rock landscapes, a waterfall, and a variety of exotic tropical plant selections from around the world. Additional indoor gardens include a carnivorous plant house, an arid house for cacti and desert vegetation, a Victorian garden, and a seasonal greenhouse.

The outdoor gardens feature four-season plantings that can be enjoyed in all seasons of the year. Attendees can walk on a paved path through a nature trail, view the beauty of a shade and perennial garden, and experience the serenity of a Japanese Garden.

The tour price includes bus fare, park admission, and a 30-minute narrated tram ride through the Sculpture Park and gardens. Docents are available at select locations, and the tram is wheelchair accessible. Visitors may explore the grounds at their own pace.

Pilgrims of Hope: Journeying Through Grand Rapids' Sacred History

Wednesday morning, August 26, 2026

Join us for a faith journey, guided by Tours Around Michigan, as we explore the beautiful and historic churches of Grand Rapids. See breathtaking stained-glass windows from Germany's oldest workshop, the night sky when the diocese was created, and (if you'd like) climb inside the famous organ that draws fans from across the state. Touch stones taken from the "rapids" in the Grand River to build the first "little stone church" in Grand Rapids. Learn about how strong faith influenced the city since the mid-1800s.

Attendees will experience a small, intimate, early church, a cathedral, and a basilica. Along the way, we'll discuss immigrant faith that built a strong religious community in Grand Rapids, architectural styles, and the pivotal role religious communities played in the early development of Grand Rapids.

Deepen Your Faith, Discover Our Heritage as you experience:

The Cathedral of St. Andrew. St. Andrew Church began as a Native American chapel in 1833 and eventually became the diocesan cathedral in 1879. Attendees will be able to visit the Bishop Baraga Bookstore for souvenirs or gifts.

The Basilica of St. Adalbert. The first Basilica in Michigan! The roots of Saint Adalbert Church date to the 1870s, when it helped Polish immigrants settle on Grand Rapids' west side.

St. Mary Catholic Church Entering St. Mary's feels like you're stepping back in time 150 years. The intimate, Gothic-style parish built by German immigrants is much like it was when its doors first opened.

The tour price will include bus fare and guide services provided by Tours Around Michigan.

Council Chat: March 2026

Topic: *"Discover Ways Affiliate Councils Can Celebrate NCCW's 106th Birthday"*

Monday, March 9th at 6 p.m. CT

The focus is on the importance and celebration of NCCW's 106th birthday! Please join the presenters: the NCCW President-elect and a renowned mystery guest.

Don't miss the excitement and fun!

A Zoom link will be sent before the March 9th *Council Chat*.

MEMBERSHIP

The answer to the February 2026 Membership question: In celebration of Valentine's Day, name two things you can share with your Council Sisters? Any of these answers is appropriate: prayers, smiles, hugs, or chocolate!

New Membership Question: Name one resource you can use to grow our NCCW membership? _____

Wishing everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day

From the Commissions and Committees



Spirituality Commission

By Commission Chair Amelia Sweeney

Forty Days to Make a Difference

For Catholics, Lent is that 40-day period of the year when we are called to more intentional prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during a time of preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection. Like a bride preparing herself for her groom, we ideally should be examining our souls and really working on our inner beauty. We are called to prayer. One tradition of our Catholic faith during Lent is to pray the Stations of the Cross. A beautiful version of this is found in Mary's Way of the Cross, which attempts to present the Stations of the Cross from the viewpoint of the Blessed Mother. The fasting and almsgiving elements of our Lenten journey are all about dying to self and living for others. Lent is not as much about what we are giving up, but rather what we are gaining. This Lent, let's make it our goal to really nurture our relationship with our Savior and share His love with others.



Service Commission

By Commission Chair Sharon O'Brien

At the January 2026 NCCW Board meeting, we presented two project ideas. Remember the Box of Joy project? We have created the "Faith Enrichment Box" to strengthen the Domestic Church – Nurturing Faith in the Family. A full reveal with sample boxes at the August Convention, and each month, we will share information on how you can begin planning for it.

Struggling to find a good Catholic book to read? We have created a brochure titled Catholic Books and Resources for Children and Families. It is full of resources we have found helpful. Coming soon! – Look for a link in future President’s Pen editions.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Commission

By Leadership Commission Chair Marlene Grover

Did you know: Every 40 seconds, someone loses their life to suicide.

How can you help?

- Check-in: A small message or call can mean the world to someone who is struggling. Whether it’s a friend, family member, or co-worker, simply asking, “How are you doing?” can open a door.
- Listen without judgment: Sometimes, just being there and offering a compassionate ear can make all the difference.
- Practice empathy: Offering understanding instead of making assumptions. Remember, everyone’s journey is unique.
- Spread awareness: Share resources, like local or national suicide prevention hotlines, support groups, or therapy options. Encourage open conversations about mental health.

Resources:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (services in English or Spanish) – **988**

National Council of Catholic Women Resolutions 2000-2025:

« Suicide Prevention 2019, pages 46-47, and

« Mental Health Illness and Challenges Awareness Resolution 2024, page 57.

NCCW Leadership/Membership Commission “Four Leaf Clover Contest” *Leading Women in Spirituality, Leadership, and Service*

Introducing a fun way to lead Catholic women to NCCW by building relationships, promoting resources, and having fun. Winners will be announced at the NCCW 2026 Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Check out the NCCW website’s main page to download the contest flyer.

Marlene Grover, NCCW Leadership Commission Chair



RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

Resolutions Committee

Let's be sure that we submit effective resolutions. First, make the purpose clear. Then, for the whereas clauses, focus on research, form the proper structure, and use factual data. Make your resolved clauses - realistic, with actionable solutions. This committee is waiting to receive your very important resolution proposals. Please submit your proposed NCCW resolution today. Thank you!

Tammy Farr – tammyccwfarr@gmail.com & Laurie Ulseth – Laurieccw@gmail.com



nominating Committee

These 40 Days

By: Rhonda Kollman, Nominating Committee Member

These forty days of Lent invite us, as women of faith, to deepen our relationship with our Lord and Savior through prayer, service, and community. We can begin by praying for those who are hurting in their families, workplaces, or neighborhoods. Invite a friend to join you at the Stations of the Cross or volunteer together at a soup kitchen. Visit a nursing home, reconnect with someone you have not seen in a while, or prepare a meal for someone who is homebound. Participate in a parish or diocesan Lenten mission, make a sincere examination of conscience, and go to confession. Consider praying with students at a school or starting a Bible study in your parish.



Education Committee

By Carol Brennan - Chair

Water for Life is one of the Catholic Relief Service programs NCCW has partnered with since 1978. We take water for granted because we just have to walk across the room and turn on the faucet. Many countries do not have access to safe drinking water, and one can get sick and even die from it if it is polluted.

March 22nd is World Water Day, established to raise awareness of the over 2 billion people living without access to safe water. We cannot live without water – **water is life!** Help renew interest in our councils in **NCCW's Water for Life**.



Leadership, Development & Training (LTD)

One of the most precious gifts from God is the ability to listen to others with an open heart. Strengthen your gifts, grow in faith, and learn practical skills to serve your council and parish community. LTD offers inspiring formation, leadership tools, and opportunities to connect with women dedicated to living their faith through serving others.

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10 NIV.

If you’re ready to take the next step in your spiritual and leadership journey, we’d love to have you join us!

For more details and leadership training opportunities, contact **Jody Watermann** at NCCWLTDCONTACT@gmail.com.

News from our Associated Organizations



Religious Alliance Against Pornography (RAAP)

By Karen Painter, RAAP Representative for NCCW

Kansas Makes Sex Buying a Felony

Ever heard this story before? After a long and grueling investigation, the police bring down a sex trafficking operation. They arrest the traffickers and free the survivors. Victory, for now. But without prosecuting sex buyers, the cycle will continue. Demand for commercial sex is driven by sex buyers. **Without their dollars, there is no marketplace for sex trafficking.** Thankfully, many states are starting to wake up to this fact! Most recently, the Governor of Kansas signed a new law making sex buying a felony offence!

Action: Call on your state legislators to make sex buying a felony!

Information taken from the National Center for Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE)