

## 2014 Convention Edition

### Who Are We? Bold Women of Many Generations!

**Who Are We? Bold Women of Many Generations!** was the theme of the VSWO Convention held **August 15-16, 2014** at Muhlenberg Lutheran Church in Harrisonburg, VA.

With the convention scripture of *Ephesians 2:10* "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" at the forefront of our convention, women came from congregations across the synod to conduct business, worship and learn together.

**Betsy Baguhn** of Mt. Horeb, WI brought greetings from Women of the ELCA staff and board, and led two awareness sessions. **Ellen Hinlicky, Director, Lutheran Partners in Mission** served as our banquet speaker.

We were blessed this year with the presence of **The Rev. Brett Davis of Muhlenberg Lutheran** who served as convention chaplain. She kept our worship and devotions centered on our biblical theme.

#### Convention highlights

- ◇ We enjoyed **uplifting opening and worship music** by musicians Linda Hawks and Lavelva Stevens.
- ◇ We generously gave **\$1,667 in a love offering for People Helping People**, a ministry in Harrisonburg
- ◇ **Awareness sessions** were offered including Quilting, Women & Justice, Bible Study, Bible Story Telling and learning more about the CWO.
- ◇ **Officers and board members were elected** including Carol Bailey, vice president (Germannan); Helen Weaver, secretary (Richmond) and board members Sara Barb (Central Valley); Annette Griffith (Tidewater); Bonnie Mantta (Tidewater); and Lisa Taglauer (Page).

*"College taught me to be open minded, while the church taught me to be open hearted."*

*Sara Barb,*

*VSWO*

*Scholarship Recipient*

- ◇ **Jana Snelgrove, Triennial Gathering Promoter**, reported on the 2014 Triennial Convention held in Charlotte under the theme "of many generations" with nearly 60 women attending from the Virginia Synod!
- ◇ We heard from **Sara Barb**, recipient of the VSWO Scholarship at Roanoke College and VSWO board member, who gave thanks for the support she received for her education.
  - ◇ **Bishop Mauney** brought greetings from the Virginia Synod.
  - ◇ Former VSWO President **Judy Ann Fray** encouraged participants to support the VSWO Endowment Fund.
  - ◇ We thanked out-going officers and board members **Sherry Frye, and Ellen Greene** for their faithful service.
  - ◇ Jody Smiley coordinated the **Young Women's Guest** program with three participants.
  - ◇ We heard an **inspiring presidential message** from **Risse Snelgrove**. She encouraged us to continue to be all we are called to be through Christ and compared our faith journey to the metamorphosis of a butterfly. "Just when the caterpillar thought the work was over, it became a butterfly." She asked "Have you ever seen a butterfly crawl back into a cocoon?" as she urged us to continue growing as women of faith.

- ◇ Next year we're moving to Yorktown for a 2-day convention at **St. Mark Lutheran Church on August 14-15, 2015**. Watch Visions for more details!

## of many generations

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*(Editors note: Did you miss the Triennial gathering? Catch up on what happened with excerpts below from the Women of the ELCA website. For more information, check out [www.welcatg.org](http://www.welcatg.org).)*

CHICAGO (ELCA) – Meeting under the theme “of many generations,” the Ninth Triennial Gathering of Women of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) brought more than 2,300 women of all ages to Charlotte, N.C., July 24-27 to share their faith through worship, featured speakers, workshop sessions and more.

“Our participants spanned six generations, from 10 months to 97 years old and in that range we find the beauty of inter-generational relationships,” said Linda Post Bushkofsky, executive director, Women of the ELCA. “It is in the community of women that our participants find support and creative ways in which to carry out the mission of our organization, mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.” Post Bushkofsky said the gathering “formed the space for inter-generational dialogue, and it is my prayer that the conversations begun in Charlotte will grow and expand across the church.”

In her sermon during the gathering’s opening worship, the Rev. Claire Shenot Burkat, bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (based in Philadelphia), said, “We will be honoring and remembering generations, the generations of women upon whose shoulders we stand. And we will be discerning ways to equip and raise up the next generation for word and witness and service in the world.

During the event’s closing worship, the Rev. Linda Norman, ELCA treasurer, offered thanksgiving for the generations of women who have helped transformed the lives of others. Norman recalled the parable of the woman whose small amount of yeast yielded a large batch of bread. “Yeast, starting as a small morsel, worked by the hands of this faithful woman, has its way and transforms everything, leavening the whole, creating a feast of bread. So with the morsel, God sets about leavening the world,” she said.

Highlights of the Gathering included:

- ◇ Featured speaker, the Rev. Susan Sparks, pastor, comedian and former attorney, told the participants that laughter can help repair and rebuild the breaches in life. “Humor is the most powerful gift that we have. I am a big believer that humor is probably one of God’s greatest gifts to us,” said Sparks, who added that one of her core messages is the ability to laugh at oneself. “If you can laugh at yourself, you can forgive yourself. And if you can forgive yourself, you can forgive others.”
- ◇ In her speech to the Gathering, the Rev. Becca Stevens, an Episcopal priest who serves as chaplain at St. Augustine’s chapel at Vanderbilt University, talked about her work as founder of Magdalene and Thistle Farms based in Nashville, Tenn. She shared a message of healing and hope with women around the country.
- ◇ Workshop topics ranged from forming a better understanding of mental illness to creating unique giving plans for congregations; from building an inclusive church for people of all sexual orientations to learning tools to helping children who are being bullied.
- ◇ Servant opportunities offered women a chance to learn and put into practice collective stewardship and discipleship. Activities, which were centered on the gathering’s Bible verse, included making quilts to be sent around the world via Lutheran World Relief; learning more about “Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls” – the Women of the ELCA’s Health Initiative; and hearing the stories of women in the military, creating safe havens for girls, learning more about the plight of women in the Congo, and community organizing.
- ◇ Women attending the gathering contributed “in-kind” gifts to support local organizations striving to meet the needs of families experiencing poverty. During the Gathering, women contributed \$14,785 in gift cards, 15,877 minutes in phone cards, 6,635 toilette items, 3,717 pairs of socks and underwear, 118 quilt kits, 116 quilts, and 1,508 prayer shawls. Agencies receiving Women of the ELCA in-kind gifts are: The Legacy Hall program of Florence Crittenton Services, The Journey Place program of The Relatives, Faith Farm of Lutheran Services Carolinas, Lutheran World Relief, and Lily Pad Haven.

## Jody Smiley ~ Women of the ELCA Vice President!

We couldn't be prouder. Our own Jody Smiley of St. Michael Lutheran Church in Blacksburg was elected vice president of Women of the ELCA. Congratulations to Jody for this well-deserved honor. With great passion for the ministry and mission of Women of the ELCA, we look forward to Jody's grace-filled leadership. Pictured to the right are the newly elected officers of the Women of the ELCA executive board as are they are presented for installation by the presiding bishop, Elizabeth Eaton.



### VSWO by the numbers

- 35 churches participated in the Little Dresses for Africa project.
- 12 of those churches made over 100 dresses.
- 58 women from Virginia attended the 2014 Triennial convention in Charlotte, NC.
- 131 people attended the VSWO Convention.
- For \$280 you can pre-register for the 2017 Triennial convention in Minneapolis, MN.

### Thank you to...

*Muhlenberg Lutheran for hosting the 2014 VSWO Convention!*

*Rev. Ruth Fortis for the beautiful quilted convention banner!*

*Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for financial support for printing convention materials & mailing the pillow case dresses!*

Virginia Synodical Women's Organization  
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Visions Circulation Manager  
5517 South Village Drive  
Roanoke, VA 24018

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit# 212  
Roanoke VA



## **VSWO Committees**

Want to serve on a VSWO Committee? Are you interested in one of our Mission areas, such as Justice & Action, Spiritual Growth and Development, Stewardship or perhaps Convention Planning? Contact Carol Bailey, VP at [tcmtnest@comcast.net](mailto:tcmtnest@comcast.net) and she'll put you in touch with the appropriate committee chair.

## **Prayer Chain**

To receive the weekly VSWO prayer requests, send your name and email address to Judy Castele at [casteele@rockbridge.net](mailto:casteele@rockbridge.net).

## **Visions**

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