

"VISIONS"



A Closer Look at the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization

November 2019

"Songs of Thankfulness and Praise"



What Are You Thankful For?

Fall is finally in the air. A long-awaited feeling following all the abnormally high temperatures we have experienced in September! Fall brings not only cooler temperatures and leaves changing color, but we start to think about the Thanksgiving holiday. It is a time we set aside to count our blessings and express our thankfulness.

Thankful: what a powerful eight-letter word. The dictionary defines it as “glad that something has happened or not happened, that something or someone exists, etc.” I am thankful for family, good health, friends, my church family, and my comfortable life. All those are blessings and gifts from God.

As you know, I am part of the exploratory committee established by the Women of the ELCA executive board to find ways we can continue to do our ministry in a changing world. We have received many, many comments from women across the country in varying walks of life and ages. Reviewing those comments have been heartening and in the same breath disheartening. They have made me look at how I feel about Women of the ELCA.

That gets me back to the word *thankful*. I am truly and deeply thankful for Women of the ELCA. I am thankful for the VSWO and all the women in our synod. I have met so many across the ELCA and in Virginia that have touched and influenced my life and my faith journey. I have made deep and lasting friendships that I would not have without Women of the ELCA. Another blessing from God.

I have been able to help support the fight against human trafficking, educate and encourage women around the world to be leaders, provide inspirational material and gatherings, and so much more. How did I do this? By supporting Women of the ELCA and the VSWO with what God has given me: my time, my talents, and my possessions.

One of the ways your congregational unit can show your thankfulness for Women of the ELCA is to have a Thankoffering Service at your church. And if this is already a tradition in your congregational unit, thank you and please continue! If you have not ever had a Thankoffering Service, please consider having one or simply making a Thankoffering. For more information and a copy of the Thankoffering Service, you can go to <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/thankofferings>. It is a wonderful way to support and to let the churchwide organization know how much you are thankful for our community of women.

Let me repeat that I am THANKFUL for all of you and all that you do in your communities, your churches, and the world. I am so proud and blessed to call you my sisters in Christ.

~ Jody

CONTACT INFORMATION - Board Members and Committees

(Term ending date in parenthesis; Committee assignments in italics)

President: Jody Smiley (2021)
901 Brattle Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060
540-250-6149
Email: jdsmiley29@comcast.net
Church: St Michael, Blacksburg
Conference: New River
Discipleship, Chair

Vice-President: Judy Wilfong (2020)
PO Box 10, Bayse, VA 22810
540-856-2880
Email: jwilfong@shentel.net
Church: Muhlenberg, Harrisonburg
Conference: Southern Valley
Convention Planning, Co-chair

Secretary: Judy Castelee (2020)
726 W. 4th St., Buena Vista, VA 24416
540-264-9998
Email: jlcasteele@comcast.net
Church: Good Shepherd, Lexington
Conference: Southern Valley

Treasurer: Deniese Powell (Term begins 2/1/20)
2901 Black Lick Rd., Rural Retreat, VA 24368
603.630.5628
Email: deniese.powell@yahoo.com
Church: Grace, Rural Retreat
Conference: Highlands
Stewardship, Co-Chair

Edith Blake (2020)
5137 Portsmouth Blvd., Portsmouth, VA 23701
757-956-5535
Email: EJBWWB@aol.com
Church: Holy Communion, Portsmouth
Conference: Tidewater
Stewardship

Sylvia Eley (2021)
417 Meadow Creek Dr., Chesapeake, VA 23323
757-582-0966
Email: seley2005@msn.com
Church: St. Andrew, Chesapeake
Conference: Tidewater
Justice, Chair

JoAnn Fawley (2021)
6409 W. Old Mountain Rd., Louisa, VA 23093
703.727.7957
Email: fawley6409@gmail.com
Church: Grace & Glory, Palmyra
Conference: Germanna
Convention Planning, Long-range Planning

Lavelva Stevens (2020)
1369 Beth Scott Drive, Pulaski, VA 24301
540-320-3369
Email: lstevens01@verizon.net
Church: Trinity, Pulaski
Conference: New River
Conference Coordinator Chair

Shelia Sanchez (2021)
514 Austin St., Norfolk, VA 23503
757-430-8685
Email: yeshuabear@aol.com
Church: St. John Lutheran, Norfolk
Conference: Tidewater
Justice, Co-chair

Theresa Thomas (2020)
247 Mt. Pisgah Rd., Mount Sidney, VA 24467
540-476-0578
Email: prof_tsquared@yahoo.com
Church: Salem, Mt. Sidney
Conference: Southern Valley
Convention Planning

STEWARDSHIP OF GIFTS AND TALENTS

If you are interested in more information about these mission areas or committees please contact any of the chairs or co-chairs. We would love for you to be part of the ministry done through these mission areas and committees.

Discipleship
Jody Smiley, Chair

Justice
Sylvia Eley, Chair
Shelia Sanchez, Co-chair

Stewardship
Edith Blake, Chair
Deniese Powell, Co-Chair
Ellen Greene

Long Range Planning
Carol Bailey, Chair (tcmtnest@comcast.net)
Joann Fawley

Convention Planning
Judy Wilfong, Chair
Theresa Thomas, Co-Chair
Joann Fawley

Thrivent Endowment Fund
June Nabers, Chair, (jnabers@hotmail.com)
Joann Fawley
Alice Schneider

Conference Coordinator
Lavelva Stevens

Visions
Carol Johnson, Editor (sunlion7@gmail.com)

CONFERENCE NEWS

NEW VSWO CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

I am Lavelva Stevens, your new Conference Coordinator, and I am a Deacon in Music, called to serve Holy Trinity in Wytheville, where I am Director of Music, playing organ and directing the handbell and Senior choirs. I live in Pulaski, where I am a member of Trinity, and I attend our Circle of Rose and participate in WELCA there. I have served on the previously served on the board and have just been elected to a 1-year term. I also direct a women's barbershop chorus, called Wilderness Road Chorus in Blacksburg, so you can say music is my vocation AND avocation! I look forward to meeting and getting to know our local coordinators! If anyone wants to contact me about conference news, I'd be happy to hear from you!

New River Conference women gathered on Sunday, October 6th at Trinity Lutheran in Pulaski for fellowship and worship. Lavelva Stevens led a devotion based on the hymn "For Everyone Born" and the Rev. Wanda Childs presided for communion. The service project benefited Lutheran Family Services. Items collected were 41 games, puzzles, and card games and 27 Birthday Party kits to be used by the adult day care facilities and the Minnick centers. Offerings at the Gathering were divided between VA Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO) and Lutheran Disaster Relief. Greetings and updates from the VSWO were brought by Lavelva Stevens. Alice Schneider is the New River Conference coordinator.

Southern Valley Conference met on Sunday, October 6th at Grace Lutheran Church in Waynesboro. Seven congregations were represented at the gathering. The program allowed the attendees to learn more about one of our local places where we can enjoy the wonder and amazement of God's creation—The Blue Ridge Parkway. The speakers were Peter Hamel, Blue Ridge District Interpreter, and Audrey Pearson, Executive Director of Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Offerings were taken to support the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO) and the Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Greetings and updates from the VSWO were brought by Judy Wilfong. Doris Grant is the Southern Valley Conference coordinator.

Tidewater Conference had their fall gathering on November 2nd at St. Andrew Lutheran in Portsmouth. The Rev. Suzanne Stierwalt led worship and Betsy Foushee provided music. Two informative workshops were offered, Essential Oils of the Bible presented by Brenda Conway and Elder Abuse presented by Marlene Bright. The women brought games and toys for the Mercy Drops Dream Center. Joe Friszslowski spoke during lunch about the program. Mercy Drops helps the "forgotten." These individuals include the homeless and struggling families. The games and toys will be given to the children of these families during Christmas. A wonderful lunch was provided by the women of St. Andrew. Offerings were taken to support the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO) and the Mercy Drops Dream Center. Greetings and updates from the VSWO were brought by Jody Smiley. The new Tidewater Coordinator is Brenda Conway.

Highlands Conference - At last count, there were eighteen congregations in the Highlands Conference, from Wise to Bluefield. Most of these congregations are, as you would expect, clustered along I-81. For obvious (geographical) reasons, conference-wide events for women are few in number. Women of the ELCA units are active in Bristol and Rural Retreat, but we would love to have our sisters from all of the other Highlands congregations to become part of the VSWO. What needs to happen in your congregation in order to form an active WELCA unit? How can other units help? If you would like more information and support toward forming an active unit in your congregation, please get in touch with Jody Smiley (VSWO President), Lavelva Stevens (Conference Coordinator), or Carol Johnson (Rural Retreat Parish WELCA President).



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING
JULY 16-19, 2020 | PHOENIX
WELCATG.ORG

Registration is open now for the 11th Triennial Convention with the theme “Just Love” to be held July 16-19, 2020 in Phoenix, AZ. Early-bird registration through January 6, 2020, is \$325. After that, registration is \$375.

The logo for “Just Love” was designed by Elizabeth McBride, director for intergenerational programs and editor of *Café*. According to Ms. McBride, “The palette of deep purple and bright green in the new gathering logo is reflective of the scenery of the valley in the Phoenix area. Along the streets of this city, dusty earth tones are punctuated with bright purple flowers and vibrant green cacti. The turquoise color connects to the history of native cultures in Arizona and the southwest region. Red signifies love. The shade of red in our gathering logo is not one of fire or caution, but rather one of joy.”

I visited Phoenix in July 2019, and I can tell you from experience that it's a beautiful city. The hotels are located within easy walking distance of the convention center – even in the July heat! There will be numerous opportunities to learn more about Phoenix and surrounding areas through specially curated tours offered exclusively by Women of the ELCA.

Participants can enjoy an early morning run, walk or roll through Cesar Chavez Park, the site of the 2020 Run, Walk, and Roll to benefit our health initiative, Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls.

Register now by following this link. <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/new-triennial-event-page>
Registration forms are available in print or in digital form.

Once you've registered, send me your contact information (email and cell phone.) I'll keep you informed about a gathering for VSWO attendees. I hope to see you all in Phoenix in July 2020!

~ Judy Casteel, Triennial Gathering Promoter
Triennial Gathering Promoter

WHAT HAPPENS AT TRIENNIAL?

- ◆ Among the benefits of participating in Women of the ELCA is the opportunity to have a voice in determining the activities and direction of the organization. Where we go and what we do as a churchwide organization will be shaped, in part, by the voting members of the Eleventh Triennial Convention.
- ◆ Seven business committees support the work of the voting members as they consider proposed constitutional changes, memorials from synodical women's organizations, a proposed budget and more.
- ◆ Voting members of the Eleventh Triennial Convention will elect officers and women to serve on the churchwide executive board for the 2020-2023 triennium. For information for voting members, please go to <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/convention-information#votingmembers>

Voting Members from VSWO (elected at the 2019 Convention) are Sylvia Eley, JoAnn Fawley, and Lisa Somerville. Alternates are Gloria Fennell, Carol Johnson, Shelia Sanchez, and Ellen Bain Gunter. Anyone may attend as a participant.

Women of the ELCA
11th TRIENNIAL CONVENTION and GATHERING



We invite you to this life-changing event.
Come. Be inspired. Then begin living out
your faith in new and invigorating ways.

July 16-19, 2020
Phoenix, Arizona



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING

Registration opens September 30. Visit welcatg.org.

LET'S LIVE LIKE WE'RE BLESSED BECAUSE WE ARE

by Audrey Novak Riley, Director for Stewardship, Women of the ELCA
Blog posted October 31, 2019 on the Women of the ELCA website

Not long ago, a very wise woman said, “We’re so blessed—let’s live like it!” Even in tough times, she said, we’re thoroughly blessed. Let’s live like it! Let’s live like we know how blessed we are!

I took that bit of wisdom to a recent meeting of the elected leadership of Women of the ELCA, and we talked it over. First, we imagined a thoroughly blessed group of women and how they might live it out. And one of our first conclusions was this: They know they’re blessed, and they’re not afraid! They’re bold and generous and loving.

Then we talked about Women of the ELCA. We’re blessed, too, even in tough times. How are we blessed? And that drew a lot of conversation. Women of the ELCA in all its expressions is blessed with the dedication of thousands of faithful women who continue serving and giving and loving and acting boldly. Stop and think for a minute, and you’ll come up with dozens more examples of how Women of the ELCA is richly blessed. We’re so very blessed! So how do we live like it?

TWO SIMPLE THINGS COME TO MIND RIGHT AWAY:

Invite someone else to share those blessings, generously, kindly, hospitably. Invite someone to your next Bible study or get-together and make her know she’s welcome. It doesn’t matter if she doesn’t look like you or talk like you. Invite her. Welcome her.

Share those blessings by making a generous Thankoffering. You might hold a Thankoffering service with your whole congregation, with just the women’s group, with a smaller group of friends—or all of the above! There’s no law that says you can do Thankofferings only once. See our Thankofferings page for everything you need to organize a Thankoffering service with a group.

You can also offer Thankofferings by yourself, as an individual. You can give with a credit card online at welca.org/give, or you can simply make out your check to Women of the ELCA, write Thankoffering on the memo line, and mail it to the address below.

We’re so blessed! Let’s live like it!

LOOKING AHEAD...

The 33rd Annual Virginia Synodical Women’s Organization (VSWO) Convention will be held at Salem Lutheran Church in Mt. Sidney, Virginia on July 31 – August 1, 2020. The theme is “Justice/Love/Service” and the convention scripture verse is Micah 6:8 “...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” The convention hymn will be “We Are Called.” As planning progresses and more details are available, the convention committee will keep you informed of the latest updates through *Visions*, the VSWO website, and Facebook page.

~ Joann Fawley

FROM THE EDITOR

The Spring 2020 *Visions* will come out around Easter. There is room for articles from individuals as well as updates and reports from the Justice, Stewardship, and Discipleship Mission Teams, and more. Any Virginia Lutheran woman is invited to contribute to *Visions*. You can email me at sunion7@gmail.com or send snail mail to Carol Johnson, 1589 Rocky Hollow Rd., Atkins, VA 24311. A submission date of March 15 would be much appreciated.



STEWARDSHIP

When most of us hear the word *stewardship*, we think about money. But stewardship is so much more. We are also to be stewards of our time, resources, and talents. We need to care for our environment, use our gifts and talents wisely, and be aware of those in need. Ask yourself this question: "*What can I do?*" and take time to think and listen to what God is calling you to do. It might be leading a Bible study, stepping up to take a leadership role, or boldly sharing your story of faith.

On another note, just a reminder that starting February 1, you will need to send your offerings to our new treasurer, Deniese Powell, at 2901 Black Lick Road, Rural Retreat, VA 24368. Continue to send to me until then. It has been a pleasure to serve you in this manner for the past four years. Continued blessings to your units.

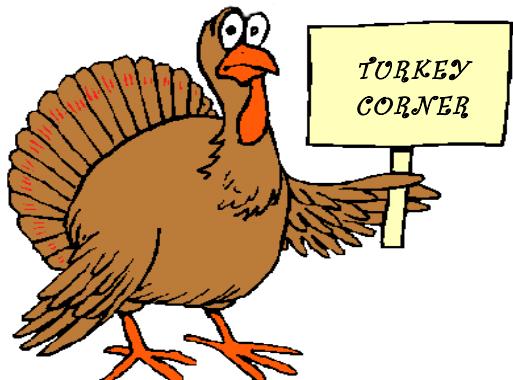
~ Edith Blake
Stewardship Chair

HELP NEEDED!

Visions needs your help. Genie Brown, our wonderful and dedicated Circulation Manager, will be leaving Virginia and moving to Chicago. She will be sorely missed, and we wish her well on her and Keith's new journey.

We need someone to take over as Circulation Manager. Genie mailed and emailed Visions to churches and subscribers. We normally publish Visions three to four times a year. We have written instructions for bulk mailing and will provide the addresses for those that receive it by email. We will need someone in position for our winter Visions addition.

Please contact Jody Smiley, jdsimiley29@comcast.net or 540-250-6149, if you have any questions or would like to be our Circulation Manager.



DID YOU KNOW....?

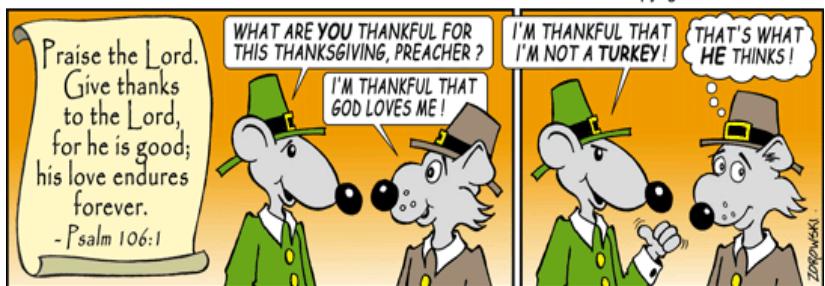
John F. Kennedy was the first president on record for unofficially sparing a turkey in 1963. But it wasn't until the Reagan administration in 1987 that a turkey was given an official presidential pardon as a joke. Despite its being a joke, the turkey was spared and put into a petting zoo. In 1989, George H. Bush made it an annual tradition and each president following him has carried on the tradition.

And this:

 Benjamin Franklin thought that the turkey should have been our national bird instead of the eagle.

There is fossil evidence that turkeys have been around the Americas for 10 million years!

Church Mice



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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Season of Thanksgiving

© Edith Blake

A time to give thanks for our blessings

Health, family, friends, and so much more

A time to enjoy nature's autumn leaves

Walks on the beach joy beyond compare

A time to remember family gatherings and traditions

Time spent with others creating new memories

A time to share our bounties with others

Fellowship around tables of plenty

A time with family and friends

Gathering with others to give thanks

