

# VISIONS

A Closer look at the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization



**Women of the ELCA**

**Fall 2020**

## **Have your Heard? The Virginia Synodical Women's Organization is Hosting a Virtual Thankoffering Service**

The VSWO is very excited to announce that we will be hosting a virtual Thankoffering Service on November 21<sup>st</sup> (a Saturday) beginning at 10:00 AM. We will be using *Light the Way for Justice, Light the Way for Love*, the Women of the ELCA 2020 Thankoffering service as our guide. We please to have Lisa Plorin, the Women of ELCA president deliver the sermon.

In addition, before we begin our service we will have breakout rooms so we can reconnect and share with each other. These times of social distancing has made us have to find creative ways to keep our community connected. We hope you will find this a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

We will be using zoom for our virtual service. It will require you to register to join us. You will find registration information on our website ([vswo.weebly.com](http://vswo.weebly.com)), on our Facebook page, and there will be an article in the VA Synod updates in the near future about the service.

We hope you will also help us spread the word. A personal invitation is always a great way to get more women involved. It would be a wonderful blessing to be able to share this worship experience with all the women in the VA Synod!.

Many of you in the past have collected your thankofferings at your circle meetings or during a worship service. This is of course is a very different time. Please still collect your thankoffering. There will be a place in our service for an offering. If you have an envelope or a thankoffering collection box have it with you. It will be blessed at that time. Then we asked you send that on to Women of the ELCA. Information can be found on [womenoftheelca.org/thankofferings](http://womenoftheelca.org/thankofferings) to help you. You can also download a copy of the 2020 Thankoffering Service.

There also is another great resource on the Women of the ELCA website concerning Thankofferings. It is called *Giving Thanks to God, All Day, Every Day*. Here is a short description: "This resource suggests short prayers of thanksgiving that you can use any time during the day as you set aside your Thankofferings."

Mark your calendars for November 21<sup>st</sup> (a Saturday) at 10:00 AM to join the VSWO for *Light the Way for Justice, Light the Way for Love*, a virtual Thankoffering Service.

# 10 HELPFUL WAYS YOU CAN ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO CONNECT

BY EVA JAMES YEO DIRECTOR FOR MEMBERSHIP FOR WOMEN OF THE ELCA

**Have you begun planning for the fall season?** Since March 2020, we've been living through the global pandemic, and changes in the ways we do things happen every day. Women of the ELCA has made adjustments, too. And we are here to help you plan so you can remain connected and engaged in living out your faith in Jesus Christ. We have many resources to help you plan for your next virtual meeting. It's important that you reach out to women for connection and encouragement.

## **BELOW ARE 10 WAYS YOU CAN ENCOURAGE & STAY CONNECTED**

Remember, as you begin to plan and in the midst of Covid-19 congregational units be sure you use caution in meeting and planning events. The following resources and ideas are available to keep women engaged as we shelter in place.

- Hold a Thankoffering service virtually with Light the Way for Justice, Light the Way for Love. The tips section offers ways to hold a virtual Thankoffering service.
- Use Giving Thanks to God, All Day Every Day prayer resources as you continue your daily Thankoffering discipline while sheltering at home.
- Get started on the 2021 Quilt Challenge. Download the challenge rules and begin designing a quilt for this much-loved artistic event that is part of our triennial Gathering.
- Download our In-Kind Gifts fact sheet so that you and the women in your congregation can begin now collecting items to assist ministries in ELCA congregations and other Phoenix-based agencies.
- Gather women (virtually) in prayer each Tuesday at noon as we continue to pray for the world and its inhabitants as we live through this pandemic, using this call to prayer.
- Encourage women to participate in the Dear Friend in Christ project, an effort to sustain community through letter writing. Details are found here, [www.womenoftheelca.org/special-initiatives/dear-friend-christ](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/special-initiatives/dear-friend-christ) and you can read some letters from the project. The project continues through November 1, All Saints Day.
- Use the PowerPoint *A Place for You* available in English and Spanish by hosting a virtual introduction to Women of the ELCA. Go to our Tools for Leaders page and scroll down.
- Read a book related to racial justice. You can find a list on our justice web page. Again, scroll down a bit.
- Encourage your friends to sign up for Bold Connections and invite them to participate in a virtual *Gather* Bible study.
- Read the blog, "Supporting Your Community of Women, Virtually" to learn other ways to support each other virtually.

Note: All these resources can be found on [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org)

## President's Message

Well how many of us are ready for 2020 to come to an end? I would say that 99.99999% of us would YES!

It is easy to see all that has gone wrong and there seems to be no end in sight. I was feeling that way till I read Linda Post Bushkofsky's article in the November issue of **Gather**. She points out reasons she found "to rejoice and be cheerful". I took a look around me, looking past my feeling sorry for myself, and I too found things I can be thankful for. My son and his wife are doing well. She will finish law school in the spring of 2021 and already has gotten a job offer. He has gotten a promotion at his work. Both are very happy. I heard just recently that you are only as happy as your sadist child. Well I only have one and a daughter-in-law so if that is true, I have reasons for joy. In September I got to spend time with a wonderful group of women, of course with social distancing and wearing masks. We still found a way to laugh and just enjoy each other's company. I am able to retire at the end of 2020 so 2021 holds many new adventures for me.

Hopefully you will join us for a virtual Thankoffering Service on November 21<sup>st</sup> at 10 AM. We can share things we are thankful for and reasons we have found to "rejoice and be cheerful". That is your homework between now and the service. Write them down commit them to memory and each time you do drop a coin or dollar bill in an offering envelope or thankoffering box.

Linda's article references 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." This was written to Thessalonians but what wonderful words for us to hear in 2020.

## Mission Justice Team

How can we live out our Purpose Statement in today's troubled times?

"As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world." ...

These words call us so deeply as we navigate our troubled and changing world. How can we even begin to take action and promote healing? A first step may be to visit the Women of the ELCA's website, Ministry and Action/Justice page. Then we suggest you explore the individual ministries. You will find ways to raise awareness of human trafficking, you can find your voice to stand up for racial justice, you can join the Racial Justice Network and you can see what Women of the ELCA is doing to combat domestic abuse. Open the door by going to [www.womenoftheelca.org/ministry-action/justice](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/ministry-action/justice).

Our Virginia synod can also be a resource. You can join the Tapestry Team, see sermons dealing with racial justice and much more. The link for Tapestry is [www.vasynod.org/ministries/tapestry/](http://www.vasynod.org/ministries/tapestry/).

How are going to live our Purpose Statement?

# JUST LOVE

## 2021 Quilt Challenge

**Quilters of all abilities are invited to create a quilt responding to two things: one side interprets the Just Love theme of the 2021 Gathering and the reverse side interprets your response to the coronavirus pandemic. The challenge comes not only in interpreting these two things, but also in working within the following rules.**

1. The quilt must interpret the gathering theme Just Love on one side and interpret the quilter's personal response to the coronavirus pandemic on the other side.
2. The quilt must incorporate the red color in the gathering's logo. Other colors may be used as the quilter desires.
3. The finished perimeter of the quilt must be within the range of 60 to 100 inches. Any shape can be used as long as the perimeter is within 60 to 100 inches.
4. Traditional or original patterns may be used. Credit must be given when using the pattern or design of another.
5. Quilts may be pieced or appliqued or a combination. They may include surface embellishment techniques (e.g., dyeing, trapunto, stenciling, whole cloth, embroidery, painting, embossing, etc.).
6. Quilts must be quilted, not tied. Either machine quilting or hand quilting is acceptable.
7. No fabric identification label is required. Quilters are asked to sign their quilt, however.
8. No sleeve for hanging is required.
9. The challenge is open to all women who are members of ELCA congregations. Quilts must be the work of a single individual. No group or two-person quilts will be accepted. Quilts must be constructed and quilted by the person named on the entry blank. The quilter need not be planning to attend the 2021 Gathering in order to participate in the quilt challenge.
10. There is a limit of two entries per person. The entry fee is \$10, which includes return shipping. Details for on-site pickup at the close of the Gathering will be provided closer to the event.
11. All quilts must be received in the churchwide office by June 11, 2021, along with a completed entry form and accompanying entry fee. Mail quilts to Women of the ELCA, Quilt Challenge, 8765 W Higgins Road, Chicago IL 60631-4101.
12. Entries will be judged by members of the Arizona Quilters Guild. Winners will be selected for originality, adherence to selected themes, workmanship, creative use of materials and overall design execution.
13. Winners and qualifying entries will be on display at the 2021 Gathering, Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Arizona.

## THANKSGIVING

© Edith Blake

Give thanks  
For your blessings

Give thanks  
For your loving kindness

Give thanks  
For your grace

Give thanks  
For your forgiveness

Give thanks  
For friends and family

Give thanks  
For shelter and food

Give thanks  
For loved ones here and gone

Give thanks  
For peace and joy

Give thanks  
For health

Give thanks  
Just because we can

Give thanks

# How can you be a good steward? Vote!

There are times when I just want to pull the covers over my head and moan, “wake me are the inauguration.”

But we don’t get to do that, not if we want to be good stewards,. Remember, a steward is someone who takes care of something important so that it can be handed on to future generations in good condition.

Read the complete devotion by Audrey riley at [www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/devotions](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/devotions).

## DISCIPLESHIP

What does discipleship mean to you? Women of the ELCA participants are active disciples in many ways.

**dis·ci·ple·ship** *noun* [di- 'sī-pəl' ship]

- a: discipleship is a lifelong journey of living out and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.
- b: disciples are followers of Jesus who are intent on carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) and the Great Command (Acts 1:8).

At WELCA, participants practice seven marks of discipleship: praying, studying, worshiping, inviting, encouraging, serving, and giving. Whether it be making quilts and health and school kits for [Lutheran World Relief](#) or [studying the Bible together](#), or assisting in worship, they grow in faith and share what they’ve learned with friends and neighbors.

Taken from the Women of the ELCA web page.

## **Thankofferings: our history**

Beginning in the late 19th century, Lutheran women were given small Thankoffering boxes to place in a special location in their homes as a visible reminder of blessings received. Women would add coins to those boxes almost daily as particular blessings were noted. From their use came the idea of an annual church service to celebrate their collection, and so the women of the congregation would come together for a Thankoffering service. The concept of Thankoffering celebrations dates back more than 100 years and beyond Lutherans. The Episcopal Church Women held their first recorded Thankoffering service in 1889, and the World Thank Offering service of the United Methodist Women has been a tradition for over 100 years. In the Lutheran tradition, the General Synod's Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society created their first Thankoffering service in 1889 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the organization. At that first Thankoffering, \$6,100 was collected. Today, Women of the ELCA collects more than \$1 million in Thankofferings annually for the ministries and mission of our women's organization.

## **Thankofferings: continuing the tradition**

Thankofferings show gratitude for God's blessings and give us an important and tangible way to express that gratitude. It is a tradition grounded in our celebration of community, of meeting together to joyfully give thanks for what God has given us. Thankofferings have always been, and still are, our opportunity to say thank you to God in both significant and ordinary moments.

*The daily acknowledgement of God's blessings through mite boxes has been a spiritual benefit to more than one soul, and the committee recommended their use not only once in ten years, but every day of the year. —American Lutheran General Synod Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society Thankoffering committee report: 1889*



*From the Women of the ELCA resource, "All About Thankofferings"*

Virginia Synodical Women's Organization  
Jody Smiley  
901 Brattle Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24064

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

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Visit the Women of the ELCA web page and look under resources for the following interesting articles for reading.

Called to be Political

Listening to God

A bold Life of Faith: Katharina con Bora Luther

Our Journey to Wellness