
GracelInside

Jesus said, "The righteous will answer him... 'When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:39-40)

This is just what GracelInside does. GracelInside is a ministry that provides chaplains to Virginia's prisons through private funding. As they state on their website, "Like a small, flickering beacon in the distance, GracelInside purposes to be the light of Jesus Christ calling forth hope and change and a new way." The chaplains make it their mission to provide hope when people are feeling hopeless, love when they may feel unlovable, and the forgiveness and acceptance that come from Jesus Christ.

This August, we are very fortunate to have Rev. Lynn Litchfield from GracelInside as our keynote speaker at VSWO convention in Richmond. She has worked as a chaplain in Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women for more than a decade, served a woman on death row, and she now works to help bring prison ministry needs to the attention of us all. In the meantime, if you would like to learn more about GracelInside, visit their website at gracelinside.org

We Need 500 Health Kits to Meet our Goal!

Ladies, this year we need you to bring items for health kits to be given to Lutheran World Relief. We will put these kits together at convention. (Please include enough items to make a complete kit.) LWR is helping thousands of people this year that have experienced great loss due to natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, and the massive numbers of refugees throughout the world. We can help them provide a person, who has lost everything, with basic necessities and allow them to know someone still cares.

Items needed for each kit:

- 1 – light weight bath-size towel (between 20" x 40" & 52"x 27") dark color recommended
- 2 or 3 - bath size bars of soap (equaling up to 8 to 9 oz.). in original wrapping, any brand
- 1 – adult tooth brush, in original packaging
- 1 – sturdy comb – remove packaging
- 1 – metal nail clipper, attached file optional – remove packaging

Toothbrush multi-packs may be used by sealing an individual toothbrush in a business size envelope. No plastic bags or wrap.

President's Message ~ Lisa Taglauer

How Blessed

I was laying in bed trying to sleep but my mind was going a million miles an hour. I just wanted to sleep. But no, my mind was going over our recent board meeting. I always look forward to seeing our board members. Some I have known for a long time. Others I am just getting to know. I began thinking about what to write for my president's message. It finally came to me, Thank you Lord! I am blessed. We are blessed. How blessed are we! Yup, I am going to write about how blessed we are to have these women serving on the VSWO Board. These women said yes to serving! Thank you God! They are truly a blessing to me and all of you. Ok with that solved maybe I can go to sleeeeeeep. Ah.

Annette Griffith- We are blessed by Annette's quiet, strong faith. She is an amazing woman. She listens a lot and talks a little but I know she ponders everything around her. When she speaks I know she has thought something through. I have great respect for her as a former Military Chaplain's wife and now a Pastor's Wife. I am truly blessed to have had the chance to get to know Annette and I thank her for her service on the board.

Helen Weaver – We are so blessed with Helen's administrative skills as our secretary and she has a beautiful voice. Helen has set up our website at www.vswowebly.com, takes great minutes and keeps us organized. At our board meeting, she led us in singing our convention hymn, *Lord You Give the Great Commission*. How beautiful it was. I am truly blessed to have Helen as our Secretary. Helen is the mother to two boys who keep her busy.

Kristin Snelgrove - We are blessed to have Kristin willing to tackle the heart wrenching subject of Human Trafficking and lead our Mission Justice Committee. I know Kristen will enlighten us all including me on this difficult to hear about topic. Kristin's has a new dog named tootsie if I remember correctly. I am not sure who is training who, but it sounds like she has a great companion.

Renee Ballentine– We are so blessed that Renee agreed to co-chair the convention planning team and is jumping right in with both feet. She has been willing to do whatever is asked of her! Renee like Helen and Kristin are young, bold women that said yes when asked to serve. I am truly blessed that they all said yes! I look forward to getting to know Renee. Renee is the mother of twins, which must keep her really busy.

Carol Bailey – We are truly blessed to have Carol as our convention chair. This woman is amazing. I really appreciate Carol's gifts of time, energy and organization to coordinate our convention. I think her gifts come from being a teacher. I have a new appreciation for all teachers. They are truly a blessing and gift from God. I know when convention is done, Carol will be ready for a vacation as she loves to travel. I thank Carol for her service on the board.

Edith Blake – We are really blessed that Edith said yes to being our Treasurer. Edith has embraced her new duties with full force. I really appreciate how Edith and Peggy Baseler, our previous Treasurer, have worked together to ensure a smooth transition. I know Edith is going to make a great treasurer. I am so blessed to be able to reconnect with Edith. We have known each other for quite awhile – thanks to going to VSWO events. If you didn't know, Edith likes to write poetry.

How Blessed! *(continued)*

Ellen Greene – We are so blessed to have Ellen guiding us through Stewardship issues. Helping us to realize stewardship is more than \$\$\$ figures. Stewardship is also about the time and talents we have been blessed with. I know Ellen will help enlighten us on how we can use our blessings. I am blessed to have been able to reconnect with Ellen. Like Edith, I met Ellen many years ago at VSWO events. Ellen can use all our prayers as she is becoming a caregiver to her father and step-mother.

Linda Lowry – We are truly blessed to have Linda serving on the Mission Discipleship Committee. Linda is an extremely hard worker and woman of great faith. She has picked up a project the previous committee started. She is coordinating a booklet that will be shared with young women throughout the Synod - advice from one woman to another to help her get through the ups and downs of life. I am especially blessed that Linda's women's group has adopted me and welcomed me into their group. I am also going to enjoy our travel time together. Linda is a farmer with chicken houses and cattle as well as 4 growing girls!

Bonnie Mantta – What a blessing to have Bonnie as our Conference Coordinator. She is such a go-getter, willing to do or try anything to build up our VSWO. She has been working hard to re-establish our communication with our conferences and coordinators. I remember seeing her at other VSWO events but never got to know her until these last two years. I am so blessed to have had this time with her. I thank her for serving on the board.

I hope that this has helped to know a little about what these women do on our board. We truly are blessed that these women said yes when asked to serve. I am so grateful that they have touched my life and how they have blessed me. When you are asked to serve, will you say yes?

2016 Global Service Projects

Our Keynote Speaker at the 2015 Convention, Rachel O'Neill, inspired us to once again help her organization, Little Dresses for Africa, but this time with re-usable sanitary pads. Providing these sani-panties to girls helps remove one barrier that would prevent them from going to school. The pattern is available on the VSWO website: www.vswowebly.com or from the Little Dresses for Africa site. You can box up your donation so it is ready to ship (just note the total number you have brought to Convention). If you want to contribute but are not a sewer, you can collect monetary donations towards shipping costs, purchase adult-size women's underwear to go with the pads or collect personal care kit items for Lutheran World Relief. If you have questions, contact Helen Weaver at hkweaver@comcast.net



2016 Convention ~ *Carol Bailey*

It's going to be a grrrrreat convention!!!

Committee members Rene Ballentine, Carol Bailey, Iris Will, and Sophie Wilson have been hard at work to make the upcoming convention, August 5 and 6, a great time filled with food for the soul, warm fellowship, and great learning experiences. Richmond is the city and Epiphany Lutheran is the place! It is not too early to make reservations at the Embassy Suites, 2925 Emerywood Parkway, Richmond, VA 23294. Ask for **the Virginia Synod Women's Organization** when you call the hotel at 804-672-8585.

Every participant will learn about Sole Hope, an organization that provides shoes for needy folks in Uganda. Anne Canaday will lead 3 awareness sessions that will stir our hearts to cut out denim soles that are the beginning of shoes to be sent to the shoeless. You will leave her sessions inspired to lead your units to fill the coffers of the 2017 convention.

In addition, each participant may choose two other awareness sessions from the following: Bible Study led by Pastor Katie Pocalyko, Service in Madagascar led by Molly Byer, and The Horrors of Human Trafficking led by Kristin Snelgrove.

Stewardship ~ *Edith Blake and Ellen Greene*

(A continuation article from the last Visions about how Stewardship is more than just money.)

Here is a simple way to help your children understand the importance of what they do with their money.

This is taken from the Make It Simple Stewardship resource. Set up three banks for your children marked "Share", "Save", and "Spend". Each time they receive money have them divide the money between the three banks and talk about how they can share their money to help someone in need or a special project at church. With the save bank they could be saving for a special trip or event coming up. And of course we all need a little spending money for gifts, a special treat, or going to the movies.

You can do this with all ages of children to bring awareness to the importance of good stewardship.

I would also like to take this moment to thank all the unit treasurers who have made the transition to new treasurer smooth. I also want to thank Peggy for her training and putting together the notes on how to use the computer program. It has been a smooth transition.

Edith Blake
Treasurer

Discipleship: *Linda Lowry*

Kits Needed

Please remember to bring items for our health kits to the convention this year. We would like to make at least 500 kits. They will help provide a person who may have lost everything, with basic necessities and let them know someone still cares.

These items need to be left separate, but include enough items to make a complete kit. The kits will be put together at convention.

Items needed for each kit:

- 1 light weight bath-size towel (between 20" x 40" and 52" x 27", dark color recommended)
- 2 or 3 bath size bars of soap, (equaling up to 8-9oz) in original wrapping – any brand
- 1 adult tooth brush in original packaging
- 1 sturdy comb – remove packaging
- 1 metal nail clipper, attached file optional – remove packaging

Toothbrush multi-packs may be used by sealing an individual toothbrush in a business size envelope. No plastic bags or wrap.

Encouraging Booklet of Advice

Help us create a book of encouragement for young ladies. Write about a time in your life that would help inspire or encourage young women that they too can make it through life's many changes. You may also include bible verses or poems that give you comfort and encouragement. Please send those to me by May 1, 2016

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Stay connected!

Check out our Facebook page- search for VSWO.
We will try to use this site more for news, updates and inspiration.

Please visit our website at www.vswowebly.com. We will try to keep updating it. If you have something you would like posted please send it Helen Weaver at hkweaver@comcast.net

Human Trafficking—Kristen Snelgrove

Human trafficking is a worldwide epidemic that is now receiving national attention, and the ELCA has decided to take it on as one of their Justice initiatives. The people who are holding and selling these victims do not discriminate against age, sex, or socioeconomic status. Everyone can be a potential victim in their eyes. The most alarming statistic for me is the number of children that are victims of this modern day slavery. It is estimated that one out of every six runaways become victims of human trafficking and 26% of this multi-billion dollar industry is made up of children. That means that of the 20.9 million people that are trafficked, 5.4 million of them are children. At our upcoming convention I will be leading an awareness session to help you learn who these victims are, how to spot them, and how to help them. The number of victims reaching out for help has grown since last year, we all need to be ready to listen to help stop this atrocious practice.

Women of the ELCA wants to hear from you

In celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is championing a process to collect women's stories from around the globe, stories that tell how women have provoked change in church and society, stories that tell how women have empowered others and engaged in theology.

The Women of the ELCA will assist the LWF in collecting our stories through 2016. This project will help future generations to do what we seek to accomplish every day: mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

They are looking for stories about projects you have taken on, organizations you have helped, and things you have done to transform the world around you.

Stories can be written essays, videos, blogs, art, interviews, quilts, photo collages. If you can involve multiple generations in the process, that would be great.

To help get you started think about...

- ◇ What are the main contributions to the individual or women's group to the lives of the people in your congregation or community?
- ◇ Highlight one or two important moments in the woman's life (if you are interviewing them).
- ◇ What or who contributed to the development of that woman's life of faith?
- ◇ What did the woman or women do to bring about reform in the congregation, the community or society.

Basic information should be included: Name(s), dates of birth (and death), address.

Start sending in your stories now. Send your contributions to women.elca@elca.org or mail to Women of the ELCA, Attn: LWF Stories, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

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VSWO Conference Coordinators ~ *Bonnie Mantta*

Happy Spring Ladies! Thank you for responding to my request for information on upcoming 2016 conference gatherings.

Spring gatherings are as follows:

Central Valley at St. Peters Lutheran Church in Tom's River on April 10, 2016.
Germanna at Peace and Glory in Palmyra on April 16, 2016.

The following conferences will have Fall gatherings: New River, Richmond and Tidewater. We have no information on any gatherings for Southern Valley, Peninsula, Northern Valley, Page and Southern.

Assignments for responsibility for conferences for VSWO convention on August 5 & 6 are:

Greeters at hotel and church - Richmond
Table decorations - Central Valley
Banner - Southern Valley
Ushers for worship - Peninsula
Communion Assistants - Richmond & Northern Valley
Lectors - Tidewater
Bread & Wine - Page
Pages for election - Germanna
Registration - Southern

Our president, Lisa Taglauer, has challenged the conferences to bring enough supplies to complete 500 personal care kits to be assembled as a service project at the convention. The kits are for Lutheran World Relief and are comprised of one light weight bath size towel, two or three bath size bars of soap in original wrappers, one adult size toothbrush in original package, one comb to be removed from any package, one metal nail clippers removed from package. If multipack toothbrushes are purchased need to be removed from package and sealed in business size envelope.

Any questions feel free to contact me at my cell 757-512-4360 or at bonniemantta@gmail.com

Young Women Guests ~ *Kristen Snelgrove*

As many of you know, we have a convention coming up! I remember being a young woman guest years ago. I remember the excitement surrounding the plans my mother was making for the young women. I remember the anxiety around the butterfly release, not knowing if these butterflies would actually fly. I remember the excitement I felt when all the young women came together and released the butterflies and we watched them fly into the sunny sky. Most of all, I remember the amazing experience I had, the bonds I made, and the joy I felt from watching the interactions between the women who were young and the women who were young at heart. I want to encourage everyone reading this to find a young woman, to connect with her, and to bring her with you to the convention. The VSWO wouldn't be the amazing organization it is now without our long-standing members, without our Sophie Wilsons. We need these young women, not just to keep us young, but also to lead us into the future. Most importantly, these women need us. They need the role models we provide and the life lessons we teach. There is no better example of bold women living in faith than the proud women of the ELCA VSWO. We provide scholarships for young women to help with the cost of attending the convention. So again, find a young woman, reach out to her, and bring her to an experience she will not forget.

We Need You !

This year at convention we will be electing a Vice-President, Secretary and 2 to 4 board members. We need you! This is a great opportunity to support your VSWO, learn more about the VSWO and Women of the ELCA and help to build up the Lutheran Women in Virginia. We meet about 4 or 5 times a year. The first meeting is usually an overnight retreat (Friday night to Saturday afternoon). The rest are one day meetings. We do a lot of business by email and phone, (but don't let not having email stop you!) Each board member – not officers—serves as chair of one of the committees or is the conference coordinator. Nomination forms will be in the call to convention. If you have questions or would like to run, please contact Carol Bailey, Annette Griffith, Bonnie Mantta, or Helen Weaver (or me, Lisa Taglauer.)

Nominations are Needed !! -*Jody Smiley*

It is hard to believe but at our convention in August we will be electing four voting members (and alternates) to represent the VSWO at the 10th Triennial Convention. The convention will be held July 11-13, 2017 in Minneapolis, MN.

Nomination forms will be in the upcoming Call to Convention and we need your help. It is very important that we have enough nominations not only to fill the four voting member positions but to have alternates for each. These women are elected a full year before the Triennial Convention and as we have seen in the past a lot can happen in a year.

Our constitution helps guide us through the process. Nominations for voting members must be made by the congregational unit. Each unit can only submit the name of one of its participants. Also as nearly as possible, at least one of our delegates shall be a person of color or whose primary language is other than English and one of the voting members shall be attending the convention for the first time. To achieve this, a rank-order process established by the Churchwide Women's Organization Executive Board is used.

Please prayerfully consider and discuss this in your congregational units in the coming months. This is your organization and this is your opportunity to have a voice in determining the activities and direction of Women of the ELCA. Where we go and what we do as a churchwide organization will be shaped, in part, by the voting members of the Tenth Triennial Convention. If you would like more information on the responsibilities and how the rank-order process will work go to <http://www.womenoftheelca.org/voting-members-pages-204.php>.

If you have any questions contact Lisa Taglauer, any VSWO board member or Jody Smiley, jdsmiley29@comcast.net.

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A Devotion on Renewal—Annette Griffith

*There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

With the advent of spring, I have been reflecting on seasons and change; both personal and in the weather. Everyone, including those of us with allergies, can enjoy the changes in the weather. Flowers bloom, the grass turns green and God renews His creation. But with every renewal, there is change. The old passes away to make room for the new.

I also will experiencing change as I conclude my term on the VSWO board. But with every change, there is opportunity for growth in this change of season. Change often is frightening. Humans are afraid of the unknown. But it is comforting to know that Jesus will be with us throughout all the changes of seasons that lay before us. I pray that whatever changes you face with be met with the faith that God will see you through it.

