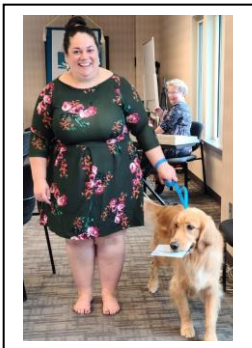


## 2023 VSWO Convention Highlights

Roanoke College in Salem was the gathering site for our VSWO Convention July 21-22, 2023. Forty-six of our sisters in Christ came together for worship, celebration, joy, fellowship – and of course, business, living out our theme of “Weave Us Together”. The Reverend Laura Swanson from St. Philips in Roanoke served as Convention Chaplain. She led our opening worship service and evening prayer (Compline) on Friday and led us in an enlightening Bible study Saturday morning on our convention scripture from 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We were honored to have the Reverend Kelly Bayer Derrick, Assistant to the Bishop, preach at our open service and bring us greetings from the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop. In addition, the Reverend Colleen Montgomery, Director for Digital Ministries, was with us all weekend. She not only was one of our workshop presenters she also recorded our awareness sessions so they could be shared with folks that were not able to attend. We closed convention with a beautiful Holden Evening Prayer service led by Alli Beck. A special thanks to Linda Hawks our accompanist. We were blessed to have these amazing women share their time and talents with us.

On Friday evening we were entertained by the talented William Penn and Drew Dowdy. They performed many types of songs, some familiar and some not so but all were great. We really appreciated William and Drew’s talent and fun-loving nature.

In addition to our worship, fun and fellowship we had presentations from our churchwide WELCA representative Liz Burgess (all the way from Maine), Meghann Cotter from Micah’s Ecumenical Ministries (our 2023-24 Love Offering project), as mentioned Pastor Laura led a Bible study, and Pastor Colleen Montgomery walked us through “What is a Reconciling-in-Christ congregation?” The awareness sessions were recorded and will be made available on our Facebook page and on our website. We will let everyone know when the links are live. Please share these with you congregational units. We would especially hope that you use the video about Micah’s Ecumenical Ministries to encourage support of this amazing Love Offering project for 2023-2024. It isn’t too early to start!



We had a very special surprise guest appearance by Rain (service dog) and Rain's handler, Ellen Wheeler from Project Horizon. Rain accepted the 2023 Love Offering in the amount of \$1,513 donated to Project Horizon. He got and gave a lot of love to the attendees.



As always, we are amazed at our women's generosity. Below are the monetary and in-kind gifts received. The top 3 congregations making Charity bears were Holy Trinity Wytheville (121), Lakeside Lutheran (60), Trinity Pulaski (56). The Trinity women also made bears that were given locally to programs in their community. The blankets made

during convention were donated to the Linus Project of Roanoke. **Thank you to all that donated and thank you for all that you do in your congregations and communities!!**

Convention offering - to be split between WELCA & World Hunger \$1,211

Love offering to Project Horizon - \$1,513

Offering to be matched by donor to add to Thrivent account - \$500

Katie's Fund - in honor of Sophie Wilson - \$250

Sophie Wilson Grant - \$120

Roanoke College Scholarship - \$120

Charity Bears (given to Project Horizon)-435

Supplies needed by Project Horizon-A bunch!

Linus Project blankets-36

We did do some work during convention. We heard reports, passed our 2024-25 budget and of course had elections. The board had a very creative way to present their reports by having a "VSWO Family Feud". Just ask anyone there it was definitely a fun way to learn more about the VSWO and WELCA.

The following persons were elected:

President – Lavelva Stevens

Treasurer – Jody Smiley (taking office 2/1/24)

Board Members:

Two-year terms – Carol Bailey and Ashley Saunders

One-year term – Teresa Bowers and Nicole Ocheltree

Officers and Board for 2023-24

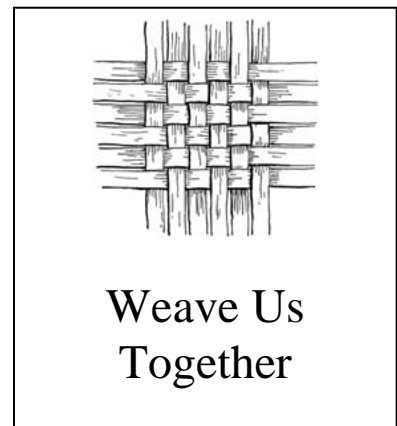
President – Lavelva Stevens

Vice President – Sylvia Eley

Secretary – JoAnn Fawley

Treasurer (current) – Judy Castele

Members of the Board – Carol Bailey, Teresa Bowers, Nicole Ocheltree, Diane Priestley, Ashley Saunders, and Pat Seelenbinder



## LOOKING AHEAD

Carol Bailey announced that the **2024 Annual VSWO Convention** will be at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church-Norge, July 26-27, 2024. Look out for more information in Visions, on our Facebook page, and our website.

**The All-Lutheran Women's Retreat** will be November 7-9, 2024 and held at the Hilton Garden Inn, 4050 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA. The theme is "A Cup of Unconditional Love". The retreat leader will be Jacqueline Bussie, author of "Love Without Limits: Jesus' Radical Vision of Love With No Exceptions". Jacqueline Bussie will also be a speaker at the 2023 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering in Phoenix this September. Several Women of the ELCA groups are reading and discussing this book. Registration information will be available in April, 2024.

Contact information: Facebook-All Lutheran Women's Retreat,

website- <https://sites.google.com/view/alwretreat>

email- [carol.troxell@gmail.com](mailto:carol.troxell@gmail.com)

## Join Us At Our 12th Triennial Gathering:

We invite you to experience a life-changing event with other bold women of faith, September 21-24 2023. The Grand Canyon Synod will be our host synod. We will gather to worship, sing, learn, participate in service opportunities, and party together. Updated information on the gathering is available at [Women of the ELCA](http://Women of the ELCA (welcatg.org)) (welcatg.org).



Ways to stay to keep current with events, news, photos, etc. from the VSWO is to friend us on Facebook: VSWO Virginia Synodical Women's Organization and to visit our website: [Virginia Synodical Women's Organization - Home \(weebly.com\)](http://Virginia Synodical Women's Organization - Home (weebly.com))

## Contact Information for Your 2023-2024 Board

<b>Officers – term expiring 2024</b>	<b>Officers – term expiring 2025</b>
<p>Vice President – Sylvia Eley            417 Meadow Creek Drive            Chesapeake, VA 23323            Phone: 757-582-0966            Email: <a href="mailto:seley2005@msn.com">seley2005@msn.com</a>            Church: St. Timothy/Norfolk            Conference: Tidewater            Mission Justice</p>	<p>President – Lavelva Stevens            1369 Beth Scott Dr.            Pulaski, VA 24301            Phone: 540-320-3369            Email: <a href="mailto:lstevens01@verizon.net">lstevens01@verizon.net</a>            Church: Holy Trinity/Wytheville            Conference: Highlands</p>
<p>Secretary – JoAnn Fawley            6409 W. Old Mountain Road            Louisa, VA 23093            Phone: 703-727-7957            Email: <a href="mailto:fawley6409@gmail.com">fawley6409@gmail.com</a>            Church: All Places Together/online            Conference: Germanna            Social Media Manager/Long Range Planning</p>	<p>Treasurer – Judy Castele (Ends 1/31/2024)            726 W. 4th Street            Buena Vista, VA 24416            Phone: 540-460-7376            Email: <a href="mailto:jlcastele@comcast.net">jlcastele@comcast.net</a>            Church: Good Shepherd/Lexington            Conference: Southern Valley</p>
<b>Board Members – Term expiring 2024</b>	<b>Board Members – Term expiring 2025</b>
<p>Nicole Ocheltree            63 Valley View Dr.            Mt. Sidney, VA 24467            Phone: 540-292-2179            Email: <a href="mailto:wldptch@yahoo.com">wldptch@yahoo.com</a>            Church: Salem/Mt. Sidney            Conference: Southern Valley            Convention Planning</p>	<p>Carol Bailey            12706 Cavalryman Ct.            Fredericksburg, VA 22407            Phone: 571-438-0273            Email: <a href="mailto:cobailey42@gmail.com">cobailey42@gmail.com</a>            Church: Resurrection/Fredericksburg            Conference: Germanna            VSWO Conf Coord/Long Range Planning</p>
<p>Diane Priestly            116 Norman Davis Dr.            Toano, VA 23168            Phone: 757-561-5491            Email: <a href="mailto:DMP625@aol.com">DMP625@aol.com</a>            Church: Our Saviour's/Norge            Conference: Peninsula            Mission Discipleship/Convention Planning</p>	<p>Teresa Bowers            11 Caroway Drive            Fredericksburg, VA 22405            Phone: 540-373-4769            Email: <a href="mailto:ctbowers@cox.net">ctbowers@cox.net</a>            Church: Christ/Fredericksburg            Conference: Germanna</p>
<p>Pat Seelenbinder            1605 Pennywhistle Arch            Virginia Beach, VA 23464            Phone: 757-479-2544            Email: <a href="mailto:pmseelen@cox.net">pmseelen@cox.net</a>            Church: Emmanuel/VA Beach            Conference: Tidewater            Mission Discipleship/Convention Planning</p>	<p>Ashley Saunders            420 Acme Company St.            Broadway, VA 22815            Phone: 540-746-8102            Email: <a href="mailto:saunders@muhlenberglutheran.org">saunders@muhlenberglutheran.org</a>            Church: Muhlenberg/Harrisonburg            Conference: Southern Valley</p>
<p>Non-Board Member            Edith Blake, Newsletter Editor            5137 Portsmouth Blvd.            Portsmouth, VA 23701            Phone: 757-956-5535, <a href="mailto:ejbwwb@aol.com">ejbwwb@aol.com</a></p>	<p>Non-Board Member            Jody Smiley, Circulation/Website Manager            901 Brattle Lane            Blacksburg, VA 24060            Phone: 540-250-6149 <a href="mailto:jdsmiley29@comcast.net">jdsmiley29@comcast.net</a></p>

