

Visions



A Closer Look at the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization

SPRING 2019

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

I'm writing this in the airport on my way to our annual Conference of Presidents meeting in Chicago. I know you are thinking *Why would anyone go to Chicago in February*, but it is a trip I always look forward to. It is a time to reconnect with friends I have made and to make new ones. It is an amazing weekend. Imagine being with so many women of faith that share in the mission and ministry of Women of the ELCA!

As some of you may know, I was asked to serve on an exploratory committee established by the churchwide executive board "to investigate Women of the ELCA's current business model along with its mission and purpose, suggesting how best to fulfill that mission and purpose in a changing world." I feel honored and blessed to be part of this group of women.

At our first meeting in January we went around the table, introduced ourselves, and took a few minutes to say what Women of the ELCA meant to us. We were supposed to sum it up in a few sentences, but you can imagine that it took most of us a lot more than that. I shared that I would not be the woman I am today if not for "WELCA." Many of us shared the same sentiment. After we all had our turns, our chaplain asked "What does that mean?" She said those are the stories that need to be told.

As I thought about that, you know it is easy to say but hard to explain. How do I sum up the impact of thirty years of influence this community of women has had on me? Sometimes it was subtle and other times it was so moving you can't put it into words. I guess you could say God was at work through these earthly "angels."

I am sure we all remember our first circle meeting. For me, it was just after my son was born and my mother was staying with us to help out. I am not sure she thought I could get the mother thing figured out (and she may have been right). She encouraged me to go to that first meeting. I know I must have said a total of ten words all night. I was new not only to my congregational unit but also to the church. The women were kind and tried to get me involved. I did feel welcome, just a little shy. They didn't give up on me, and as they say, the rest is history. Through the years this community (congregationally, synodically, nationally) has helped me grow in faith, compassion, and confidence. I can now easily lead meetings, speak in front of groups large and small, and express my faith without hesitation.

I can't know who I would have been without Women of the ELCA, but by God's grace and the support of so many generous women, I don't have to know. This is why the exploratory committee's work is so important. I have told you my story. Take some time to think about what "WELCA" means to you, your congregation, and God's ministry in your community. Tell that story to others, invite someone new to be part of your story, and help her begin to form her own story to share.

~ Jody Smiley

Save the Date
VSWO Gathering-August 2nd and 3rd
First Lutheran Church, Norfolk



Meet Barbara Tormondsen, our churchwide representative who will speak at our 2019 convention/gathering

Barbara was elected to the executive board of Women of the ELCA in July 2017. She serves on the budget and finance committee.,

Previously, Barbara served as president and treasurer of the Metropolitan New York Synodical Women's Organization (7C).

Barbara is also an active member at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rye Brook, N.Y. She is the treasurer for St. Paul's and serves on the church council. Additionally, Barbara is president of the altar guild and St. Paul's Women of the ELCA.

Barbara graduated from Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H., with a major in engineering sciences and has her master's of business administration from Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business.

Barbara lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, with her husband, John. They have two children and one grandchild. Barbara enjoys spending time with family and competitive ballroom dancing.

T h a n k o f f e r i n g s

What does stewardship mean to you? Women of the ELCA encourages and equips women to consider their responsibility and capacity for stewardship.

We create educational resources about giving and managing money, including devotions, Bible studies, and program materials for individuals and small groups.

Does your congregational unit have Thankoffering services with the offering going to Women of ELCA? Do you ask everyone to give not just the women? If you do THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU! If you don't please consider starting your own tradition of Thankofferings.

"Thankofferings are a long-standing custom among Lutheran women. We give in thanksgiving for blessings received—and we do receive so many blessings, don't we? And we are so grateful. That's why we give Thankofferings.

Your generous Thankofferings help support the ongoing ministries of the churchwide women's organization, including our triennial conventions, the work of your elected churchwide board, the annual conference of synodical presidents, our communications ministries, justice and advocacy work, and so much more."

You can download the 2018-19 Thankoffering service from the Women of the ELCA website. It is available in both PDF and Word formats. *Portions of this article are excerpted from the Women of the ELCA website, Stewardship.*

MISSION TEAMS

JUSTICE MISSION TEAM

Justice: Just Love!

At the triennial gathering 2017 closing worship service, the Rev. Angela Khabeb exclaimed: “News flash! Christianity is not comfortable. If you are comfortable in Jesus, you’re doing it wrong.” Following Jesus is messy. Loving one another is justice. We are not perfect, we are often broken, sometimes we don’t fit. Sometimes our edges are rough—but we are one body in Christ.

The inspiration for Women of the ELCA Gathering logo [pictured below] came as I walked around downtown Phoenix, the site of the 2020 gathering. I noticed a mural outside of the convention hotel. Its collection of broken mirrors, tiles, shards of plates and painted rocks ebbed and flowed in a kinetic frenzy of color and textures.

We are The body of Christ: The mural reminded me of the body of Christ and how we are all misshapen pieces in one glorious and beautiful work of art. 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.

As we embrace the theme “Just love” we remember the words of the Rev. Alexia Salvatierra at the gathering in 2017 in Minneapolis: “I believe that if we follow mercy all the way, go deep into mercy, we end up at justice.”

~ Elizabeth McBride, <https://www.womenoftheelca.org>



DISCIPLESHIP MISSION TEAM

2019 Service Projects

For 2019 Service projects, the Discipleship Mission Team has suggested that local units focus on children, with possible project ideas described on **page 5** of this *Visions*. At Convention, we will also receive donations to benefit schools in the Tidewater area.

According to the NY Times (May 16, 2018) 94% percent of public school teachers say they spent their own money on notebooks, pens and other supplies in the 2014-15 school year without reimbursement. The average amount spent was \$479. About 44 percent spent \$250 or less, while 36 percent spent \$251 to \$500. Some spent as much as \$1000.

This year at our VSWO Convention, we will receive donations of these supplies for local Tidewater area schools. Norfolk alone has 33 elementary, 1 Pre-K-8, 1 K-8, 8 middle, and 5 high schools, over 3000 teachers, and some 33,000 students Pre-K through 12.

Here is a list of supplies most needed. You may think of other things as well. Volunteers from the Tidewater area are going to take supplies around to local schools

- Pens and pencils. If pencils are pre-sharpened, even better.
- Notebooks and folders. Ideally, without any designs on them. ...
- Erasers. ...
- Crayons. ...
- Glue sticks.
- Dry erase markers. ...
- Kleenex and antibacterial wipes.
- Red pens

Treasurer's Report

At our February Board meeting, the Board agreed to raise the Fair Share Travel Fee to \$35.00. The raise will cover the travel reimbursement for delegates which for the past couple of years was in the red.

Just a reminder: my term in up this year. We will be electing a new treasurer. The new treasurer gets training by churchwide at no cost to them. I will work with the new treasurer before she takes over in February, 2020, which is the beginning of our fiscal year.

Please remember: Stewardship is taking a special offering this year to support the Betty Wilson Triennial Scholarship Fund. The scholarship enables those interested in attending triennial.

~Edith Blake, Treasurer

CONFERENCE NEWS

Hi Ladies!

I want to start out by thanking Jackie, Sheila, Alice, Susan, Barbara, and Betty for being part of the team of conference coordinators.

The report I received from Southern Valley shows that Betty Diehl's term has ended. Thank you, Betty, for your service.

We want to welcome Doris Grant as the new Southern Valley Coordinator.

Please let me know the dates and locations for the Spring Gatherings.

I have been advised that Germanna's gathering is March 16 at Christ Lutheran in Fredericksburg. (See article below.)

Most recent coordinator guidelines and forms for information on gathering and up-to-date planning leaders have been sent to all coordinators. They should be filled out and sent to the treasurer and me after you have your gathering.

Conference responsibilities:

Communion Assistants - Page

Lectors - New River

Pages - Southern Valley

Registration - Southern/Highland

Service Project - Tidewater/Peninsula

Snacks - First Lutheran, Norfolk

Table Decorations - Germanna

Ushers - Central Valley

Please prepare your reports so that they will be ready for the Bulletin of Reports that is due to be emailed to Judy Castele by June 1, 2019.

Blessings, Bonnie Mantta

VSWO Conference Coordinator

NEWS FROM GERMANNA

The Germanna Women's Conference planning committee met on Jan. 26 to plan our Spring Gathering on March 16th at Christ Lutheran in Fredericksburg,

Our theme is Handmade with Love from Project Linus (<http://www.projectlinus.org>) Our Bible verse is John 3:21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." We will be making no sew fleece blankets for infants and children as our service project for the women to take back to their own congregations. A neat tie-in (no pun intended) is that March 16th is National Quilters Day. We hope you can join us on this day - the timeline will be similar to previous gatherings, 0930 breakfast at check-in- Morning Matins at 1000, service project workshop 1100 to 1230, 1245 business meeting, lunch and installation as needed. I will be sending this out to all with more details and directions soon.

Blessings, Sue Skinner

Cell - 540-907-5720

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DISCIPLESHIP: 2019 SERVICE PROJECTS

Our focus for the coming year will be on children, so in that effort, our service project for 2019 involves ways we can help children in need of comforting. We have found several organizations that have items that you can sew, knit, or crochet that will make children who are ill or in need of a hug feel loved. You may know of other groups that you would like to support instead, and that is great. We just ask that each unit or conference find organizations in your community that may need these items and donate them. Keep a count of what your unit makes and how many. Bring that information along with pictures (if you like) and a few samples of your handiwork to the 2019 convention in Norfolk. Below are three suggestions of organizations you can help.



Knots of Love: <http://www.knotsoflove.org/>

“Our mission at Knots of Love is to warm the hearts and heads of those experiencing traumatic hair loss. Our volunteers lovingly hand-knit and crochet caps for those struggling with treatment-induced hair loss and tiny Neonatal blankets for fragile new lives in incubators. Knots of Love caps and blankets serve as a constant reminder to the patient and their loved ones that

Project Linus: <http://www.projectlinus.org/>

“We provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need through the gifts of new, handmade blankets, and afghans, lovingly created by volunteer ‘blanketeers’.”



Ryan's Case for Smiles: <http://caseforsmiles.org/>

“A hospital experience can be terrifying and traumatic for both a child and their family. While others strive to find a cure, Ryan's Case for Smiles helps with the stress and emotional impact of illness in the here and now. Our whimsical pillowcases give children an emotional boost while resources and tools help families better understand and cope with the experience.”

**ALSO A REMINDER THAT AT CONVENTION, WE WILL BE RECEIVING
A SPECIAL DONATION OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR
LOCAL TIDEWATER AREA SCHOOLS.**

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Joy Is The Feast
© Edith Blake

Joy is the feast

As we gather round the table

We share bread and wine

The body and blood of our Lord

Joy is the feast

As we gather to worship

We share our praise and thanksgiving

To the one true God

Joy is the feast

As we gather in community

We share our gifts and talents

For the Lord

Joy is the feast

As we gather in fellowship

We share our trials and strengths

Receiving a deeper faith in our Lord

Stay connected! Check out our Facebook page — search for VSWO for news, updates, and inspiration. Also, 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 to Helen Weaver hkweaver@comcast.net

Note to self...
God didn't say, 'Be still and feel that I am God,' He said, 'Be still and know'.

Louie Giglio



"He follows your 'tweets.' That's how God always knows what you're doing."

Where can we go to find God if we cannot see Him in our own hearts and in every living being.

Swami Vivekananda

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Fasting during Lent is a spiritual discipline practiced across many religions and throughout history. Fasting is not just about eating – it is more about our tendency to give into the sin of over-indulgence. We eat too much, we drink too much, we wear too much, we waste too much, we do a lot of things in excess. In this day and age, we fear too much!

I wonder if we can consider a different kind of fasting this year – a fast from fear, fearing those who are different from us. A meme on Facebook suggests that Fear has two meanings: **Forget Everything And Run**. Or **Face Everything And Rise**.

But how do we “face everything and rise” instead of forgetting and running away? Here are a few thoughts. If you fear someone who identifies as the “other” political party, talk to one another about what you truly believe how things can be made to work better for everyone. If you fear immigrants, find someone who has immigrated to this country in the last ten years and talk to that person. If you fear a gay or lesbian person, perhaps find somebody who identifies as gay or lesbian and talk to him or her. Ask about the struggles, the fears, and the issues the individual has faced. If you fear someone of a different nationality or skin color, spend some time getting to know a person whose skin color is different from yours. Talk, ask questions, but mostly listen.

Fasting from fear doesn't take much except for some time, the ability to listen, and making ourselves vulnerable enough to form a relationship with somebody else. Martin Luther, in his reflections on the 8th commandment, counseled: *we are to fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead, we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.* During these forty days, let us dare to fast from all that separates us from one another and strive to see the grace and love of Jesus Christ in each one of us. *(adapted from the Ash Wednesday message of the Reverend Jonathan Hamman, Rural Retreat Lutheran Parish)*



Women of the
ELCA 