

“VISIONS”



A Closer Look at the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization

May 2021

President's Message

Spring has sprung (even if it was 40 degrees this morning). With the coming of spring, we see flowers blooming and trees beginning to green. Also, it seems we maybe seeing a light at the end of this pandemic tunnel we have been in for over a year.

This past year has been depressing at times. I have to admit that not meeting in person has been hard for me personally. At times it was difficult to see how congregational units, the VSWO, and even the churchwide organization was going to survive, but as we know, God is always at work in our lives. Our units found ways to meet, the VSWO board continued to work together, and the churchwide organization made adjustments to keep us going.

We have reasons to be hopeful that we can find that new normal where we can gather again in person. I have faith that as we go forward, our organization will recommit itself to our purpose statement. I know our women have missed their time together and will returned rejuvenated and continue their commitment to Women of the ELCA.

One way we can reinforce that commitment is to help us identify potential leaders. We need your help. As you know we were not able to have our 2020 convention. All the board members agreed to continue to serve. We will have a virtual convention on September 25th, and at that time all of the officer and board positions will be up for election. Please let one of the current board members know if you are willing to serve or if you know of someone that would be a faithful leader. Fresh and re-energized leadership can bring new ideas to the VSWO.

In closing, this community of women have found creative ways to continue to stay connected, to do projects, and support ministries in their congregations and community. We are devoting this issue of *Visions* to tell you about how some congregational units are living out our purpose statement even during a pandemic. Thank you for your continued support of the VSWO and Women of the ELCA.

Jody Smiley, President

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NEWS FROM THE CONFERENCES: What have congregational units been up to?

Have you wondered what the women in the Virginia Synod have been up to? We asked each conference to share some information with us. As you can see, they have been very busy.

Germanna-Coordinator: Carol Bailey

Christ in Fredericksburg - Ellen Pabst

Our ladies have been getting together through zoom and here are our last three activities. In December we had "A Fireside Chat." We had a wonderful time telling special memories and sharing a special ornament. In January, we had our yearly planning meeting. We set up monthly get-togethers. We set up book reads, Bible studies, dates to go to the nursing home, and our annual retreat. (Some dates tentative because of COVID). February we had an Unbirthday Party via Zoom. Everyone brought a sweet and a candle, and we played games.

Resurrection Fredericksburg - Carol Bailey

We have our one group that meets every Wednesday morning for Bible study and support. We are just finishing a great book, *Holy Envy* by Barbara Brown Taylor, an Episcopal priest. Our monthly WELCA meets on the second Thursday and we use *Gather* magazine for study. Our outreach continues as we provide meals as needed for those who are recovering from surgery or otherwise in fragile health. In addition, we take cookies every month to the firefighters at the station very near to the church. We have established phone buddies to contact those in our congregation who live alone.

Grace and Glory-Joann Fawley

Our Women of the ELCA unit at Grace and Glory Lutheran Church in Palmyra, Virginia, is called Women at Grace and Glory, lovingly referred to as WAGG. We have two groups that intentionally gather. There is a group for study and a group for quilting. The study group has been holding monthly Zoom meetings using *Gather* magazine. The quilters have worked individually at home. Our unit sends in offerings to VA Synod Women. We also purchase a bulk subscription to *Gather* magazine to support Women of the ELCA. We initially purchased and now renew annually the magazine by using a Thrivent Action Team Grant. The Women of the ELCA is kept visible to the congregation through monthly submissions to the church newsletter. Every Sunday bulletin contains an invitation and information regarding any meetings. We, also, submit a unit report as part of the annual congregation report. We grow in faith through study together and go forward to act out our faith in service to God through the ministries at Grace and Glory supporting one another in our callings.

Highlands

Rural Retreat Parish - Deniese Powell

Our women are active with Katie's Pantry, named for Luther's wife. During the pandemic, we have filled the pantry twice a day, seven days a week. It is a four-shelf box in our Grace Lutheran Church parking lot in Rural Retreat, VA with 24/7 availability. We have been blessed with many donations of food, personal hygiene and baby items, and money.

Redeemer - Charlotte Taff

In 2020 even through the pandemic the Martha Circle was able to continue to meet through zoom and support many projects and ministries. In the first quarter of 2021 the circle coordinated the project for the congregation to assemble Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief. Our goal was to prepare 50 kits. 33 kits were assembled by the congregation and over \$500 was donated. A local company that makes towels donated 100 towels and the circle purchased the other items from the donated money that were needed for the kits (bath size soap, toothbrushes, combs, nail clippers). Circle members put 100 kits together and boxed and mailed them to LWL. A total of 133 kits were mailed. Just being able to meet through our ZOOM meetings helped us to stay connected and be able to fellowship together.

New River-Coordinator: Alice Schneider

On December 13, the New River Conference had our annual "Gathering" by zoom this year. The theme, *Celebration of Women in Ministry*, was a celebration of the 50th year of the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church. Six area women pastors and a vicar shared interesting and inspirational stories of their journeys to the ministry. We also had a surprise visit from former St. Michael pastor, Linda Mitchell Motley, now retired in Panama. Over 30 women from the Conference participated.

St. Michael - Alice Schneider

We helped to gather donations of food for the Montgomery County Food Bank and supplies for the Women's Resource Center. In September, with the other NRV churches, we supported a collection of cleaning and paper supplies and packaged foods for the Women's Resource Center. Also, we prepared 24 Easter baskets for children and 8 baskets for mothers at the center. We collected and delivered school supplies for children at Price's Fork Elementary School and also partnered with them to support their Secret Santa program.

Shiloh Lutheran Church - Suzanne Albert

We continue to stay connected to our members and our local community needs through telephone, emails, and cards. Through this trying time our women keep in touch with elderly members in both community and church by phone and dropping off food and periodicals, and occasionally distanced visits. Donations continue to the Interfaith Food Pantry in Blacksburg from our members and the local neighbors.

Luther Memorial

The women of our congregation gathered by Zoom during the pandemic for "Soul Sisters" a weekly time to share and pray; and a women's Bible study led by Pastor Monica Weber (ongoing). When the pandemic ends, we hope to resume gatherings including making quilts for NRV Community Action, exercise and other activities.

Trinity Pulaski - Linda Hawks

Our women worked making masks. Over 500 masks were made and delivered to various organizations. We were able to assist with the local 2020 Christmas Store. We were able to provide \$250 worth of children's coats for the store through a Thrivent Action Team. As their 2021 Project, our quilters are planning to give each resident at Fairview Home a quilt on their birthday. We have donated food items to Pulaski Daily Bread. The Behavioral Health Unit at Pulaski Hospital is a wonderful new addition to our community. We donated personal items for the residents to receive as Blessing Bags as they are leaving this program.

Our Savior - Cindy Whitehead

We coordinate an active plastic recycling program with our congregation and others in the community. We send the material to the Trex company which makes decking, benches, and other items out of recycled plastic bags and other plastic of similar consistency. To date, we have placed over 8 donated benches to various locations in our area.

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Morning Star - Linda Lowry

Last year we only had four fundraisers. But due to a donation from local Trust Fund, we were still able to help the organizations the best that we could. We had a "Bakeless" Bakesale for our Easter fundraiser. We usually have a large bake sale. But instead we asked people who fix things to donate what they think they spend on making things and those who buy, to donate what they usually spend.

The River of Life Ministries (St. Luke, St. Paul, & St. Peter) - Lisa Taglauer

We were able to get together 30 gift bags and take to the Hawksbill assistant living home in December.

Peninsula

Our Savior - Diane Priestley

We collected a Thank Offering for WELCA, we sponsored a needy family for Christmas through the Christian Appalachian Project (CAP). We had a food drive for our local food pantry (FISH) and baby supplies drive for the Hope Pregnancy Center on Palm Sunday. We distributed blue ribbons on Rachel's Day at our "drive through" communion after Church. We collected donations for a Memorial bench for our Vice President (Karen Dutton) who passed away in November.

Southern Valley - Coordinator: Doris Grant

Good Shepherd - Judy Castele

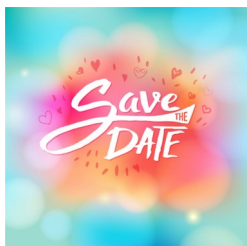
Ministries (limited as they are since we're not gathering in person) include stocking our Little Free Pantry on the church wall. We've also recently adopted a family of refugees from Honduras. We're providing clothes, furniture, meaningful work, and other support for the family of six.

Tidewater- Coordinator: Brenda Conway

St. Andrew Portsmouth - Edith Blake

We have not met as a group since the Pandemic started but have participated in various projects the church has been supporting during this time. In the summer we collected food items for a program sponsored by Mercy Drops to provide food during the school year to children who would normally get meals if in school. We have collected food items for the Oasis program who feed the homeless in Portsmouth. We have also collected items for Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless to provide health kits. We have been conducting a Bible study on Thursday mornings with the lessons for Sunday as our focus.

If you don't see your congregation here, please let us know how you are gathering and the projects and ministries you are involved with. Please send your information to Edith Blake, ejbwrb@aol.com. We will post it on our website or put in our next edition of Visions.



We are excited to announce the date of the next VSWO convention. It will be a virtual convention and will be on Saturday, September 25, 2021. More information will be following in June. Please consider "sending" a voting member from your congregation. They will need a valid email address to log in, access files, and vote. This year we will be voting on president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and all board members. We are also planning a "gathering" by zoom that will follow the business session of the convention. Please plan to join us.

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***Gather* Magazine-Are you a subscriber?**

Subscribing to *Gather* magazine is another way of supporting Women of the ELCA. Each issue contains a monthly Bible study which is already planned out in timed increments and ready for your group to use. Also, there are wonderful inspirational articles written by women of faith. *Gather* is published ten times a year with combined issues in January/February and July/August. Your print subscription comes with free access to the digital edition as well.

THRIVENT ACTION TEAM GRANT – Did you know that you can use a Thrivent Action Team grant to purchase a bulk subscription to *Gather*? Yes, you can, and you can also renew the bulk subscription each year using a Thrivent Action Team grant. The Women of the ELCA Unit at Grace and Glory Lutheran Church in Palmyra have been doing this now for three years.

INTRODUCTORY OFFER - Women of the ELCA is offering to first time subscribers a yearly subscription to *Gather* magazine for just \$9.95, their guaranteed lowest rate. You save 50%. If you already subscribe, thank you. Please consider giving a gift subscription.

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Women of the
ELCA 

To everything
there is a
season....
The flowers
appear on the
earth; the time
of the singing of
birds is come,
and the voice of
the turtle is
heard in our
land

