
2016 VSWO Project

Our keynote speaker at the 2015 convention, Rachel O'Neill, inspired us to once again help her organizations, Little Dresses for Africa, but this time with reusable 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 website. You can box up your donations so it is ready to ship. Just note the total number on the outside of your box. We hope to collect 500 sani-panties. If you have questions, contact Helen Weaver at hkweaver@comcast.net.

It is a widespread but sometimes unacknowledged problem that girls in Africa miss school and stay at home because of menstruation. Help us help them, by sewing "Sani-panties" distributed through Little Dresses for Africa. Include panties when you can!

According to [UNICEF](#), one in ten schoolgirls in Africa miss classes or drop out completely due to their period, and substitute pads or tampons for less safe and less absorbent materials such as rags, newspaper or bark.

There are many aspects that link girls' attendance rates to their menstrual cycles. Firstly, the lack of affordable sanitary products and facilities for girls and women keeps them at a disadvantage in terms of education when they are young and prevents their mobility and productivity as women. **Secondly**, the lack of clean and healthy sanitation such as toilets and running water means that girls often do not have anywhere to change or dispose of pads safely and in privacy at school. **Thirdly**, the taboo nature of menstruation prevents girls and their communities from talking about and addressing the problem; raising awareness and education to eliminate the stigma of menstruation is a large part of the battle.

UNICEF [reports](#) that "in countries where menstrual hygiene is taboo, girls in puberty are typically absent for 20% of the school year". Most girls [drop out](#) at around 11 to 12-years-old, and miss school not simply because they fear being teased by their classmates if they show stains from their period, but also because they are not educated about their periods, and their need for safe and clean facilities is not prioritized. The idea that monthly bleeding is something shameful, polluting, or taboo may also encourage girls to avoid social contact during their period. Additionally, the cultural implications of menstruation as a stage in a woman's development may be used to take girls out of school – the idea being that if a girl is ready for motherhood, then she is ready for marriage.

Menstruation is a reason for dropping out that can be added to the potential threat of sexual harassment from male teachers as girls develop. In either case, the result is girls lagging behind with schoolwork and performing badly. We have delivered these personal items to the women and young girls and they are received with joy! This is a simple and very necessary project. We'd love to have your help! We will be sending these as well as adult sized panties to the girls in Africa as part of our health education.

Little Dresses for Africa has seen the need among the young girls and women and encouraged our sewers to take part in sewing and sending what we call "sani-panties". Improvements in sanitation can go a long way to combating the problem. The distribution of these washable pads along with adult sized panties lead to very helpful discussions surrounding their use and general health. The resulting good hygiene enables the girls to manage their periods more easily. Thank you for joining us in this life-changing project.

From www.littledressesforafrica.org

President's Message ~ Lisa Taglauer

Grace and Peace to you. To be honest I never thought I would be writing this as President of the VSWO. I am intimidated as I am following in the footsteps of an awesome group of past presidents. It is an honor and it has been a bit overwhelming getting organized. I apologize that I have been slow and delayed in getting this newsletter out to you. But I am picking up steam and looking forward to a great year and excited about the plans our board has starting making as well as planning for our convention coming up in Richmond on August 5 and 6th! I hope we have a great turnout. One of the many things I look forward to is being inspired and renewed by how awesome you all are, seeing old friends and getting to make new friends. I am amazed at what a caring group of women you are and appreciate all you do for each other, your churches and those in need.

I want to share some thought on last year's convention verse. When I heard it I thought I should use that in my first newsletter. It is from 1 Timothy 1:4 – 8.

Paul says – “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God..”

A couple of things really struck me about these verses. Our faith has been handed down to us through the generations, through our grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, friends, church sisters and now you. It is up to each of us to continue to share our faith and hand it down to the next generation whether it be family, friend, church member or stranger. Second and my favorite part “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” I might, and you too may, feel like you are lacking in an area or two of those mentioned. But God has given us the spirit of power and of love and with that we can do anything. I know that the VSWO women are the most incredible, powerful women when it comes to helping people in need and showing love for those that need it the most. We are powerful! We are graced by God's love and it doesn't get any better than that! Always remember that!

I would like to thank all of you that came to our 28th Annual Convention *Bold Women Called by Christ* in Yorktown on August 14 – 15. It was a wonderful time. It is only the second time that we have held it at a church, so we are still fine tuning some things. We have read all the comments and suggestions and will hopefully be implementing a number of them at our next convention to be held at Epiphany Lutheran Church, Richmond on August 5-6, 2016. I hope to see you there. I would like to thank you the Richmond Conference for hosting us and Carol Bailey and Renee Ballentine (co-chairs of our convention planning team.) I know they are already busy at work getting things ready for us.

We really need to build up our committees – Justice, Discipleship, and Stewardship. Please read the articles about these committees and call or email the board member chairing them. Ask them how you can help. Thank you to those that serve as Conference Coordinators and planning team members. I know we are all busy and so I appreciate the time you are willing to give to serve in these positions.

Our next VSWO board meeting is March 12 in Richmond. Please send me an email or call me if you have business you would like the board to consider.

Please keep in touch and let me know what is happening in your conference and your church and with you. One of my goals is to work on doing a better job of communicating with you and we need to hear from you too. If we can help in any way let us know. I am hoping to do a monthly email blast providing you updates on what the board is doing and WELCA news. I have emails from convention, but if I don't have yours and you would like to hear from me, send me your email address. I can send a paper copy too if you give me your address (we don't want to leave anyone out that doesn't have an email).

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:4

Convention In-Kind Offering: Health Kits

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 originally 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.

Justice: *Kristen Snelgrove*

Women of the ELCA defines justice as faith in in action, addressing inequities in political, economic and social systems and as equality, impartiality, mercy and justice. We demonstrate justice by serving God, bringing healing and wholeness to the church, the society and the world. Our justice initiative had led us to raise awareness, and bring help and healing, to victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking in simplest terms is modern day slavery. Men, women and children are bought and sold into sex and labor industries by coercion or force. There are 12.3 million adults and children being forced into slavery at any given time across the world; of these, over half are women and girls.

The justice committee's role will be to provide resources to local congregations on ways to help these victims escape and heal. We will also be able to provide learning material on who these people are and how they become trapped. If this is something you would like to learn more about or if you would be interested in joining the justice committee, contact me at ksnelgrove2005@yahoo.com

2016 Convention ~ *Carol Bailey*

It's not too soon to mark your calendar for the 2016 VSWO convention to be held August 5-6 at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Richmond. The theme is "All Anew to Serve Others" with Pastor Katie Pocalyko as our convention chaplain. The Embassy Suites will house all delegates and participants. Watch for more details in upcoming Visions. Articles that explain our service projects can be found elsewhere in Visions. Assignments for conferences are listed below. If you have any questions regarding your conference assignment, please contact Carol at tcmtnest@comcast.net or 540.972.0371 or Renee Ballentine at reneedove515@gmail.com or 804.744.0246.

Richmond	Greeters at hotel and Epiphany
Central Valley	Table decorations
Southern Valley	Banner
Peninsula	Ushers for worship
Richmond, Northern Valley	Communion Assistants)
Tidewater	Lector(s)
Southern	Registration
Page	Communion elements
Germana	Pages for elections

Stewardship ~ *Edith Blake and Ellen Greene*

What is stewardship? It is about more than money, but it is also about money. Our use of money and possessions are important in our discipleship as followers of Jesus. Steward comes from the Anglo Saxon term "sty warden" who was a keeper of the pig sty. The term has come to mean anyone who is the keeper of another person's possessions. It is our responsibility to take care of and use wisely the blessings God has given us. They include our time, attention, physical health, energy, talents, possessions, attitudes, relationships and money. Therefore, we need to include sharing of our financial resources, as well as our time and talents to support the ministry of Women of the ELCA.

Think how stewardship colors our life's entire decision making process and how an "attitude of gratitude" might prosper our organization and how we can inspire generosity in others. When you invite people into stewardship, you are inviting them into the will of God for the world, as revealed in scriptures. We are called to be the body of Christ in the world which includes sharing our blessings received from God and doing God's will. Stewardship is both corporate and individual. We are also called to care for what God has entrusted to us. What can you do to protect our earth?

As you consider stewardship and what it means to you, look at the following scriptures and consider what God is calling us to do: Matthew 6:25-33, Psalm 51:10-12, Mark 4:37-41, John 13: 34-35 and Philippians 4:11-13.

There is also an activity you can do at home called "Stewardship Stew." If you go to the ELCA website and type the words Stewardship Stew in the search box, it will bring up this activity you can do at home.

Please keep stewardship in your prayers and pray about what you will share with the Women of the ELCA, your time, talents and treasures.

Discipleship: *Linda Lowry*

Discipleship is a lifelong journey of living out and spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our spiritual growth happens in communities – be it in our houses, congregations, schools or anywhere that people share their experiences of God.

Women of the ELCA are active disciples in many ways. They practice the seven marks of discipleship: praying, studying, worshipping, inviting, encouraging, serving and giving. Whether it is making quilts, health and school kits for Lutheran World Relief, studying the Bible together, or assisting in worship, they grow in faith and share what they've learned with friends and neighbors.

Encouraging Booklet of Advice

This year the VSWO board has agreed to compile and print an “Encouraging Booklet of Advice”, for our young women who are beginning a new path in their lives, whether it is graduating from high school, college, or becoming a new bride.

As a member of the Spiritual Growth/Discipleship committee I encourage you to explore, discuss, and share your faith with one another. Help us by sending encouraging advise, bible verses, poems, and short stories that would help young women just beginning their journey in life.

One way to help you do this is to have your unit read the book “And One More Thing Before You Go” by Maria Shriver. According to Shriver, graduating from high school is a big step for any girl. She is leaving her childhood behind and beginning the rest of her life. She is also leaving her mother's protective circle of love and guidance. One of the greatest gifts a mother can give her daughter at this pivotal moment in her life is good counsel. After reading the book or sections of it, discuss your thoughts and feelings at one of your meetings. You can also share your thoughts on the VSWO Facebooks public discussion page. We want to publish this booklet by convention time so gather your “advice and encouragement”, and send it to me by May 1,2016 at: Linda Lowry, 920 Waterside Dr., Stanley, Va. 22851

I invite you to help with this project and join our committee. I would also appreciate any thoughts or suggestions that would help us spread the Good News. Contact me at Llowry5@embarqmail.com.

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

Attention Unit Treasurers ~ Peggy Baseler, VSWO Treasurer

Bold Women Called by Christ was our theme for our 28th Annual Convention of the VSWO held at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Yorktown this past August. Our Bold Women collected \$2,521.50 for the Love Offering which was equally divided between Little Dresses for Africa and a local outreach which was Natasha's House. For our convention offering we received \$1,384.50 of which half was sent to WELCA in Chicago.



Our Young Women Guest Program had a balance of \$351.43 at the beginning of Feb. 2015. We received \$558.00 thru registrations and a gift in the memory of Georgie Tyer. We covered the costs of 3 young women guest (Melissa Lowry, Karen Meyer and Molly Beyer) and still have a balance of \$437.36 towards our next convention.

We started a new fund which is "Betty Wilson Triennial Scholarship Fund" this year. Because of Bold Women like you, it now has a balance of \$1,750.00.

My term as VSWO treasurer ends January 31, 2016. Your new treasurer, Edith Blake, will take office Feb. 1, 2016. We thank her for coming forward at our convention to lend her talents to the VSWO.

It has been a true blessing to have been your treasurer. When I retired from 37 years of banking in Dec. 2013, I accepted this position and thought that it would be a good transition from full time employment to retirement. I have grown spiritually from working with such a great bunch of women, your VSWO Board. I have learned Quick Books, which was easier than I thought it would be, and have been in contact with some amazing treasurers both locally in Virginia and throughout the U. S. The Women of the E.L.C.A. started a "Facebook" account for all the active synodical treasurers which has been a big help.

As I complete my term I hope that you will remember me as "The M & M Treasurer." At the last 2 conventions there has been a basket of M & M's with the sign "MONEY MATTERS in MINISTRY AND MISSION" God bless all of you BOLD WOMEN.

From the new Treasurer ~ Edith Blake

Let me take a few minutes to introduce myself. My name is Edith Blake and I am the new treasurer for the VSWO. Some of you may remember that I previously served on the board as chair of Mission: Action, Convention Planning and Secretary. I attend St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Portsmouth and participate in the Busy Sees at Holy Communion in Portsmouth. I am ending a term on my church council where I have been secretary for the past two years. My husband and I have been married for thirty-five years and lived in Virginia for thirty-two years. I am a retired education secretary.

I am looking forward to serving as treasurer and getting to know unit treasurers across the Synod. I will also be serving as co-chair of the stewardship committee with Ellen Greene. If you would be interested in serving with us, please contact me at 3377 Brandywine Drive, Chesapeake, VA 23321 or EJBWWB@aol.com

I also encourage you to subscribe to Gather magazine and check out the online web-based magazine Café.

Gather offers a mix of articles, theological reflections, devotions and stories of comfort and challenge that help readers grow in faith and engage in ministry and action. Gather is published 10 times a year with combined issues in January/February and July/August. Many women (and enlightened men) in Lutheran and full-communion partners read the magazine.

VSWO Conference Coordinators ~ *Bonnie Mantta*

My name is Bonnie Mantta and I am the new VSWO Synodical Conference Coordinator. I have reviewed the reports that have been received. There are several conferences that had gatherings in 2014, but have not sent in a report for 2015. Please forward your report to me at 944 State St, Chesapeake, VA 23323. I plan on providing you with updates about the VSWO, as well as other conferences. I would appreciate any input you can provide. My email is bonniemantta@gmail.com

News from Women of the ELCA

Our Mission Statement: Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ

In an article by Eva James Yeo (Director for Membership, WELCA) she challenges us to consider how we might mobilize the next generation of girls, young adults and women of all ages to become part of the our women's organization. Think about how we can transform and grow not only our local units but the VSWO and the Women of the ELCA.

Be open to new ideas. Personally invite all women in your congregation to be a part of your group.

Here are some ideas generated at the Ninth Triennial Gathering Workshop, Streets to live in: A WELCA model. Is your group interested in transforming these ideas into a new ministry or project?

- Sponsor a first-time participant at the triennial gathering
- Befriend college girls as "grandmothers away from home"
- Pair up intergenerational prayer partners
- Build on intergenerational relationships through ministry
- Begin an outreach to new moms, especially those who are single
- Start an after-school program
- Have after-work groups that younger women can attend
- Highlight a WELCA resource of the month – I love this idea.
- Continue to lift up human trafficking information (www.welca.org/humantrafficking)

Don't forget Bold Women's Day is the fourth Sunday in February – Feb. 28 this year. That is the suggested date but celebrate it when you can fit in to your calendar. You can find resources at womenoftheelca.org/BWD

The Women of the ELCA Executive Board approved the 2020 convention to be held in Phoenix, AZ. The 2023 convention will be held in Spokane, Washington.

Other action the board approved:

Approved the 2017 triennial convention budget (\$943,110) and triennial gathering budget (\$1,107,500)

Installed Anissa Canova, Gouldsboro, PA (Northeastern PA SWO) as a new board member

Elected new executive committee members – Deborah Banks-Williams, Lois Bylund and Gwendolyn King.

Approved a policy against electioneering.

Approved a request from the Southeastern Michigan Synodical Women's Organization to revise its constitution to reduce the size of its board from eight to six. (hmm, somebody had the same idea as me)

Electioneering Policy – The policy applies to the election processes around the Tenth Triennial Convention (2017) including the election of voting members to the convention and the election of churchwide officers and board members. “We live in a different world today, however, where social media permeates all that we do. Women must be cautious in their use of social media so that they don’t run afoul of the policy against electioneering.”

Note: I have written to the churchwide office and asked them if the policy has been posted to their website. If anyone would like to see the policy it was in the Winter 2016 Interchange or call or email me. - Lisa



All Anew is the theme for the Women of the ELCA’s Tenth Triennial Gathering in Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 13 – 16, 2017. The theme is supported by several biblical texts that speak of renewal.

The logo is in the joyful, organic shape of a butterfly or is it a flower? It represents transformation and growth. Splashes of color honoring the four elements (earth, water, fire, air) spill outside the lines to create an uplifting symbol that is bright, bold and vibrant.

Start saving!

Women of the ELCA: A Place For You

Get to know the mission and ministries of Women of the ELCA with this booklet. Perfect for new members and outreach efforts. This printed booklet is available from the e-store in English and Spanish. You can share "**A Place For You**" as a PowerPoint (En español) with women in your congregation and beyond. Questions can be addressed to Eva Yeo 800-638-3522, ext. 2450 Eva.Yeo@elca.org.

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PLEASE PRAY for me and all the WELCA Presidents...

As we travel to the Annual Conference of Presidents, February 19 – 21 in Chicago, IL. Our theme is *The Ripple Effect* and the scripture is Amos 5:24. There will be 64 synodical presidents and six executive board members meeting together. I will provide a report in the Visions.

Churchwide WELCA will be collecting gift cards (Visa, Target, Walmart for a local human trafficking safe house. If you would like to send it to me before Feb. 18, I will take them with me. *Lisa*

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