

The Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention  
of the  
Virginia Synodical Women's Organization  
of the Women of the ELCA



**July 26-27, 2024**  
**Our Saviour's Lutheran-Norge**  
**Williamsburg, Virginia**



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## VSWO Convention Schedule

*(All times are approximate. Schedule changes will be announced.)*

### Friday, July 26, 2024

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 11:00am–12:30pm   | Registration (Fellowship Hall)   |
| 11:45 am–12:30 pm | Lunch (Fellowship Hall)  |
| 12:30pm–12:45pm   | Transition to Sanctuary for Opening Worship  |
| 12:45pm–1:45pm    | Opening Worship with Holy Communion (Sanctuary)<br>Welcome/Land Acknowledgment<br>Greetings from Bishop Milton<br>Introductions  |
| 1:45–2:00pm       | Return to the Fellowship Hall  |
| 2:00pm            | <b>Awareness Session #1 - Encircle</b>   |
| 3:00pm            | <b>Business Session #1 for ALL</b><br><br>Opening of Convention/Purpose Statement<br>Report of Credentials Committee<br>Appointment of Parliamentarian and Convention Committees<br>Adoption of Rules of Procedure and Convention Schedule<br>Nominations for Officers and Board Members<br>Resolutions to the Secretary |
| 3:30pm            | Break – 15 minutes   |
| 3:45pm            | <b>Business Session #2 for All</b><br><br>Greetings from Churchwide Representative<br>Treasurer's Report for Proposed Budget and Audit<br>Introductions of Nominees<br><br><i>Participants are dismissed to attend the planned activity</i>  |
| 4:15pm            | <b>Business Session #2 for Voting Members (continues)</b><br><br>Election of Officers/Board Members<br>Officer's Reports<br>Conference Coordinator's Report<br>Adoption of Proposed Budget<br>Report of the Elections  |
| 5:15pm            | Break  |
| 6:30pm–7:30pm     | Banquet  |
| 7:30pm            | Entertainment  |
| 8:30pm            | Short Evening Devotion   |

## Saturday, July 27, 2024

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 7:00am          | Breakfast at the Hotel   |
| 8:15am          | Registration for one-day participants  |
| 8:30am          | Opening Music in Fellowship Hall<br>Opening Prayer   |
| 8:45am          | <b>Business Session #3 for ALL</b><br><br>Report of the Committee on Minutes<br>Report of the Committee on Claims<br>Report of Reference and Counsel/Reading of Resolutions<br>Adoption of Resolutions<br>Repeat Announcement of Election Results<br>Report of Offerings<br>Katie's Fund Report<br>Thrivent Report<br>Roanoke College Scholarship Report<br>Communications Report: Visions<br>Any unfinished business from Friday sessions |
| 9:15am-10:15am  | <b>Awareness Session #2 – Healthier Minds</b>  |
| 10:15am         | Stretch Break  |
| 10:30am         | 2024 Service Project Report<br>Presentation of Love Offering<br>Introduce 2025 Service Project<br>Report of 2025 Convention Planning<br>Report of Long-Range Planning Team<br>Promotion of 2024 All Lutheran Women's Retreat   |
| 11:00am-12:00pm | <b>Awareness Session #3 – Latisha's House</b>  |
| 12:00pm-12:15pm | Preparation for Closing Worship  |
| 12:15pm- 1:00pm | Holden Evening Prayer<br><br>Closing of Convention<br>Installation of Newly Elected Officers/Board Members<br><br>Directions for Lunch   |
| 1:00pm- 2:00pm  | LUNCH  |

## Opening of Convention

*By Edith Blake*

**Leader:** Let us say together the purpose statement of the Women of the ELCA

**All:** As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.

**Leader:** Let us recite our convention scripture together 2 Timothy 1:6.

**All:** 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.

**Leader:** and verse 7

**All:** For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

**Leader:** I now declare the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Virginia Synodical Women's Convention open.

## Who's Who

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Convention Chaplain.....                 | Rev. Jennifer Osheim-Owen                                      |
| CWO Representative .....                 | Gwen Edwards   |
| Convention Site Coordinator .....        | Diane Priestley  |
| Convention Registrar/Visions Editor..... | Jody Smiley  |
| Convention Planning .....                | Nicole Ocheltree, Chair<br>Pat Seelenbinder<br>Diane Priestley |
| Parliamentarian.....                     | Helen Weaver   |
| Worship Planning.....                    | Linda Hawks , Lavelva Stevens<br>Rev. Jennifer Osheim-Owen     |
| Song Leader.....                         | Alli Beck  |

**Convention Theme:** “Stir up the gift of God which is in us”

**Convention Scripture:** 2 Timothy 1:6-7

**Convention Hymns:** “God of Grace and God of Glory”  
“Here I Am Lord”

## Purpose of the Convention

- To conduct the business of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization;
- To interpret and provide suggestions for congregational/intercongregational or special units, through their voting member, for the achievement of the purposes of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA);
- To provide a variety of learning experiences to strengthen each woman to value their self, to build up and celebrate relationships, and to articulate and act upon their faith; and
- To provide fellowship, and worship as we celebrate 37 years of rejoicing with bold women.

## Women of the ELCA Mission Statement

To mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ

## Women of the ELCA Purpose Statement

**As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.**

## **Worship & Offerings**

Micah Ministries is the recipient of the 2024 Love Offering. The worship offering will go to the Virginia Synodical Women of the ELCA.

## **Voting Member Travel Expenses**

- Voting members' attendance at all business sessions is a prerequisite to payment of travel expenses.
- Voting members shall submit vouchers to the Committee on Claims by end of Business Session 2.
- Travel vouchers shall be paid by the Committee on Claims and distributed by close of convention.
- If public transportation is used, the least expensive shall be employed. If private transportation is used, reimbursement shall be at a rate of 15 cents per mile per vehicle. Tolls for turnpikes or tunnels are not allowable.
- Each unit, whether represented or not, shall be asked to contribute \$35 to the Fair Share Travel Fund.
- Only voting members whose units have paid the 2024 contribution to the Fair Share Travel Fund prior to July 26 are eligible to receive travel expense checks.

## **Rules of Procedure for the Convention**

### **Representation**

Article VI, Section 2: Item 1: Voting members of a convention shall be the elected officers or Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) leaders and board members of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO) and one voting member from each unit on the roll of the VSWO.

### **Seat and Voice**

The following shall have seat and voice (no voting privileges) in the convention:

- Those congregations not represented by a unit shall be invited to send one representative to the convention;
- Bishop of the Synod or their representative;
- Churchwide Women's Organization (CWO) Representative; and
- Others to whom the voting body shall give this privilege

### **Voting Members**

- Shall attend voting member orientation.
- Shall be promptly seated during the convention before the start of all business sessions.
- Shall be registered before being seated in the area reserved for the voting body.
- Shall wear badges at all business meetings.
- Shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with the Fair Share Travel Fund.
- Shall not absent themselves from the convention without permission of the President.
- Shall report to the Registrar should an emergency require departure from the meeting and relinquish badge. The alternate, if present, shall be re-registered as a voting member.

## **Speeches**

Speeches shall be limited to two (2) minutes unless otherwise determined by two-thirds vote of the convention.

## **Elections**

Vice President and Secretary (both 2-year term), three (3) Board Members (2-year terms each) and one (1) Board Member (1-year term)

## **Motions and Resolutions**

- Any voting member may make a motion which is germane to any pending question.
- Resolutions of a general nature shall be written on the form provided, signed by two voting members and submitted to the VSWO Secretary by Friday, July 26 by end of Business Session #1. Resolutions will be received by the Secretary and referred to the Committee on Reference and Counsel.
- Each voting member who offers a resolution shall be given an opportunity to explain it to the Committee on Reference and Counsel.

## **Parliamentary Procedures**

Robert Rules of Order (R.R.), latest edition, shall be the governing parliamentary law of the convention in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are consistent with the Constitution and Bylaws of the VSWO.

## **Addressing the Assembly**

- Each voting member should stand, address the chair ("MadamePresident"), state their name and congregation, and receive "recognition from the chair" and then proceed. (R.R.)
- All comments should be directed to the "chair." (R.R.)

## **Limitations on Debate**

- Each voting member may speak twice on the same question on the same day, but should not make a second speech on the same question so long as any voting member who has not spoken on that question desires the floor. (R.R.)
- Any voting member, feeling that debate should be stopped, may request the convention to do so by obtaining the floor and moving the "previous question." If this is seconded and convention decides by a two-thirds vote in favor, then debate is stopped and the vote is taken on the pending question. (R.R.)
- Calls for "questions" by members are not motions for the Previous. They are simply informal expressions of individual members' desires to proceed to a vote. These calls are disorderly if made while another member is speaking or seeking recognition. (R.R.)



Blessings to each of you, my siblings in Christ!

I bring you greetings from your churchwide executive board, representing all of you as we continue to breathe new life into the bones of our beloved Women of the ELCA. You are part of this revitalization, and I give thanks for each of you, and for your congregational units, your conferences and clusters, and your synodical women's organizations. As you convene in your annual or biennial synodical women's conventions, know that you are being lifted up in prayer by the leadership of your executive board.

Your conventions involve more than transacting necessary business. They are also opportunities to be inspired by the messages of clergy and gifted speakers and to be challenged by issues facing our neighbors and our communities, including immigration, human trafficking, and racism. You also celebrate accomplishments, make new friends, and reconnect with old. You eat together, pray together, laugh together, grow in faith together. And you leave re-energized to continue our mission and ministry. You are bold Women of the ELCA!

Thank you for being the face of Christ as we learn to dismantle actions that exclude our siblings from feeling welcomed, included, and heard. Each of you are ambassadors of God's Just Love.

Together, we are the women's ministry arm of our ELCA. God has called us into this work. I pray you will feel the call, and the power of the Holy Spirit, as you gather together. I walk with you on this journey.

With Just Love,



Myrna Wells-Ulland  
President, 2023-2026 Triennium  
Women of the ELCA

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[womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org)

## 2023-2024 Virginia Synodical Women's Organization Executive Board

| Officers--term expiring 2024   | Officers –term expiring 2025  |
|--|---|
| <b>Vice-President</b><br>Sylvia Eley<br>417 Meadow Creek Drive<br>Chesapeake, VA 23323<br>Email: <a href="mailto:seley2005@msn.com">seley2005@msn.com</a><br>Phone: 757-582-0966<br>Church: St. Timothy/ Norfolk<br>Conference: Tidewater<br>Mission Justice/VA Synod Tapestry Team        | <b>President</b><br>Lavelva Stevens<br>1369 Beth Scott Dr.<br>Pulaski, VA 24301<br>Phone: 540-320-3369<br>Email: <a href="mailto:lstevens01@verizon.net">lstevens01@verizon.net</a><br>Church: Holy Trinity/Wytheville<br>Conference: Highlands                                   |
| <b>Secretary</b><br>JoAnn Fawley<br>6409 W. Old Mountain Rd.<br>Louisa, VA 23093<br>Email: <a href="mailto:fawley6409@gmail.com">fawley6409@gmail.com</a><br>Phone: 703-727-7957<br>Church: All Places Together/on-line<br>Conference: Germanna<br>Social Media Manager/Long Term Planning | <b>Treasurer</b><br>Jody Smiley<br>901 Brattle Lane<br>Blacksburg, VA 24060<br>Phone: 540-250-6149<br>Email: <a href="mailto:jdsmlly29@comcast.net">jdsmlly29@comcast.net</a><br>Church: St. Michael/Blacksburg<br>Conference: New River<br>Convention Registrar/Visions Editor   |
| Board Members – term expiring 2024   | Board Members – term expiring 2025  |
| Nicole Ocheltree<br>63 Valley View Dr.<br>Mt. Sidney, VA 24467<br>Email: <a href="mailto:wldptch@yahoo.com">wldptch@yahoo.com</a><br>Church: Salem/Mt. Sidney<br>Conference: Southern Valley<br>Convention Planning, Chair   | Carol Bailey<br>12706 Cavalryman Ct.<br>Fredericksburg, VA 22407<br>Phone: 571-438-0273<br>Email: <a href="mailto:cobailey42@gmail.com">cobailey42@gmail.com</a><br>Church: Resurrection/Fredericksburg<br>Conference: Germanna<br>VSWO Conference Coordinator/Long Term Planning |
| Diane Priestley<br>116 Norman Davis Dr.<br>Toano, VA 23168<br>Email: <a href="mailto:dmp625@aol.com">dmp625@aol.com</a><br>Church: Our Saviour's Lutheran-Norge<br>Conference: Peninsula<br>Mission Discipleship/Convention Planning   | Teresa Bowers<br>11 Caroway Drive<br>Fredericksburg, VA 22405<br>Email: <a href="mailto:ctbowers@cox.net">ctbowers@cox.net</a><br>Church: Christ/Fredericksburg<br>Conference: Germanna<br>Mission Discipleship/Micah Ministries Liaison  |
| Patricia Seelenbinder<br>1605 Pennywhistle Arch<br>Virginia Beach, VA 23464<br>Email: <a href="mailto:pmseelen@cox.net">pmseelen@cox.net</a><br>Church: Emmanuel/Virginia Beach<br>Conference: Tidewater<br>Mission Discipleship/Convention Planning                                       | Ashley Saunders<br>420 Acme Company St.<br>Broadway, VA 22815<br>Email: <a href="mailto:saunders@muhlenberglutheran.org">saunders@muhlenberglutheran.org</a><br>Church: Muhlenberg/Harrisonburg<br>Conference: Southern Valley<br>Mission Justice                                 |
| Dona Jenkins<br>St. John Lutheran Church/Abingdon<br>Web Master  |   |

## **SPECIAL GUESTS**



**Gwendolynn Edwards**  
**Secretary, Churchwide Executive Board**

Gwendolynn Edwards was elected secretary of the executive board of Women of the ELCA in September 2023. She serves on the constitution review committee and executive committee. Gwendolynn has served on the board of Nebraska Women of the ELCA (4A) first as vice president, then president, and recently as treasurer.

A member of Lord of Love Lutheran Church in Omaha, Neb., she is a member of the handbell choir and an active member of her Bible study group. She has served her congregational unit in many positions throughout the years and a variety of roles within her church.

Gwendolynn serves the Nebraska Synod as the Synod Council Secretary and previously as parliamentarian at synod assemblies. She is a member of the ELCA Nominating Committee.

She volunteers with Boy Scouts in their Scouts BSA Troops and on the council level as an assistant council commissioner. Gwen has worked for National Indemnity Company for nearly 38 years. She currently works in the infrastructure department.

Gwendolynn and her husband, John, celebrated their thirtieth anniversary in 2023. They are the proud parents of Aaron who is attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and employed at a local Y branch in Lincoln as the Program Director-Youth, Teen, and Family. She is an avid bowler and travels to participate in national tournaments.



**Convention Chaplain**  
**The Rev. Jennifer Osheim-Owen, BCC**  
**Williamsburg Landing**  
**Williamsburg, VA**

Pastor Jennifer grew up in southeast Wisconsin is a life-long Lutheran. She attended Valparaiso University, majoring in German and Political Science. Following college, she worked as a Nanny outside of NYC and as an Intern for a Senator in Washington, DC. After moving back to Wisconsin she worked in a variety of positions from Office Manager to Customer Service positions. She attended Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN and was ordained in March 2001; over the last 23 years, she has served in a variety of Synods as both the settled Pastor and as a trained Interim Pastor. In 2016, Pastor Jennifer left congregational ministry to do a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) Residency with Lutheran Senior Services in St. Louis, MO. From 2017 – 2023, she served as the Chaplain with Friendship Haven, Fort Dodge, IA. While there she collaborated with local clergy to provide weekly mid-week worship, Bible studies, VBS and other programming for the Residents. In 2023 she accepted a position with Williamsburg Landing, Williamsburg, VA as one of their Chaplains.

Pastor Jennifer has lived throughout the country as well as spending considerable time in Germany and Zimbabwe. She and her husband live in Yorktown, VA and enjoy traveling and exploring where the road-trip takes them.



**Amy Barbour**  
**Director of Foster Care**  
**Encircle**

Amy has always had a love for children and is very passionate about working with children and families and has always worked with them in some capacity for over 25 years. Like many teenage girls, Amy began babysitting for family friends and then became the neighborhood babysitter. Amy wanted to pursue a career where she could help children grow and thrive in their families and overcome obstacles in their life. Her career started with working with young children who had physical and intellectual disabilities. She became familiar with children in foster care when working at a youth emergency shelter and meeting children who were recently separated from their family. Amy has spent the majority of her career with EnCircle, formerly Lutheran Family Services, working as both a foster care and adoption worker and manager in our domestic Treatment Foster Care program and more recently, helping to create and develop our two immigrant foster care programs. Amy is currently the Director of Foster Care and oversees EnCircle's three foster care programs, located in Richmond and Newport News.



**Laura Williams**  
**Program Manager**  
**Encircle**

Laura began her career working for the New England Center for Autism, before becoming a Program Manager for a group home in Massachusetts. She then moved to Virginia and became a Child Welfare worker for Newport News Department of Human Services. She worked for Newport News Department of Human Services for four years before transitioning to EnCircle (formerly Lutheran Family Services) as a foster care worker. Laura has been employed by EnCircle for 27 years having worked several years with the agency's foster to adoption program, but primarily supporting youth and families as a foster care worker and then Supervisor/Program Manager for treatment foster care. More recently Laura has become the Program Manager for the agency's Long Term Foster care program which helps to place unaccompanied youth in foster homes when they have not been able to be placed with a sponsor after crossing the border. Laura desires to spread the word about the need for foster families and to dispel the myths about fostering teenage youth. She hopes to connect families and children with resources in the community that will help our teens feel secure and comfortable as they move toward adulthood.



**Alejandra Upton**  
**Licensing and Recruitment Specialist**  
**Encircle**

Originally from Ecuador, Alejandra moved to the US in 2014. She has a Bachelor in Women's Studies from Old Dominion University. Her previous experience was in the public school system as a Family Engagement Specialist for families that are newcomers and do not speak English. She is a Licensing and Recruitment Specialist for Long-Term Foster Care with EnCircle. This new program recruits foster families for immigrant children who cross the border by themselves. The ultimate goal is reunification with their families, back in their country of origin or the U.S. Alejandra works with the communities in Hampton Roads, finding local resources and community partners. In addition, she recruits foster parents and walks them through the licensing process.



**Elizabeth Ameling**  
**Founder & Executive Director**  
**Latisha's House**  
[elizabeth@latishashouse.com](mailto:elizabeth@latishashouse.com)

With over 15 years of experience, Elizabeth works with women who are at risk and who have been victims of sexual exploitation. Mrs. Ameling also participates in stings with law enforcement; she works closely with victim advocates including from Homeland Security, the FBI, local police, and anti-trafficking organizations. As a certified traumatologist by the Center for Trauma Studies at Regent University, and the American Green Cross she brings a trauma informed approach to victims of sex trafficking, and to members of the community in her trainings and public awareness talks.



**Heidi Wallace, CTSS**  
**Director of Programs and Outreach**  
**Latisha's House**  
[Heidi@latishashouse.com](mailto:Heidi@latishashouse.com)

Heidi brings a wealth of experience and dedication to her role, having served in state services for nearly 25 years. Her focus on at-risk adolescent and teen girls demonstrates a deep commitment to supporting vulnerable populations. With a degree in Human Services and Social Work, along with certification as a Certified Trauma Support Specialist from the Arizona Trauma Institute, Heidi is well-equipped to address the complex needs of trauma survivors.

Continuing her professional development, Heidi has embraced the HEART model of trauma-informed training and received training through the Sexual Exploitation Treatment and Training Services (SETTS). These efforts underscore her ongoing dedication to learning and implementing best practices in trauma support.

Heidi's passion lies in both educating the community about the impact of sex trafficking and working directly with survivors. She finds fulfillment in helping individuals heal from trauma, guiding them to set goals, and supporting them in achieving positive futures. Her work not only addresses immediate needs but also empowers survivors to envision and work towards hopeful outcomes.



**Dawn Murray, Art Teacher  
Cornerstone Christian School  
Harrisonburg, VA**

Dawn Murray is an Art teacher who enjoys working with artists of all ages. She has provided creative consulting and training for childcare providers, homeschooling co-ops, parents and educators for over 20 years.

From 2016 through 2020 she owned and operated the Village Arts Center in Broadway, VA. Currently, she teaches Art at Cornerstone Christian School for grades Pre-K through 11. When she's not teaching in a traditional classroom, she enjoys providing creative workshops for private parties, team building, retreats and fellowship events.

## Report of the President

*Lavelva Stevens*

The Virginia Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA (VSWO) is a "community of women, created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit." We "commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world." Any woman who is a member of an ELCA church is automatically a participant in the Women of the ELCA.

Our 2024 convention theme, "Stir up the gift of God which is in us" is so indicative of what we as women of the ELCA strive to do. Reflecting on our Scripture passage from 2 Timothy, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control", I see this carried out in very many ways.

All of our board members work hard in their daily lives and they have also committed to working hard for our VSWO. I know we have many women in this organization across the state who give countless hours for meeting together for fellowship, Bible study and wonderful service projects that support their churches and communities. I applaud everyone for this faithful service!

I know Micah Ministries has felt our support all throughout this past year, and I commend everyone who has participated in our Amazon-Wish-List approach to caring for this ministry in Fredericksburg. I hope we can support Latisha's House in the same way for this coming year.

Our elected delegates enjoyed attending the Women of the ELCA (WELCA) Triennial Convention held in September in Phoenix. They were: Sylvia Eley, Pat Seelenbinder, and Jody Smiley, who attended along with me, serving as our president. The WELCA Gathering took place following the convention. Linda Hawks joined us for the Gathering. Nearly 800 women from across the United States attended this event.

I want to thank Sylvia Eley, who has faithfully served, and is ending her tenure as our Vice-President, and whom I have enjoyed getting to know these past 4 or 5 years that we have served together on the board. Judy Castele served as our Treasurer through January 31 of this year, and I am very grateful that she agreed to help us out in this capacity.

I thank all of our board members: JoAnn Fawley, Secretary; Sylvia Eley, Vice-President; Jody Smiley, who became Treasurer on February 1st of this year and who has been keeping us informed and enlightened through Visions and her weekly Happy Monday emails; and Carol Bailey, Pat Seelenbinder, Diane Priestly, Teresa Bowers, Nicole Ocheltree, and Ashley Saunders, who have been working hard to carry out numerous duties to help make our convention run smoothly and to 'help bring about healing and wholeness' to the world around us.

We are fortunate to be able to hear from our new bishop, the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Milton, and we are so proud to have her attend. She is the first female bishop, and the first African American Bishop in the history of the Virginia Synod, ELCA.

I especially want to thank and acknowledge our hostesses this year from Our Saviour's. These ladies have been so very gracious and willing to help us with everything we need for this convention.

Let us continue to 'support each other in our callings' as we come together at Our Saviour's, so we can be renewed and refreshed to go out and serve in our home congregations!

The board recommends:

1. That the convention Rules of Procedure be adopted as printed in the Bulletin of Reports with any necessary corrections.
2. That the Program of the Thirty-sixth Annual Convention of the VSWO be adopted as printed in the Bulletin of Reports, with any necessary changes.
3. That the Auditor's Report be accepted as printed.
4. That the VSWO Budget for 2025- 2026 be adopted as presented by the Board.

## **Report of the Vice President and Report of Mission: Justice**

*Sylvia Eley*

This is a bittersweet time. As my time as a VSWO Board Member and Vice President end, I reflect upon the last two quarters works.

As a Tapestry Team Member and Co-leader of the Quarterly Justice Threads, I created a PowerPoint for Black History Month which was also presented on the VSWO website and submitted an article about my work in Human Trafficking which can also be seen on the VSWO website.

It brings me much joy to serve the Lord with opening devotion for each board meeting. These devotions are written with purpose directed at any current events, convention themes, or VSWO missions. It has truly been my pleasure to share devotions that provide encouragement, inspiration, motivation, love.

March is dedicated to Women's History Month. Articles representing Women's issues were presented by myself and Ashley Saunders, while Teresa Bowers wrote about homelessness. I wrote about advocating for victims of human trafficking.

For many years, The ELCA has been involved in ending human trafficking as well as tending to survivors. There are many resources available on the ELCA website that provide valuable information on the subject. Let us all work together to bring about change by educating, advocating, and collaborating with your congregation to get involved.

Psalm 82:3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.

<https://elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Justice-for-Women/Social-Issues/Human-Trafficking>

Ashley Saunders, an advocate for LGBTQIA+ inclusion reminds us as women and more importantly as Christians, to practice the radical inclusion of Christ, this can be as easy as adding your pronouns to your email signature or introducing yourself and stating your pronouns. Take some time to learn about the trans and non-binary experience. Make a commitment to practicing radical love and inclusion with your trans and non-binary siblings.

Mark 12:30-31 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-evangelical-lutheran-church-in-america>

Teresa Bowers, the Health Innovation Navigator of Micah Ecumenical Ministries, is spearheading the VSWO 2024 Service Project. Micah's mission is assisting the homeless community in finding housing and taking all the steps involved in that process. Through the generosity of the church community, those in need are provided with basic furniture and household items needed to set up housekeeping.

MATTHEW 25:40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

<https://micahfredericksburg.org/>

Being able to serve with such resolute ladies who share the same values, acceptance, and love, is a real blessing.

Participating in so many activities, conventions, leadership roles and planning committees; summing up the past seven years is hard and saying goodbye is harder but, I send love to all and best wishes on the future endeavors of the organization.

To God be the Glory. Peace, love, and blessings to all.

## **Report of the Secretary and Social Media Manager**

*JoAnn Fawley*

I have served as secretary from 2022-2024. As Secretary, I record the minutes at board meetings, prepare the Call to Convention, and the Bulletin of Reports/Supplement for the annual convention. After the convention, I submit the appropriate reports to the Women of the ELCA Churchwide office. I work closely with the President to carry out other duties as needed. As Social Media Manager, I work to keep the VSWO social media pages current.

## **Report of the Treasurer -- February 2024-January 2025**

*Submitted by Jody Smiley, Treasurer*

The term of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO) treasurer is based on the church fiscal year. My term as the VSWO treasurer began February 2024 and will continue through January 2026.

When I began my term, I reached out to the unit treasurers. They have been very helpful during my transition period. Please if you know of units or churches that would like to have active units, please contact me or any of our board members. We would love to meet with these groups and provide information about the VSWO and Women of the ELCA.

As Judy Castele so wonderfully put it in her report last year "God has richly blessed us. We stand on the shoulders of the women who came before us. May we, in return, commit to leaving a legacy of a vibrant organization for the generations to follow." Please consider increasing your giving (if even a little) to your congregational unit or make an individual gift to the VSWO. Encourage other women in your units to do the same. These funds not only impact the ministries of the VSWO but also the churchwide organization. We send 55% of all regular congregational and convention offerings to Women of the ELCA.

Another way you can assist the ministries of the VSWO and churchwide is to have conference gatherings. These are a great way to introduce women and congregations to the work of the women's organization. Have a gathering, provide information about how to become an active unit, and take up an offering to share with the VSWO.

Below is my contact information if have any questions about offerings or how your offerings are used.

Jody Smiley  
VSWO Treasurer  
901 Brattle Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
Jdsmiley29@comcast.net

In grateful service,

*Jody*

Jody Smiley

# **Audit Report**

## **February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024**

**June 4, 2024**

**Virginia Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the  
ELCA c/o Jody Smiley, Treasurer  
901 Battle Lane  
Blacksburg, VA 24060**

To Whom it May Concern:

An audit committee was appointed by the VSWO board. The committee consisted of Erin Hagar, Susan Bain, and Ellen Gunter. All members of Trinity Lutheran Church's congregational unit in Pulaski, VA.

The committee reviewed the documentation provided by Jody Smiley and Judy Castelee. This documentation included bank statements, VSWO Excel Spreadsheet Ledger, deposit slips, and expense voucher forms. After a thorough review the committee found no irregularities.

Sincerely,  
Erin Hagar  
Susan Bain  
Ellen Gunter

**Virginia Synodical Women's Organization**  
**Profit & Loss**  
**February 1, 2023 – January 31, 2024**

|  | <b>Budget</b>   | <b>Actual</b>   |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Income</b>                          |                 |                 |
| <b>Offerings</b>                       |                 |                 |
| Conference Gathering                   | 1600.00         | 695.00          |
| Congregational Units                   | 6450.00         | 3521.98         |
| <b>Total regular offerings</b>         | 8050.00         | 4216.98         |
| <b>Convention Offerings</b>            |                 |                 |
| Convention offering (undesignated)     | 1700.00         | 1211.00         |
| Designated (Love offering)             | 1400.00         | 1513.00         |
| <b>Total convention offerings</b>      | 3100.00         | 2724.00         |
| <b>Other income</b>                    |                 |                 |
| Betty Wilson (Triennial Scholarship)   | 600.00          | 0.00            |
| Thankoffering                          | 0.00            | 0.00            |
| Visions subscriptions                  | 65.00           | 0.00            |
| Thrivent (for matching funds)          | 0.00            | 940.00          |
| Katie's Fund                           | 0.00            | 425.00          |
| Sophie Wilson (convention scholarship) | 0.00            | 270.00          |
| Roanoke College Scholarship            | 0.00            | 120.00          |
| Transfer from Thrivent VSWO Fund       | 0.00            | 6000.00         |
| WELCA Grant from Katie's Fund          | 0.00            | 1000.00         |
| <b>Total other income</b>              | 665.00          | 8755.00         |
| <b>VSWO Convention</b>                 |                 |                 |
| Fair Share Travel Fund                 | 600.00          | 455.00          |
| Housing, Meals, Registration           | 4800.00         | 5015.00         |
| <b>Total VSWO Convention</b>           | 5400.00         | 5470.00         |
| <b>Total Income</b>                    | <b>17215.00</b> | <b>21165.98</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                        |                 |                 |
| <b>Churchwide Programs</b>             |                 |                 |
| Conference Gatherings (55%)            | 880.00          | 347.50          |
| Insurance - Travel/Accident            | 25.00           | 0.00            |
| Katie's Fund                           | 0.00            | 425.00          |
| Offering - Conference of Presidents    | 150.00          | 0.00            |
| Regular/Convention Offering            | 3575.00         | 2864.76         |
| <b>Total Churchwide Programs</b>       | 4630.00         | 3637.26         |

**Profit and Loss February 1, 2023 – January 31, 2024 (continued)**

|                                | <b>Budget</b>  | <b>Actual</b>  |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Communications</b>          |                |                |
| Bulk Mailing Permit & Postage  | 450.00         | 0.00           |
| Visions (Printing & Supplies)  | 500.00         | 0.00           |
| <b>Total Communications</b>    | 950.00         | 0.00           |
| <br><b>Convention</b>          |                |                |
| BOR Printing/Postage           | 100.00         | 136.73         |
| Call to Convention             | 150.00         | 0.00           |
| Chaplain                       | 500.00         | 250.00         |
| Fair Share Travel              | 790.00         | 304.80         |
| Housing and Meals              | 5900.00        | 5757.97        |
| Mileage Speaker                | 100.00         | 0.00           |
| Miscellaneous                  | 100.00         | 875.72         |
| Sophie Wilson Grants           | 500.00         | 465.00         |
| Workshop Honorium              | 500.00         | 250.00         |
| <b>Total Convention</b>        | 8640.00        | 8040.22        |
| <br><b>Executive Board</b>     |                |                |
| Audit                          | 225.00         | 0.00           |
| Truist/NSF fee                 | 30.00          | 0.00           |
| Mileage & Lodging              | 500.00         | 0.00           |
| Miscellaneous                  | 100.00         | 0.00           |
| President's Discretionary Fund | 250.00         | 0.00           |
| Stationary & Supplies          | 75.00          | 0.00           |
| <b>Total Executive Board</b>   | 1180.00        | 0.00           |
| <br><b>Other Expenses</b>      |                |                |
| Love Offering                  | 1400.00        | 1483.00        |
| Total Mission Areas            | 0.00           | 0.00           |
| Roanoke College Scholarship    | 0.00           | 120.00         |
| <b>Total Other Expenses</b>    | 2000.00        | 1603.00        |
| <br><b>Total Expenses</b>      | 17400.00       | 13280.48       |
| <br><b>Net Income</b>          | <b>-185.00</b> | <b>7885.50</b> |

## Giving by Congregational Unit February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024

|   | Type    | Date       | Check<br>Number | Memo                        | Amount   |
|---|---------|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| <b>CV - Prince of Peace, Bayse</b>      |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| Prince of Peace, Bayse                  | Deposit | 7/24/2023  |                 | Convention-Regular Offering | \$105.00 |
| Prince of Peace, Bayse                  | Deposit | 1/19/2024  | 324             | Unit Offering               | \$78.00  |
| <b>Total</b>                            |         |            |                 |                             | \$183.00 |
| <b>CV - St Jacobs, Mt Crawford</b>      |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| St Jacobs, Mt Crawford                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 952             | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| St Jacobs, Mt Crawford                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 952             | Unit Offering               | \$150.00 |
| St Jacobs, Mt Crawford                  | Deposit | 7/23/2023  | 1404            | Convention-Regular Offering | \$50.00  |
| St Jacobs, Mt Crawford                  | Deposit | 7/24/2023  | 1405            | Convention-Regular Offering | \$100.00 |
| <b>Total</b>                            |         |            |                 |                             | \$335.00 |
| <b>CV - St James, Fishersville</b>      |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| St James, Fishersville                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 1232            | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| St James, Fishersville                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 1233            | Unit Offering               | \$143.00 |
| St James, Fishersville                  | Deposit | 1/10/2024  | 1245            | Unit Offering               | \$147.00 |
| St Stephens, Strasburg                  | Deposit | 6/15/2023  | 1023            | Unit Offering               | \$150.00 |
| <b>Total</b>                            |         |            |                 |                             | \$475.00 |
| <b>GE - Christ, Fredericksburg</b>      |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| Christ, Fredericksburg                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 5687            | Convention-Love Offering    | \$50.00  |
| Christ, Fredericksburg                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 5687            | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| Christ, Fredericksburg                  | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 5687            | Unit Offering               | \$50.00  |
| <b>Total</b>                            |         |            |                 |                             | \$135.00 |
| <b>GE - Resurrection-Fredericksburg</b> |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| Resurrection-Fredericksburg             | Deposit | 10/23/2002 | 112             | Unit Offering               | \$100.00 |
| Resurrection-Fredericksburg             | Deposit | 5/15/2023  | 113             | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| Resurrection-Fredericksburg             | Deposit | 5/15/2023  | 114             | Unit Offering               | \$100.00 |
| <b>Total</b>                            |         |            |                 |                             | \$235.00 |
| <b>HI - Holy Trinity Wytheville</b>     |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| Holy Trinity Wytheville                 | Deposit | 7/23/2023  | 6289            | Convention-Love Offering    | \$150.00 |
| Holy Trinity Wytheville                 | Deposit | 7/23/2023  | 6290            | Convention-Regular Offering | \$98.00  |
| <b>Total</b>                            |         |            |                 |                             | \$248.00 |
| <b>HI - Rural Retreat</b>               |         |            |                 |                             |          |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 10/23/2002 | 652             | Unit Offering               | \$87.00  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 10/23/2002 | 653             | Unit Offering               | \$50.00  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 2/2/2023   | 636             | Unit Offering               | \$33.33  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 3/30/2023  | 638             | Unit Offering               | \$30.00  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 3/30/2023  | 640             | Unit Offering               | \$21.00  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 5/11/2023  | 645             | Unit Offering               | \$72.00  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 6/27/2023  | 646             | Unit Offering               | \$27.00  |
| Rural Retreat                           | Deposit | 7/23/2023  | 648             | Convention-Love Offering    | \$25.00  |

|               |         |           |     |                             |          |
|---------------|---------|-----------|-----|-----------------------------|----------|
| Rural Retreat | Deposit | 7/23/2023 | 649 | Convention-Regular Offering | \$40.00  |
| Rural Retreat | Deposit | 7/24/2023 | 647 | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| Rural Retreat | Deposit | 1/19/2024 | 657 | Unit Offering               | \$30.00  |
| <b>Total</b>  |         |           |     |                             | \$450.33 |

#### **NR - St Michael, Blacksburg**

|                        |         |            |     |                             |          |
|------------------------|---------|------------|-----|-----------------------------|----------|
| St Michael, Blacksburg | Deposit | 4/1/2023   | 299 | Unit Offering               | \$43.00  |
| St Michael, Blacksburg | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 300 | Convention-Regular Offering | \$35.00  |
| St Michael, Blacksburg | Deposit | 6/26/2023  | 300 | Unit Offering               | \$17.00  |
| St Michael, Blacksburg | Deposit | 7/13/2023  | 226 | Unit Offering               | \$68.00  |
| St Michael, Blacksburg | Deposit | 12/13/2023 | 227 | Unit Offering               | \$124.00 |
| <b>Total</b>           |         |            |     |                             | \$287.00 |

#### **NR - Trinity, Pulaski**

|                  |         |           |      |                          |            |
|------------------|---------|-----------|------|--------------------------|------------|
| Trinity, Pulaski | Deposit | 3/20/2023 | 1288 | Unit Offering            | \$460.00   |
| Trinity, Pulaski | Deposit | 3/30/2023 | 1288 | Fair Share Travel        | \$35.00    |
| Trinity, Pulaski | Deposit | 6/16/2023 | 1293 | Convention Fees          | \$475.00   |
| Trinity, Pulaski | Deposit | 7/24/2023 | 1294 | Convention-Love Offering | \$100.00   |
| <b>Total</b>     |         |           |      |                          | \$1,070.00 |

#### **NR - Conference Gathering**

|                     |         |            |  |                     |          |
|---------------------|---------|------------|--|---------------------|----------|
| New River Gathering | Deposit | 12/13/2023 |  | Conference Offering | \$350.00 |
| <b>Total</b>        |         |            |  |                     | \$350.00 |

#### **PA - Morning Star, Luray**

|                     |         |           |      |                             |          |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Morning Star, Luray | Deposit | 6/30/2023 | 1372 | Convention-Love Offering    | \$100.00 |
| Morning Star, Luray | Deposit | 6/30/2023 | 1372 | Convention-Regular Offering | \$50.00  |
| Morning Star, Luray | Deposit | 6/30/2023 | 1372 | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| Morning Star, Luray | Deposit | 6/30/2023 | 1373 | Unit Offering               | \$250.00 |
| <b>Total</b>        |         |           |      |                             | \$435.00 |

#### **PE - Our Saviour, Norge**

|                    |         |           |      |                   |          |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|------|-------------------|----------|
| Our Saviour, Norge | Deposit | 7/25/2023 | 1102 | Fair Share Travel | \$35.00  |
| Our Saviour, Norge | Deposit | 8/18/2023 | 1104 | Fair Share Travel | \$35.00  |
| Our Saviour, Norge | Deposit | 1/10/2024 | 1107 | Unit Offering     | \$140.50 |
| <b>Total</b>       |         |           |      |                   | \$210.50 |

#### **RI - Epiphany, Richmond**

|                    |         |            |     |                          |          |
|--------------------|---------|------------|-----|--------------------------|----------|
| Epiphany, Richmond | Deposit | 12/13/2002 | 690 | Unit Offering            | \$158.40 |
| Epiphany, Richmond | Deposit | 4/20/2023  | 679 | Convention-Love Offering | \$50.00  |
| Epiphany, Richmond | Deposit | 4/20/2023  | 679 | Unit Offering            | \$252.80 |
| Epiphany, Richmond | Deposit | 4/30/2023  | 679 | Fair Share Travel        | \$35.00  |
| Epiphany, Richmond | Deposit | 7/25/2023  | 688 | Unit Offering            | \$72.40  |
| Epiphany, Richmond | Deposit | 1/19/2024  | 695 | Unit Offering            | \$184.80 |
| <b>Total</b>       |         |            |     |                          | \$753.40 |

#### **TW - Lakeside Lutheran**

|                   |         |           |      |               |          |
|-------------------|---------|-----------|------|---------------|----------|
| Lakeside Lutheran | Deposit | 1/10/2024 | 1004 | Unit Offering | \$277.50 |
| <b>Total</b>      |         |           |      |               | \$277.50 |

**SV - Pleasant View, Staunton**

|                         |         |           |     |                          |          |
|-------------------------|---------|-----------|-----|--------------------------|----------|
| Pleasant View, Staunton | Deposit | 7/23/2023 | 183 | Convention-Love Offering | \$125.00 |
| Pleasant View, Staunton | Deposit | 1/10/2024 | 188 | Unit Offering            | \$80.25  |
| <b>Total</b>            |         |           |     |                          | \$205.25 |

**SV - Salem, Mt. Sidney**

|                   |         |            |      |                          |          |
|-------------------|---------|------------|------|--------------------------|----------|
| Salem, Mt. Sidney | Deposit | 10/23/2002 | 1862 | Unit Offering            | \$175.00 |
| Salem, Mt. Sidney | Deposit | 4/12/2023  | 1833 | Fair Share Travel        | \$35.00  |
| Salem, Mt. Sidney | Deposit | 4/12/2023  | 1833 | Unit Offering            | \$175.00 |
| Salem, Mt. Sidney | Deposit | 7/13/2023  | 1847 | Unit Offering            | \$175.00 |
| Salem, Mt. Sidney | Deposit | 7/24/2023  | 1854 | Convention Fees          | \$120.00 |
| Salem, Mt. Sidney | Deposit | 7/24/2023  | 1853 | Convention-Love Offering | \$100.00 |
| <b>Total</b>      |         |            |      |                          | \$780.00 |

**SV - Conference Gathering**

|                              |         |            |  |                     |          |
|------------------------------|---------|------------|--|---------------------|----------|
| Southern Valley<br>Gathering | Deposit | 10/23/2024 |  | Conference Offering | \$345.00 |
| <b>Total</b>                 |         |            |  |                     | \$345.00 |

**TW - Emmanuel, VA Beach**

|                    |         |           |      |                             |          |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Emmanuel, VA Beach | Deposit | 6/26/2023 | 1845 | Convention-Love Offering    | \$175.00 |
| Emmanuel, VA Beach | Deposit | 6/26/2023 | 1846 | Convention-Regular Offering | \$70.00  |
| Emmanuel, VA Beach | Deposit | 6/26/2023 | 1847 | Fair Share Travel           | \$35.00  |
| <b>Total</b>       |         |           |      |                             | \$280.00 |

**TW - St John, Norfolk**

|                  |         |           |      |                   |         |
|------------------|---------|-----------|------|-------------------|---------|
| St John, Norfolk | Deposit | 6/26/2023 | 1016 | Fair Share Travel | \$35.00 |
| <b>Total</b>     |         |           |      |                   | \$35.00 |

## Total Giving by Individuals February 1, 2023 - January 31, 2024

|             | Type    | Date      | Memo  | Total Amount |
|-------------|---------|-----------|---|--------------|
| Individuals | Deposit | 7/24/2023 | Convention-Love Offering                    | \$410.00     |
| Individuals | Deposit | 7/24/2023 | Convention-Regular Offering                 | \$625.00     |
| Individuals | Deposit |           | Thrivent Fund Match                         | \$940.00     |
| VSWO Board  | Deposit | 10/7/2023 | Katie's Fund –<br>In honor of Bishop Milton | \$180.00     |
| Individuals | Deposit |           | Katie's Fund                                | \$245.00     |
| Individual  | Deposit | 7/24/2023 | Other –<br>Roanoke College Scholarship      | \$25.00      |
| Individual  | Deposit | 7/23/2023 | Other –<br>Sophie Wilson Scholarship        | \$30.00      |

## Virginia Synodical Women's Organization

### Balance Sheet

*As of January 31, 2024*

#### Assets

|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Checking (Wells Fargo)         | \$15,000.00        |
| Checking (Truist)              | \$ 892.90          |
| Thrivent Investment Management | <u>\$7,673.00</u>  |
| <b>Total Assets</b>            | <b>\$23,565.90</b> |

### Balance Sheet

*As of June 1, 2024*

#### Assets

|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Checking (Wells Fargo)         | \$ 18,003.57       |
| Thrivent Investment Management | <u>\$8,223.69</u>  |
| <b>Total Assets</b>            | <b>\$26,227.26</b> |

**Virginia Synodical Women's Organization**  
**Proposed Budget**  
**February 1, 2025-January 31, 2026**

**Income**

**Offerings**

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Conference Gatherings          | 1,000.00        |
| Congregational Units           | 5,500.00        |
| <b>Total regular offerings</b> | <b>6,500.00</b> |

**Convention Offerings**

|                                   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Designated (Love offering)        | 1,500.00        |
| VSWO Convention offering          | 1,500.00        |
| <b>Total convention offerings</b> | <b>3,000.00</b> |

**Other income**

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| Katie's Fund  | 150.00        |
| Roanoke College Scholarship                           | 500.00        |
| Sophie Wilson Grant ( <i>Convention Scholarship</i> ) | 300.00        |
| <b>Total other income</b>                             | <b>950.00</b> |

**VSWO Convention**

|                                   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Fair Share Travel Fund            | 420.00          |
| Housing, Meals, Registration, BOR | 3,500.00        |
| <b>Total VSWO Convention</b>      | <b>3,920.00</b> |

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>Total Income</b> | <b>14,370.00</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|

**Expenses**

**Churchwide Programs**

|                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Conference Gatherings (55%)         | 550.00          |
| Katie's Fund                        | 150.00          |
| Offering - Conference of Presidents | 100.00          |
| Regular/Convention Offering         | 3,850.00        |
| <b>Total Churchwide Programs</b>    | <b>4,650.00</b> |

**Convention**

|                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| Chaplain          | 300.00   |
| Fair Share        |          |
| Travel            | 420.00   |
| Housing and Meals | 5,100.00 |

|                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Miscellaneous                    | 100.00           |
| Sophie Wilson Grants             | 300.00           |
| Workshop Honorarium              | 300.00           |
| Supplies                         | 150.00           |
| <b>Total Convention</b>          | <b>6,670.00</b>  |
| <br><b>Executive Board</b>       |                  |
| Mileage                          | 600.00           |
| Miscellaneous                    | 100.00           |
| President's Discretionary Fund   | 100.00           |
| Stationary & Supplies            | 50.00            |
| <b>Total Executive Board</b>     | <b>850.00</b>    |
| <br><b>Other Expenses</b>        |                  |
| Love Offering                    | 1,500.00         |
| Mission Areas                    | 200.00           |
| VSWO Roanoke College Scholarship | 500.00           |
| <b>Total Other Expenses</b>      | <b>2,200.00</b>  |
| <br><b>Total Expenses</b>        | <b>14,370.00</b> |
| <br><br><b>Net Income</b>        | <b>0.00</b>      |



# ROANOKE COLLEGE

April 2024

Dear Mrs. Jody Smiley,

I am a Junior majoring in Health and Exercise Science and I am from Midlothian, VA.

My college experience at Roanoke has been greatly enriched due to the generosity of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization of the ELCA Scholarship.

Roanoke College holds a special place in my heart, and I will forever be grateful for my time spent here. Raised in the Lutheran Church, I was drawn to Roanoke College because of its affiliation. The summer before my senior year of high school, I worked at my church and loved every second of it. From then, I knew I wanted to attend a school that was built on Christian principles and aligned with my own beliefs. Roanoke had my heart as soon as I began researching it. In high school, I was in a specialty center titled Health Professions and Therapies which led me to pursue rehabilitative services as my intended career. This combined with being an athlete my whole life and being given the opportunity to play tennis at Roanoke College, led me to decide Health and Exercise Science (HEXS) as my major. In addition to deciding on HEXS, I have declared a minor in Spanish, minor in Psychology, minor in Disability Studies, and a concentration in Human Development. I am so fortunate to be able to complete all of these programs while also being a varsity athlete and member of the Honor's Program.

As an athlete here at Roanoke, I have gained so many life skills and made numerous connections that I will cherish long after I graduate from Roanoke. My coach is someone I look up and turn to in times of trouble, and I am fortunate to be a leader and mentor to my teammates as I am a team captain. I always say that playing tennis at Roanoke was one of the best decisions I could have made because even in times of feeling overwhelmed, homesick, out of my comfort zone, etc., being on the tennis court is something familiar and brings me peace.

Although I am very proud of my athletic career at Roanoke, my accomplishment that I am most proud of during my time at Roanoke has been starting an adaptive sports program here on campus for people in the community with disabilities to come play and join a community where they feel heard and included. This program is called MAPLE'S Kids (Multiple Adaptive PLAY Experiences in Sports), and it functions every Saturday morning throughout the school year. It has gained a lot of media attention, and volunteering at MAPLE'S Kids will be a requirement for students pursuing the new Disability Studies major beginning next year. I have made so many connections that will help me in my future as I intend to go to Occupational Therapy school after Roanoke, and I know that so many have benefitted from this program. For my time remaining at Roanoke College, I hope to continue to expand this program, make more meaningful connections, finish my competitive tennis career strong, and inspire others to do something big at Roanoke College.

All students have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the world with the help and support of this school. My hope is that each and every student here takes advantage of this unique aspect of Roanoke College. Without this scholarship, I would not have had the chance to be as successful as I am today, and I hope you know how appreciative I am to have been able to receive it.

Warmly,

*Julia*

Julia Bassett

## **REPORT OF MISSION: JUSTICE**

*Sylvia Eley  
(see page 15)*

## **REPORT OF MISSION: STEWARDSHIP**

*Jody Smiley and Teresa Bowers*

Women of the ELCA encourages and equips women to consider their responsibility and capacity for stewardship. This year the VSWO has focused our Love Offering recipient on “Micah’s Ecumenical Ministries” in Fredericksburg. We have promoted not only giving of financial gifts but also in-kind offerings. Our congregational units and individual women have jumped on the band wagon and have been sending items to the Micah’s. Thank you for those gifts and we look forward to hearing from Teresa Bowers of Micah’s (also a member of our board) about what and how much was given.

Thank you for your continued support of the VSWO and Women of the ELCA. Your regular, convention and conference gathering offerings that are sent to the VSWO are shared with the churchwide organization. This not only helps our synodical organization but also the wider ministries of WELCA

Are you aware that the VSWO supports a scholarship for young women at Roanoke College? In 2024 the Stewardship Mission Area would like to emphasize and lift up this wonderful scholarship. If you would like to make a donation to this, just make a note on your check. Also, we have a Thrivent Investment Fund that helps support our conventions and various ministries that we like to provide assistance. Again, if you would like to help this fund grow just make a note on your check.

**In 2023-2024 your offerings to VSWO were shared in following ways:**

**Sophie Wilson Grant: 2 scholarships were given to the 2023 convention**

**Love Offering: \$1,483.00 Project Horizon**

**Roanoke College VSWO Scholarship: \$120.00**

**Katie’s Fund: \$425.00**

**Support of the churchwide organization: \$3,212.26**

**Thank you for your continued generosity.**

## REPORT OF MISSION: DISCIPLESHIP

Within the mission statement for the Women of the ELCA it states “we commit ourselves to grow in faith”. As Women of the ELCA, we are active disciples in many ways and one of those ways is growing in our faith together through Bible and book studies.

The VSWO board decided that one of the ways we wanted to grow our faith was to be more open to God’s radical and inclusive love for ALL. Pastor Colleen Montgomery of All Places Together was asked to recommend books that the board could consider for a book study. The board chose from her selections the book: *Love Without Limits* by Jacqueline A. Bussie.

Soon after beginning the book study, the Churchwide Women of the ELCA announced that they would be giving a \$1,000 grant from Katie’s Fund to each Women’s Synodical Organization. Katie’s Fund supports ministry in three areas: leadership development, global connections and living theology. The Churchwide board asked that the synodical women’s organizations when faithfully deciding on how to best utilize the grant funds focus on one of these three (3) areas. The VSWO board decided to focus on living theology. Living theology encourages us to become more Christ-like in our daily living. Since the board was already reading the book *Love Without Limits* in hopes of growing more open to God’s radical and inclusive love for ALL, it seemed only logical to brainstorm ideas around our book study and how to include Women of the ELCA across the Virginia Synod.

The board decided to use the \$1,000 in Katie’s Funds to purchase copies of *Love Without Limits* to be distributed at the 2023 convention at Roanoke. The remaining funds after purchasing the books were donated in support of the All Lutheran Women’s Retreat (ALWR) where Jacqueline A. Bussie will be the retreat leader. The VSWO donation will help fund the speaker’s fees and/or scholarships to the ALWR to be held November 7-9, 2024.

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

At the 2024 women’s convention, the VSWO board will be conducting a survey. The purpose of the survey is to gather information into how the books distributed at the 2023 convention were used. For example, did you read it personally and then pass it on to a friend, was the book used in a book study locally or at your church, etc. Did you or your group read the book and now plan to attend the All Lutheran Women’s Retreat on your own or together as a group? The VSWO board is excited to hear if you felt your faith broadened and strengthened by reading the book. **Be sure to bring your copy of the book to the All Lutheran Women’s Retreat to have it signed in-person by the author, Jacqueline A. Bussie.** Ms. Bussie was a keynote speaker at the 2023 Triennial Gathering in Phoenix last September. The VSWO board is excited to have the opportunity to support The All Lutheran Women’s Retreat using Katie’s Funds.

Please give to Katie’s Fund so that important programs such as these can continue to be offered as part of Women of the ELCA. Donate here: <https://community.elca.org/welca>

## **REPORT OF THE THRIVENT ENDOWMENT FUND - 2024**

*Jody Smiley, Head Trustee, Judy Castele, and Helen Weaver*

The trustees for our Thrivent Investment Fund are Jody Smiley (Head Trustee), Judy Castele, and Helen Weaver. Trustees are appointed to hold legal title to the invested funds of the VSWO. They shall have the knowledge of and the discipline to implement prudent investments and make recommendation to the Board regarding the management and preservation of such funds made available to them. The VSWO Board will vote on their recommendations. They are appointed for 3-year terms. As treasurer Jody Smiley can no longer serve as a trustee. The board will appoint/reappoint a new group of trustees this year.

The Thrivent Endowment Fund was first created from funds that came with the merger that created Women of the ELCA/VSWO. Over the years these funds have grown through donations and gains in the stock market. Over the years funds have been used to support the expenses for a keynote speaker, one voting member to the Triennial Convention, the gathering of our synod's female rostered ministers, and a donation to Lutheran Disaster Relief.

One of the visions for this fund was to help offset costs that maybe incurred for conventions and retreats. Funds were used as needed to support our 2022 and 2023 conventions.

An up-to-date balance of funds will be given during the convention. Please consider a gift to this fund. All contributions made by individuals and congregational units should be sent to the VSWO treasurer. Please note in the check memo line "For Thrivent Endowment Fund".

## **REPORT OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE COORDINATOR**

*Carol Bailey*

I would like to say that conferences have been meeting and that I have been ultra-busy visiting conferences. We know that units are busy, but few conferences meet. I did, however, have a great time at the Southern Valley Conference Gathering at Muhlenberg on October 8, 2023. The program was presented by Alicia Thomas, director of the Virginia Quilt Museum, who showed quilts and gave the history of quilts in Virginia. So interesting!

Jody Smiley and Lavelva Stevens attended the Highlands/New River Conference Gathering at Rural Retreat where Brother Jason explained what a Lutheran monk is.

Christ Lutheran, Fredericksburg, hosted the Germanna Conference to a picnic at Duff McDuff Park on April 18.

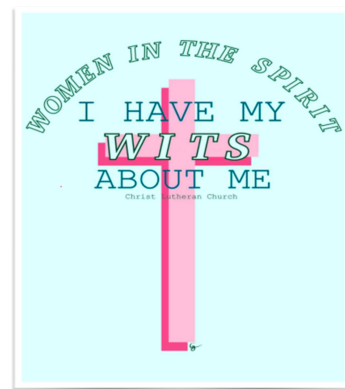
The New River Conference Fall Gathering was held on November 4, 2023.

# Germanna Conference

## Christ/Fredericksburg

*Submitted by Roxanne Harvey*

Women in the Spirit (WITS) of Christ Lutheran (CLC), Fredericksburg had another great year! We enjoy a good mix of social and service activities.



- WITS kicked off last fall with a retreat held at Lake Anna with a theme of **Letting Jesus Heal** (9/22-24/23). 19 women attended.
- We gathered to write personal notes in 100 beautiful handmade Christmas cards, which were delivered in December, along with holiday treats, to the residents of Woodmont Center nursing home (10/21/23). 11 women attended.
- We toured Belmont, the residence and studio of local artist Gari Melchers in Falmouth and enjoyed lunch at Brock's (11/18/23). 16 women attended.
- For the holidays, we helped setup and decorate Crismon trees in the sanctuary and held a Fireside Chat with a gift exchange and Silent Auction (12/16/23). 17 women attended.
- In January, we held our annual planning meeting, setting the calendar of activities for 2024 (1/20/24). 16 women attended.
- We held a work day for organizing and assembling layettes for Interfaith Community Council (ICC) of Fredericksburg. The layettes are distributed by ICC to local needy mothers (2/24/24). 20 women attended. We also support ICC School Dressing Days at the end of July.
- We enjoyed a discussion on the book *"Wintering"* by Katherine May (3/16/24). 16 women attended.
- We toured Chatham Manor and grounds and had lunch at Vinny's (4/13/24). 13 women attended.
- The women of Germanna Conference were invited to gather at Duff McDuff Green Park in Stafford, VA for a picnic hosted by the women of CLC on May 18, 2024. The theme was Spring Gathering: A Season of Hope. The weather was uncooperative, so we moved our picnic to CLC Fellowship Hall. 17 women attended.
- WITS continues to collect personal items from the congregation all year for distribution quarterly at the Micah Community Meals held on Wednesdays at CLC. The following items are distributed: Bar soap, deodorant (men & women), mouthwash, razor blades, shaving cream, hand sanitizer, lip balm with sunscreen, feminine products, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo & conditioner, band-aids, a variety of teas, socks and other clothing, as available.
- Throughout the year, the women of CLC have coordinated and served at our church's funeral receptions through a special group called the Terri Ministry.
- CLC has a very active Quilting group that meets weekly, Wednesdays between 9:30-1. There are 17 women in this group and each year we donate many quilts to Lutheran World Relief, Empower House and other groups, as needed.

CLC WITS have adopted a logo for our group, created by a church member. We always like to have our WITS about us!! (see logo above)

## Peace Lutheran Church/Charlottesville

*Submitted by Peggy Malzi Bizjak*

Women's ministries at Peace Lutheran Charlottesville are busy with many of us doing God's work of the church in our community. Pastor Chris Wulff continues to lead us in many activities within the congregation, in our Charlottesville community, and in the Virginia Synod as a whole. Recently, Peace was the site of one of Bishop Milton's day-long clergy conferences. Also, at the request of Bishop Milton, candidates in the Virginia Lay Preaching Academy will receive instruction at Peace from Pastor Chris in preaching and leadership. Additionally, Pam Tomko, Council President at Peace, received the Serving Boldly Award from the Virginia Synod for 2024, acknowledging her work in the Hungry Hearts No More ministry.

Bible studies are a major part of women's lives here at Peace. Groups meet on Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout the year and a few meet in homes, coffee shops, or on Zoom. Currently our **Children's Ministry** now has 10 students in Sunday School in varying ages who remain eager to participate in a learning environment which provides a variety of activities. Women are a major part of our **Youth Group** which meets regularly throughout the year "building community and creating an environment of trust through the love of Christ". Through engaging activities, they learned about how the Holy Spirit works in and around us in daily life. The **Card Ministry** sends a variety of cards throughout the year such as for birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, confirmations, sympathy and get well/thinking of you. Our staff is honored with holiday cards for Christmas and Easter. Our cards are all handmade with love from the team. Women of the **Altar Guild** care for everything involved with "dressing" of the Altar and the preparation of the Eucharist for distribution each Sunday and on special holidays throughout the year. **Art Ministry Team** women consistently work "to create a welcoming atmosphere throughout our building." Sanctuary, narthex, office areas, and building addition reflect Art Team Projects throughout the year. Additionally, the annual Art Show is back in full swing. The **Prayer Bead Team** once again held a few workshops during Advent to make Chrismons for our tree in the narthex. The Chrismons were given to the congregation at the Christmas Eve service to take home. In 2023, we marked the return of one of our "most cherished ministries", and the women of Peace, along with other members of the church, were once again invited to be **PACEM** hosts after a very long COVID-driven hiatus. We provided hospitality to a dozen homeless women here in Charlottesville for 2 weeks. We were also happy to report that through the Holy Spirit, several of our community partners shared in helping with this important community effort. Peace women are very active in the **Hungry Hearts No More (HHNM)** food ministry at Peace which has been in operation for over nine years. It started out as a backpack program to provide students in need with food for the weekend and soon evolved into a bigger project since realizing that the families needed more support. Our families are generally referred to us through the local schools. This important ministry serves 18 families to include 29 adults and 38 children. Donations are received in both monetary and food items through the Peace congregation and also our local community and schools. Additionally, our community partners help the women of Peace continue on with this vital ministry. Our **Justice Ministry** here at Peace in combination with other congregational ministries in the Charlottesville area "seeks to identify specific problems in our social, economic, and governmental systems that cause the suffering of groups of people." Justice Ministry works through the Interfaith Movement Promoting Action by Congregations Together, known as IMPACT. **Building and Grounds Team Ministry** "reaches out in service to others with love and support through a variety of ministries, including women ministries, that use the building and/or grounds as a base." Stewardship of our property for us means respect and care for it, so as to provide a clean, safe and welcoming environment for all.

Lots of wonderful women supported ministries are at work here at Peace, spreading the Good News to our community and our partners through the love and joy of the Holy Spirit.

## **Resurrection/Fredericksburg**

*Submitted by Carol Bailey*

The women of Resurrection spent the fall of 2023 gathering, organizing, and stuffing stockings for 200 children in need in Spotsylvania. Each stocking contained a new book; crayons or colored pencils; pencils; pencil sharpener; socks, gloves, or hat; games, a bag of candy and a candy cane. This year's contribution brought our total giving to Spotsylvania school children to over 2200 stockings! We also served funeral luncheons for several dear members.

In 2024, we became adventurous with trips to a synagogue, the Virginia Quilt Museum, and lavender fields. Of course, we always went out for lunch and enjoyed the fellowship of our sisters in Christ! In addition, we provided each confirmand with a glass pedestal cross and a large afghan crocheted by Sandy Harrington. Members enjoyed providing lunch to the congregation in honor of our confirmands.

Thank you, Thrivent, for funds used to purchase yarn, luncheon food, and stocking items

## **New River Conference**

*Submitted by: Jody Smiley*

We held our Fall Gathering at Trinity in Pulaski on November 4th. We had twenty women attend from several churches in our area. Our theme was Micah 6:8. We began with snacks and time for fellowship. For our program we showed the video of the Micah's Ecumenical Ministries awareness session from our 2023 convention. It was well received by our women. Most had no idea what this ministry does. All walked away very impressed and ready to contribute not just funds but also in-kind gifts to our love offering. We really suggest others show this video at either gatherings or unit meetings. It is very powerful. We ended our meeting with worship and Holy Communion. Pastor Jessica Darty led our worship. This was a wonderful time to get to know her since she is new to our conference.

The New River Conference is led by a planning team instead of one conference coordinator. Our team consists of Linda Hawks, Trinity in Pulaski, Sandy Birch and Jody Smiley from St. Michael in Blacksburg. Many thanks to our team for coordinating this year's Fall Gathering. We are in the process of planning our 2024 Fall Gathering.

We are blessed with active, faithful women in the New River Conference. Our women continue to work very hard in their congregations and community. They assist with feeding programs such as facilitating the collection and delivery of food to food banks in the New River area. They support local schools, hospitals, and other organizations in their greater communities. Many of them have quilters that create wonderful quilts and other items that brighten the lives of many in our area. Thank you for all that our do.

# Page Conference

## Morning Star Lutheran Church, Luray

*Submitted by: Sue Fox*

We do not have an active Page Conference. Morning Star is the only church in the conference that has a women's organization. Our group at Morning Star is very active. We meet every month with programs that include Bible studies, other Women of the ELCA resources or special presentations from community groups and for a business meeting.

We continue our support for World Hunger, Lutheran World Relief, ECLA Disaster Relief, Katie's Fund, Lutheran Family Services, and Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp. Our unit celebrates Thankoffering with a brief worship service at our November meeting and we continue to collect Thankoffering donations. We observe Bold Women's Day and Rachel's Day on the appropriate Sundays during our worship services.

Our women's group supports many special charities and numerous community-based organizations with monetary donations. We are very active in supporting the work of our church through special fellowship meals throughout the year and hosting meals following funerals. Our church celebrated our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. We helped to carry out three different anniversary celebrations including our special Homecoming event in September 2023, with Bishop Milton was our guest minister.

We support the following charitable groups in our area: Senior First, Life Center (a faith-based crisis pregnancy center), Page one (an organization that gives food and fuel assistance to needy families), Luray Fire Department and Luray Rescue Squad, Arise (a homeless outreach center), Choices (provides domestic abuse support), Page Free Medical Clinic, Weekday Religious education (taught in the county public schools) and a weekend food program for school children.

Our group supports sick and shut-ins of our congregation with visits and Christmas gift bags. Morning Star Women are a very active group committed to growing in faith, affirming our gifts, supporting one another in our callings and engaging in ministry and actions in our home, church, the VSWO, the church at large and the world.

# Richmond Conference

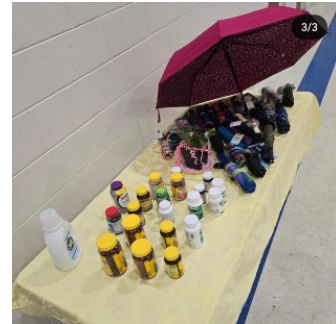
## Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran/Richmond

*Submitted by Eileen Johnson*

Our Christmas Tea was held on December 5 in Price Hall. We had about 40 women in attendance. Again, this year, we enjoyed finger foods and a variety of teas served in members fancy teacups. We donated many bottles of laundry detergent to our donation recipient Safe Harbor. Kathrine Moore, Volunteer & Administrative Mgr. thanked us for our continuing support of Safe Harbor and explained a little more about their organization.



The Women of the ELCA Circles held their annual spring luncheon May 8. Approximately 30 women attended and enjoyed entertainment by The Elderly Brothers, a barbershop quartet, and boxed lunches from Homemades by Suzannes. Donations of umbrellas and multi-vitamins were collected for Micah Ecumenical Ministries in Fredericksburg.



We have three Circles at Epiphany. They are Katie Luther, Clara Sullivan and Margaret Miller.



We continue our ministry of sending birthday cards to all our members 80+ years young. We assembled 30 cookie trays for Moments of Hope Outreach at Christmas; continue to support GraceInside with 1,106 greeting cards and 35 calendars. We are collecting items for Reinhart House (similar to Ronald McDonald House), support Safe Harbor with snacks, laundry detergents and any other items they need throughout the year. In February we assembled 25 Valentine gift bags for Safe Harbor ladies, made winter blessings bags for the senior women affiliated with Moments of Hope Outreach.

We had a presentation on Protecting Our Personal Data and 25 Circle members gathered in April, along with some of our pastors, to take a tour of the Richmond Mormon Temple during their open house invitation. It was an interesting tour followed up with lunch at Angelo's. What a great field trip and time of fellowship it was!

## **Lakeside Lutheran, Sarah's Circle/Lake Gaston, NC**

*Submitted by Diane Colin*

Sarah's Circle has a long history at Lakeside Lutheran Church. It was organized by several women of Lakeside Lutheran before the church was built. Julia Ann Freeze was one of those women who felt it was important that the women of the church participate in the work of the church as soon as there was a group to meet, so they met in each other's homes. We now meet the third Monday of the month from September to June at 9:30 in the Education Classroom in the Fellowship Hall.

In January of 2023, we gave \$350 to the Property Committee towards the purchase of a new pre-lit Christmas tree for the Sanctuary. We enjoyed its beauty this Advent and Christmas, decorated with the lovely Crismons that Julia Ann helped to make. Upon the death of her grandson on Christmas Eve, we gave a donation of \$500 towards her great-grandson's scholarship fund.

We gathered on Saturday mornings to make quilts for Turkey. In March through July, we also took on the Bears for Human Trafficked Children. We sent 68 bears to the conference last July.

Upon returning in September, we honored Cynthia Brown for 10 years as our Treasurer. Bev Fowler is now keeping track of our funds; Charlaine Schmidt is our recording Secretary and Diane Colin remained on as the Shepherd. We planned our projects for the fall including the Bake Sale at Wildwood Nursery. This year, we gave sample cups of coffee and with Jan Bell's lead on the sale of Equal Exchange coffee, we sold \$255 worth of coffee and chocolates. The goal was not to make money on the coffee, but to move the coffee in inventory. Jan took advantage of a sale before a price increase. Adding coffee samples to the bake sale was a hit! We plan to do it again. We also had music playing. Once again, Lakeside Lutheran bakers helped provide more items than ever before. We sold most of the items and cleared \$629...the most funds to date! Total intake that day with the coffee and baked goods was \$884.00. Since then Jan has added Equal Exchange Olive Oil and Chocolate Chips to the inventory!

As giving over-all in the church was down in the fall, the Evangelism Committee found that they needed funds to purchase Food Lion gift cards for the Angel Tree. Sarah's Circle donated \$1700 dollars for the purchase of those cards that go into the Angel Tree family's bags. We also voted unanimously to give a gift of \$5,000.00 to Lakeside Lutheran's mortgage on the new addition to help pay it down. That is the equivalent of a double payment. In addition, we gave a monetary gift to Church Secretary, Della Rose at Christmas for her support of our ministry. Julia Ann Freeze passed away in August. For her Memorial Service, we purchased a lovely red and white wreath with Sarah's Circle banner draped across it.

We recognized all women at Lakeside Lutheran on Bold Women's Sunday. In May we sent \$680 for our church's Thankoffering.

# Southern Valley Conference

*Submitted by: Rosemary Spell*

Southern Valley Conference (SVC) women enjoyed a number of opportunities to study, worship and fellowship together during 2023. All events were centered on “Weave Us Together” VSWO theme.

On Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at 10 a.m., we gathered at Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mount Sidney for our annual Spring Bible Study. The “Weave Us Together” study was based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-14. The leaders were Pastor Gordon Putnam, St. James Lutheran Church, Fishersville, and Taunya McDonald, Christ Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, Waynesboro. The study focused on the activities of and their involvement in a multi-denominational group, Christian Coalition for Equity and Justice, Waynesboro. In-kind donations were made to two service projects: Central Valley Habitat for Humanity, Bridgewater, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) “Fresh Change,” a project of the Virginia Synod Tapestry Program. Lunch was ordered from Valley Pike Farm Market, Weyers Cave. The event was attended by 31 women representing six SVC congregations and two guest speakers.

On July 21 and 22, 2023, the Southern Valley Conference women attended the Virginia Synodical Women’s Organization Annual Convention held on the Roanoke College campus, Salem. In-kind donations from the SVC churches were made to the VSWO-sponsored projects.

On Saturday, August 12, 2023, at 10 a.m., the SVC women and their guests gathered at the Sipe Center (theater) in Bridgewater to enjoy a private showing of Sight and Sound’s (Lancaster, PA) filmed Biblical production of “Noah.” Afterward, the attendees enjoyed lunch at nearby restaurants. The rental cost for the Sipe Center was paid by five active WELCA groups. The licensing cost to show the production was donated by two WELCA members. The DVD was provided by a WELCA member. Approximately 70 WELCA members and church friends attended.

The Fall Gathering and Business Meeting was held on Sunday, October 8, 2023, at 2:30 p.m. at Muhlenberg Lutheran Church in Harrisonburg. Alicia Thomas, Director, Virginia Quilt Museum, in Harrisonburg, presented a program on “Quilts in the Shenandoah Valley.” Carol Bailey, VSWO, attended and addressed upcoming 2024 activities. The 2023 SVC team was elected to serve another term in 2024: Rosemary Spell (2023 Conference Coordinator), June Nabers and Anne Putnam. The event was attended by 26 women representing five SVC congregations and three guests (1 from VSWO). An offering of \$345 was collected and remitted to the Treasurer of the VSWO. In addition, \$212 was collected and donated to the Virginia Quilt Museum. The attendees enjoyed food and fellowship to close the event.

On February 24, the Southern Valley Conference Planning Team held a Presidents meeting to discuss 2024 activities and events, including participation in the VSWO meeting, July 26-27, at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Norge. SVC events are planned to May 14 (Spring Bible Study), August 10 (Queen Esther movie), and October 13 (Fall Gathering).

## **Conference Team, 2023**

Conference Coordinator:

Rosemary Spell

Planning Team Members (2):

June Nabers and Anne Putnam

## **Closing of Convention**

*By Edith Blake*

**Leader:** As we prepare to depart let us remember the words of our convention hymns.

**All:** God of grace and God of glory on your people pour your power; crown your ancient church's story; bring its bud to glorious flower. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour, for the facing of this hour.

**Leader:** Let us go forward with the chorus of Here I Am, Lord

**All:** Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

**Leader:** I now declare the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Virginia Synodical Women's Convention closed.

## **Ritual of Transition (L=Leader; C=Community)**

**L:** Sisters in Christ, through your baptism you were called to lives of service as part of the priesthood we all share in Jesus Christ. You have served faithfully and well as leaders in the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization. You have served thoughtfully, graciously and with diligence, offering strategic leadership to this synodical women's organization and to the entire women's organization. We offer to you our gratitude for the wisdom and compassion that you have given so generously in service for Women of the ELCA.

**C:** **We thank God for you.**

**L:** Recognizing that change must be an ongoing process and that diversity and flexibility are essential, will you continue to share your wisdom and your experience with this synodical women's organization? Will you support and encourage the future leaders of this synodical women's organization, praying for and with them?

If so, answer, "I will, and I ask God to help me."

**Retiring Leaders:** I will, and I ask God help me.

**L:** Let us pray.

Loving God, we thank you for these women. Your Holy Spirit equipped them with many gifts that have been used to support the mission and purpose of this organization. Inspire them now to new avenues of service, encouraging them to be risk-takers and making them confident in their faith. May their pathways be filled with peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

**C:** **Amen.**

**L:** Let us stand to recognize and appreciate these women, acknowledging their gifts to God and to Women of the ELCA.

*Those whose current service is ending return to their seats. The assembly is seated.*

## Installation of a Synodical Board

*The new officers and board come forward and face the assembly. The leader may read the offices and names of those who are to be installed.*

*Addressing the assembly:*

L: A reading from 1 Corinthians:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

*Addressing those being installed:*

Sisters in Christ, you have been chosen for leadership responsibilities in Women of the ELCA. We rejoice in the gifts God has given you and in your willingness to offer them for this service.

Will you continue to seek to grow in faith, attending to God's holy Word, and listening to God in prayer? If so, respond, Yes, and I ask God to help me.

**Response: Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you earnestly seek to affirm the gifts of others, to share the responsibilities of your office in partnership with your sisters, and to encourage others to offer their talents and skills in faithful service?

**Response: Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you seek to lead the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization in ministry and action, extending God's loving promise of hope to those beyond this community?

**Response: Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you seek to promote healing and wholeness within the church, the society and the whole world?

**Response: Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Do you accept the specific responsibilities for which you have been elected and will you seek to serve faithfully?

**Response: Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you accept the responsibility for the financial and constitutional order of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA?

**Response: Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Through Holy Baptism, you were gathered into the family of God and called to minister to others, and through your election, you have been chosen to serve as leaders of Women of the ELCA. May God work through you to share hope and healing with the world in which you live. God is faithful and will graciously enable you to fulfill your task. May God's blessing give you peace.

*Addressing the assembly:*

Together with these elected leaders, you are called through Holy Baptism to a life of discipleship. Will you receive these leaders and work with them, pray for them, and support them for the sake of the gospel? If so, answer: We will, and we ask God to help us.

**C: We will, and we ask God to help us.**

*Addressing those being installed:*

I now declare you installed as officers and board members of the Virginia Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

*Continuing with prayer*

Let us pray.

Loving God, surround these women with your life-giving Spirit, inspiring them to love and serve all creation. Make them bold and courageous, Holy God, that they may help the women of this organization fulfill our mission and purpose. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

*Addressing the assembly:*

Let us stand in recognition and appreciation of these women for their gifts to God and to Women of the ELCA.

*The officers and board members return to their seats.*

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## **Biographical Data of VSWO Board Officers (2-year terms)**

### **Vice President**

Name: Patricia Seelenbinder  
Address: 1605 Pennywhistle Arch  
Virginia Beach, VA 23464  
Phone: 757-375-0579  
Email: pmseelen@cox.net  
Age Range: 65+  
Church: Emmanuel/Tidewater

### **Women of the ELCA Experience**

Local Unit: Officer  
Conference/Synodical: Conference participant, convention attendee & voting member, current board member 2022-2024  
Churchwide: 2023 Triennial voting member  
Hobbies: Kayaking, crafts, sewing, gardening, cooking, traveling, Bible study  
Volunteer work: Feeding & Clothing "People in Need"; Meals on Wheels; Food Pantry; Making Quilts; Emmanuel Outreach Team

### **Secretary**

Name: JoAnn Fawley  
Address: 6409 W. Old Mountain Rd.  
Louisa, VA 23093  
Phone: 703-727-7957  
Email: [fawley6409@gmail.com](mailto:fawley6409@gmail.com)  
Age Range: 65+  
Church: All Places Together/on-line/Germanna

### **Women of the ELCA Experience**

Local Unit: Participant of Resurrection WELCA  
Conference/Synodical: Conference team and participant, convention attendee & voting member, VSWO secretary 2022-2024 and board member  
Churchwide: Triennial voting member & participant  
Hobbies: Gardening, cardmaking, quilting and reading  
Volunteer work: Free Mom Hugs and Service Projects through WELCA And All Place Together

**Three (3) Board Members (2-year terms each)**  
**One (1) Board Member (1-year term)**

Name: Diane Priestley  
Address: 116 Norman Davis Dr.  
Toano, VA 23168  
Email: [dmp625@aol.com](mailto:dmp625@aol.com)  
Age Range: 65+  
Church: Our Saviour's Lutheran-Norge/Peninsula  
Women of the ELCA Experience  
Local Unit: Officer  
Conference/Synodical: Conference participant; current VSWO board member 2022-2024  
Hobbies: Reading and traveling  
Volunteer work: WELCA, social ministry committee, facilities committee, Treasurer

**Name** Nicole Ocheltree  
**Address** 63 Valley View Dr.  
Mt. Sidney, VA 24467  
**Email:** [wldptch@yahoo.com](mailto:wldptch@yahoo.com)  
**Age Range:** 35-49  
**Church:** Salem, Mt. Sidney/Southern Valley  
**Occupation:** Quality Improvement Specialist  
Women of the ELCA Experience  
**Local Unit:** Participant and former Officer  
**Conference/Synodical:** Conference participant, Convention voting member and participant, and current VSWO board member 2023-2024  
**Hobbies:** Reading, puzzles, attending live music, traveling  
**Volunteer work:** church council member, manages church Social media and helps with youth programs in the church and the community

**Three (3) Board Members (2-year terms each)**  
**One (1) Board Member (1-year term)**

**Name:** Anne Putnam  
**Address:** 10 Jefferson Ct.  
Waynesboro, VA 22980  
**Email:** anneputnam55@gmail.com  
**Age Range:** 65+  
**Church:** St. James Lutheran, Fishersville/Southern Valley  
**Occupation:** Retired  
**Women of the ELCA Experience**  
**Local Unit:** Participant, Officer  
**Conference/Synodical:** Participant, Conference Team  
**Hobbies:** Quilting  
**Volunteer Work:** Quilting, Disciples Kitchen, Church Council  
Secretary and multiple committees, Southern  
Valley Planning Committee

**Name:** Dona Jenkins  
**Address:** 19283 Mercedes Dr.  
Abingdon, VA 24210  
**Email:** mg.donajenkins@gmail.com  
**Age Range:** 50-64  
**Church:** St. John/Abingdon/Highlands  
**Occupation:** Retired, previously IT Auditor, Programmer,  
Systems Analyst and Master Gardner Program  
Coordinator

**Women of the ELCA Experience**  
**Local Unit:** Participant  
**Conference/Synodical:** VA Synod Conference Participant and current  
VSWO Web Master; Pacifica Synod Board  
Member and Convention Participant  
**Churchwide:** Triennial participant, voting member and  
Churchwide Board Member  
**Hobbies:** Watercolor, cooking, exercising, reading, knitting  
**Volunteer work:** Church Council and Facebook Admin. for Highlands  
Conference, St. John Lutheran, Hungry Mother  
Lutheran Retreat Center, Web Admin for Virginia  
Master Gardener and Virginia Master Naturalist

# Ways to stay connected with Women of the ELCA and Virginia Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA

| Women of the ELCA Website (Churchwide)   | Virginia Synod Women's Organization (VSWO)   |
|--|--|
| <p>Website:<br/><a href="https://www.womenoftheelca.org/">https://www.womenoftheelca.org/</a></p> <p>Tool for Leaders:<br/><a href="https://www.womenoftheelca.org/tools-for-leaders">https://www.womenoftheelca.org/tools-for-leaders</a><br/>i.e. Treasurer forms, etc.</p>  | <p>Website:<br/><a href="https://vswow.org/">https://vswow.org/</a></p>   |
| <p><b>Publications Women of the ELCA website:</b><br/><a href="https://www.womenoftheelca.org/publications">https://www.womenoftheelca.org/publications</a><br/>Gather Magazine<br/>Café (boldcafe.org)<br/>Bold Connections<br/>Daily Grace<br/><a href="https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/category/daily-grace">https://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/category/daily-grace</a></p> | <p><b>Visions</b> is the Virginia Synod Women of the ELCA newsletter.</p> <p>To receive the newsletter submit your email to:<br/>Jody Smiley, Visions Circulation Manager<br/><a href="mailto:jdsmiley29@comcast.net">jdsmiley29@comcast.net</a></p> <p>Visions is now <u>digital only</u>, so please print off and share with others.</p> |
|  <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA">https://www.facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA</a></p>   | <p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/VSWO.WomenoftheELCA">https://www.facebook.com/VSWO.WomenoftheELCA</a></p> <p>Please email pictures and events to be posted to:<br/><a href="mailto:vswow.virginiasynodicalwomen@gmail.com">vswow.virginiasynodicalwomen@gmail.com</a></p>   |
|  <p>Instagram.com/WomenoftheELCA</p>  | <p><a href="https://www.instagram.com/vswow_virginia_synod/">https://www.instagram.com/vswow_virginia_synod/</a><br/>(underline between vswow_virginia_synod)</p>  |
|  <p>Twitter.com/WomenoftheELCA</p>  | <p><b>Send Offerings to:</b><br/><b>Jody Smiley, Treasurer</b><br/><b>901 Brattle Lane</b><br/><b>Blacksburg, VA 24060</b><br/><b>Email: <a href="mailto:jdsmiley29@comcast.net">jdsmiley29@comcast.net</a></b></p>  |
|  <p>Pinterest.com/WomenoftheELCA</p>  |  |