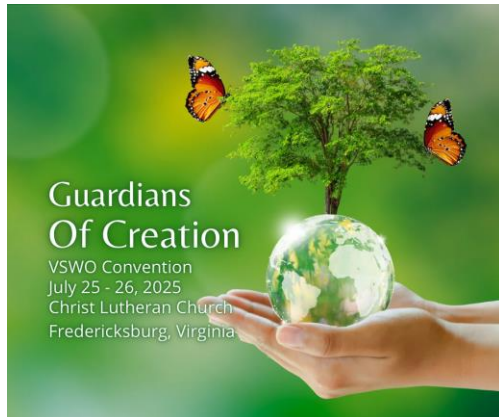
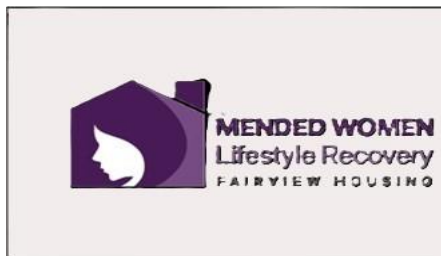


2025 VSWO Convention Highlights



Christ Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg was the site for our VSWO Convention July 25-26, 2025. Over sixty of our sisters in Christ came together (plus workshop leaders and other guests) for worship, learning, fellowship, fun – and of course, business. Our theme was **“Guardians of Creation”** and our convention verse that kept us centered was Genesis 2:15 – “The LORD God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it.” from the Common English

Bible. The Reverend Anne Jones-Martin, pastor at Christ, served as our Convention Chaplain. She led our opening worship service and devotions on Saturday morning. She also had a wonderful Bible Study based on our theme and verse. We were honored to have the Rev. John Wertz preach at our opening service and bring us greetings from the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop. Sheena Foster, Executive Board Member of the Women of the ELCA, brought greeting from the churchwide organization. Again, this year we closed convention with a beautiful Holden Evening Prayer service led by Alli Beck. A special thanks to Rebecca Case our accompanist. We were blessed to have these amazing folks share their time and talents with us.

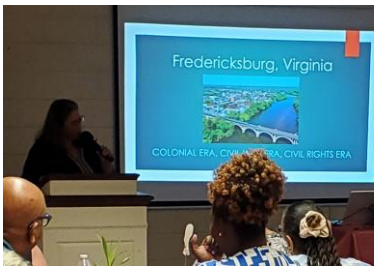


Our workshops this year were really informative and thought-provoking. Our first awareness session was given by Josh Carter, on the staff of Mended Women in Abingdon, and his special guest Vickie, a former resident there. They introduced us to Mended Women, our 2025-26 Love Offering recipient. They shared the mission of Mended Women and Vickie is a great example of how this

organization can be life changing. A video of this session will be available on our website so that it can be shared with your units and at conference Gatherings. Our second session on Saturday morning was *“Care of Creation: We have come so far, but we have so far to go”* presented by Jody Smiley. She took us through the history of environmental issues and

solutions that scientists and engineers developed to help our planet heal. She also discussed emerging potential environmental problems. Our last session was “*What Can I Do? Protecting Our Planet*” presented by Nicole Ocheltree. She talked with us about products and hidden ingredients that could be harmful to the environment and ourselves. She also gave us ways that we can make informed decisions concerning the planet and our health when making purchases.

We had a fun art project for everyone to take part in. It was led by Nichole Ocheltree and Dona Jenkins. We were all asked to bring some rocks for painting. This photo is just an example of the final products.



On Friday evening we were entertained by Heidi Bass, owner and operator of Trolley Tours of Fredericksburg. She shared with us the history of Fredericksburg as if we were on one of her trolley tours. It was both educational and entertaining.

THANK YOU to the women of Christ that made this weekend special with your bright smiles and hard work. You made us feel at home!

As always, we are amazed at our women’s generosity. Below are the monetary and in-kind gifts received. The in-kind gifts brought to the convention for Latisha’s house were so overwhelming that it took multiple cars to take them back to Williamsburg and were too numerous to count. Prior to convention 118 Amazon Wish List items and 18 quilts were donated. At convention over 107 quilts were given. They ran out of time to count them all!

Convention offering - to be split between WELCA & VSWO - \$975

Love offering to Micah’s Ecumenical Ministries - \$2,799

Roanoke College Scholarship - \$75



Looking ahead to 2026: St. John's Lutheran in Abingdon will host the 2026 convention. The convention dates are June 12-13, 2026. The earlier dates were chosen since the 2026 Triennial is in mid-July. We want to hear from you! We have put together a survey to help us plan YOUR convention. Please click [HERE](#) and complete.

We did do some work during the convention. We heard reports, passed our 2025-26 budget and of course had elections.

The following persons were elected:

Voting Members for the Women of the ELCA's 2026 Triennial Convention:

Jillian Stierwalt and Gloria Fennell (Ashley Saunders will be our alternate)

President – Lavelva Stevens

Treasurer – Anne Putnam, term will begin February 1, 2026

Board Members: Two-year terms – Sylvia Eley, Diane Priestley, Ashley Saunders

Your 2025-2026 VSWO Board: President-Lavelva Stevens, Vice President- Pat Seelenbinder, Secretary-JoAnn Fawley, Treasurer-Jody Smiley (continues till 1/31/26) and board members: Sylvia Eley, Dona Jenkins, Nicole Ocheltree, Diane Priestley, Anne Putnam, Ashley Saunders. *Anne will continue as a board member till her term as Treasurer begins on 2/1/26. At that time the board will appoint someone to fill her term until the convention in June.*

At the 2025 Women's Synod Convention, the Reference and Council Committee read the resolution on Period Poverty and recommended its adoption. Voting members then voted to adopt the resolution on Period Poverty.

What is Period Poverty? Period Poverty is something that many of us have thankfully never experienced, but unfortunately many do. Those who menstruate often do not have the financial means or have convenient access to menstrual supplies. The resolution addresses these issues.

The resolution adopted on Period Poverty, can be found on page 4. The VSWO Officers and Board Members are encouraging all groups that gather to view the video linked in the resolution which highlights southwestern Virginia healthcare issues. Also, please select an organization to donate menstrual supplies. We need to become comfortable talking about menstruation and menstrual supplies even with the men in our lives. This is a healthcare necessity.

If your congregation had a voting member that attended the convention, ask them about the resolution. If you would like to receive the same information that the voting members received at convention, email our secretary, JoAnn, at fawley6409@gmail.com. A copy of the Period Poverty resolution along with additional handouts will be emailed to help you plan your period poverty project. The VSWO women's board would also like to hear about the projects that you plan.

**VIRGINIA SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION
THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION
Christ Lutheran Church, Fredericksburg, VA
July 25-26, 2025**

PERIOD POVERTY RESOLUTION

The following resolution is related to how we as Women of the ELCA can educate ourselves on women's health issues.

To be aware of the healthcare obstacles facing women, and persons of color, and the LGBTQIA+ community.

WHEREAS, the December 9, 2024, Virginia Synod Justice for Women Tapestry Zoom led by Pastor Kelly Bayer Derrick, Pastor Kayla Keilholtz and Sylvia Vick-Eley was entitled Obstacles in Women's Healthcare & Health Education <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DieT9QaeOoU> ; and

WHEREAS, healthcare and health education for women, persons of color and the LGBTQIA+ community have come a long way and still have a long way to go; and

WHEREAS, healthcare services and supplies are difficult to obtain here in Virginia, especially in the southwestern part of the state, not just in Third World countries; and

WHEREAS, statistics show that approximately 1 in 10 students globally and 1 in 4 students in the United States miss one (1) week a month due to their periods, and adults miss out on job opportunities for advancement due to lack of access, funds or both to obtain menstrual products; and

WHEREAS, the need is great for us to spread awareness and educate about women's healthcare and advocate for women's health globally and in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, faith communities can help raise awareness and start the discussion about the health needs of women, young girls and those who identify as female; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that each congregational unit watch together or individually the Tapestry interview by Pastor Kayla Keilholtz with healthcare workers in Marion, Virginia on Women's Health and Education in Rural Southwestern Virginia and discuss; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in our churches we will have menstrual supplies available in the women's bathrooms and at women's events; and be it further

RESOLVED, that in our communities we will donate to food banks, women's shelters, and homeless organizations menstrual supplies; and be it further

RESOLVED, that all women of the VSWO be encouraged to obtain more information from organizations such as Days for Girls <https://www.daysforgirls.org/> ; and be it further

RESOLVED, that as Women of the ELCA we will continue to bring awareness to the topic of period poverty and other healthcare needs of women.