

VSWO 2026 Call to Convention

Virginia Synodical Women's Organization - Women of the ELCA
Thirty-eighth Annual Convention – June 11 – 13, 2026
St. John Lutheran Church, Abingdon, Virginia

- Convention Theme:** Boots of Faith: Walking Through WELCA's History
- Convention Scripture:** For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10
- Convention Hymn:** For All the Faithful Women #419
- In-Kind Donations:** Quilts (twin size) and Mended Women Amazon Wish List
- Offerings:** The 2026 Love Offering recipient is Mended Women in Abingdon. Worship offering will go to the Women of the ELCA.
- Convention Chaplain:** Pastor Elise Anderson
- Synod Greetings:** Bishop Phyllis Milton
- Business:** All voting members **MUST** be present at 1:30pm Thursday afternoon for the business session. Convention business will include the following elections: Vice President (2-year term), Secretary (2-year term), three (3) Board Members (2-year term each) and the adoption of the 2027 – 2028 budget.
- Sophie Wilson Grant:** The Sophie Wilson Grant encourages first-time, non-voting member participants to attend the VSWO Convention. Applications are due by May 15, and recipients will be notified shortly after the application is received. Please consider adding a donation to the Sophie Wilson Grant on your Registration Form.
- Important:** The Call to Convention (CTC) is distributed via email, found on the VSWO website, and posted on the VSWO Facebook page. Please make copies of the Registration Form and distribute to all women.

Please help us promote the convention in bulletins, newsletters and any social media platforms your church may use.



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2025 – 2026 Service Project:

Mended Women
Abingdon, Virginia

Mended Women Lifestyle Recovery (MWLF) is a residential recovery program serving women in Abingdon, Virginia. MWLR is a clinically managed low-intensity residential substance abuse program designed specifically for women within 150 miles of our Southwest Virginia campus.

Residents receive evidence-based treatment-oriented protocols and services from caring professionals, quality nutritious meals, sleep in a safety-monitored room with 24-hour support in a supportive community environment designed for healing and recovery.

There is an [Amazon Wish List](#) for Mended Women that you can purchase items they need for their program or bring twin quilts to the convention.

Dona Jenkins is coordinating the Mended Women project and may be contacted at mg.donajenkins@gmail.com with any questions.

2026 – 2027 Service Project:

Isaiah 117 House
Rockingham County, Virginia

Isaiah 117 House provides physical and emotional support in a safe and loving home for children awaiting placement into foster care. When children are removed from their homes out of concern for their safety, they usually await placement at a child welfare services office. This wait can be a few hours to several days. These children often have little to nothing with them and are scared, lonely, and hungry.

Isaiah 117 provides a comforting home where these children can be brought to wait instead of an office environment. A place that is safe with friendly and loving volunteers who provide clean clothes, smiles, toys, and snuggly blankets. The house allows children to receive the comfort and care they need while child welfare staff can do the necessary paperwork to identify and secure a good placement.

Anne Putnam will be coordinating the Isaiah 117 House – Rockingham County project and may be contacted at anneputnam55@gmail.com with any questions.

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Discovery Sessions 1 & 2: Pick 2 sessions to attend.

Bishop Milton's Fireside Chat

Step into a meaningful and personal conversation with Bishop Phyllis Milton, the first African American woman elected to lead the Virginia Synod. In this fireside-style session, Bishop Milton will share her journey of faith, leadership, and calling, reflecting on the challenges, milestones, and joys that have shaped her ministry. This is a rare opportunity to engage in a small-group dialogue with the bishop. Attendees are encouraged to ask questions, explore the future of the church, and hear firsthand what it means to lead with authenticity, courage, and faith in today's world.

The Art of Japanese Fabric Dying

Discover the beauty and tradition of Japanese textile art in this hands-on session focused on Shibori, an ancient resist-dyeing technique that creates stunning patterns on fabric. Participants will experience the Japanese dyeing method and try their hand at folding, twisting, and binding fabric to create their own unique designs.

Ride Into Radiance

Aging is a beautiful journey, and your skin deserves care that reflects that truth. In this informative and encouraging session, you'll learn how to care for your skin through the decades with practical tips, product advice and self-care routines. Whether you're navigating dryness, sensitivity, or simply want to refresh your routine, this session will help you embrace radiant, healthy skin at any age.

The Transgender Experience

Do you feel that you are welcoming and affirming of the LGBTQIA+ community yet don't understand why anyone would want to change their gender? Perhaps you know someone that is trans but are afraid to ask why or you are confused why pronouns are so important. As people become more inclusive and welcoming for the queer community, they often do so without understanding the person behind the label. This interactive workshop, hosted by Ginger Cutrell, is intended to help explain and clarify some of the common myths and misconceptions of the transgender community, answer some of your questions, and maybe provide some clarity on what and why.

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Discovery Session 3:

Pick 1 session to attend.

Trail Mix & Tips

Food is more than fuel, it's foundational to your energy, mood, and long-term health. In this approachable session on nutrition, you'll learn how to make informed, balanced food choices that support your body and lifestyle, without restrictive diets or overwhelming rules. Led by Jennie Settle, MS, RD, CSO, you will leave with practical tools and ideas to help you feel your best, no matter your age or stage.

Riding Together: Building Strong Unit Health

Strong units are built on connection, communication, and shared purpose. In this collaborative session, you'll engage in open conversation about how to strengthen the health of your unit, whether through creative engagement, fresh activities, or deepening community bonds. Bring your ideas, challenges, and questions. This will be a space to share what's working, learn from others, and gather inspiration to help your unit grow in spirit, size, and impact. Facilitated by Nicole Ocheltree, we will explore ways to keep our circles thriving and moving forward.

Chair Yoga: Gentle Movement for Every Body

Take a deep breath and give your body the care it deserves. In this gentle chair yoga session, you'll be guided through simple stretches, mindful breathing, and light movements, all done while seated or using a chair for support. No mats, flexibility, or experience required! Perfect for all ages and mobility levels, chair yoga helps reduce tension, improve circulation, and support overall wellness. Led by Kim Dove, you'll leave feeling more relaxed, centered, and energized.

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VOTING MEMBERS

Voting members must arrive by 1:30pm on Thursday to attend the ONLY business session.

The VSWO Constitution includes the provisions for representation at convention: *Article VI, Section 2: Representation Item 1:* Voting members of a convention shall be elected officers or SWO leaders or board members of the synodical women's organization and one voting member from each unit on the roll of this synodical women's organization. *Item 2:* Those congregations not represented by a unit shall be invited to send to the regular convention one representative who shall have seat and voice.

Voting Members must register by **May 15**. The Bulletin of Reports will be sent electronically and be available online by **May 22**. It's recommended you print a copy, review it, and bring it with you. Copies will be available during convention.

THURSDAY SCHEDULE

Registration begins at 1:00pm. Voting Members will attend the business session and there will be activities for Non-Voting Members.

FAIR SHARE TRAVEL FUND

Voting Members attending the entire convention will be reimbursed under the Fair Share Travel Fund guidelines, providing their unit has paid **\$35** by **May 29** to VSWO Treasurer: Anne Putnam, 10 Jefferson Street, Waynesboro, VA 22980. Travel reimbursement requests must be turned in by **4:00pm on Friday, June 12**.

REGISTRATION FEE

The registration fee must be paid when registering. This fee is used to pay for presenters, food, supplies, Board Members lodging, mailings, and any other convention expenses. It does NOT include lodging and is non-refundable.

HEALTH FORM

Bring with you and turn it in at registration.

LODGING HOTEL ARRANGEMENTS

A block of rooms has been reserved for Thursday and Friday nights at **Country Inn & Suites**, 940 East Main Street, Abingdon, VA 24210. Cost is \$119+tax/fees per night, nonsmoking rooms. Attendees must make their own reservations directly with the hotel **prior to May 11**, by calling (276) 676-2829 or online at [Country Inn & Suites](#). You must mention Virginia Synodical Women's Organization (VSWO) to receive the group rate. Check-in time is 3:00pm and check-out time is 12pm. Deadline for the group rate is **May 11**. There is no guarantee of a room after this date.

MEALS

All meals are included in the registration/lodging fees. Thursday evening is a cookout, so bring a camp chair and enjoy the outside (weather permitting). Friday lunch and dinner will be served, and an ice cream social will end the night at the hotel. Saturday lunch will be served before convention closes. Complimentary breakfast is provided by the hotel. Please note any dietary needs on your registration form.

REGISTRATION FORM

All participants (visitors, guests, board members, etc.) must register online or send a completed Registration Form to Jody Smiley, by **May 28**. Voting members must register by **May 15**.

BOARD NOMINATION FORM

Use the enclosed form for nominations for Vice President, Secretary, and Board Members. Send to JoAnn Fawley by **May 15**.

SOPHIE WILSON GRANT

Grant applications for first-time, non-voting participants must be submitted to Anne Putnam by **May 15**.

QUESTIONS REGARDING REGISTERING?

Contact Registrar, Jody Smiley at jdsmiley29@comcast.net or 540-250-6149 or JoAnn Fawley at 703-727-7957 or fawley6409@gmail.com.

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Boots of Faith: Walking Through WELCA's History

Virginia Synodical Women's Organization
 2026 Convention Registration Form
 Register online at: www.vsw.org

Questions? Contact Registrar Jody Smiley at Jdsmiley29@comcast.net or 540-250-6149

Mail Registration Form to Jody Smiley
 901 Brattle Lane, Blacksburg, VA 24060.
 You can also register online.

Voting Members: Registration due by May 15.

Participants: Registration due by May 28.

First and Last Name: (as you want on your nametag) _____

Mailing Address: _____
(Street Address or P.O. Box)

Preferred Pronouns: _____

(City) (State) (Zip Code)

Phone (C): _____

Email: _____

Phone (H): _____

Church Name: _____

Church City: _____

Conference: (Circle One) Central Valley Germanna Highlands New River Page Peninsula
 Richmond Southern Valley Tidewater Other

Registration Options	Fee	Amount Due
Full Participant	\$100.00	
I've included a gift to the following:		
Katie's Fund		
Roanoke Scholarship		
Sophie Wilson Grant Fund		
VSWO Thrivent Endowment Fund		
Total amount due		\$
<p>Please check all that apply:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My check is enclosed. (Make registration checks payable to VSWO)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My registration will be paid by the VSWO*.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Special dietary needs (please specify): _____</p>		

Please check all that apply:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> VSWO Officer* | <input type="checkbox"/> Voting Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Participant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VSWO Board Member* | <input type="checkbox"/> Invited Guest or Speaker* | <input type="checkbox"/> First time attendee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conference Coordinator* | | |

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Emergency Medical and Emergency Contact Form

First and Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Phone: (C) _____
(Street Address or P.O. Box)

(City) (State) (Zip Code) Phone: (H) _____

Gender: (Optional) _____ Pronouns: (Optional) _____ Blood Type: _____

Date of Last Tetanus Shot: _____ Age: 34 and under 35 – 49 50 – 65 Over 65

Do you wear glasses/contact lenses? _____ Are you hearing impaired or wear hearing aids? _____

Describe treatments you are receiving for a current illness/condition (including chronic illnesses, i.e. asthma, diabetes, seizures): _____

Allergies? Yes No If yes, explain: _____

List any medications you are currently taking: _____

Emergency Contact #1: _____ Relationship: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

Emergency Contact #2: _____ Relationship: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Work: _____ Cell: _____

Permission To Treat

I give permission for medical personnel to treat me in the event that I am unconscious or otherwise unable to give consent.

(Printed Name)

(Signature)

(Date)

Please bring this form with you to convention in case of emergency.

