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Florida-Bahamas
Synodical Women's
Organization



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Anne's Advice



As little children in Sunday School, one of our first lessons was to obey the Golden Rule: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.* The command to love your neighbor as yourself, or to not do to another what you would not want done to you is found in almost every culture. Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, atheists and others around the world: all are called to love their neighbors. But Christians have a new commandment. *"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."* (John 13:34) This is the command to love as Jesus loves. This is the grace that forgives and serves and heals. This is the love that reaches out and accompanies the one who is mourning, feeds the one who is hungry, and shelters the one who has no home.

Just Love was the theme of the Twelfth Triennial Convention of the Women of the ELCA. On September 18-21, 250 Voting Members came to the Sheraton Phoenix for the business convention. We worshipped and prayed for discernment. We shared Bible Study. The WELCA Board President, **Joy Michalicek**, presided over the meetings. Tuesday, September 19 through Thursday, September 21, new officers and board members were elected. By-laws changes and Memorials were adopted. The proposed Budget for 2024 was adopted. All of our business actions were shaped by our goal of living our Purpose and Mission with *"Just Love."* We closed the Convention with Worship and Installation of the new Executive Board.

Thursday, September 21, was the beginning of the Twelfth Triennial Gathering, *Just Love*. More than 1,100 women from the United States and a few other counties as well gathered at the Phoenix Convention Center. In the mornings, we came together for worship. Following worship, each morning, there were speakers whose stories inspired us with the meaning of *"Just Love."* On Thursday evening, following the opening session, there was a reception that had us dancing in the street!

In the afternoon, there were two time slots each day to select any of the Learning Opportunity Workshops or Servant Events. Several workshops and Servant Events explored Racial Justice. **Vance Blackfox** introduced the ELCA Truth and Healing Movement in the Learning Opportunity Workshop titled *"Indian 101."* One very popular session was a book discussion led by

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Dr. Jacqueline Bussie, author of *Love Without Limits: Jesus' Radical Vision for a Love With No Exceptions*. WELCA President, **Linda Post Bushkofsky**, led an exploration of the amazing opportunities available to women through Katie's Fund grants. In the session titled "Just Love Connecting Women," Lutheran women from around the world shared their stories to show how relationships of accompaniment and companionship with our global community can strengthen our ministry at home. There were opportunities to learn more about Lutheran Disaster Relief, AMMPARO and Engagement in Migrant Ministry, Lutheran World Relief, and so much more. Each of these sessions gave us information and skills to be more effective in living out Jesus' New Commandment to love one another as he has loved us. Just Love is our goal.



Anne Storan, FL-BA SWO President

Forms, Funds and Finances...

Greetings SWO Sisters,

In just two months we will be singing around the campfire and walking on Holy Ground as we gather at the Warren Willis Conference center for our Fall Gathering. Yes, this is a new location but it will be the same awesome weekend of reconnecting with our WELCA sisters from around the state.



A few reminders for the weekend:

- If you are sending a voting member to the Fall Gathering, be sure you have made at least one regular offering to the SWO this year. This means sending an offering from your unit to the SWO Treasurer using a Form A. It is different than a Love Offering or offering collected at a Spring Gathering.
 - ◇ If you would like me to check on your unit's status, please email me at: fbswotreasurer@gmail.com or call 239-848-7274
- We will be collecting two offerings at the Fall Gathering - one Saturday during the Love Offering presentation and the other during our Worship Service on Saturday Evening. If you plan on writing a check for either or both of these offerings, please plan to write two separate checks.
 - ◇ For the Love Offering (Sozo Kids), make the check payable to the FL-BA SWO and indicate Love Offering in the memo line or on the envelope. Please do not make the check payable to Sozo Kids. This will be the final offering going to Sozo Kids.
 - ◇ For the regular worship offering, make the check payable to the FL-BA SWO and indicate regular offering in the memo line or on the envelope. If it is an offering from your unit, please also include what church the offering is from.

Thanks for your continued support of the works of our SWO - I look forward to seeing you all at On Holy Ground in November.

Tracy Moffatt, FL-BA SWO Treasurer

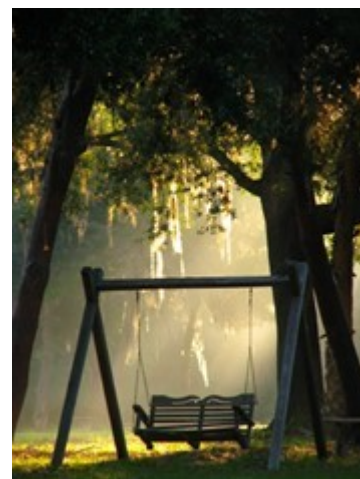
Fall Gathering 2023
November 10-12, 2023
Holy Ground - God Still Speaks

We are getting closer to our Fall Gathering! Have you registered yet? Registration is live at <https://www.flwelca.com/2023-fall-gathering>. The website includes resources you can download to promote the gathering in your congregation, as well as applications for *Share the Spirit* and *Let Your Light Shine*. If you want to attend Fall Gathering and resources are a concern, reach out to your local congregation. Then complete the grant form and send it in with your registration. Grants are not announced publicly.



Does your congregation have a ministry you would like to share with the other women of the Florida-Bahamas Synod? Returning this year - we have lots of room for **display boards!** Bring your tri-fold or display board to Fall Gathering. They will be displayed in the entrance area of the main auditorium where we will meet for worship and business sessions. Let's share what our congregations are doing, giving new ideas and inspiring others.

Conference Leaders - Just a reminder to prepare your camp craft for Saturday evening's activity. After crafts, we will roast s'mores at the campfire while singing camp songs. Have a favorite camp song? Email Karen Weinrich at weinrik@hotmail.com so we can be sure it is included. So far, Kumbaya is the only suggestion received.



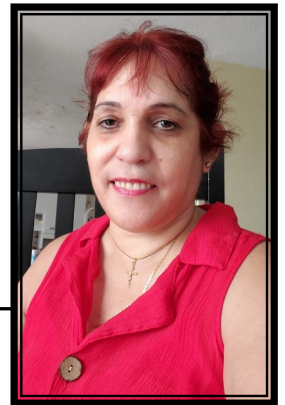
We are so excited to see everyone at this wonderful new site. It is going to be a wonderful weekend discovering how God Still Speaks in our lives.



Lisa Klima & Karen Weinrich
Co-Chairs - 2023 Planning Committee

welcome

Meet our Churchwide Representative
at our November 2023
Fall Gathering



Yma Mulero

Yma Mulero was elected to the churchwide executive board at the Eleventh Triennial Convention (2022). She serves on the programs and communication committee.

Yma was born in the Bronx, New York, to Puerto Ricans parents, and was raised in Carolina, Puerto Rico. She has two brothers, *Victor* and *Miguel*. Her parents, *Victor* and *Edigma (Eddie)*, have both passed away, 2015 and 2016 respectively.

She was raised in the Lutheran Church in Puerto Rico. In her teen years, she was a Dominical Bible School teacher, summer Bible school teacher, and president of the local church teens group. In 1988, she moved to the States and lived in New York and Massachusetts for 25 years. In 2013, she returned to Puerto Rico to care for her mother, and she returned to Cristo Rey, her home church.

Lisette Martinez was treasurer of the WELCA of the Caribbean Synod, and she encouraged Yma to get involved and so she did. In 2019, she became treasurer of synodical women's organization of the Caribbean Synod. She is actively involved in Cristo Rey, where now she is council president.

Yma works for El Angel Ice Plant, where she is the administrative assistant; she also has two small part-time jobs as an administrative assistant. Yma has an Associate Degree in Computer Systems from Mt. Wachusett Community College, with a concentration in Accounting.

She loves God above all! God has been good to her all the time!



BE IT RESOLVED

WELCA can make a difference in so many ways and writing a Resolution is one of them. Resolutions call us to action as an organization, give us strength to facilitate change as a group, and empower us to make a difference. Resolutions will be read and acted upon at our Fall Gathering business meetings. Your resolution brings issues that are important to you, your congregational unit, and community to the attention of all of the women in attendance. Actions taken may include asking all women to take them to their own units, or even sending it on to the next Triennial Convention in the form of a memorial. According to the Women of the ELCA website: "*Memorials and resolutions can direct future actions of all expressions of our organization.*" The process begins with you...

Resolutions need to be submitted prior to the Fall Gathering - deadline is October 15

Instructions for writing a resolution, a blank resolution, and a short sample are available on the FL-BA SWO's website at flwelca.org. There is still time to draft a resolution, get your Congregational unit's approval and submit it before the October 15, 2023 deadline.

Resolutions should be sent to the **Chair of the Resolutions Committee, Sallie Haley**, by email at misssallie56@gmail.com, or by the postal service to Sallie Haley, 8578 Pine Needle Terrace, Crystal River, FL 34428.

Or you may email the form to **SWO President Anne Storan** at astoran46@gmail.com.

PRAYER PARTNERS

For many of our women, prayer partners are an important part of fall gathering. So what are prayer partners? Prayer partners are women who connect over the weekend and then continue to pray for each other throughout the next year. Some even choose to send cards, but that is not required. If you would like to participate, drop your name at the prayer lounge at fall gathering. Then you can choose another name. We chose to do it this way so that women can choose to participate (or not.)



Gather your In-Kind gifts for SOZO KIDS!

At the Women of the ELCA Fall Gathering in November, we will be collecting your **In-Kind gifts** for our Love Offering. **Sozo Kids** has provided a list of their current needs as follows:

- Body Sprays (for teen boys or girls)
- Hair Accessories
- Hair Tools: Curling Irons, Blow Dryers, Straighteners
- Hoodies aka Sweatshirt w/Hood
- Hygiene Kits - Boy and Girls
- Sports Balls
- Wireless Headphones
- Gift Cards - Walmart, Amazon, Visa, Sam's Club, and Office Depot

Thank you all for helping to support this worthwhile organization throughout the year!

Debra Lantz, Love Offering Coordinator & SWO Board Member



UGLY FACTS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

by Stacia Carter, FL-BA SWO

Justice & Reconciliation



U.S. law defines human trafficking as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts and/or labor against their will. Many of us think of human trafficking as sex trafficking or sexual in nature. Human trafficking can also be forcing someone to work against their will. In 2021, 10,359 situations of human trafficking were reported to the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline involving 16,554 individual victims. This number is likely only a fraction of the actual problem. According to all the reports I've read, anyone is a potential target of human trafficking. However, some people are more vulnerable than others.

The most vulnerable include people who have recently relocated to an unfamiliar place. This can include relocation for jobs, family or migration from one area to another. Other vulnerable people include people with substance use, mental health concerns, runaways, homeless youth or young adults recently released from child services supervision.

Traffickers often identify potential victims and exploit their vulnerability to create a dependency on the trafficker. Despite many myths that traffickers are easily identifiable and/or they fit a specific profile, it's simply not true. Human traffickers are diverse, come in all ethnicities and genders as well as socioeconomic status. As we've recently seen in cases in Florida, perpetrators include many wealthy members of society who are not above using their wealth and privilege as a means of controlling their victims. They use threats, blackmail, violence, withholding of pay, withholding of needed documents or threats of deportation if the victim is an immigrant. In some instances, the perpetrator is a family member or even an intimate partner.

No matter the circumstance, no matter the legal status, ethnicity or economic status of the victim, human trafficking is illegal. The unfortunate thing is it is happening all around us, often right in front of us, but we don't recognize it, or we ignore those feelings that "something isn't right". It's hard to think of someone we know as a potential sex trafficker, an abuser, or a forced labor trafficker. No one wants to think that stand-up person, that pillar of society, that generous person we think we know so well, could be a predator. In recent years we've seen politicians, physicians, educators, coaches, business moguls, actors and neighbors arrested and convicted of the horrible crime of human trafficking.

What can we do without putting ourselves in the middle of a situation or accusing someone of trafficking other humans? Well, we can do a couple of things I'm going to list here. It's up to you to pick and choose what you and/or your congregation wish to do.

1. If you own a smartphone, download the app TraffickCam. This is a low involvement way to assist in locating victims. Every time you stay at a hotel, B&B, rental home or resort, open the app and take a picture of the room and upload it to the app. The pictures are collected and used to identify locations of women, men, and teens being sexually abused.
2. If you are in the US and believe someone may be a victim of human trafficking, call the 24-hour National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. All victims, whether US citizens or not, are eligible for services and immigration assistance.
3. If you believe you are encountering a victim of trafficking, call 911. Even though the dispatcher will ask for your information, you can decline to give self-identifying information yet still report someone you believe to be in danger.
4. Take a seminar or attend a workshop to learn the indicators of human trafficking. Better yet, have your congregation invite a speaker and sponsor a workshop. Many police departments and local or government agencies have speakers and information that can be provided to share.

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Other things you can do individually or as a small group are to volunteer in the community supporting anti-trafficking efforts; volunteer at shelters educating residents on how to protect themselves from traffickers; or work with local schools to provide educational materials on trafficking because young people are potential targets.

Because human trafficking often involves forced labor, be aware of where your local produce comes from. The field workers may not have any control over their working conditions or may be paid less than legally allowed. Also try to be aware of where your clothes are manufactured. Many factories have been accused of being sweat shops, guilty of illegal labor practices or forced labor.

Here are websites that are resources for additional information such as <https://www.responsiblesourcingtool.org> or <https://humantraffickinghotline.org> or

CNN's Freedom Project .

Peace to our sisters in Christ,

Stacia Carter, FL-BA SWO Board



Archives Corner

by Mary Flekke, Synod Archivist

What do you do with all those papers you have accumulated as an officer of your Congregational WELCA Circle? If they are operational papers, you can add them to your congregation's Archives. These include directories, program papers, treasurer's reports, and other items that your circle has used for its meetings. You do not have to save the *Gather Magazine* or publications from the National Church; they should be archiving these themselves. There are archive guidelines on the ELCA website at www.elca.org/Archives.

historical record of your membership. Meeting minutes as well are kept forever. And, if you plan to write a history of your congregation's WELCA organization, minutes and directories provide you with some of the materials you need to do this. If you do undertake a history writing project and have not kept a repository of your files, talk to other members of your group. I can almost guarantee that one of them will have kept some of the items you need!

Bank statements the IRS now says can be discarded after four years. The old guideline was seven, and some still keep things the seven years if they have the space. Treasurer's reports, after four years, just keep the year-end reports. Records of offerings, (in the church's case – the envelopes) can be discarded once they are recorded, but I recommend keeping them for at least a calendar year, as sometimes members have questions and want more proof than you might have recorded! Directories, keep forever; they provide a





by Donna Person, FL-BA SWO Board Member

ELCA Fund for Leaders *Scholarship*



Do you know a seminary student who is currently attending one of the ELCA seminaries? Encourage them to apply for the Fund for Leaders Scholarship(s) awarded by the Board of the Florida-Bahamas Synodical Women's Organization ("SWO").

Seminary students must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Applicants must be in the candidacy process and have been verified with the Florida-Bahamas Synod Candidacy Chair.
- 2) Seminary students must be attending one of the eight ELCA seminaries and are either in the Master of Divinity (M.DIV), Master of Arts (MA), or Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) programs.
- 3) Preference will be given to residents of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, female applicants, and active members of congregational units.
- 4) Applications will be accepted each year beginning on November 1 with a deadline of December 15 for submission.
- 5) The selected candidate(s) will be invited to attend the SWO's Fall Gathering, to participate in the weekend's activities, and to present a brief greeting. If the scholarship recipient(s) is unable to attend the Fall Gathering, a video may be submitted.

The Fund for Leaders Scholarship Application for the 2024-2025 academic year is available on our website, www.flwelca.com. **The deadline is midnight, December 15, 2023.** Applications should be sent to **Donna Person**, SWO Secretary, 7418 Corkwood Circle, Tamarac, FL 33321, or dperson7@aol.com.



From the Editor's Desk — Linda Greilick

We Gather Together

Fall it is! A time to gather for many of us! Events celebrating the days of fall are planned in our families, our communities, and our churches. Once again, we as Florida-Bahamas Women of the ELCA, have the privilege to join together with our sisters in this organization at our 2023 Fall Gathering. We gather at a new site this year, one that some have visited on other occasions, but new to many. We will join together this weekend on this piece of God's earth by sharing worship, campfire, crafts, Bible study, workshops, and fellowship on this Holy Ground created by our Lord. We are familiar with this passage from Matthew 18:20 – *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."* Here, Jesus tells us that He is present whenever we gather together in His name. What a lovely message!

With this vision in my mind, I look forward to spending this upcoming November weekend with you. If you haven't registered, the time is now! Meet us! Greet us! Gather together with us!



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

*Are you preparing
those Quilts and
Kits?*

The Drop Off Schedule is still going to be the first full week in February 2024. The sites are:

Christ Lutheran Church in Ft. Lauderdale
Shepherd of the Hills in Clermont
Trinity Lutheran in Jacksonville
Emmanuel in Venice
Good Shepherd in Tampa
Holy Trinity in Ft. Walton Beach

All have agreed to accept all your quilts and kits. Please note the weight for boxes and try to keep them at 30 pounds.

I am checking with LWR to see if we can get the second truck to start on Monday the 12th also. I will inform all the wonderful volunteers as soon as LWR responds to me.

My information on the website should be phone 352-223-1925 and email address leonegoding@centurylink.net.

Thank all of you who work so faithfully for Lutheran World Relief.
The need is so great.

Leone Goding, FL-BA SWO LWR Coordinator



CHURCH WOMEN UNITED MEETS IN OCTOBER

The *State Assembly for the CWU of Florida* is being held in the Fall this year on **October 10 – 12**. It will be held at Warren Willis Conference Center just a month before our WELCA Gathering in November. If you feel you want to get a sneak peek at the facility, please feel free to let me know. You can just come for one day on the 11th and see Church Women United.

The last Celebration held this year is World Community Day. The Units normally hold this on the first Friday of November. This year's theme is "*Living a Legacy of Love: Doing God's Work*" as in Ephesians 2:10. Please contact me or a Unit near you to attend.

Leone Goding, FL-BA SWO/CWU
Cell 352 223 1925 or
leonegoding@centurylink.net



UNIT NEWS!

Gloria Dei Lutheran in Leesburg has a wonderful leader in Christine Carlson. She has lead this Bible Study first with Women of the Bible and now we are studying the book of Acts. We hate to miss because she prepares the lesson with so much thought into it.

Ladies in the picture are *Charleen Cramer, Carol Marshall, Linda Steege, Debbie Cassem,* and our *leader Christine Carlson.*

Florida Bahamas Synodical Women' Organization Directory

Executive Board 2023

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<u>AV Tech</u> Kris Dines kdines1@comcast.net	



What does our logo mean?

Our logo—with the cross, water and a white lily—identifies women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as children of God; baptized, forgiven, adopted into God's family, full of grace and hope in eternal life. It is a reminder of the growth, beauty, and vitality that rises out of that life-giving baptismal water. It is also a reminder of the mission of the church to "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

**Missions

D Discipleship
J Justice
S Stewardship



Tapestry

The *Tapestry* is published six times per year. It is available online under the *Tapestry* link of the FL-Bahamas Women of the ELCA website located at www.flwelca.com.

To submit material for publication, contact
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lindag65@verizon.net

**Please submit *Tapestry* articles
By November 20 for the December issue.**