



April 2023  
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Florida-Bahamas  
Synodical Women's  
Organization



## In This Issue

Anne's Advice.....	2
SoZo Kids.....	2
ELCA Fund for Leaders.....	2
Forms, Funds, Finances.....	3
Facebook.....	3
Holy Ground.....	4
May Friendship Day.....	5
From the Editor's Desk.....	5
Is My Value Just Rhetoric.....	6
Just Love.....	7
Spring Gatherings.....	8-9
Board Listing.....	10



## Anne's Advice

Spring comes early in Florida, and the blue skies, flamboyant azalea colors and infinite variety of shades of green more than compensate for the discomfort of summer's humidity. The bursting forth of new life always gives me energy and greater optimism. As a woman of the ELCA, I also treasure Spring Gatherings. I enjoy gathering with the women of my own conference and reading in *"Tapestry"* about all the other gatherings around the Synod. But since we have been able to meet in person again, I've heard concerns about those who are missing. I also hear expressions of how difficult it can be sometimes to go out and participate in activities we used to enjoy.

In February, Women of the ELCA Churchwide held a Zoom conference titled *"Living Faithful: Called and Thriving."* Several hundred women from all over the country participated in the four-hour sessions over a Friday and Saturday. The opening was a lament by **Prairie Rose Seminole**. She shared her statement of recognition and reconciliation. Her litany included the language of her people while she shared native hymns and prayed with us.



**Pr. Mary Finkler** talked with us about being called. She shared that we may not automatically know what our calling is or even that God has a calling for us. But God has already equipped us with all that we need to live the life he intends for us. We must be willing to be still and take time to listen to God. Abide with God and we will gain understanding and skills for application. She used the analogy of an acorn. In spite of its tiny size, the acorn contains everything it needs to grow into a giant oak tree. In the same way, from the moment you were conceived, you already had everything you would need to fulfill whatever God would call you to be or do. Too often, women are reluctant to take on new roles. They must think of the acorn and know that they already have everything they need to fulfill the purpose God has called them to.

**Desta Goehner** shared with us personal lessons in her life and gave us questions to ponder in conversations in our breakout sessions. This led to some ideas that I am still considering during my own times of contemplation.

## FB-SWO Board

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- Although I am living my life without fear of Covid, I'm still not over the impact of Covid in my life. I am only now acknowledging my grief over the opportunities I lost during those months before vaccination when we isolated for our own safety. I'm still angry that my granddaughter spent her senior year of high school and her freshman year of college learning on her own in her bedroom. I was so disappointed there was no Triennial Gathering 2020. I feel as though I make plans more tentatively, with less confidence than I had. I believe I will need to identify what I missed out on and grieve that loss. Then I can let go of it and look with confidence for whatever God intends for me in this post-Covid world.
- I am distressed by the discord in my community and in some of my personal relationships. Desta had a wonderful formula for reconciliation. Agree to differ, resolve to love, and unite to serve.

Be still and enjoy the beauty of the beautiful Florida Spring. As you hear the birds sing their hymns to the glory of God, take a moment to thank God for ears to hear that song, eyes to see that blue sky, a nose to smell that gardenia bush, a tongue to taste the sweetness of the strawberries, and skin to feel the warm breeze.

Anne Storan, FL-BA SWO President



## Love Offering

## SOZO KIDS!

by Debra Lantz, FL-BA SWO Love Offering Coordinator

In 2021, we were introduced to **Sozo Kids** by its founder **David Houck**. He described deplorable conditions the children lived under in the Ocala National Forest. There are a lot of families in the forest living in rural poverty. Many of the families have no electricity.

One of the problems he told us about was preteen pregnancy. Their mentoring programs offer food and homework help to 7,500 families so the children can have a better future. In 2022, he started by telling us that no ten year olds were pregnant. Conditions improved some with the mentoring centers.

In addition, there are three feeding centers in the poorest regions of the forest. **Sozo Kids** has a summer camp for the children to attend. David appreciates the help we are able to give his program.

For more information on **Sozo Kids**, they have a website at [www.sozokids.org](http://www.sozokids.org). They offer the opportunity to tour their facilities.

You can also contact Debra Lantz, FL-BA SWO Love Offering Coordinator, at [ladebra3@gmail.com](mailto:ladebra3@gmail.com).

## ELCA Fund for Leaders

for this church and for our future

Each year the Florida-Bahamas Synodical Women's Organization awards a scholarship(s) to seminary students that provides financial assistance to those in the candidacy status who are pursuing ordained ministry. This year's recipient is **Courtney Noya**, who will be entering her fourth year at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. Courtney attended All Saints Lutheran Church in Lutz, Florida from the age of three, and through the years, she served as an acolyte, lector reader, assisting minister, and council member. At seminary, she led social events for students that fostered a sense of community. During her internship at Clemson University, she became a trusted leader for Lutheran Campus Ministry. On a wider scale, Courtney has served the ELCA in the Young Adult in Global Mission Program and even worked as a recruiter for the eastern part of the U.S. She recently applied for the ELCA's Young Adults focus group which is looking for a diverse group of young people to discuss the work and future direction of the church.

**Congratulations Courtney!**





## Forms, Funds, and Finances...

Greetings SWO Sisters,

Since many new Conference Officers and Unit Officers are being elected in these first months of 2023, I thought I would take a minute to review the Offerings Forms and such for all the new “money-handlers” out there!

For Spring Gathering, use **Event Data Collection Form** to remit offerings to me. You will also report Conference Leaders on this form. Please send the Conference Officers Update for even if no changes are made - we want to always be sure we have correct contact information for everyone.

For regular offerings to the SWO, use **Form A** and send directly to me. These would be offering such as unit offerings, conference offerings, Love Offerings, Scholarship Fund Contributions. Your Offerings may be sent as often as you collect them or whatever fits your unit’s schedule best. Please remember, each unit is required to make a donation to the SWO annually if you would like to have a voting member attend the Fall Gathering.

For offerings going to Churchwide, use **Form B** and send directly to Churchwide. These would include offerings such as Katies Fund and Thankofferings. Your SWO forwards 55% of all regular offerings we receive from the Units to the Churchwide Organization to support the ministries of WELCA.

All these forms can be found on the website: <https://www.flwelca.com/programs-1>

My Address is:

Tracy Moffatt  
1944 Crestview Way  
Naples, FL 34119

I will be emailing donation receipts to the senders. Please be sure to include your email, or a Church email, on your **Form A** and that is where your receipt will be sent. These emails will come from [fbswotreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:fbswotreasurer@gmail.com) so all future Treasurers can use the same email. You may also use this email for questions or to follow up on donations.

For questions and more Information please contact me via email, text or an old-fashioned phone call!

[fbswotreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:fbswotreasurer@gmail.com) or [tracymoffatt@aol.com](mailto:tracymoffatt@aol.com) or 239-848-7274

by Donna Person, FL-BA SWO Board Member-Publications



A great source of information is the **Florida-Bahamas Synodical Organization ("SWO") Florida/Bahamas Women of the ELCA Facebook page**. You can find out what's going on in local churches, your Conference, at the Florida-Bahamas Synod, and at Women of the ELCA (Churchwide).

Presently, there are posts on upcoming events such as the SWO's Fall Gathering from November 12-14, 2023, at the Warren Willis United Methodist Camp in Fruitland Park; when the SWO's *Tapestry* newsletter is available on the website; information regarding publications from the Women of the ELCA (*Café*, *Bold Connections*; and the monthly *Boldcafe* dinner at [boldcafe.org](http://boldcafe.org) in which you B.Y.O.D. (bring your own dinner) and listen and participate); Lutheran World Relief; and leadership opportunities.

Go to this page: **Florida/Bahamas Women of the ELCA** - and share your thoughts, ideas, and photos about what's happening at your church and Conference.



**for the 2023 Fall Gathering**

**November 10-12, 2023**

***Holy Ground - God Still Speaks***

Have you marked your calendar yet for this year's Fall Gathering? We are so excited to be at the Warren Willis United Methodist Conference Center. If you haven't already, check it out at <https://wwumccc.org/>.

You may be wondering how this new location will compare to our old location. You will find it to be very similar. Women will be staying in hotel-style rooms, each with a single bed. We will hold our main gatherings and worship in this beautiful facility. There is even a prayer labyrinth and an outdoor space where we will have s'mores on Saturday evening.



*Warren Willis Auditorium*



*Rev. Trixie Richter*



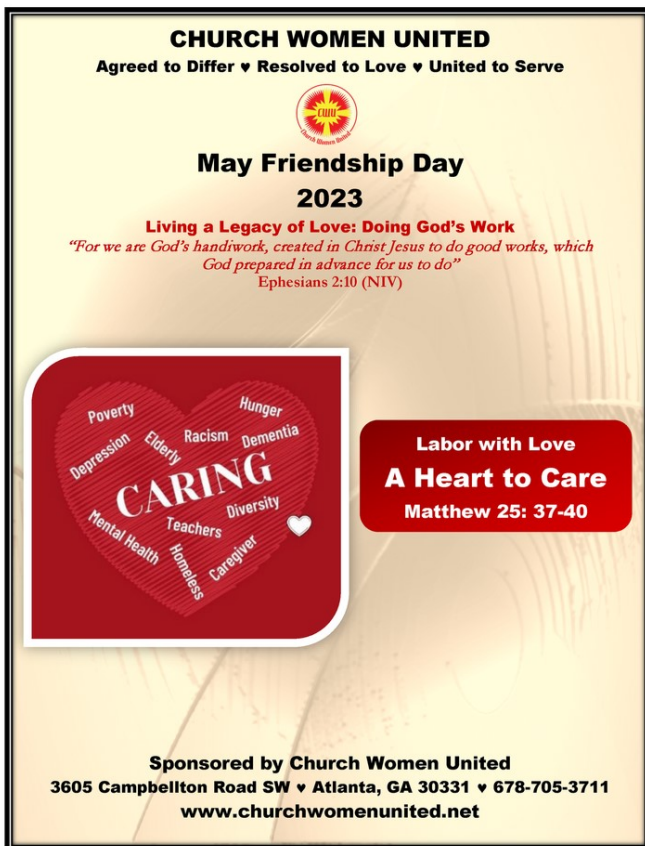
*Sister Michelle Collins*

Those who have been attending for many years will recognize familiar leaders, as ***Rev. Trixie Richter*** leads worship services and ***Deacon Michelle Collins*** leads Bible Study

We can't wait to see everyone there, where we will celebrate Holy Ground and discover how God still speaks to us.

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





## Church Women United

### May Friendship Day 2023

Agreed to Differ • Resolved to Love • United to Serve

The Theme chosen by Church Women United for 2023 is:

#### Living a Legacy of Love: Doing God's Work

*"For we are God handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"*

-Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

May Friendship Day is celebrated all over the World on the first Friday in May. The focus for 2023 on this day will be:

*"Labor with Love—A Heart to Care"*

The celebration will also include Fellowship of the Least Coin, a worldwide ecumenical movement of prayer for peace and reconciliation. Every time one prays, she sets aside a "least coin" of her currency as a tangible token of her prayer. Church Women United is the custodian for [International Fellowship of the Least Coin \(IFLC\)](#) in the United States.



Please find a Unit so you can join in this celebration. If you need help in finding a Unit in your area or have questions about the event, please contact:

**Leone Goding, FL-BA SWO—CWU, SWO [leonegoding@centurylink.net](mailto:leonegoding@centurylink.net)**



From the Editor

### Just Love

From the Editor's Desk — Linda Greilick

Planning for the 2023 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering has restarted. Just this week, I received an email from Gabriela Contreras sharing the steps I should take to prepare for the event. Her message began: **"Love, patience, and kindness has prevailed!"** Those words stopped me in my tracks. I could only think of the devastating and breaking news that has filled our newscasts, newspapers, and phones this week! I could only think that not everyone in our community, our country, and our world feels this message of prevailing love, patience, and kindness. Why can we not "Just Love?" Why can we not be patient with one another? Why can we not share kindness and understanding with all? That thought is so troubling to me. I can pray for me to improve in all of these ways. I can pray for others to be more loving, patient, and kind. But, don't I need to act too? In Galatians 5:22, we hear *"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."* Instead of listening to our own wants and desires, turning our ears to listen to the Spirit certainly can help us to JUST LOVE a lot more!

# Is My Value Just Rhetoric?

by Stacia Carter, FL-BA SWO Board Member-Justice & Reconciliation

I recently attended a meeting of ELCA women. As I was leaving the meeting, I saw a vehicle that had multiple bumper stickers on it. I read bumper stickers because it gives me insight into the person driving the vehicle whether I know them or not. That day, I was heartbroken.

The bumper stickers were in support of movements and politicians who say I and others of my ancestry have no value. One bumper sticker proclaimed the driver was “*anti-woke*”. That’s disheartening because anti-woke usually means that person doesn’t want to be knowledgeable about issues affecting others other than him/herself. Another bumper sticker was in support of a politician who recently decided the state could not offer an AP African American History course because he didn’t agree with the subjects to be taught. His public statement was “the course offers no educational value”.



No educational value? For high school students to learn about people of African ancestry, about slavery, the abolition of slavery, abolitionists, the Underground Railroad, the emancipation of slaves, Juneteenth Day, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Church, Black music, the history of LGBTQIA in the Black community, the Black Lives Matter movement, even gangs in the Black Community. After all, there are plenty of movies about White and Asian Gangs and the Mafia, so somewhere along the line, someone was taught about them. Because this politician doesn’t want this course taught, important events in history will not be learned in schools.

To be clear, this article isn’t about politicians or political stances. This article is about beliefs and agreement with others who support stances that are harmful to people who don’t look and think like they do. It’s about agreeing with family, friends, neighbors, teachers, preachers, celebrities, other prominent people and politicians who support policies harmful to others. It’s about supporting people who harbor racist and dangerous ideas. It’s about agreeing with and supporting those people and their ideas. It’s about disregarding, degrading, and harming others by your thoughts and actions or inactions.

By not allowing the AP African American history course, we are denying students the opportunity learn about early Black writers such as **Hannah Crafts**, **Phyllis Wheatley**, **Ralph Ellison**, **Richard Wright** and our first African American Poet Laureate **Gwendolyn Brooks**. We aren’t allowed to teach about **Fred Pelham**, the first Black person to receive a degree in civil engineering. Black scientists such as **Charles Turner**, Black inventors or environmentalists. Black activists such as the founders of the 1619 Project or events such as the Ocoee or Rosewood massacres in Florida, have no value according to this politician because he doesn’t like the subject matter. Black folks have contributed to every and I mean every aspect of life in the United States. **Morgan Garrett** designed the first stop light. **Marian Anderson** was the first opera singer to sing at the White House, **Mae Jemison** was the first Black female astronaut. Slaves literally built roads and many public buildings including the White House that still exist today. However, this knowledge has no educational value according to the owner of the car and bumper stickers.

Unbelievably, the politician in question also happens to be the Governor of Florida. His political party also controls the state legislature. His appointees control the state Department of Education, the University system, he has the power to remove and appoint Sheriff’s and other elected officials who disagree with him. And he is not afraid to wield his power.

Books depicting slave revolts, books written by authors he disagrees with, curriculums that discuss the horrors of slavery, the transportation of people bound and stripped naked in the bottom of ships, the horrors of the late 1800’s and 1900’s can get teachers suspended, fired and charged with crimes, in some cases a felony. Teachers who unintentionally make a student feel bad for the actions of their ancestors, or unintentionally make a student feel responsible for the treatment of African Americans can be sued. As for LGBTQIA, some school districts are telling their teachers not to have photos of their same sex spouse and not to mention their same sex significant other for fear of being fired.

*continued on Page 7*

I'm sure many who support this rhetoric and these policies have never had a discussion with a person of African ancestry about how this affects them. Let me tell you how it affects me.

I ask, how can you say you care about me but support policies that say teachers can't teach about my ancestry? How can you say you care about me and support policies that will get a teacher arrested for teaching proven factual history? How can you say you are my friend, yet deny me the same chance as you to speak about my heritage? You get to speak about the good and the bad of your heritage whether it's about your grandparents immigrating to America, your grandparents struggle to get established, the hardship your parents faced being first and second-generation Americans. You get to speak about your parents' story of learning the English language while your grandparents and aunts and uncles only spoke their native language at home. You get to talk about the discrimination you and your family faced such as being called slurs, not being allowed in certain neighborhoods, etc. Yet, you are ok with me and mine being denied the same opportunity. WHY?

I know my African ancestors did not come here willingly. The color of my skin tells me that more than one generation of females were raped, conceived and had babies for their masters. But these things aren't supposed to be taught here in Florida. The history of the Holocaust where Jewish people were tortured, raped and forcibly marched into gas chambers can be taught, but not the history of African Americans. WHY?

What I really don't understand is how we as ELCA say we support inclusivity. I don't understand how we say, "ALL ARE WELCOME". The ELCA for years has been trying to increase our membership of people of color. Yet when I see bumper stickers and other overt signs that say I am not a valued member of this denomination, that my history has no value, I really must consider if this is where I should be. Am I wanted? Am I valued? Do I belong?



WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING  
SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2023 | PHOENIX  
WELCATG.ORG

The registration for the Gathering is now open. There is an **early bird discount available through April 30, 2023.**

Click on the following link for information regarding Registration: [www.welcatg.org](http://www.welcatg.org) In addition to registration information, there is various information on this site including speakers, quilters challenge, the rail system in Phoenix, and the Phoenix Travel Guide.

When the TG was postponed from 2020 to September of 2023, the participants who had registered were given an option of letting the churchwide organization hold their registration fee so those of us that did that are already registered. You do not need to re-register for the Gathering. You also do not need to re-register for any items, tours and events you previously paid for. You will not be charged the difference for your registration, previously booked tours or other previously -paid items.

If you choose to book tours or events, or order items, but are already registered, click the link to modify registration on the site.

Please note that all previous hotel reservations made in 2020 were canceled. Re-book your hotel rooms before August 24, 2023, at either of the host hotels. Visit [www.welcatg.org](http://www.welcatg.org) to make your hotel reservations.

If you have questions regarding your registration, email or call Framework Meetings at [info@frameworkmeetings.com](mailto:info@frameworkmeetings.com) or call them at 208-651-2230. Please let me know if you register to attend the Gathering so I can add you to my contact list.

**Diane Spicer**, Triennial Promoter  
[dlsic@juno.com](mailto:dlsic@juno.com)



## SPRING GATHERINGS 2023

At the annual winter SWO Board/Conference Leaders meeting this year, a suggested theme and Bible study focus was chosen for Conference Spring Gatherings. Many agreed upon "Let your light shine" based upon Matthew 5:16: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" or Psalm 18:28: "It is you who light my lamp; the LORD, my God, lights up my darkness."

Another theme that a couple of conferences chose to follow is "Dancing in Grace" based upon Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"



*We'll be hearing from more Board Members on these upcoming Spring Gatherings in our next issues.*

*Can't wait!*

## WHERE AND WHEN

CONFERENCE	DATE	LOCATION	BOARD MEMBER ATTENDING
Broward-Bahamas/ Miami-Dade/Monroe	After Easter	Pembroke Pines	Donna Person
Caloosa	To be determined		Tracy Moffatt
First Coast	May 13	St. Mark Jacksonville	Sallie Haley
Flagler/Volusia	March 25	Hope Lutheran Daytona	Ann Storan
Gulf Coast	March 25	Nativity Weeki Wachee	Leone Goding
Heart of Florida/Lake	March 25	St. Phillips Mt. Dora	Nina Jageler
Mid-Gulf	April 1	Emmanuel Venice	Laurie Nelson
Panhandle	To be determined		
Space Coast/ Tradewinds	April 22	Joy Palm Bay	Denise Beumer Stacia Carter



Right to left: Board Secretary Laurie Nelson installing officers Secretary Lisa Corneilson , President Irene Brissel, VP Judy Martin, & Treasurer Loraine Van Haecke

## 2023 SPRING GATHERINGS ARE HAPPENING!

AT ST. MATTHEW'S IN OCALA

PINELANDS CONFERENCE

Pinelands Conference Spring Gathering took place on Saturday, March 18th, at St. Matthew's in Ocala. What a wonderful Spirit filled day filled with fellowship and love. All units in our conference took part in the success: from volunteering at registration and providing breakfast and lunch to the beautiful Spring decorations and the campfire tea lights provided as table favors. Breakfast was offered at 9am. Then *President Shelly Fortin* called the meeting to order with an opening prayer and mission statement. After a favorable vote of new nominated officers, installation took place. *President Irene Brissel*, *Vice President Judy Martin*, *Treasurer Loraine Van Haecke* and *Secretary Lisa Corneilson* were installed. I then brought greetings from our SWO Board and introduced those on the board in attendance. An informational power point was presented, and all were encouraged to attend the Fall Gathering in November. Paper applications and information sheets were also offered to those interested in Share the Spirit, Let Your Light Shine, New Love Offering, Board member and Officer app. and all the learning web sites and resources we have available. *Deacon Shirley Rice* shared about the 'Ministry of Hope' mission that St. Matthew's works with. Each church in attendance then shared the mission works within their churches. After lunch, *Irene Brissel* from St. Matthew's presented a Bible study from Matthew 5:16. In closing, all gathered in the sanctuary where *Pastor Gayle Nelson* lead a beautiful communion service.

Your Sister in Christ, *Laurie Nelson*



AT HOPE IN ST. PETERSBURG

SUNCOAST CONFERENCE

Suncoast Conference Spring Gathering was held March 18, 2023 at Hope Lutheran Church in St Petersburg. Congregational Unit President *Pat Shipley* welcomed all to Hope. *Pastor Felice Johnson* led the Bible Study and split the group into four groups to discuss different aspects of the theme verses from Micah 6. The reports back



Dancing in Grace



were interesting. A skit was presented on suitability of gifts to the Lord. Actors in the skit were *Linda Greilick*, *Tina McCloud*, and *Mary-Jo Martin*. A soloist *Rena Massey* sang during the Communion service and *Ross Kimura* shared his musical talents as the pianist the entire morning. Elections were held. *Phyllis Berlage* and *Linda Greilick* were elected as Co-Chairs and *Kathy Bartelt* was elected Secretary. This is for a 2 year term. Thirty-eight attended with ten first timers. A delicious lunch was enjoyed by all. *Debbie Christie* led us in a scarf dance with wonderful music after lunch. With financial assistance from Thrivent, twenty-five school kits were assembled for Lutheran World Relief and note cards with encouraging words were created for Lutheran Residences.

**Debra Lantz**  
FL-BA SWO Board Member

Left to right: Board Member Debra Lantz, Co-chairs Phyllis Berlage & Linda Greilick, & Secretary Kathy Bartelt



# Florida Bahamas Synodical Women' Organization Directory

## Executive Board 2023

<u>President</u>	<u>Vice President</u>	<u>Secretary</u>	<u>Treasurer</u>
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## Board Members and Missions\*\*

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Leone Goding leonegoding@centurylink.net J-LWR, CWU	Nina Jageler njageler@gmail.com D-Conference Coordinator	Donna Person dperson7@aol.com D-Publications, Fund for Leaders

## Non-Board Members

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<u>AV Tech</u> <b>Kris Dines</b> 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](http://www.flwelca.com).

To submit material for publication, contact  
**Linda Greilick, *Tapestry* Editor**  
lindag65@verizon.net

**Please submit *Tapestry* articles  
By May 15 for the June issue.**