

TAPESTRY

A Publication of the
Florida-Bahamas
Synodical Women's
Organization of the
ELCA

April 2026 | Vol. 39, Issue 2

From Your President

Christ has risen! Christ has risen indeed!

What a joyful proclamation we profess on Easter. I wish you an Easter season that calms your heart amid all the trials of this world. We are stressed, we are anxious, people are dying in war. People we know may be in direct danger. But through all of this, we know that Christ is risen, Christ has risen indeed. We are working for justice, we are empowering others and supporting them in their callings, we are living our faith and we know that Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. We are working hard to understand why our circles aren't growing in membership, and why our churches aren't attracting young people but we know Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. We see people are hungry, people are sick and people are suffering. We see gun violence, domestic violence, and theft but we know Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Our worshipping communities are sometimes not what we need and other times they are more than we need. We gather around word and sacrament, trusting God's Grace and we know that Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. May this knowledge comfort you today and always.



In This Issue

From Your President.....	p. 1
Lutheran World Relief	p. 2
Rachel's Day.....	p. 2
Updates from Your Treasurer.....	p. 3
Spring Conferences.....	p. 4
Panhandle.....	p. 4
Pinelands.....	p. 5
Heart of Florida.....	p. 7
Fall Gathering 2026.....	p. 9
From the Editor.....	p. 10

— Raeann Purcell, *President*

Pictured: St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida on Easter Sunday 2026. Share photos of your church and worship community with Gina, and you'll see them in future issues of Tapestry.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Lutheran World Relief is Love in Action!

For 80 years, quilts and kits have been sent around the world. Last year, for the first time, the same generosity was shown to those who needed help in our country because of hurricanes Helene and Milton, wildfires in California, severe weather in the Midwest, and flooding in Central Texas. Also, \$1 million in cash grants were shared.

The quilts and kits collection was held in January, and Florida was very generous, with 55 churches participating.

Quilts: 4,153. Baby care kits: 315. Fabric kits: 97. Personal kits: 1,501. School kits: 1,194

There were 6 pickup stops around the state on their way to Minnesota for distribution. (689,814 quilts and kits sent to 16 countries.)

Thank you for all the hands that participated in making, packing the items in the boxes, and filling the trucks.

—Marilyn Kreitzinger



Do you love details?
Scan the QR code or email Gina at fltapestry@gmail.com for a breakdown of each congregation's contributions.

Rachel's Day: Third Triennial Convention (1996) of Women of the ELCA resolved "That ELCA women encourage their congregations to recognize the **first Sunday in May** each year as Rachel's Day, based on Jeremiah 31:15–17 wherein Rachel grieved for her children, to mourn the loss of our children and to renounce the forces of evil and fear that plague our nation."

Learn more at womenoftheelca.org/special-initiatives/rachels-day

Updates from Your Treasurer

Finally! It seems fairly certain that the unseasonable cold days are done for this year! It's Springtime! A time for Spring Gatherings, annual elections, and – for lots of us – a ton of yard work this year!

For your Spring Gatherings, please use the Event Data Collection Form to remit offerings and to report Conference Leaders even if no changes are made so that we can make sure our info is up to date. This form should be sent to me.

For regular unit offerings, conference offerings, Love Offerings, Scholarship Fund Contributions, and donations to the Lutheran World Relief Shipping Fund, please use Form A and send directly to me.

For offerings going to Churchwide, such as Katie's Fund and Thank offerings, please use Form B and send directly to Churchwide as directed on the form.

Please remember that each unit is required to make a donation, of any amount, to the SWO, annually, if you would like to have a 'voting' member attend the Fall Gathering. Even if you don't have a "voting" member at the Fall Gathering, **ALL** Women of the ELCA in Florida congregations are welcome and encouraged to attend the Fall Gathering!

Your offerings may be sent at any time depending on what fits your unit's schedule best. Feel free to combine several months to save checks and postage.

All these forms can be found on the website: womenoftheelca.org/tools-for-leaders

My contact info is:
Michele Hilton
100 New Leatherwood Drive
Palm Coast, FL 32137

For questions and more information, please contact me via email (micheleahilton@aol.com), or text or call me (941.373.5596).

Oh yes...yard work – no suggestions here! At least it will be "instant gratification."



— Michele Hilton, *Treasurer*

2026 Spring Conferences

Panhandle Conference Spring Gathering



The Panhandle Conference Spring Gathering was held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Ft. Walton Beach, 20-21 February. The theme was “Reflections” and focused on Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.”

We gathered on Friday evening for a time of fellowship. The Conference Committee leadership team provided a soup supper followed by a fun craft making mini prayer boards to take home.

Saturday was the main event, beginning with a continental breakfast and registration. There were 30 people at the gathering on Saturday representing churches from Ft. Walton Beach, Pensacola, and Tallahassee, the majority of whom also attended Friday evening. The business meeting was held first with information provided on Fall Gathering 2026, the new Love Offering designee Forward Paths Foundation, and that Triennial will be virtual so it will be available to all. Elections were held with Karen Korte (Holy Trinity, FWB) and Dee Messino Anderson (St. Paul, Pensacola) elected as Co-Coordinator and Stephanie Setley (Holy Trinity, FWB) elected as Communicator. Stacey-Fleming Weeks, outgoing Conference Co-coordinator led the installation service for the new leaders. The last business item conducted was the selection of dates for the next Spring Gathering which will be held April 16-17, 2027.

Program elements included a Reflections Scavenger hunt, a spiritual reflection by Stacey Fleming-Weeks, and a presentation on ways to focus on intentionally slowing down to connect with God (“Be Still”) from Dori Dunham. A love offering was collected for Forward Paths Foundation and prayer partners were exchanged.

The session closed with a communion service led by Pastor Bethel Bateson and a hymn.

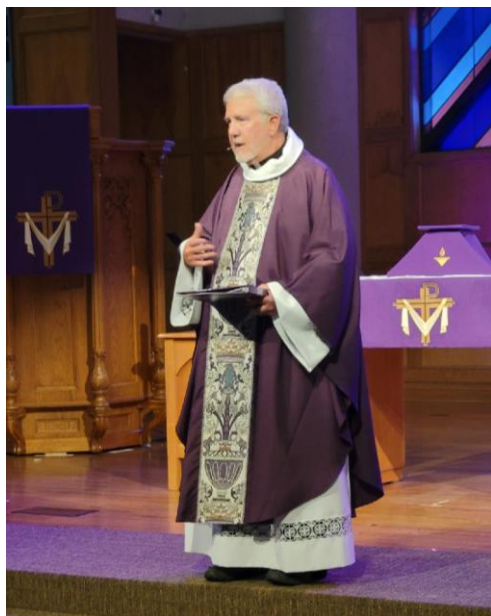
—Wilma Shively,

SWO Board Secretary (and outgoing WELCA Panhandle Conference Coordinator)

Report on Pinelands Conference Spring Gathering

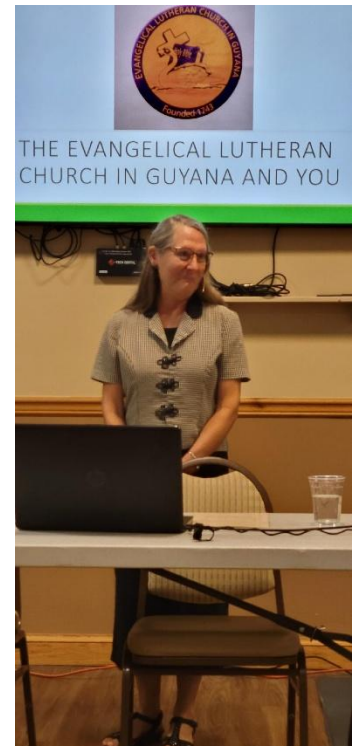


On March 4, 2026, the women of Pinelands Conference met at Hope Lutheran Church in the Villages. After registration and a lovely continental breakfast, our program began with 54 members in attendance. President Bev Conklin led the business meeting. Jan Keller was elected president, Eileen Soler, Vice President, and with a little prayer and encouragement, first time attendee Gail Gratzick agreed to serve as secretary.



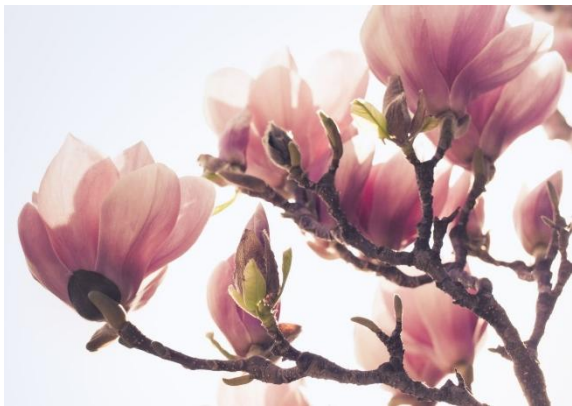
Pr. Bruce Dillman led us in worship and communion and we enjoyed the ukelele accompaniment with the closing hymn. We enjoyed a lovely lunch prepared by Hope's chef (Yes, Hope has a chef on staff) and then the program by Rev. Dr. Carol Schneider who shared with us about the Lutheran Lay Academy in Guyana. Rev/ Dr. Schneider shared that they were sharing some resources with the Lay Ministry Academy of the Florida-Bahamas Synod. This is one way that the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana (ELCG) is addressing the leadership shortage in the ELCG. They are equipping voluntary lay leaders, deacons, and pastors age 18-60 through a ladder of courses that allow participants to proceed as they are called, from lay leader to deacon to Pastors. We were blessed with pictures of the churches in the ELCG and the modes of transportation.



We had 14 first time attendees that were recognized with a small gift from the Synodical Women's Organization (SWO). Units shared the work that they are doing in their congregations. I was presented with a lovely homemade scented candle made by Cindy Gaertner as a gift from the conference. This spirit-filled spring gathering was a joy to attend.

—Racann Purcell



Report on Heart of Florida Conference Spring Gathering

The Heart of Florida Spring Conference was hosted by Salem Orlando on March 14. We opened our program with an energetic Bible study led by Rachel Ulrich of St. Stephen Longwood on how the Bible tells us not to worry, and we closed with a sermon by Pastor Karen Albaugh from Trinity Groveland confirming God's command to leave our worries in his hands. In between, we had presentations by outgoing Heart of FL Co-Chair and new SWO Board member Marilyn Kreitzinger on Lutheran World Relief, former SWO Board member Leone Goding on this year's Love Offering recipient, Forward Paths Foundation, Inc., and a presentation on WELCA by our SWO Board Representative Stacia Carter. Former SWO Vice-President Denise Beumer was also in attendance.



Lutherans always have food when we gather.

We joyously welcomed four first time attendees to the fold, and they were presented with a small gift for joining us. A highlight of our conference was The Prayer performed by the Hawaiian dance group Halau Hula Kaleooka'iwa as well as hearing the Doxology sung in Hawaiian. We were invited to then join them in singing the Doxology in English. I believe we were all moved by watching their love of God in motion and song.

Elections were held and new officers were installed. We thanked outgoing Co-Chairs Loraine Van Haecke and Marilyn Kreitzinger for their dedicated service to Heart of Florida. Then we welcomed our new Co-Chairs Leone Goding and GlendaFaye Koelln and returning Secretary/Treasurer Arlene Kelly.

By the time the conference was over, we were filled with the spirit of God through word, song, fellowship and plenty of food. After all,

—Stacia Carter



*Pictured right:
Leone Goding,
Arlene Kelly,
GlendaFaye Koelln*



SAVE THE DATE!!!!



FBSWO Fall Gathering

November 13-15, 2026

Warren Willis United Methodist Camp & Conference Fruitland Park

Planning for this year's Fall Gathering is moving along!! "Come Holy Spirit" is the theme the weekend is being built around. Worship will be led by Pastors Jen Moore and Dori Dunham. You may remember Dori from last year as she spoke Friday night about how receiving our scholarship impacted her. George Algozzina will provide our music during worship and at our Saturday Evening event.

Many workshops will be offered and we are working hard to find more ladies willing to lead craft workshops. If you are interested in leading any type of workshop, please reach out to me: tracymoffatt@aol.com. Registration will open in early June.

We hope to see you there!

Lisa Klima & Tracy Moffatt, *Fall Gathering Co-chairs*

Jan Keller & Denise Coller, *Planning Team*

From the Editor

“For instance, a person who has been around for a while might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume he should only be a vegetarian and eat accordingly. But since both are guests at Christ’s table, wouldn’t it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing what the other ate or didn’t eat? God, after all, invited them both to the table. Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God’s welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.”

—Romans 14:2 (*The Message paraphrase*)

I have an annual tradition of joining friends on Easter to make Peep dioramas. (Yes, the sugar-laden, vibrant-colored birds you’re thinking of.) Each year, we have a theme, and one of the possible themes for 2026 was “a Bible verse or passage.”

This is what first came to my mind:

“...the weak eat only vegetables” (NRSVUE translation).

I recall sitting in the pew when this was one of our readings and feeling *extremely* called out. *Wait?! So, am I weak because I don’t eat meat?*

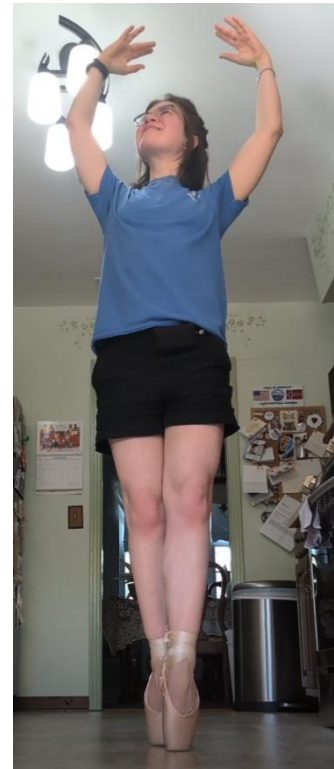
But that’s not the point. It continues into a welcome that transcends our small-minded dietary concerns. “Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them” (NRSVUE translation).

Which brings me to ballet.

I took ballet from kindergarten through high school, took an 8-year break, and returned to dance about four years ago.

There is so much welcome in the adult ballet community in 2026, seemingly more than ever before. Adults are coming to (or back to) ballet classes to fulfill childhood dreams. Adults are performing in recitals. And adults are safely beginning pointework with caring teachers. People are finding welcoming, affirming, and inclusive dance communities in person and even on the internet (one only has to peek at Instagram to soak up some positive stories).

There’s an option for everyone in a mixed-level adult ballet class. Wear a leotard and tights and a bun, or wear workout clothes you feel comfortable in. “Choose your own adventure” when you dance across the floor. Go fast in the first group, medium in the middle groups, with the teacher walking you through it in the last group. If your body doesn’t want to fold or jump or turn today, you’ll do what you need for your body. Your focus for the day doesn’t have to be what the person next to you is focused on. You have shown up and you are welcome here.



You are welcome here whether you eat meat or whether you abstain.

You are welcome here whether you have time to attend regular WELCA meetings or whether you are just a woman in the ELCA.

It's a joy to serve as your *Tapestry* editor. Thank you for reading!

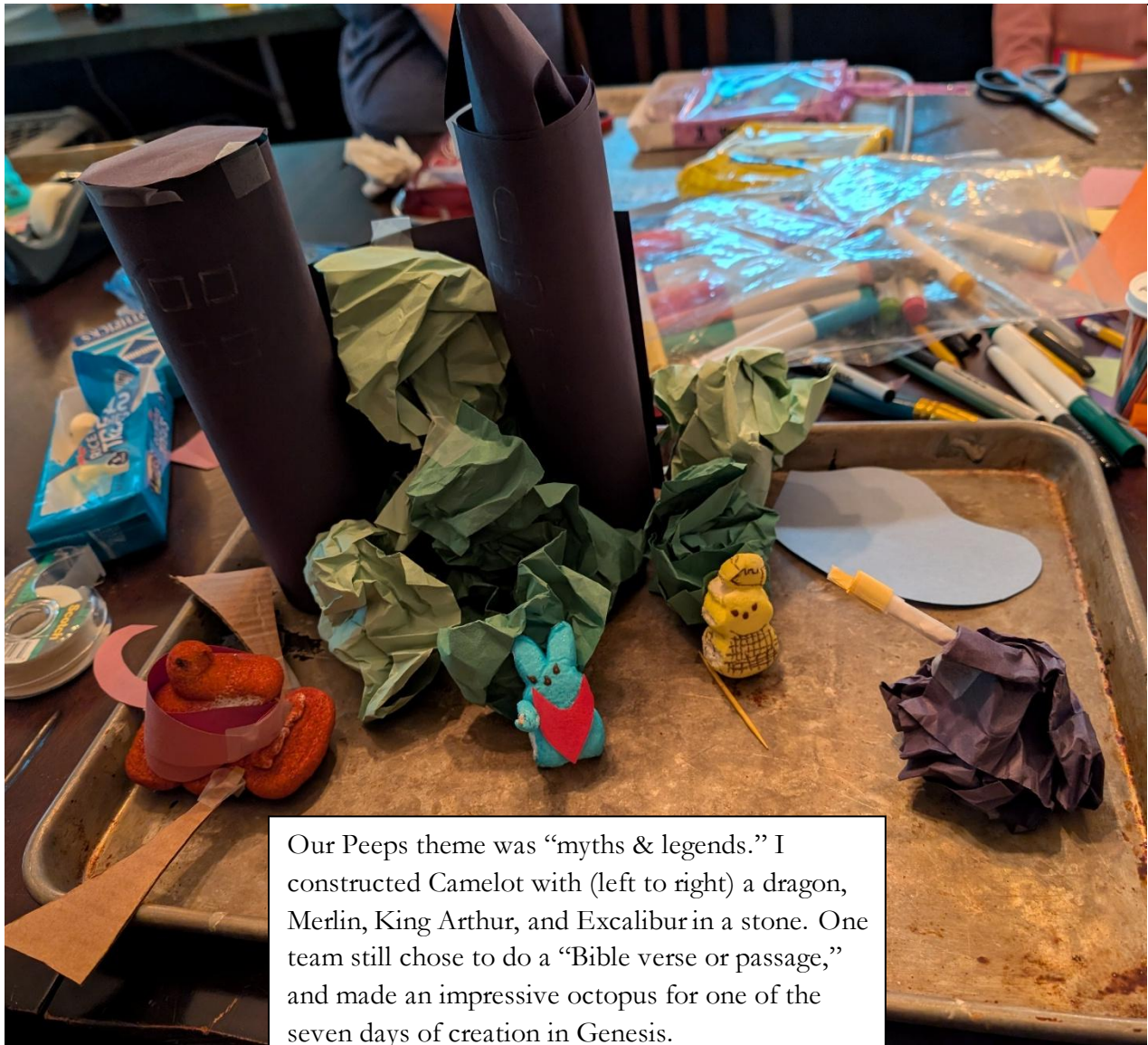
Also, remember to email your articles and photos to me at fltapestry@gmail.com. Your stories and photos are always welcome!

Upcoming issues:

June 2026 Issue (send articles by May 15)

August 2026 Issue (send articles by July 15)

—Gina Olson, *Editor*



Our Peeps theme was “myths & legends.” I constructed Camelot with (left to right) a dragon, Merlin, King Arthur, and Excalibur in a stone. One team still chose to do a “Bible verse or passage,” and made an impressive octopus for one of the seven days of creation in Genesis.

Florida-Bahamas Synodical Women's Organization Directory

President Raeann Purcell raeannpurcell@hotmail.com	Vice President Donna Person dperson7@aol.com	Secretary Wilma Shively wjshively@aol.com	Treasurer Michele Hilton michelehilton@aol.com
--	--	---	--

Board Members

Stacia Carter	staciamlc@gmail.com	Social Justice, Advocacy, and Reconciliation
Marilyn Kreitzinger	manyjoys2u@gmail.com	LWR
Irene Brissell	ibrissel@gmail.com	
Lakesa Ferguson	lakesa36@gmail.com	

Advisory Members

Diane Cummings	sworegistrar1@gmail.com	Registrar
Diane Spicer	spicerdiane3@gmail.com	Love Offering



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).

UPCOMING ISSUES

June 2026 Issue
(send articles by May 15)
August 2026 Issue
(send articles by July 15)

**Email Gina Olson at
fltapestry@gmail.com**

