

TAPESTRY

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

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From Your President

How are you? Are you feeling the stress of current events in our country? The feeling that it is us against them; they are the enemy, and we are right? We must continue to shout our message until they see that we are right. How can they not understand? How can they be so evil? What is wrong with these people?

These people, our neighbors, our siblings, residents of our communities, our leaders are all children of God. Matthew 5:44 says, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Luke 6:27 says, "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. James 5:16: "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and

effective." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." We need to remember in our call to do justice we are also called to love kindness and walk humbly with God.

Let's start a wave, a wave of prayer. Smile at people, use their names, pray for those who are suffering with anger, dismay, frustration, and aggression. In your daily encounters, whenever you come across someone, take a deep breath and blow out a prayer of blessing. Can we do it? With God's help, all things are possible!

— Raeann Purcell, *President*

Sad News

Anne Storan, our most recent past president, succumbed to a brief illness and joined the church eternal. We extend our prayers to her family and friends as we mourn her loss. Anne loved the Women of the ELCA and was a faithful contributor financially and with her time and talents. She touched many lives and will be missed. Rest in peace, good and faithful servant.



2026 Triennial Gathering

We invite you to join with our ministry as we seek to nourish women's faith and love and to inspire women to proclaim their identity, intent, and actions. The theme for the 2026 Triennial Gathering is "I am Worthy," focusing on Psalm 139:14: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." This proclamation reminds us of God's promise to always be with us, even during times of devastation and division. Repeating the phrase "I am worthy" helps us recognize the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in our lives. This practice of self-affirmation creates opportunities for healing and repair within ourselves, the church, society, and the world. When we declare "I am worthy," we align ourselves with God's promises. There is great power in our resolve.

Register at womenoftheelca.org

2026 WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING



july 16-19, 2026 ✝ des moines, iowa

Forms, Funds, & Finances...

Greetings SWO Sisters,

The Fall Gathering is fast approaching! We will gather once again at the Warren Willis Conference Center. Registration is open until October 10th – so please join us! This year, we will again be sharing our worship space with the Methodist youth at the camp for a retreat! We have made some plans in conjunction with the youth retreat to connect our two groups – it will be an awesome weekend!



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, make the check payable to the FL-BA SWO and indicate "Love Offering" in the memo line or on the envelope.
 - **DO NOT** make the check payable to GraceWay Village.
 - 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 in November.

—Tracy Moffatt, *Treasurer*

Fall Gathering 2025

“For all who are led by the spirit of God, are children of God.” – *Romans 8:14*

FALL GATHERING 2025 is fast approaching. Have you registered yet? We will return to Warren Willis United Methodist Conference Center in Fruitland Park, November 7-9, for a fun, fulfilling weekend. We are hoping you will join us.

Rev. Kari Niedermaier has agreed to be our worship leader. Rev Margarita Romo will be our Bible study leader. We will also hear from Lorie Garcia, WELCA churchwide board representative, and Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham from the Florida-Bahamas Synod office.



In between discussing the business of WELCA, we will enjoy worship, Bible study, workshops, time for private meditation, and fun. Don't forget to join us Saturday evening for game night. We will have games, but if you have a game you love, bring it with you.

To keep everything running smoothly and not overload any one Conference, we have everything divided up the responsibilities (listed below). If you have questions, each Conference has an assigned Board member as their contact. That person is also listed. If you haven't heard from your assigned contact or have questions, please be sure to reach out to them.

<u>Conference</u>	<u>Duties</u>	<u>Board Contact</u>
Broward, Bahamas, Tradewinds	Ushers	Leone Goding
Caloosa & Panhandle	In-Kind Gifts	Wilma Shively
First Coast	Saturday Devotions	Lisa Klima
Flagler-Volusia	Credentials	Denise Beumer
Gulf Coast	Prayer Lounge	Sallie Haley
Heart of Florida & Lake	Communion	Leone Goding
Mid-Gulf	Elections	Denise Beumer
Pinelands	Registration	Tracy Moffat
Space Coast & Tradewinds	Sunday Devotions	Lisa Klima
Suncoast & Tampa	Hospitality	Judy Dreisbaugh

We will once again have use of a golf cart, and Bill Hull has happily agreed to be our driver.

When you register, please remember to indicate on your registration if you have mobility issues so that you can be assigned a first-floor room. Also, please indicate if you have dietary restrictions so the meal team is aware. See you soon!

—Stacia Carter, *WELCA Board*

Social Justice, Advocacy, & Reconciliation

I guess I am naïve. I never thought people would expect me to mourn someone who wished death on people who look like me. Someone who spewed hate, who has shown open disdain and hate for people of color, especially Black women, LGBTQIA, immigrants, Muslims, and other groups. While I don't know of anyone celebrating his death, I know many who, like me, refuse to mourn or be silenced from telling the truths about his words or his actions. Truthfully, I am appalled at the people who are supposed to be Christian who defend him. But that is your right. Everyone has the right to free speech. I just wish everyone remembered that when those he attacked speak up. I was taught to love my neighbor, to honor everyone's right to practice their religion, to lend a helping hand, and to not judge someone based solely on their appearance. I've always thought these were the Christian principles I needed to follow.



I hear clips of certain men disparaging Black women. Stating the only reason, we attained our positions is because of affirmative action. Forget that we must take the same legal bar exams, the same medical board exams, the same CPA exams, the same teacher licensure exam or meet the same military qualifications for our specialties. We had to graduate from college, write thesis and/or dissertations, toil in jobs that didn't pay well as we moved up the ladder. None of that counts because supposedly we only "got our job through affirmative action."

Now the buzzword is DEI. Most people don't even know what DEI stands for. Let me explain it in understandable terms. Diversity is what forced drug companies to diversify their test populations to include women when establishing protocols for many medications. Previously, most drugs were tested on rodents and then on white men (except for the experiments such as the Tuskegee Syphilis experiment—Google it), but not on women or people of color. This resulted in the protocols being based on that 185-pound man with different testosterone and other chemical levels, but not on a woman's body. They also weren't tested on men of different ethnicities, even though drugs work differently on men of various heritages. DEI helped with diversifying those studies.

Equity has made it easier to request equitable treatment in public accommodations and in the workplace. Say you have a job, but you need training to advance. The men get to go to an annual conference out of state, but the women are told it's "unseemly" for a woman to travel alone or with a man she isn't married to. Yes, companies have actually said this. Now, if men get to attend those conferences and training, they legally must allow the female employees the same access. Equity also means simple things, such as if you drive a company vehicle, the seat has to be able to move to accommodate the shorter stature of many women. If an employee is in a wheelchair, that employee must have access to a wheelchair ramp or elevator to get into the building and floor to floor. Your employer can't put the breakroom on the second floor and say, "oh, you can't walk up the stairs, too

bad.” An employer can’t move equipment out of reach and not provide a step stool or another way for shorter employees. That’s just putting things on an equitable playing field.

Inclusion should be simple. This is making all feel INCLUDED, being welcoming and supportive in all environments. An example, for years many African American women chemically “relaxed” their hair to fit into professional environments, schools, any place where the majority was not African American. Many of us suffered chemical burns, damage to our eyes, and hair loss. Then we started developing cervical and other cancers that the manufacturers were aware of but downplayed on warning labels. Some even completely failed to disclose these potential side effects. Many Black women started having their natural hair braided, then covered in a wig or “weave” for the work week, then let their natural hair out to breathe on the weekends. This was expensive and time-consuming. For many of us, this was too much. We started wearing short afros or braids. Schools expelled our daughters, reprimanded and fired our sisters and mothers because we no longer wore our hair according to a white standard of hair beauty, straight and preferably long. It has taken legislation to force employers of women of African or Caribbean descent and other ethnicities, to be allowed to wear their chemical-free, natural hair styled neatly in braids, locs, twists, etc. Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson has worn Sister Locs since her swearing-in, and they look fabulous. I started wearing braids around 2007/2008 and haven’t looked back. Now I wear locs and love my hair. Wearing my hair natural no longer results in me being “ex”cluded from jobs or organizations. Inclusion also means getting various opinions for ad campaigns. It means television shows now reflect actual populations of cities with people of diverse backgrounds, diverse income levels. Minorities are no longer only portrayed as household help, low-income workers. As in real life, we are shown with professional jobs as well as low-income jobs, participating in all facets of life. Inclusion means women, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA, non-Christians are all in the boardroom making decisions. People who used to be excluded are now seen as valuable members at the table. Or at least they were until recently. Now, DEI is being used as a weapon. DEI doesn’t guarantee anyone a job, neither did affirmative action. DEI just means that my resume gets included with all the others that meet the requirements. It means if I passed the bar, did an internship at a law firm, I have an equal chance of being interviewed to prove myself. Too often in the past, resumes of women or people of color were separated out or even excluded from the pile with white men. Often a woman who was more qualified, had more experience, could do the job better never even got interviewed. Now everyone must compete for that job. The job isn’t given to anyone because of their gender or race.



They need to be the most qualified, and some men resent that fact. Now, many men are saying women should stay home, be homemakers, that DEI is discriminating against them, the white male. It’s clearly not true. We currently have university Presidents running major universities in FL with no university experience, no PhDs, no teaching credentials. We have men in US Cabinet positions who are former talk show hosts with no experience on the subject they are now regulating. But it’s

women, people of color, LGBTQIA or people with disabilities who are unfairly getting jobs they aren't qualified for?

I ask the women of the ELCA. Please don't make assumptions about one another. Please assume that a woman got her job because she earned it, passed the same exams, met the same requirements, paid her dues the same as everyone else. Also, please, please stop telling women of color to ignore racist attacks. The attackers don't go away; they just get emboldened when no one speaks out, challenges them, calls them on being racist, sexist, or homophobic. Be a sympathetic ear when your friend or acquaintance, who doesn't look like you, tells you how badly she was treated by someone who treats you just fine. Remember, people treat people differently, and that other person may have biases that are never displayed toward you. Don't be surprised when your experiences are not their experiences. Truthfully, no two friends' experiences are the same. Don't try to tell a woman with different life experiences how she should think. Ask her what she thinks and exchange opinions. Please don't try to tell a woman that someone who preaches hate, supports policies that can harm her family or violate her rights is someone she should support. Could you support someone who tries to erase your very existence? Listen to each other with an open mind. Be a woman of the ELCA, a loving Christian who accepts all.

—Stacia Carter, *WELCA Board*

GraceWay Village Love Offering

GraceWay Village in Fort Pierce was chosen as the Love Offering beginning in February 2024. It began in 2009 as a program to provide clothing for children (infancy to 18 years) from low-income families. A feeding program was then added to address the needs of those individuals who feel food insecurity. This summer, the GraceWay Cafe program grew by 37% and the Clothing Boutique by 10% compared to a year ago.



GraceWay Village set a goal of building a Family Restorative Living Facility for families threatened with homelessness. This facility will provide temporary housing for families as well as essential life-skill training leading to self-sufficient, healthy families. Phase One of the Family Shelter will soon break ground. For more information, go to www.gracewayvillage.com.

In Kind Gift List for Fall Gathering:

- Amazon Gift Cards
- Walmart Gift Cards
- Sam Club Gift Cards
- Visa Gift Card
- Target Gift Cards

New Socks & Underwear for children & teens:

Teen Girls:

- Ladies' size 5,6, & 8 undies - bikini preferred (no thongs)
- Ladies' size 9-11, no-show, low-cut ankle socks
- Men's size small, medium undies - boxer briefs ONLY (no briefs or white)
- Girl sizes 2-3, 4, 6 undies - no white (They love the princess/cartoon styles.)
- Girl sizes toddler, small, medium, and large ankle socks
- Boy sizes 4, 6-8, 10-12, 14, 16-18 undies - boxer briefs ONLY (no briefs or white)
- Boy sizes toddler and large ankle socks

—Diane Spicer, *Love Offering*

Lutheran World Relief: Quilts in February



**LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF**

Again, with the help of the six churches that make this happen, we are supporting Lutheran World Relief. During the first week of February 2026 (which will be the 2nd through the 6th), all churches should bring their quilts and kits. The next week, on Monday the 9th and Tuesday the 10th, the truck will be sent from Lutheran World Relief.

Watch for more information in the next issue!

—Leone Goding, *SWO Coordinator LWR*



Report on Space Coast Conference Spring Gathering 2025



Thirty-six women gathered at St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Melbourne, FL, on March 22, 2025, celebrating the theme, “Hope, Joy, Endurance, and Faith.” This event was co-hosted by the women of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Melbourne, FL.

After morning refreshments and welcomes from Gisela Khail, Space Coast Conference President, and Sandra Penrod, St. Timothy’s WELCA President, The Reverend Blaine Johnson officiated at the worship service with Communion as Linda Carole Poppe served as pianist. Raeann Purcell, guest speaker, represented the Synod, and Chrystal Netherton, CEO of GraceWay Village, our current Love Offering recipient, also was a guest speaker.

The Ays Native American people were honored prior to the business meeting, which included acceptance of previous meeting minutes, announcing the location of the Spring 2026 Gathering, Lutheran World Relief report, and special words of encouragement from Raeann Purcell. Chrystal Netherton gave an address updating the love and care for families that GraceWay Village was able to give through our generous Love Offerings. A special time was allotted for attendees to share their ministries. Lunch was prepared by the women of St. Timothy, followed by a Bible Study on the theme of the day. The 2026 Space Coast Conference Spring Gathering is scheduled for April 18, 2026 at Our Savior Lutheran Church, Vero Beach, FL.

—Janet Jodoin, *Space Coast Conference Secretary*

From the Editor

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness;

come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.”

—*Psalm 100:1-3 (NRSVUE)*

Fall is a season of change and new activity. As we enter this season, I find myself taking on two new explorations: pointe and ukulele.

Eleven years ago, after years of ballet, I began to learn to dance in pointe shoes, and then I stopped dancing and didn't return until eight years later. Now I am beginning again. It is challenging, but fun. I don't have to be the best, to compete, to nail a [fouetté](#) any time soon. I have the privilege of enjoying the experience, the slow learning.

Even more recently, my interest was piqued when I saw that we'll have a ukulele workshop at Fall Gathering. I added it to my list, and got a ukulele, encouraged by my violist mom.

Now, it's important to note that both of my parents are professional musicians, and I am not. I play the piano, and I took violin lessons for a half a second as a young child. So, as I held the ukulele and started adjusting it in my arms, it was a bit humorous. I had no clue what I was doing! Thanks to a YouTube video lesson and some practice, I have a hint of a clue now...but don't expect anything impressive from me!

What are you exploring? How are you “making a joyful noise”? I invite you to share the new things you are exploring for the December issue!



Please email your articles and photos to me at fltapestry@gmail.com.

I hope to meet many of you at Fall Gathering!

Upcoming issues:

December 2025 Issue (send articles by November 15)

February 2026 Issue (send articles by January 15)

—Gina Olson, *Editor*

Florida-Bahamas Synodical Women's Organization Directory

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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

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Email Gina Olson at fltapestry@gmail.com

