

TAPESTRY

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

June 2026 | Vol. 39, Issue 3

From Your President

I AM WORTHY.

This is the theme for the Triennial Convention and Gathering this summer and the summer Bible study in the *Gather Magazine*. Are you planning to attend the Gathering on July 16-19 in Des Moines, Iowa? We look forward to hearing from you about your experience. The theme is based on Psalm 139:14: “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

Our churchwide organization says “this statement serves as a reminder of God’s promise to be with us, even in times of devastation and division. By repeating the phrase “I am worthy,” we can recognize the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work in our lives. This practice of self-affirmation opens up opportunities for healing and restoration within ourselves, our 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.”



Reverend Sara Olson Smith, the author of the Bible study and the Bible study leader for the Triennial Gathering shares in her video a synopsis of her study. She speaks of Jesuit Priest Gregory Boyle’s concept of “no matter whatness.” How we matter to God, no matter what. She shares that we are more than one thing. I am a mother, a grandmother, a woman of the ELCA, a lover of dogs, a little silly, and a lot unorganized but I am worthy because God created me in his image. And thirdly, I am because you are. We are created for interdependence and community. I depend on a lot of people to keep our organization going and I thank you all for sharing your talents with our organization so that we can mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. I hope you enjoy the summer Bible study. Check out

GatherMagazine.org and sign up for the monthly emailed newsletter for updates. We would love to hear from you as to how your congregational unit is using the study. Remember: You are Worthy!

— Racann Purcell, *SWO President*

In This Issue

From Your President.....	p. 1
Updates from Your Treasurer.....	p. 2
More Gatherings.....	p. 3
Caloosa.....	p. 3
Space Coast.....	p. 4
First Coast & Suncoast.....	p. 4
Mid-Gulf.....	p. 5
Broward-Bahamas.....	p. 6
Fall Gathering 2026.....	p. 7
From the Editor.....	p. 8

Updates from Your Treasurer

Greetings SWO Sisters,

This is my first year as a SWO Board member – and so my first time to visit with other conferences for their Spring Gatherings! What a blessing! I look forward to seeing many that I met at Spring Gatherings at the Fall Gathering!

“Come, Holy Spirit” is the theme for our upcoming **Fall Gathering, November 13-15**. More info to come from the Gathering leaders! But save the date!

Do you need a *“helping hand”* to make attending possible? We have funds available to help!

Share the Spirit Grants (Adults)

These grants are designed to assist women with the cost of attending the Fall Gathering beyond what they—or their unit—are able to contribute. Applicants are encouraged to share in the cost as they are able, with grant funds helping cover the remaining balance.

All women are welcome to apply, including:

- First-time attendees
- Women needing financial assistance
- Any women in your congregation
- Women of all ages

Let Your Light Shine Grants (Youth)

This grant program supports **young women in grades 6 through college** and works just like Share the Spirit.

If you know a young woman who would benefit from a meaningful, faith-filled weekend, please invite her to attend! Our Youth Shepherd is already planning a wonderful weekend of activities.

Grant Details

- Funds help cover **accommodations, meals, and registration**
- **Previous recipients are welcome to apply again**
- Applications are available at: www.flwelca.com (Fall Gathering page)
- Please include your application with your registration

Applicants are encouraged to also seek support from their congregation, sponsors, and personal contributions. This helps us extend assistance to as many women and youth as possible.

♥ Support the Grants

We also invite individuals, units, and conferences to contribute to these grant programs so we can continue offering a “helping hand” to more sisters in Christ.

Mail contributions to:

Michele Hilton, SWO Treasurer
100 New Leatherwood Drive
Palm Coast, FL 32137

(Make checks payable to Women of the ELCA and designate the fund in the memo line or include Form A.)

— Michele Hilton, *SWO Treasurer*

More 2026 Spring Gatherings

Caloosa Conference

The ladies of the Caloosa Conference gathered on March 21 at Christus Victor Lutheran Church in Naples. Twenty-nine attended, including seven first-time attendees. All enjoyed a wonderful program on Mindfulness Skills to de-stress, worry less, and connect with God presented by Debra Burdick, LCSW also known as “The Brain Lady.” We received great practices and exercises to use every day.

For more information on the skills, please visit Debra’s website: www.thebrainlady.com

The day ended with worship led by Pastor Courtney Noya of Christus Victor—a former recipient of our Fund for Leaders Scholarship.

—Tracy Moffatt





A beautiful day in Vero Beach at Our Savior Lutheran Church.

Space Coast Conference

The Space Coast Conference Spring Gathering met on Saturday, April 18, 2026, in Vero Beach at Our Savior Lutheran Church. The theme was “Do Not Worry,” based on the Bible verses Matthew 6:25-34. It was a beautiful day in many ways. The sun was shining, we were met with a breakfast as we gathered, the ladies were mingling, the atmosphere was cheerful, and all getting ready for Christian fellowship. Conference president Gisela Khalil welcomed all to the Gathering. Conference secretary Janet Jodin opened with prayer. A worship service was led by Pastor Chelsey Weech. Communion was served.

We proceeded with business meeting. The nominations were opened for new officer positions. The officer roles are still in need of volunteers, as no names were brought forward during the meeting, and they were asked to contact Gisela if they are interested in serving. Organizations grow stronger when members are willing to share their time, talents, and ideas. A Lutheran World Relief report was given by Janet Jodin for the conference. 628 quilts, 371 all kits, wonderful results from 8 churches.

We had an inspirational, interactive Bible study on Psalm 121 led by Pastor Chelsey Weech, where we had the assurance of God’s protection when we worry. We then moved to the fellowship hall where we had a lovely lunch provided by the women of Our Savior. We were given a lovely handmade beaded bookmark. Following our lunch, Diane Ludwig spoke to the women about the Women’s Refuge of Vero Beach, who offer a place for two weeks to two years to women who need a place to

be safe. A monetary gift was given to the refuge to help their program. We left having met new ladies, tummies full, and inspiration to share that God is always with us.

—Marilyn Kreitzinger

First Coast & Suncoast Conferences



April 18, 2026 This being my first term as your Treasurer, it was also my first experience as a Spring Gathering SWO representative. This is definitely one part of the “job” that I REALLY enjoy!

In April I was thrilled to attend the Spring Gathering for the First Coast Conference held at Trinity Lutheran in Jacksonville.

Left: Michele Hilton speaks to the First Coast Conference. Below: Mary Tereszkiewicz shares about LWR.

Everything was so well planned from gathering time and light breakfast foods, to a Bible Trivia game based on wellness, to a lovely lunch, devotion time and songs and more songs with very gifted musicians, meeting old friends, making new ones (one 1st timer!), an inspiring speaker from LWR – Mary Tereszkiewicz...a great day to spend with 35 Lutheran sisters.



First Coast officers for the year ahead!

Then, on **May 2**, I got to spend a girls’ weekend with one of my twelve grandchildren AND attend the Suncoast Conference Spring Gathering, hosted by Trinity Lutheran of Meadowland in St. Petersburg. Truthfully, the ride over from my NE Florida home to St Pete – over the lovely I-4, which brings out the very worst in me...was made worthwhile by being with such a great group of women! I couldn’t have asked for a more warm and friendly group to spend lunch, conversation, ministry sharing with...about 25 women (two 1st timers!) who were just a joy to be with!

Thank you to both conferences for your warm welcomes!

—Michele Hilton, *SWO Treasurer*

Mid-Gulf Conference

The Mid-Gulf Conference met on April 18 with the theme, “Worry No More.” We opened with welcome of the host church, Holy Trinity by Janice Hanus and proceeded to devotion. After the business meeting led by president, Gayle Bakiel, Raeann Purcell (Synodical Women’s Organization President) brought news from our organization and recognized 10 first time attendees with a small gift. Gayle led us in Bible study using Matthew 6:28 and 29. We participated in a communion service led by Rev. Carl Fisher followed by lunch. Jim and Charlotte known as the Lovings entertained us with Gospel music and we closed with litany and prayer. A special thanks to all those who made this event so special.

— Raeann Purcell, *SWO President*

Broward-Bahamas Conference

On May 30, the women of Trinity Lutheran, Pembroke Pines, hosted the Broward-Bahamas Conference’s Spring Gathering with ladies in attendance from Christ Lutheran, Fort Lauderdale; Redeemer, Lauderdale Lakes; and St. John’s, Hollywood. Vicar Heather Hedman-Devaughn from Redeemer, Lauderdale Lakes (a Fund for Leaders Scholarship recipient for the past two years), led the Bible study and discussed the importance of self-care and emotional wellness by incorporating *The Grace Method* by Johanna Avin, **Guard** your peace; **Regulate** and Refuel; **Acknowledge** Your Limits; **Choose** Compassion; and **Extend** Grace Inward. Piper Spencer, playing the ukulele, led the group in song. Ladies had the opportunity to participate in making note cards to send to loved ones and to design and paint rocks with positive messages to share with veterans and in memory of Broward Sheriff’s Office employees. Dany Vega of Trinity Lutheran, Pembroke Pines, was elected Vice President.

—Donna Person, *SWO Vice President*



Fall Gathering Registration is now open!!!

You may now register for the Fall Gathering to be held November 13-15 at Warren Willis Methodist Conference Center in Fruitland Park.

To register: scan this QR Code or go to www.flwelca.com to download form and/or register online. Workshop lists and selection will be available in early August.

The weekend promises to be a refreshing and renourishing time as we explore the gift of the Holy Spirit. Come for worship, workshops, and a wonderful time!



*Come
Holy Spirit*



From the Editor

“...child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. Amen.”

—*Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (p. 231 “Holy Baptism”)

“I am worthy.”

“I am confident. I am worth caring about. I am caring and kind. I am strong. I am a helper. Make today a good day. 😊”

These are my positive affirmations. I first wrote them on a tiny sheet of paper and placed them in my bathroom in 2020.

I had just moved back to Jacksonville after finishing graduate school in New York. My identity as “student” was gone after a Zoom-thesis reading, Zoom and Skype and YouTube were my connections, and I was applying to jobs and interviewing. I felt uncertain, worried, and unworthy. Anxiety and a bit of depression were tapping me on the shoulder.

I wrote positive affirmations and began reciting them (silently or aloud) in the mornings.

Sometimes it felt (and still feels) silly to say things that don’t feel true *yet*. (“I am confident” feels like a stretch, but it is empowering to say.) Yet, this practice helps me frame my days in a more supportive way than allowing negative thoughts and worries to dominate the morning.

In early June, as I was polishing a final draft of *Tapestry*, I led a short morning Bible study discussion using Rev. Dr. Ralen M. Robinson’s article in *Bold Café*. Near the end, I invited everyone to write some positive affirmations for themselves and to perhaps start with “I am a beloved child of God.”

I invite you to write positive affirmations for yourself, too.

How will this practice change your days?

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:

August 2026 Issue (send articles by July 15)

October 2026 Issue (send articles by September 15)



Positive affirmations with earrings for an upcoming dance recital. I will say them beforehand!

—Gina Olson, *Editor*

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 micheleahilton@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	Global Missions
Lakesa Ferguson	lakesa36@gmail.com	Love Offering

Advisory Members

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



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

August 2026 Issue
(send articles by July 15)
October 2026 Issue
(send articles by September 15)

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

