

TAPESTRY

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Florida-Bahamas
Synodical Women's
Organization of the
ELCA

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From Your President



I like dogs! I like them big and I like them little. I am currently unable to have my own so I have been doing some dog sitting for neighbors and friends. Some dogs are bouncy and excitable. Some dogs are quiet and scared. Some dogs can be very protective. Some are just happy go lucky. One dog was very good at telling time. She knew she could not eat until 30 minutes after her pill so at 5:00, she started circling and reminding me to give her the pill. At 5:30, she started

pushing her bowl around so I would not forget to feed her.

I recently sat with a pair of Labrador Retrievers that I met a few times outside their home. I was a little concerned when I went to the house as I had not been there before. I unlocked and opened the door and they greeted me with wagging tails. After they went outside, we sat on the sofa together. I was thinking about how hospitable they were. Calm, relaxed and happy for a few scratches. I have a neighbor that has 2 small (10lb) dogs and a medium size dog. When I visited them, they bark and bark and jump. The 2 littles chase each other around and nip at each other. Even after a while, they are still very excitable. They do not listen. Their brother is happy to be left alone as the two battle on.

I was thinking about listening. Sometimes, I am not very good at it. Like some dogs, I am easily distracted. Instead of hearing what the person is saying, I'm thinking about what I must do later or what I am going to say in response or how what they were saying affected me. I get excited and interrupt. I focus on me. I often don't listen

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to hear. I don't give the attention that the person deserves. I do this with God too. I am easily distracted. Squirrel! Sometimes, I do not want to hear what is being said. Sometimes, I need an experience to make me hear the message.

My goal is to actively work on listening. I want to be the Labradors. I am praying that I can be empathetic and not judge, not

interrupt, keep eye contact and concentrate on what is being said as opposed to what I'm going to say. I pray that I can keep an open mind and learn from others. I also hope to spend more time intentionally listening to God. I'm going to use the resource provided on WomenoftheELCA.org called *Listening to God* to help work on myself. During a group discussion once, someone complained about falling asleep when they were praying. The response was, who better to fall asleep talking to.

— Raeann Purcell, *President*

Lutheran World Relief



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

There is a CHANGE to the Ingathering for Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Clermont.

The new Contact Person is Alma Wehr at (414) 758-8538. Please contact for appointments the week of February 2-6, 9:00 am to noon.

Please change your truck drop-off schedule for February 2026.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact Leone Goding SWO (352) 223-1915 or email leonegoding@centurylink.net.

News from Your Treasurer

Greetings all! I am Michele Hilton, newly elected to serve as your Treasurer for the next couple of years. A huge shout out and thank you to Tracy Moffat for her work as Treasurer since 2022.

I have “been around” the Synod for many years serving in various capacities: Conference Chair, Assistant to several Bishops, and Vice President of the Synod Council. I love working with numbers so I am really looking forward to this new venture as your Treasurer. My husband I are retired and live in Palm Coast, Florida where we are active members of St. Mark By The Sea.

With Spring Gatherings right around the corner, please remember to use **Event Data Collection Form** to report about your gathering and remit offerings to me. For regular offerings of any kind to the SWO, you use **Form A** and send directly to me. These would be offering such as unit offerings, conference offerings, Love Offerings, Scholarship Fund Contributions. For offerings such as Katie’s Fund and Thank offerings, the preference is to send those directly to Churchwide using **Form B**.



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

My home address 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).

— Michele Hilton, *Treasurer*

Love Offerings: A Thank You from GraceWay Village

GraceWay Village is honored to have been selected as the Love Offering recipient by the Women of the ELCA for the past two years. This partnership has meant more to us than words can fully express.

Chrissie and I have cherished the time spent at your Fall Gatherings each year, getting to know the women behind the mission and witnessing firsthand your generous hearts of service to the Lord. Your kindness, hospitality, and sincere commitment to helping others have left a lasting impression on us.

Through your love offerings, you have provided essential food items that enable GraceWay Village to continue serving our neighbors in need. The gift cards you so thoughtfully donated have allowed us to respond quickly and compassionately to families in crisis, meeting urgent needs with dignity and care. The socks and underwear you collected have been a tremendous blessing as well, simple items that make a profound difference for children and families facing hardship.

Your faithful generosity has strengthened our ability to serve, uplift, and restore hope in our community. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ and for walking alongside GraceWay Village in this important work. We are forever grateful.

With sincere appreciation and blessings,

Chrystal & Chrissie



Conference Choice for Spring Gathering Theme: Worry No More

The Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) board members and conference leaders enjoyed a weekend of planning, discussion, and fellowship at Luther Springs from January 23-25. On the second day, while the SWO board met, Gina joined the conference leaders in the dining room for some good conversations about themes for this year's Spring Gathering. The conference leaders had extensive conversation about worry and the importance of self-care in relation to the verses.

The suggested theme is "Worry No More," using Matthew 6:25-34. You may choose to add Galatians 6:9 and have "tandem verses."

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear...And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?" *Matthew 6:25-27**

Other suggested verses:

Psalm 28:7

Romans 8:28

Proverbs 3:5

Psalm 56:13

Matthew 10:14

Conferences can use this theme, but are also welcome to choose their own.

**NRSVUE translation*

Do not worry.



FALL GATHERING 2026 CONFERENCE ASSIGNMENTS

CONFERENCE	FALL GATHERING ASSIGNMENT	CONFERENCE LEADER	BOARD CONTACT PERSON
Broward-Bahamas & Miami-Dade/Monroe	Ushers	Lena Putzer	Marilyn Kreitzinger
Space Coast & Tradewinds	Saturday Devotions	Gisela Khail	Irene Brissel
Flagler-Volusia	Communion	Raeann Purcell Michele Hilton	Lakesa Ferguson
First Coast	Hospitality	Rachel Mumford	Stacia Carter
Heart of Florida & Lake	Elections	Loraine Van Haecke	Donna Person
Pinelands	Registration	Bev Conklin	Michele Hilton
Caloosa & Panhandle	In-Kind Gifts	Julie Hunter Wilma Shively	Wilma Shively
Mid-Gulf	Sunday Devotions	Gayle Backiel	Irene Brissel
Suncoast /Tampa	Credentials	Sharon Koelsch	Donna Person
Gulf Coast	Prayer Lounge	Kathy Drach Ellen Lapinski	Tracy Moffatt
Youth	Rachel Ulrich		
Audio Visual	Karen Weinrich		

From the Editor

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?”

—*Matthew 6:25-27*



2026! What a year! And, as I write this letter, it's still only January.

After a snowy Christmas with family, I returned home to...come down with the flu and sleep through the new year. On my birthday, January 10, I finally emerged. I took a walk. I breathed in the outside air, greeted neighbors, paused to watch a trio of crows rising and falling (perhaps playing), and I looked at the wispy clouds. It was a short version of my normal walk, but I sure felt alive.

When did you last realize there were clouds?

When did you last pause to watch some birds?

When did you last notice someone or something and think “Thank you, God”?

When did you last worry?

A second ago. A millisecond ago, if I'm being honest. If I'm not actively aware of my worrying, I worry that I'm overlooking something. Worry and I know each other well.

When the Matthew reading was selecting for Spring Gatherings this year, it felt so appropriate, so necessary. It's something I need to reflect on in 2026, and I hope you'll join me in doing so and in giving thanks for the small blessings around us each day.

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:

April 2026 Issue (send articles by March 15)

June 2026 Issue (send articles by May 15)

—Gina Olson, *Editor*

A Look at Luther Springs 2026: SWO Board and Conference Leaders









*O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*

—Psalm 104: 24



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
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Board Members

Stacia Carter	staciamlc@gmail.com	Social Justice, Advocacy, and Reconciliation
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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

April 2026 Issue
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**Email Gina Olson at
fltapestry@gmail.com**

