

TAPESTRY

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From Your President

This month, I hope you will indulge me as I share a little of my life.

My mom was my best friend. Not when I was growing up. She was Mom, with all the support a working mom with four children could provide. When I decided to return to church after being away for 15 years, I took my children to the church my parents attended. My mother got me involved in the Women of the ELCA and when a new circle for working moms was formed, I became the leader. As this circle struggled to find its call, my mother supported me in finding a way. As I began to attend conference and synodical events, my mother was there and when I attended my first Triennial convention in San Antonio in 2005; I wanted to share the experience with my mother. She traveled to Salt Lake City to attend the 2008 Gathering with me. There are many women who have encouraged me and helped in my faith formation and my experiences with the Women of the ELCA, and I am grateful to every one of them, but my mother was, of course, the most special. In recent years, her health suffered and I missed sharing events with her. On July 22, 2 days short of her 91st birthday, she received her final reward. Her memorial service reminded me how many lives she touched when the church filled with people from many aspects of her life. She was indeed a



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very special lady and I know that I am blessed to have had the relationship that we shared. I pray you all have special relationships that you cherish and that you remember to be grateful to God for these blessings.

— Raeann Purcell, *SWO President*

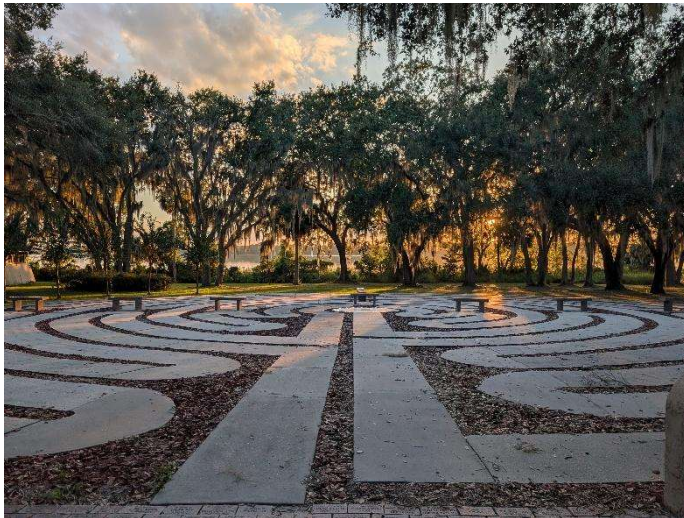
From Your Treasurer

Greetings SWO Sisters!

Have you seen all the great workshops listed on our website for the Fall Gathering???

I am SO excited! The Fall Gathering is quickly approaching! What???

You haven't registered yet? Registration is open for our annual Fall Gathering at the Warren Willis Conference Center in Fruitland Park. The weekend of November 13-15 centers around the theme "Come, Holy Spirit!" Registration is open until



October 10th – just go to www.flwelca.com/2026-fall-gathering. If you come every year, or if you haven't been in a while or if you've never attended a Fall Gathering, there's something "special" that happens when women gather together for fun, worship, song, silliness, and fellowship.

A few reminders for the weekend:

- If your WELCA unit is sending a voting member to the Fall Gathering, be sure at least one regular offering to the SWO has been made this year. Just use Form A to send your unit offering to the SWO Treasurer. Questions? Just give me a call at (941) 373-5596 or text me or email me at micheleahilton@aol.com.
- There will be two offerings collected at the Fall Gathering – one on Saturday during the Love Offering presentation and the other during our worship service on Saturday evening. If you plan on writing a check for any Offering, please note the following:
 - For the Love Offering: Please make the check payable to the FL-BA SWO and indicate "Love Offering" in the memo line or on the envelope.
 - For Regular Worship Offering: Please make the check payable to the FL-BA SWO and indicate "regular offering" in the memo line or on the envelope.
 - For any Unit Offering: Please make the check payable to the FL-BA SWO and indicate "unit offering" in the memo line or on the envelope and ALSO indicate which church (name and city) the offering is from.

Can't wait to see you at the Fall Gathering!

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

— Michele Hilton, *SWO Treasurer*

Fall Gathering
November 13—15, 2026
Warren Willis United Methodist
Camp & Conference—Fruitland Park

Join your sisters from across Florida as we welcome the Holy Spirit
to refresh and renew our souls with worship,
Bible study, workshops, fellowship and fun!

Pastor Jen Moore, Gateway Trinity Lutheran Church, Ft. Myers,
and Pastor Teresa Stewart, Holy Cross Lutheran, Spring Hill, along with
George Algozzina will lead us in worship, music and Bible study.
Many workshops—including crafts—will be available, and new this
year—interactive devotional rooms to connect you with the Holy Spirit.
We will enjoy a fun event on Saturday night with other “spirits” and
WELCA spirit everywhere—costumes optional!

Registration is now open on www.flwelca.com

*Come
Holy Spirit*



We look forward to seeing
YOUR spirit shine!

Your Planning Team: Lisa Klima & Tracy
Moffatt, Fall Gathering
Co-chairs Jan Keller & Denise Collier, Nina
Jageler & Rachel Ulrich

Report from 2026 Triennial Gathering

Attending the 2026 WELCA Triennial in Des Moines, Iowa was inspiring. 1,038 registered, plus others, making it 1,100 in attendance. When you are in a room with 1,100 Lutheran women, you can feel the Holy Spirit at work, especially when you have a worship service and communion with women of all ages.



There were four in attendance from Florida. Three from Hope Lutheran in The Villages (Jan Keller, Virginia Robertson, Susan Krohn) and one from St. Philip in Mt. Dora, myself, and my sister Malinda Dyer from New Mexico attended (our 2nd Triennial together). We all stayed at the Downtown Hilton which was a skywalk away from the convention center, so very handy.

We had an inspirational Bible Study leader, the Rev. Sara Olson-Smith, who has written Bible studies for the *Gather* magazine in July and August 2026. She told us God names our worth. After noticing a beautiful quilt, your thoughts go to the women who made such a gift and the “worth” she has shared. A friend who now has dementia, we remember her “worth” to us before her world disappeared. We all are worthy of God’s love.



to make earrings. He was there to share his love with all and was pleased that everyone liked what he had created.

There were several other speakers telling us in various ways that we are WORTHY in body, mind, and soul. It’s ok to daily smile at the woman in the mirror and tell her “you have worth.”

We attended several workshops, but a special one was Mosaic, an agency that helps people with disabilities. A young man with Down syndrome had found his way of creating artwork. The participants were given a sheet of the artwork and other items

We visited many of the 50 vendors in the exhibit hall, as well as ladies making quilts for Lutheran World Relief, fun glasses from a vendor helping kids, Thrivent, and the list goes on.

The Triennial Gathering offering was \$42,000; in kind \$16,000 for Iowa food bank.

The next Triennial will be in Louisville, Kentucky in 2029!

—Marilyn Kreitzinger



Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 through October 15 is Spanish Heritage Month. This month is dedicated to recognizing the influence and culture of persons who identify as Hispanic. Hispanic is a term for ethnicity. Hispanics can be various races, multiracial, Black, White, Indigenous, or Asian. Hispanic refers to the people, culture, and countries related to the Spanish language. Hispanics are from Spain, Mexico, Venezuela, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Honduras to name some of the countries. The specific cultures vary by nationality, religion, racial identity, ancestral heritage, and other factors the same as being American doesn't mean we are all the same. We celebrate the diversity of Hispanics just as we celebrate the diversity of Americans. Truthfully, even though we are celebrating "Hispanic" heritage month, I had qualms about using the term Hispanic because "Hispanic" has links to colonization by Spain but it is an accepted term by most groups and it is the name of the month we are celebrating.

Hispanic culture is reflected in diverse music through artists such as Carlos Santana (Mexico), Julio Iglesias (Spain), Shakira and Karol G (Colombia), Pit Bull, Gloria Estefan and Emilio Estefan who all have Cuban roots, and Ricky Martin and Bad Bunny who are from Puerto Rico, along with New York native Marc Anthony. Hispanic culture is also reflected in the plethora of foods offered by each culture. Each culture has their own traditional foods the same as various cultures in the rest of the US.

People who identify as Hispanic have different religious beliefs. Many are Roman Catholic, Protestant, as well as Evangelical and Pentecostal. In the city I live in, there are two Hispanic Seventh Day Adventist congregations. Again, Hispanics are diverse. Hispanic Heritage Month is an excellent opportunity to explore Latin culture and see the impact Hispanics have had on the United States.

Hispanics represent a fast growing and young demographic in the US that is shaping our culture and economy. The Hispanic population has grown to approximately 20% of the US population according to the US Census Bureau with a median age in their early 30s. Despite claims by many politicians, the majority of Hispanics in the United States are US citizens. Again, the majority of Hispanics are not here illegally, they are citizens. According to Pew Research, 55% of all Hispanics live in three states, Texas, California, and Florida. It should go without saying, people living in Puerto Rico or people from Puerto Rico are US citizens by birth since Puerto Rico is a territory of the US. Musician Bad Bunny is a US Citizen.

Notable People of Hispanic heritage:

- Dr. Antonia Novello was the first female and the first Hispanic appointed US Surgeon General.
- Ellen Ochoa who was the first Hispanic woman to go into space in 1993. Astronaut Ochoa later served as Director of the Johnson Space Center.
- Sonia Sotomayor who became the Hispanic and Latina woman to serve on the US Supreme Court. Justice Sotomayor was appointed and confirmed in 2009.

- Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, civil rights activists who co-founded the National Farm Workers Association (United Farm Workers) to fight for improved working conditions for agricultural workers.
- Sylvia Rivera is an activist fighting for gay and transgender rights, as well as fighting racism and economic exclusion of LGBTQ members.
- Luis Alvarez won the 1968 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work with particle physics and a hydrogen bubble chamber.
- Dr. Albert Baez helped develop the X-ray reflection microscope for medicinal and scientific use.
- Dr. Helen Rodrigues Trias, a noted pediatrician who has worked to increase public health access for children and minorities.
- Lionel Messi is considered by some to be one of the greatest soccer players in history. Messi has won numerous awards and was on the 2022 FIFA World Cup team.
- Roberto Clemente is a 15-time MLB All-Star and World Series Champion baseball player and was the first Latin American player to be inducted into the National Hall of Fame.
- Oscar De La Hoya the Olympic Gold Medalist and world champion in boxing, known as the “Golden Boy” of boxing.
- Bishop Rafael Malpica Padilla the first Hispanic elected as Bishop in the ELCA in 1987. Bishop Padilla served as Bishop of the Caribbean Synod.
- Bishop Pedro Suarez, the first Venezuelan to be elected Bishop in the ELCA is currently serving as Bishop of the Florida Bahamas Synod.

While this list is a very small list of accomplished people of Hispanic/Latin American heritage, I encourage each of us to learn about others. The more we know about other cultures and ethnicities, the richer our individual worlds become. We understand one another better, we recognize when we harbor stereotypes, we dispel myths about one another. We become better.

The ELCA has 0.8% population of Hispanic members nationwide. Many congregations will participate in Hispanic Heritage Month by holding services partially in Spanish, inviting members of Latin descent to talk about their culture, decorating the sanctuaries and altar with items indicating Hispanic heritage. We will worship together, pray together, eat together, and be together. In honor of Hispanic Heritage month, I leave you with the Lord’s Prayer written in Spanish. (Please excuse any translation errors as I am not fluent in Spanish.)

Padre Nuestro (The Lord’s Prayer)

Padre Nuestro, que estás en el cielo,
 santificado sea tu nombre;
 Venga a nosotros tu reino;
 hágase tu voluntad en la tierra como en el Cielo.
 Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día;
 perdona nuestras ofensas,
 como también nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden;
 no nos dejes caer en la tentación,
 y líbranos del mal. **Amén.**

—Stacia Carter, *Social Justice, Advocacy, and Reconciliation Board Representative*

Salem hosted the Hispanic Heritage Celebration sponsored by the Just Love Committee. Here are a few pictures of the decorations for the service. The service was broadcast on the Synod website.



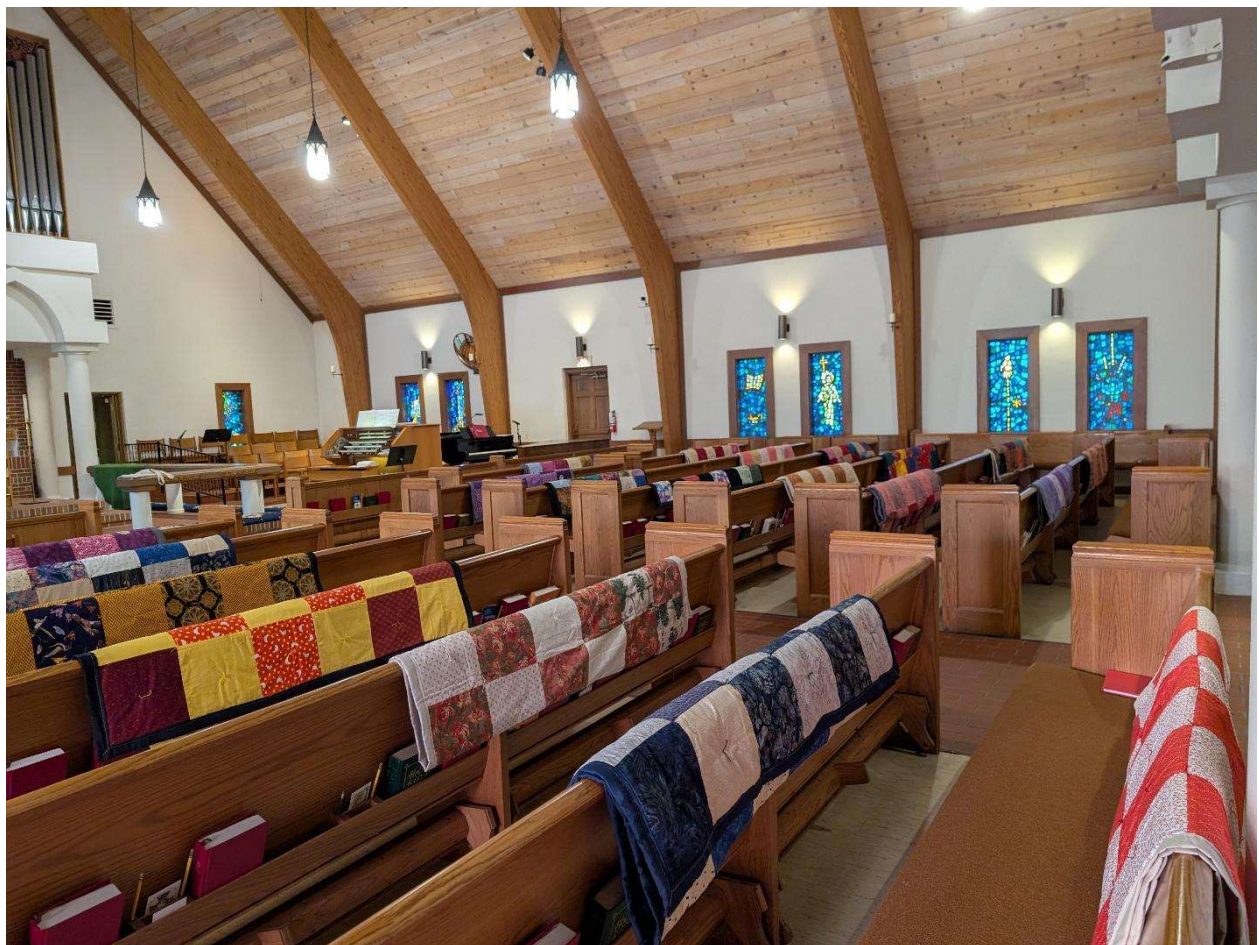
Lutheran World Relief

As we celebrated *God's Work. Our Hands.* in September, we looked around our community to see where we could help locally and through Lutheran World Relief. So, our church picked a local group, Lakes Cares, who gives food to those in need, and we donated food and money. We then made Lutheran World Relief disaster kits, which help overseas and also here in the United States with floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes; we also had kits for lights and water from Thrivent. We can combine all resources to help others near and far.

The quilts and the baby, personal, and disaster school kits go to others countries. Many churches are busy making quilts and assembling the kits. If your church hasn't done any of these, try it this year. All of the kits and quilts are picked up at churches around the synod during the first week in February (more information to follow). Please contact me (Marilyn) for details at manyjoys2u@gmail.com

—Marilyn Kreitzinger

Pictured: Quilts at St. Mark's Lutheran in Jacksonville, Florida, where Gina Olson attends.



A Story in Pictures: WELCA Visits Women of the ELCG in Guyana

by Raeann Purcell, *SWO President*

After a time of co-Bible study via Zoom, the Evangelical Church Women of Guyana invited us to attend their annual convention. Nine women responded to the call to participate in this trip after informational sessions were held. We met at the Miami airport and began embroidering baby blankets as the in-kind gift to a local hospital for the convention.



We traveled around to visit several congregations and learned they really like to sing.



The swan is the symbol of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guyana (ELCG) and is widely displayed in their congregations. They have banners similar to what we have.





Young women attended the convention. We were asked to present workshops. You may recognize Pr. Jennifer Michael, former SWO president and former churchwide Executive Board president who spent time in Guyana 13 years ago as a seminarian. She was excited to visit to see the progress that has occurred. Most of the convention attendees and our group along with three of our Suriname sisters that attended are pictured here. Come to Fall Gathering to hear more of our trip and how a grant from Katie's Fund helped with the expenses.





From the Editor

“Every shell on the beach has survived a storm, and so have I.”

—on a bookmark



Life isn't always happy and perfect, though we may walk around answering “How are you doing?” with an enthusiastic “Good!” or curating our social media to look like a utopia.

I was in a car accident two days before I wrote this, and aside from muscle aches, uncertainty, guilt, questions, shakiness, sadness, wishes, looping memories, etc., I am doing okay. I am grateful that no one was seriously injured. I am grateful to be alive. I am grateful for my family and friends.

I am grateful for time spent with a group of women at my church the day after the accident. We took golden oyster shells and decoupage them, while chatting comfortably and enjoying one another's company.

In this issue, I'll simply leave you with gratitude, photos of my finished shells, and the message on the bookmark at our lunch table.

It says: “Every shell on the beach has survived a storm, and so have I.” The back of the bookmark is simple and lined with Bible verses about strength, including Isaiah 41:10, which says, “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Thank you for reading! Remember to email your articles and photos to me at fltapestry@gmail.com. Your stories and photos are always welcome!

Upcoming issues:

December 2026 Issue (send articles by November 15)

February 2027 Issue (send articles by January 15)

—Gina Olson, Editor

Florida-Bahamas Synodical Women's Organization Directory

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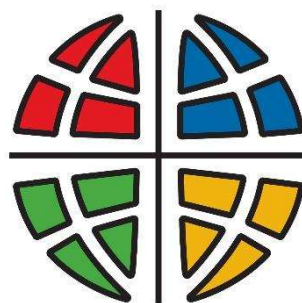
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What does our logo mean?

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*).



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