



The **RIPPLE**



Expanding the Circle of SC Women of the ELCA

Check out our **website** for up-to-date information and pictures.

Go to <http://www.scwelca.com>.

Spring/Summer 2021



SC WELCA VIRTUAL CONVENTION SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1pm - 6pm

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness No merit of my own I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name. On Christ, the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.” ELW 597

Our theme this year, **Just Love**, calls us to love one another. This is an easy command when you think about loving your family (maybe), your friends (sometimes), and yourself (really?). But what about the cranky neighbor who turned you in to the police because you didn’t have your dog on a leash? Yep. Or the person with different political views or skin color? Yep. Or the bully, or your enemy, or the thief who stole your car? Yep, those people, too.

God calls us to **Just Love** everyone. The Holy Spirit is asking us to be the hands and voice and feet of God in the community and to share the story of Jesus with everyone, not just those who are easy to love. So, Just Love everyone.

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OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Dear Sisters in Christ,

*Praise the Lord! Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good;
his love is eternal. Psalm 106: 1*

It has been a long time coming, but by God's grace, the uncertainties due to COVID-19 and the challenges we have faced are beginning to subside and we can look to the future with hope. Even in the midst of struggle, there still comes God's promise of grace. It is in these moments of grace that we can experience the peace and stillness though the storm continues to rage. Let's look with hope to a new beginning. The Lord is doing a new thing! Let's make some positive choices and do our part to make things better. Let's live in gratitude and let our light shine. **And never, ever let other people mess with the dimmer switch on your light.**

In spite of the pandemic, Lutheran women found ways to stay connected. Flexibility and creativity were necessary to continue our ministries, whether it was through Zoom Bible studies or Facebook daily devotions. Ladies continued to work in their home individually, sewing masks and quilts and crocheting caps and shawls. Ladies collected funds to pay for utilities and rent for people in their community and worked at soup kitchens to feed them.

This issue has information about the virtual convention as well as the projects. We will be voting via ecclesiastical ballot for President and electing a Treasurer and 4 Board members. We have many capable leaders in this organization. Please prayerfully consider your votes for these positions.

We will be sending out the Board of Reports via email to all registered attendees. Even though we will be meeting virtually, we will still need convention committees. The committees will be meeting in "rooms" before and during the convention. The Committee on Credentials makes the official registration reports. The Committee on Reference and Counsel reviews and reports on resolutions and recommendations which come before the convention. The Committee on Conduct of Elections handles the election process. We also have the Committee on Minutes and the Committee on the Report of the President. Please consider saying "yes" when I call.

My time on the board comes to a close with the upcoming election. These last eight years have been full of blessings, and challenges. But through it all, together with my sisters-in-Christ, we have enjoyed much support, much joy, and yes even sadness. I am grateful to be able to say that the SC Women of the ELCA fulfills our mission to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. Do you see a common thread in the logos from previous years? The ladies of SC WELCA have boldly gone in Ministry and Action in answer to God's Call to *shine our light*, to show *grace in our community*, and to *Just Love* our neighbors. God is making *all things new*.

Peace and Hope,

Becky





VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



I hope this spring has brought back some hope to you for the end of this pandemic of Covid-19. As summer is approaching, I hope you are finding ways to show love as Christ did for us and others. I have been busy showing Christ's love by helping my local food banks by organizing small coupon gatherings to organize coupons, cut coupons, and make lists to shop for the needs of our local food pantries to help feed families in need. Just seeing the appreciation on the faces of these families is like seeing God's love shining back through these grateful people's faces. My heart is so grateful that I can use my love of couponing to help others in need. I hope and pray that all my SC WELCA ladies are safe and well. I love each of you and pray daily for you.

I hope by now everyone has heard about our virtual convention. The virtual convention will be Sunday, September 26, 2021 from 1:00pm to 6:00pm. The voting members and visitors will need to register by August 2, 2021. They must have a valid email address for confirmation of registration and to receive the link to login into the virtual convention. All voting members must login in separately in order to vote. To see all documents presented during the virtual convention, you must login in with a computer, laptop or iPad. The Bulletin Of Report (BOR) will be emailed to all who have registered. If you wish to receive a printed paper copy you must denote this choice on your registration form and include the appropriate fee of \$10.00. Please note that the registration form includes the places for registration fee if applicable, BOR fee, convention offering, and projects donations.

Your sister in Christ,

Amanda Boatwright , Vice President

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY



I am praising the Lord for the light I am seeing at the end of this COVID tunnel. Our Board meetings are still being held over Zoom. Though it has been great to see faces, I am looking forward to meetings in person again. But obviously, business needs to be accomplished and it still means a virtual convention for 2021.

We held Zoom Board meetings on February 21st and April 25th. Those minutes are now on the SCWELCA website after being approved at our June 27th meeting.

In February we welcomed Cindy McManus as our new *RIPPLE* editor. We are blessed to have her experience and expertise. Sherry Fowler has been a blessing for me since becoming secretary. I know she will be missed by all of us. In February Diane Wicker sat in as our Parliamentarian. Kristin Snelgrove provided a

lovely devotion based on Psalm 23. As usual, Becky provided us with a summary of her activities for WELCA since the previous meeting which included recruiting a new *RIPPLE* editor, looking into a virtual convention format, and taping greetings for Lutheran Men in Mission's convention.

Rachel's treasurer's report is discussed in her report in this *RIPPLE*. Amanda and her Convention Committee presented so many plans hoping for our usual "in person" convention. Bless them for working so hard and pivoting constantly as plans needed to change again for the virtual convention this year.

The tireless Nominating Committee is still looking for a second candidate for Treasurer, and one more to run for the Board. Please prayerfully consider how God can use you to bless us all. Risse reported that



REPORT OF THE SECRETARY *(continued)*

the Triennial Gathering which had been rescheduled to August 2021 was cancelled. The Convention (business only) will be held virtually in August instead. The next Triennial will still be in Phoenix, AZ, but in 2023. We also changed our email/ *RIPPLE* delivery service from Constant Contact to MailChimp in order to be wise stewards of your donations.

In April we welcomed Elsa Hope as our Parliamentarian and Becky opened with a devotion based on 1 John 3:23-24. The Convention committee reviewed all our choices for holding a virtual convention and we voted to use SCAV, Inc. (South Carolina Audio Visual, Inc.). We reviewed information needed for registration, costs, how nominations and voting will be handled virtually. It never ceases to amaze me; how many choices and complications can be involved in something that sounds so simple. Becky reviewed how the Presidents Conference had been handled in late February virtually. It was totally different than usual and because it was virtual, each synodical president was able to invite several others to attend. The title for the day was “Pivot, Don’t Panic”. We have been using that concept a great deal this year. They did a great job of presenting us with ways to keep in touch with congregational units, and plan for our own virtual convention.

Please remember us all in prayer and prayerfully consider how your own God given talents can assist the Board and/or your own congregational unit in His service.

Blessings,
Linda Roland



Please send Linda Roland an updated officers list to be included in the Bulletin of Reports. We want to make sure it is as accurate as possible.
Email it to lindajroland@gmail.com.

TREASURER’S REPORT



The Treasurer’s year end reports for the February 1, 2019 through January 31, 2020 fiscal year and for the February 1, 2020 through January 31, 2021 fiscal year will be included in the Bulletin of Reports that will be available for the 2021 convention in September. As reported previously, for the 2019-2020 fiscal year actual income was \$69,181 and actual expenses were \$73,241. For the 2020-2021 fiscal year the financial results were significantly impacted by the pandemic with actual income of \$29,745 and actual expenses of \$28,122.

The Registration Form for the 2021 virtual convention included in this *RIPPLE* indicates that any donations for our convention projects and convention offering from congregational units can be included with your convention registration.

However, these donations can also be sent directly to me.

Thank you for your continued support of the work of SC WELCA.

“May everything we do be done in love.”

Rachel Quesada



ACTION

Hooray! SUMMER is HERE! The warmth of the weather is matched with the warmth in our hearts as we thank our dear Lord and Savior for standing with us during a very traumatic time of our lives. At last, we are beginning to enjoy the SMILES of others, loving HUGS, and the fantastic SOUNDS of people enjoying each other's company again. Perhaps we are truly turning the corner to a more NORMAL day-to-day - "We can only PRAY" (as so many of us say); AMEN, Let us pray!

As we PRAY, let us also not forget to pray especially for those who have suffered the tremendous losses of many kinds, whether through COVID or otherwise, and to pray in THANKS for so many who have served those who suffered through this horrendous year. Is there any better way to SHARE our LOVE for others than through prayer?

Prayers of THANKS also to all who have SERVED through the diligent and loving task of sewing or donating pre-made masks for the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (SCNCACs) Together, we have donated over 1,000 masks, and in doing so, we have shown grace and love to these traumatized children. The SCNCAC's have been quite appreciative of your tireless efforts and have indicated they have an adequate supply at this point.



It has been truly unfortunate to not meet face-to-face for regional meetings so we could share information directly with you regarding our project organizations. True to form though, our Lutheran ladies have found a way to provide monetary or gift card donations for the **SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC's)** and **Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)**.

Understandably our donations are less than in "normal" years. If you find it in your hearts to do so, we encourage all who can to continue making monetary gifts to our Action Project organizations. Given the virtual nature of the convention and the additional postage costs associated with mailing gift cards, all donations for the projects should be in the form of checks. These can be sent with the convention registration or mailed to the SCWELCA treasurer, Rachel Quesada, 520 Timber Lane, Anderson, SC 29621 . Make all checks out to SCWELCA and indicate the organization(s) of your choice in the FOR space of the check.

Children in abusive situations often find safety and love outside of their homes through school or other public settings. In this pandemic year, the isolation likely created an additional level of risk for their safety. In response, the SCNCAC initiated a program called "BeHeard4Kids" to educate others in identifying signs of abuse and reporting it properly for the safety of these children. Please read about this program and more at [SCNCA Beheard4Kids](#). There is also a link on our website [SCWELCA.com](#).

Our Lutheran Disaster Response makes an enormous impact globally through its many projects. We at home here in the south and near coastal areas can likely relate well to LDR's efforts with hurricane response and the positive impact it must have to those who are devastated with loss of life and property. Additionally, and specifically to the pandemic, per its website, LDR 'supported responses in 51 countries around the world including the United States, plus five global responses, that address a wide range of needs, from supplying personal protective equipment and medical equipment; to provision of food and other necessary supplies; to water, sanitization and hygiene and awareness education. Additionally, 32 synods and three social ministry organizations have received LDR support for congregational feeding ministries, such as food pantries, hot meal delivery and meal distribution.' For more information about how LDR use our loving gifts across the globe, please read more on its website at <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response>.

Another wonderful and local way we show our love is through our 'Honorary Life and Memorial Recognition Program'. Through this program, you may honor someone in your congregation who demonstrated love through ever-present service to your congregational efforts. The recipient may be actively served or served during their lifetime. The recipient will receive a certificate and a pin. Proceeds go to the South Carolina Women of the ELCA Scholarship Fund at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. An application is in the issue, on the SC WELCA website, or contact Virginia Herlong, 813 Silver Point Road, Chapin, SC 29036; email: vherlong@sc.rr.com; or phone 803-932-0155 (home) or 803-206-2493 (cell).

Thanks again to all the wonderful and loving ladies of SC WELCA for your continued support of our Action projects.

Rae Davis, Action Committee and Project Chair



COMMUNITY

ST. JOHN'S, WALHALLA



Lucy Klaren Circle through their annual scholarship fund awarded three \$1,000 scholarships to Walhalla High school graduates and \$1,000 to St. John's Preschool. *Knitters and Crocheters* presented Brock Raab, Walhalla High school graduate from St. John's, with a knitted/crocheted afghan with a cross design. *Chefs for Shut-Ins* made and delivered lunches once a week during 2020 and 2021.

OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN CHURCH, WEST COLUMBIA

Project Rent and Blanket Donations

With the help of their generous congregation and a Thrivent \$250 contribution, the 2021 WELCA Community Service Project "Project Rent" and Blanket Donations for God's Helping Hands was a huge success.

Financial support from the congregation will go towards assisting families in their community with rent and utilities due to the recent Covid-19 crisis.

With support from Thrivent, fourteen blankets and bedspreads were purchased to add to the donations from OSLC members. Twenty five total blankets were given to God's Helping Hands. So far, \$1,040 has been collected for Project Rent.



LUTHERAN CHURCH BY THE LAKE, MCCORMICK



The WELCA Quilt Circle at Lutheran Church By the Lake has provided more than a thousand quilts to our community both near and far for the past six plus years. Locally, we give quilts to the children's First Steps program at Christmastime. We donate to the Greenwood Cancer Center, the Lydia House in Augusta,



GA, the Veterans Home in Anderson, SC, the Craddock Center in the Appalachian Mountains and most recently to the Kinard Manor House in Greenwood, SC. Our quilts have traveled the world to Madagascar and Nicaragua. Our circle started when we were blessed with a very large donation of fabric. Our motto is "Each square of fabric is prayerfully pieced together with threads of love and stitched with hope."

Karen Divita and Jean Randall, LCBTL Quilt Circle

A lady from my church went to the Cancer Center in Greenwood for treatment. To her delight, she was given a quilt by the Center. Imagine her surprise when she learned that the quilt was made by the ladies at the Lutheran Church By the Lake! This ministry is a true testament of our community of women showing love and compassion to the children of God.

Becky Koch



GROWTH

REMEMBERING AGNES FLOLK



We on the Growth Committee were sorry to lose our friend and WELCA sister, Agnes Folk, who passed away on April 15, 2021. Agnes was a long-time SC WELCA member and former board member. As past chair of the Growth Committee she was responsible for starting the overnight retreat at Camp Kinard. Along with her daughter, Sallie, Agnes served in a non-board position as Retreat Coordinator, providing refreshments for our Camp Kinard retreats. She also provided many meals for the Isle of Palms retreats. She will truly be missed.

Some truths in life
are hard to accept.
Your memories will never
be forgotten!
Rest in Peace!



We are looking forward to the **Virtual SC WELCA Convention** on Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021. This will be something new for us, but we women of the ELCA can certainly do whatever is needed in order to conduct our business meeting and elections, even with COVID restrictions! In addition to participation by the voting members from each unit, the convention will be live streamed for visitors to view the virtual gathering. Information concerning the live stream will be sent out before the convention.



The new dates for the **Isle of Palms retreat** are **April 22-24, 2022**. The cost will be the same - \$130. There will be more information coming.

We hope you have had a chance to look at some (or all!) of the **Women of the ELCA's free, downloadable resources**. There are so many to choose from, and you are welcome to use them individually or with your circle or congregational unit. Since we are in the season of Pentecost, you might want to download the Pentecost, Prayer and Power program which connects the disciples' experience at Pentecost and the days leading up to it with three areas in which we can be a blessing to others through prayer and action: women's health, violence against women, and clearing the "red tape" that keeps people from being fully empowered. To find this, and more, go to www.welca.org. You will even find an app for your smart phone to receive a daily devotion.

We on the SCWELCA Growth Committee are thankful that the days of in-person gathering for worship and study are slowly arriving and pray that all of you are doing well and staying connected to your sisters in Christ.

Blessings,
Merri Lewis, Chair
Sarah Cheesman
Denise Warren



LTSS RECIPEINT



Laura Henrickson was the recipient of the SC WELCA scholarship last academic year at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University. Laura is starting her second year at LTSS. She is from Lexington, SC. Laura wrote:

"I am humbled and honored to receive the SCWELCA's scholarship. I feel that it is through your ministry's generosity that I am able to experience the ways in which God moves in our lives and through each other. This is a blessing and a gift and I thank each and everyone of you all for your prayers, support, and generosity!"

CONFERENCE REPORTS



It's been so wonderful to receive all the news from conferences about how they are beginning to gather again. It's been awhile since people have seen each other and a lot has changed over that time. With signs of hope on the horizon, ladies across South Carolina are itching to get back together. If your conference is planning on hosting a fall gathering, we'd love to hear about it.

Seeing things slowly getting back to normal will help everyone see the light at the end of the tunnel. Don't forget to send any news and/or pictures from your conference from the past year.

Email me at ksnelgrove2005@yahoo.com.

Kristin Snelgrove

WALL MURAL for the Convention



We are also asking the Unit Presidents to send us photos that we could use for our Wall Mural featuring all of South Carolina Conferences. We are putting together a video presentation to show during the Virtual Convention. We need to create the video and send it to SCAV, Inc in time for them to process this as part of the convention. Please send your photos to Cindy McManus at cjm.welca@gmail.com before Saturday, August 7.



CONVENTION PLANNING

Dear SC WELCA members!

Our theme for convention is *"May everything we do be done in love"*!

As a board we decided to have a virtual convention because of our ❤️ for our SC WELCA members. We wanted to keep everyone safe until all were vaccinated and the virus gone! That may still take some time, so out of ❤️ we are offering the convention virtually. We hope that, in turn, you will show your ❤️ for our WELCA and the work that we do in God's name by joining us on September 26 at 1 pm.

With ❤️ "see" 👁️ you at convention!

Sarah Cheesman Board member, Co-chair Convention Planning



CHURCHWIDE NEWS



On August 3-5, 2021 the Churchwide Women of the ELCA will be conducting the 11th Triennial Convention via a virtual platform. This upcoming convention was originally scheduled for July 14-16, 2020 in Arizona, but due to the pandemic the 2020 convention was postponed. Our elected SC Synodical Women of the ELCA voting members will be attending the Triennial Convention in August. These women will be voting on our behalf regarding many convention action items such as, new churchwide board members, the churchwide budget and the below constitutional changes.

Your SC Board members feel very strongly that each of you should be aware of these recommended changes to our constitution. We also feel strongly that you should voice your opinions on any of these recommended changes. Please read the bullet points below. If you have any questions or concerns on these recommended changes, please email one of our SC voting members at the bottom of the page by Sunday, August 1, 2021. They are eager to hear from you.

2021 Triennial Convention Proposed Constitutional Changes for Churchwide Women's Organization (CWO) and Synodical Women's Organizations (SWO)

- ◆ Encourage SWO leadership to be a participant (instead of "must be") in a unit
- ◆ Foster clusters or conferences in the SWO
- ◆ Leaders may be called chairs, co-chairs, or coordinators (instead of currently defined officers)
- ◆ The SWO Treasurer keeps traditional title to facilitate her work with banks
- ◆ SWO Board may be "three or more" (instead of the current set number)
- ◆ Allow one officer and one board member from the same unit; (currently only one from the same unit)
- ◆ Churchwide Executive Board be composed of 15 women - 4 officers, 1 elected member from each ELCA region, and 2 at-large members; (currently 21 - 4 officers and 17 elected members)
- ◆ Executive Board to have at least three (20%) persons of color or whose primary language is other than English and at least three (20%) persons under the age of 45 and/or persons of the LBGTQIA+ community; (currently requires only 10% of persons of color or whose...)
- ◆ Elect only three voting members to triennial convention – president (or chair), one woman of color or whose primary language is other than English, and one first-time voting member under the age of 45; (currently president plus one voting member for every 25 units in the SWO)
- ◆ Board meetings may be held by videoconferencing; (currently not specified, but usually face-to-face meetings)

Your SC WELCA Voting Members are:

President Becky Koch (beckykoch01@gmail.com)

Gwendolyn Furcron (gfurcron1946@yahoo.com)

Patricia George (scpenguin528@bellsouth.net)

Elsa Hope (rmehope@bellsouth.net)

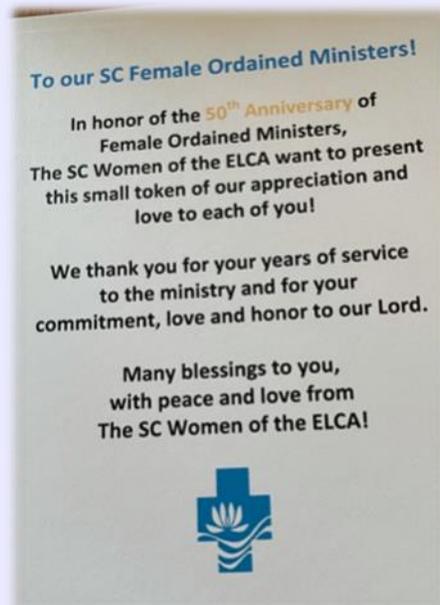
Sarah Cheesman (Sarah.Cheesman@yahoo.com)



50th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

The 50th Anniversary Committee met at Sarah Cheesman's home on March 13, 2021 to assemble and pack the celebration gifts to our 50th Anniversary female pastors (see pictures below). The packages were mailed on March 23, 2021. We hope by now that all our female pastors have received their gifts of appreciation for their service to our Lord from South Carolina WELCA.

Your Sisters In Christ,
Amanda Boatwright-Chair
Sarah Cheesman
Merri Lewis
Amanda Cruse
Amanda Sease Baker





LET'S HAVE A PARTY! A CONVENTION WATCH PARTY!



Why not get your ladies together at the church for lunch to view the convention on a big screen? This would be a wonderful opportunity for ladies who don't have access to a computer or are uncomfortable using technology. Let's come together as a community of women to provide as many ladies as possible to find out a little bit more about SC WELCA.



Please keep in mind that voting members will need to have their own computers to be able to log on through their emails.

Election of the SCWELCA President (by Ecclesiastical Ballot Election), Treasurer and Board Members

*"Now there are varieties of gifts, but there are varieties of service, but the same Lord."
1 Corinthians 12: 4-5.*



Voting members will be electing a new president by ecclesiastical ballot at the September virtual convention. Many ladies in this organization possess the gifts and talents needed to serve in this role. Please prayerfully consider nominating one of the capable leaders who exemplify good leadership skills, whether it is someone on the current Board, in our Conferences and Units, or one of our former Board members or Conference leaders. The first ballot will be the nominating ballot. In order to be eligible, a woman shall be a participant in a unit and a voting member of an ELCA congregation.

No elected person shall serve as an officer or board member for more than seven consecutive years. The President shall be elected by the convention to a term of 2 years and shall be eligible for one reelection to the same office. Since Becky Koch has served two consecutive terms as President, she is not eligible for reelection. Pray and ask for guidance with your nomination.

The voting members will also be electing a Treasurer and four Board members at convention. Their photos and biographies will be included in the information emailed and/or mailed to the voting members. These ladies will serve 2-year terms. Additional nominations may be made from the floor for Treasurer and Board members.

Please review the information carefully prior to convention and be ready to vote for the ladies who you feel are the best choices. The Nominating Committee thanks all of you who have agreed to run for these positions.

Sharing God's Love,
Betty Jo Amick
Margaret Shirer
Gail Kane
Ruth Morgan



The *RIPPLE*

The *RIPPLE* is published four times per year. It is normally mailed to the churches for distribution to congregational unit presidents and pastors at no charge, as well as to the church-wide office. It is distributed to other subscribers at an annual subscription rate of \$7 annually or e-mailed for free to anyone.

The *RIPPLE* is published under the Mission: Community Committee of SC Women of the ELCA.

Online subscriptions may be sent to Cindy J McManus at cjm.welca@gmail.com.

Subscribe to the *RIPPLE*

Complete the information below and send to
Cindy J McManus, *RIPPLE* Editor/Circulation Manager
1682 Riverwind Dr. Apt. A, Columbia SC 29210

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Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Church & City _____

Email _____ Phone _____

New _____ Renewal _____



May everything we do be done in love

REGISTRATION FOR THE SEPTEMBER 26 VIRTUAL CONVENTION

Voting members and visitors, please complete the Registration Form on the next page. The voting member fee is \$20.00 each, while registering as a visitor is free. Visitors, including those who do not register, will be able to live stream the convention. Detailed information on this will be sent before the convention.

Voting members: please remember that each of you MUST be on a device, not sharing it with another voting member. This is the only way we will get an accurate count during the elections.

Visitors will be able to view the live streamed video on the SC WELCA website

If you decide you would like a printed copy of the Bulletin of Reports, please include \$10.00 with you completed registration.

MAKE CHECK OR CHECKS PAYABLE TO SC WELCA

Send this form and payment to Convention Registrar:

Sherry Sheppard

128 S. Main St., Ste. 3
Summerville, SC 29483

For questions, contact Sherry at (843) 860-7998 or by email at anthradvntr12@gmail.com.



JUST LOVE - OUR CHAPLAIN'S PERSPECTIVE



The theme for this year's WELCA Convention is again **Just Love**. As last year's convention was Covid-cancelled, we continued this as our 2021 theme. Reflecting on this past year, I decided that maybe by God's design, we get to continue this important theme another year for our Lord provides what we need just as we need it.

From 2020 right into 2021, we needed a lot of *love* to navigate masks and vaccines, and those who resist masks and vaccines. We witnessed much civil unrest last summer after the death of George Floyd. Then we experienced a different kind of civil unrest in January when the Capitol was stormed. During this pandemic we learned of businesses closing with resultant high rates of unemployment and consequent unprecedented food pantry lines. So many people in need of Christ's *love*.

And within Christ's Church, it has been a long 15 months determining the safest way to worship transitioning to on-line, then outdoors, and tentatively indoors again. I don't remember ever having *worship wars* as some fellow pastors call them. I learned of congregations struggling with determining the safest way to worship that honored everyone, especially those with the most fragile health among us. It has taken a lot of compassion and *love* to weather these storms....

The theme **Just Love** comes from the 1 Corinthians 16:14 passage: ***Let all that you do be done in love.*** St. Paul is writing this to the Corinthian church. Corinth, after being captured and leveled by Roman forces in 146 BCE, was rebuilt 100 years later by Julius Caesar. Because of its perfect location as a port town, it became a booming city with wealthy merchants and a bustling shipping industry. There were many pagan shrines for worship of Greek gods. Corinth with its excess wealth developed a reputation for vice, lewdness, and revelry.

The converts to Christianity there struggled to shed their previous *worldly* ways. From the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses issues of: division within the congregation, lawsuits against one another, sexual immorality within family members, food sacrificed to idols, abuses around observance of the Lord's Supper and the use of Spiritual gifts. Talk about *worship wars*....

Just before giving us the beautiful **Love Chapter** (1 Corinthians 13), St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that each one is a necessary and valued member of the body of Christ. Each is a **beloved**, gifted part whose spiritual gifts are needed to be the rich, full organic body that God in Christ intends. Paul concludes his letter with sharing what the resurrected life in Christ will be and *how that knowledge changes who they are now*. Then he asks they live out their *love* of the resurrected Lord through sacrificial giving to assist with the upbuilding of less wealthy congregations.

St. Paul ends his letter encouraging them to stand firm in the faith; be strong; and most important of all: ***Let all that you do be done in love.***

The context for which St. Paul wrote these words centuries ago reminds me that our woes of today are not so new. Christians through the centuries grappled with new difficulties. But while the situations may change generation to generation, the remedy does not. It sounds like *foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us being saved it is the power of God* --- the transformative power of **Love**.

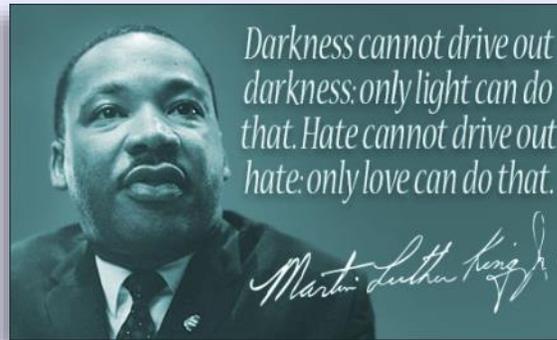
On one level, we make it sound so simple -- **Just Love**. It rolls off our tongues so easily. Two four letter words that were made to fit together as the answer for all that ails us. But is the power of *love* really that easy?

On my best days I like to think so, but on my darkest days, I wonder....

So, I look to modern-day saints who were tested and tried, but who still through the power of the Holy Spirit found a way to **Just Love**.



I leave you with this beautiful *love* quote by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr:



As God's people, we know who the Light is; we know who the **Love** is. My prayer is that the Light of our Lord drives out all the darkness of Covid that has infected our lives as we are renewed and filled evermore with the Light and **LOVE** of our Lord. Let this be the wisdom of God to which we cling this day. Amen! Let it be! Amen!

Reverend Kathy Harris, 2021 WELCA Chaplain

South Carolina Women of the ELCA 2020-2021 Board

President (term exp 2021)

Becky Koch (July 8)
864-344-1786 (c)
beckykoch01@gmail.com

Vice-President (term exp 2022)

Amanda Boatwright (Oct 13)
803-674-6112 (c)
msangelwingschurchchick@yahoo.com

Secretary (term exp 2022)

Linda Roland (March 1)
304-382-2895
lindajroland@gmail.com

Treasurer (term exp 2021)

Rachel Quesada (Mar 8)
561-866-3011 (c)
arachelq@gmail.com

SC WELCA Retreats

Sallie Folk
843-307-1417
salstitcher823@yahoo.com

Board Members

(Terms expire 2021)

Amanda M. Sease-Baker (Aug 13)
949-547-4557 (c)
manda4ever25@gmail.com

Rae F. Davis (Jul 5)
803-360-4968
rdvs297@gmail.com

Kristin Snelgrove (Nov 16)
803-629-2287
ksnelgrove2005@yahoo.com

Amanda West Cruse (Aug. 31)
803-917-7625
acruse1958@gmail.com

Non-Board Positions

Honorary Life/Memorial Recognition Coordinator

Virginia Herlong
803-932-0155 hm
803-206-2493 cell
vherlong@sc.rr.com

Board Members

(Terms expires 2022)

Sarah Cheesman (Aug. 19)
803-332-6825 (h)
803-528-0797 (c)
sarah.cheesman@yahoo.com

Merri Lewis (Feb 18)
803-732-5429 (h)
803-445-9989 (c)
lewismmerri@yahoo.com

Risse Snelgrove (July 14)
803-378-7696
snelgroverisse@gmail.com

Denise Warren (Nov. 19)
803-297-2153
Vdwarren13@gmail.com

RIPPLE Editor/Circ. Mgr. Webmaster

Cindy J McManus
336-918-4353
cjm.welca@gmail.com



South Carolina Women of the ELCA
Cindy J McManus
1682 Riverwind Dr. Apt. A
Columbia SC 29210



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