

A Publication of the Southeastern Synod Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



WEAVER

FALL 2023 | Volume 5 Issue 3

2024 SES WELCA CONVENTION in Huntsville, Alabama Register Now!



Meet the New WELCA Board



Be Uplifted!

It's Good For the Soul

2023 Convention Recap!

**SES WELCA
EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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President

Gabriele “Sissy” Gifford
Vice President

Kat Julius
Secretary

Diana Palma
Treasurer

The Weaver represents a tapestry of the stories of gifted and multi-talented women that will strengthen us, offer us various experiences and struggles we all face, with views that may challenge us and educational tools designed to enhance our ministries and our togetherness as a people. It is our earnest prayer that the Weaver will inspire you to always be your best, do your best, and be a blessing to all people.

Our readers are encouraged to submit announcements, church ministry events, articles and photos for publication consideration. As a faith-based publication, all advertisements are subject to review and approval by the Weaver Editorial Staff.

**For more information and submission instructions,
please contact the Editor-in-Chief Linda Few
at 404-556-5858 or by email fewbaby@bellsouth.net**

Printed copies of The Weaver are available by subscription only.

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The Weaver

**Pastor Patti Axel
Melodee Davis
Bridget Radford
Arlette F. Stansbury
Alice Schunemann
Christeen Yerby**

**Linda Few
Editor-in-Chief**

**Louise Iconis
Managing Editor**

WELCA 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,*

BOARD CONSULTANTS

Barbara Schwanebeck
Convention Registrar

*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.*

Linda Few
*AV Administrator
Communication Team*

Louise Iconis
*Website/Facebook Admin
Communication Team*

Kathy Hill
Triennial Promoter

Janice Hawkins
*Lutheran World Relief
Key Leader*

Sue Tyler
SE Synod Liaison

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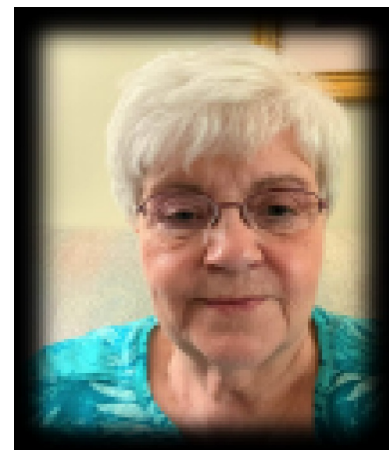


Greetings From the SES-WELCA President


Many of us experienced a wonderful weekend at our 35th Annual Convention in Augusta with the theme “Be Uplifted! It’s Good for the Soul”. For those who attended, I hope you share your experience with the ladies in your Congregational Unit (CU) who were not able to attend.

We’ll soon be busy planning Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations with family and friends. I hope we can all make time to remember all the things we have to be thankful about and the real reason we celebrate Christmas, the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

At the same time, we are overwhelmed by the news about the war between Israel and Hamas. The war in Ukraine also continues. It seems we are surrounded by war. It’s easy to become fearful and forget that no matter the storms raging around and within, our Lord is always with us. I am reminded of the poem “Christmas Bells” written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1863 after learning of the death of his son in the Civil War:



Phyllis Wade
SES-WELCA President



I Heard The Bells on Christmas Day

<i>I heard the bells on Christmas Day Their old, familiar carols play, And wild and sweet The words repeat Of peace on earth, good-will to men!</i>	<i>Then from each black, accursed mouth The cannon thundered in the South And with the sound The carols drowned Of peace on earth, good-will to men!</i>
<i>And thought how, as the day had come, The belfries of all Christendom Had rolled along The unbroken song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!</i>	<i>It was as if an earthquake rent The hearth-stones of a continent, And made forlorn The households born Of peace on earth, good-will to men!</i>
<i>Till ringing, singing on its way, The world revolved from night to day, A voice, a chime, A chant sublime, Of peace on earth, good-will to men!</i>	<i>And in despair I bowed my head; “There is no peace on earth,” I said; “For hate is strong, And mocks the song Of Peace on earth, good-will to men!”</i>
<i>Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail, With peace on earth, good-will to men”</i>	

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

All the “stuff” going on makes taking time to continue to “Be Uplifted” even more of a priority for me—it helps keep me focused on the One constant in my life—Jesus Christ. I need this reminder that the Light of Christ has not been extinguished—God is not sleeping—and no matter how hard the forces of evil keep trying His love will ultimately prevail.

May each of you, dear sisters in Christ, continue to “Be Uplifted! It’s Good for the Soul”

Be Uplifted! It's Good for the Soul**35th Annual SES-WELCA Convention Highlights****Business conducted at the 2023 Convention included:**

- ▶ The election of a president, treasurer, and board members --
Phyllis Wade, President;
Diana Palma, Treasurer (re-elected)
Bridget Radford, Board Member
Christeen Yerby, Board Member (re-elected)
- ▶ Milagro Women's Center was approved as recipient of the 2024 Love Offering to begin February 1, 2024.
- ▶ Approval of the annual budget – February 1, 2024 through January 31, 2025.
- ▶ Total Attendance: 106
- ▶ Total Convention Offering: \$2,099

Be Uplifted!**It's Good For the Soul**

At the end of the convention, Beth Drane, Vice President and Margary Keller, Triennial Promoter announced their resignations. There were also some vacancies of non-Board positions that needed to be filled. The following persons were appointed:

Sissy Gifford, Vice President
 Pastor Patti Axel, Board Member
 Arlette Stansbury, Board Member
 Kathy Hill, Triennial Promoter
 Linda Few, Communications Committee Chair, Newsletter Editor
 Louise Iconis, Newsletter Editor, Webmaster and Facebook Administrator

Much appreciation and thanks are extended to the outgoing President, Shirley Connelly; Board Members, Sissy Gifford and Barb Miller; Vice President, Beth Drane; and Triennial Promoter, Margary Keller. Our heartfelt thanks to all these amazing women for sharing their time, gifts, and talents with us.

Conventions don't just happen; they take a lot of planning and time for everyone involved.

Many thanks to:

The Ladies of Cluster 1, Ebenezer, for hosting our convention and everyone who served on the Convention Planning Committee
 All those who attended, especially our Voting Members
 Shirley Connelly for all her hard work
 The Reverend Dr. Kevin L. Strickland, Bishop of the Southeastern Synod
 The Reverend Beverly Shaw, Chaplain
 Angela Bell, our Churchwide Representative and Bible Study Leader
 The Exhibitors and Workshop Leaders
 Dr. Kelly Glow, Keynote Speaker
 Dana Lee Smith, Music Director
 Louise Iconis and Linda Few, AV Administrator – for writing and producing another funny Board Skit
 Kathie Hunter, Convention Nurse
 All those who donated purses for Katie's Table and items for the Silent Auction

Thank you to everyone for sharing your gifts and talents to help make our convention a huge success!

Grateful Thanks from the Desk of the Treasurer!

by **Diana Palma, SES-WELCA Treasurer**

The financial updates from the 35th Annual Convention in Augusta has been completed and everyone is thanked for graciously supporting the Southeastern Synod WELCA's efforts to rebuild for the fiscal year 2023-24, which will end January 31, 2024. With all the continued prayerful offerings donated through the end of January, we will begin the new fiscal year on February 1, 2024, well-placed to gather in Huntsville, Alabama for the 36th Convention next September 20-22, 2024.

Treasurer's Convention Report (as of October 23, 2023)

Convention Offering	\$2,099.00
Love Offering	\$3,654.00
Silent Auction	\$1,548.00
Katie's Fund	\$468.00
Convention Expenses	\$3,606.00
Lutheran World Relief Shipping	\$3,353.00
Scholarships	\$800.00

Send checks and offerings to:
Diana Palma
 312 Honey Locust Court
 Peachtree City, GA 30269



2024 Convention Registration at 2023 prices!

The 36th Annual SES Women of the ELCA Convention will be held in Huntsville, Alabama, on September 20-22, 2024. Continuing to rebuild from the challenges experienced during the pandemic, help is needed to ensure the best convention experience and to grow and thrive with increased attendance. To meet that goal, you can pre-register now for the 2024 Convention at the 2023 rate of \$200. Donations received by December 20th will guarantee a lock-in the current 2023 prices.

Please make checks payable to SES WELCA.

Simply make a note in the "Memo" line of your check or your online contribution for your offering to be accepted accurately. Memo choices include any specific needs and/or:

2024 Convention Registration
2024 Convention Expense,
Regular Offering

To pay by credit card, go to the store on our website at www.seswelca.com.

(A \$15 service charge is already included in the posted fees.)

Early Registrations will be securely documented.

Welcome New SES WELCA Board Members

Arlette F. Stansbury believes in the church and community and uses her gifts as a productive servant. As a retired educator from the School District of Philadelphia she has used her time enhancing activities that benefitted these areas.



She previously served as president of her church's unit of the Women of the ELCA in Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA); the SEPA Candidacy Committee; served as a Board Member; was Vice President of the SEPA Women of the ELCA and was a Triennial delegate to their convention and attended many Gatherings. She has worked with the youth on numerous occasions and at the National Youth Gatherings.

In the community, Arlette has served as block captain for the numerous years. She was involved with tutoring and mentoring through 'Big Brothers, Big Sisters' of Southeastern Pennsylvania. She is a life member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated and the African Decent Lutheran Association.

Since moving to Tennessee, she became a member of Faith Lutheran in Lebanon and has worked on the Call Committee with hopes of utilizing her prior experience to assisting SES Women of the ELCA to continue reaching their full potential.

She is the mother of two, grandmother of seven, great grandmother of one and godmother/mentor to countless others.



Pastor Patti Axel is a second career Pastor-Developer. She worked as a Nurse Manager in the NICU at CHOA-Egleston for 26 years before graduating from Lutheran Theological Seminary and being ordained in July 2008 at the age of 49. She served Nativity Lutheran Church in Bethlehem GA from 2006-

2008 as an Apprentice Developer and then served in the Synod Office as a Director of Evangelical Mission. She is now serving an Interim Call at Advent Lutheran Church in LaGrange.

Patti is married to Jeff Axel who recently retired from Southwest Airlines as a 737 Captain. They have two adult children, a son-in-law and three grandchildren, four grand-dogs, two grand-cats, a turtle and fish – all rounding out the grand-menagerie.

Pastor Patti has served in WELCA since she was a young adult in the 70's and 80's and developed a young women's circle at St. Matthew Lutheran in Atlanta. She has a passion for women's lay-ministry, knowing that women form the backbone of most congregational service and outreach programs. She is looking forward to serving on the WELCA Board and supporting spiritual growth for women of all ages.

Gabriele Gifford (most people call her "Sissy") had just completed her second term as a SES WELCA board member and she has now been appointed to fill the remaining year of the resigning Vice President.



Sissy is a 65 year old widow and although she did not have children of her own, she has five nieces and nephews, five great nieces and nephews, and they are all a big part of her life and that includes her church family at Triumphant Cross Lutheran Church in Dothan, Alabama. Sissy led the WELCA unit at the church and even written and given sermons. Sissy has an open mind and is always ready to follow where God is leading. Her goal is to be a good and faithful servant.



Bridget Radford was born in Baltimore, Maryland and now lives in Nashville, Tennessee. She recently retired from the Nashville Public Library. She now serves as an Adult Ed instructor at Volunteer State Community College and Sumner County Jail.

Bridget has been a Lutheran since 2009 and has been active in Women of the ELCA since 2021. She enjoys reading, theater, travelling, and meeting new people. Her favorite quote from Eldridge Cleaver is, "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." Bridget's favorite Bible quote is, "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24

"The smile is the beginning of love."

- Mother Teresa

Lutheran World Relief - 2023 SES LWR Quilt & Kit Report

by Janice Hawkins, LWR Key Leader

Another successful collection occurred at all of our seven Ingathering locations in August. Southeastern Synod donations are still a little below pre-pandemic numbers but donations of Quilts & Kits continue to rise. The totals for the SES August 2023 collection were:



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

- ▶ **Quilts: 3189**
 - ▶ **Personal Care Kits: 2690**
 - ▶ **School Kits: 3235**
 - ▶ **Baby Care Kits: 1001**
 - ▶ **Fabric Kits: 226**
- Total weight of all items: 28,682 pounds**

Fifty-six churches came to the locations – seven were non-ELCA and three were from outside the boundaries of the Southeastern Synod. Ingathering locations are updated every spring and listed on the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) website. Locations are available to anyone who wants to drop off their donations. LWR does pay for the trucks to come to our sites and then deliver our donations to their warehouse in Maryland, so it is important that you and/or your congregational unit send a donation for the shipping fund to the WELCA treasurer.

Many thanks are extended to the site coordinators and volunteers who load the trucks at the Ingathering sites. It takes time and effort to gather up volunteers and load our donations into the trucks in the August heat! Thank you so much to these awesome women: Mary Jane Gray, Tommie Morgan, Joni Donegan, Roberta Stamp, Sandy Gibson, and Rhonda Gaede.

With all the conflict going on in the world right now, our donations are needed. LWR Quilts & Kits are some of the first items brought into these areas. Personal Care Kits and Baby Care Kits provide items for hygiene and family care. School Kits provide supplies for children to continue with a sense of normalcy as they gather for learning. This is the time of year to start working with your congregations and community groups to put together kits and of course, continue making quilts. Many times youth, Scouts, and school groups are looking for service projects. WELCA is the perfect resource to offer guidance for these groups. Be sure your pastors know that WELCA women are willing to help with these projects!

An updated Quilt & Kit Ministry Guide is expected to be available in January 2024. You can order multiple copies for free from the LWR website or by phone. These resources should be made available at your churches, cluster meetings, and for any group wanting to do a service project!

LWR is also developing a new Quilt & Kit tracker. It is hoped that information about the release of the new system will be reported in the next edition of The Weaver.



An updated Quilt & Kit Ministry Guide is expected in January 2024. You can order multiple copies for free from the LWR website.



2023 Triennial Highlights

The Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA sent a delegation of five voting members and two volunteers to the 12th Triennial Convention in September 19-21 in Phoenix, Arizona. The convention is the highest legislative authority in Women of the ELCA. Voting members from 64 synodical organizations conducted the business of our organization electing leaders for the next triennium, acting on memorials from synodical organizations, approving the budget, and much more.



Ginger Cutrell, a member of The Table in Nashville, Tennessee, was elected to the WELCA Churchwide Board and will represent the Southeastern Synod until the next convention in 2026.



Myrna Wells-Ulland was elected as the President of the Women of the ELCA for the 2023-2026 Triennium.



Voting members used an electronic system to tally votes quickly.

Triennial



Triennial Convention Attendees: Left-right – Pastor Nyahaley Labor (voting member), Carolyn Davis (volunteer), Janice Hawkins (voting member), Margery Kellar (volunteer) Shirley Connelly (voting member), Bernice Bland (voting member), and Louise Iconis (voting member).



Margery Kellar served as a volunteer for the elections at the Triennial Convention.



President Joy Michalicek and the chaplain used an old school bag for LWR and a scarf she purchased at SES 2002 Convention to create the worship paraments.

Be Uplifted! It's Good for the Soul **2023 Convention Pictorial**







POP NEWS PICTURE

Little did the WELCA Ladies know that the actor known as simply “Leon” (aka Leon Robinson) was staying at the Augusta Marriot during our convention. The star of the films, “The Five Heartbeats”, “Cool Runnings”, “The Temptations” and “Waiting the Exhale” was in Augusta working on a stage play. Leon surprised some of the ladies taking photos after the banquet with the words “You fine ladies are looking good!” before he rushed away. Our keynote speaker Kelly Glow caught up with him and got this fabulous selfie!

For Our Congregational Units

Get Involved in WELCA Annual Collections

Congregational Units are asked to start collecting your pop tabs now for submission at the 2024 SES -WELCA Convention in Huntsville, AL. WELCA has been a supporter of Ronald McDonald House project for many years. Each year, attendees at convention add their collection of pop tabs to the giant Ronald McDonald House and then the donations are delivered to the children’s House program in the host convention city.

Ronald McDonald House programs, located near top children’s hospitals, are a home away from home that provide comfort, support and resources to families who travel far from home for the medical care their child needs. Parents can stay close to their hospitalized child and benefit from the comforts of home without incurring hotel and food costs. The donated tabs will be recycled and the proceeds will be given to the Ronald McDonald House programs to benefit families everywhere. So, let’s keep the tabs coming!



For Our Congregational Units We Are Circles of Friends

by Phyllis Wade, SES-WELCA President

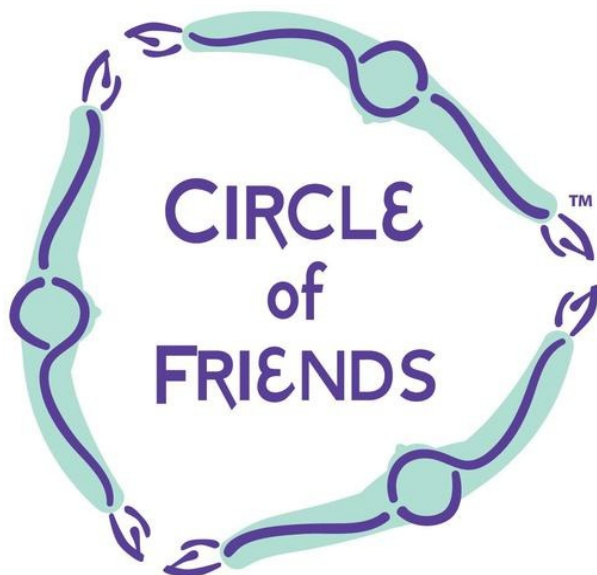
In many of our Congregational Units (CUs), we have Circles, often named for women in the Bible. I love the concept of a circle for our WELCA gatherings. To me a circle has the ability to grow, change, and still be a circle. That's what I see for WELCA Circles: no minimum number of members, options on leadership styles, no "one size fits all". We can meet for Bible study, to do a service project, to tie quilts or assemble Lutheran World Relief (LWR) kits, or any number of other reasons.

Often our meetings are around a table—in a church classroom, in someone's living room, in a restaurant, or in a park. It doesn't matter where or why. At some point in time, we encourage and support each other, we pray together, we plan events, or how to help a local service organization. How does your Circle meet? Does it welcome newcomers? Has it changed over the years or remained the same? Is it open to change?

We often talk about encouraging younger women to participate, but what do they see when they look at our Circles? I see the same love, support, and encouragement I saw when my mom, my aunts, and grandmother gathered around my grandmother's kitchen table. There was love, laughter, and sometimes tears as they shared what was happening in their families. It was an honor to be invited to sit at the table with this amazing group of women. They taught me my first stewardship lesson: that even if I don't have a lot to give, when I share my little bit with others, it can make a difference in someone's life.

As a young mother, I was often given advice on raising children, sometimes unsolicited, but given out of love. When my oldest was ready to enlist in the Air Force, my mom couldn't understand why I cried every time I thought about it, and I still remember one of my aunt's reaching across the table, taking my hand, and saying "I understand". In WELCA, I have found that same encouragement, support, love, understanding, and willingness to share whatever they can that I experienced around that kitchen table years ago. I truly believe that women of all ages need that and can find a place in our Circles, around our tables. We just need to let them know that our Circles can be a place where they are welcomed, encouraged to grow in faith, supported, and become a "Circle of Friendship".

Some year's ago, someone shared the following about "A Circle of Friendship" that does a great job of describing our WELCA Circles. May we all find this friendship in WELCA.



A CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP

A circle of friendship...is bound together,
by sharing good moments and Life's stormy weather:

And should you feel lonely...you needn't pretend;
surrender your false pride and lean on a friend.

A circle of friendship...is growing delight;
it helps dispel sadness, as it lets in the "light."

A circle of friendship...warms you in its glow;
take that warmth with you and feel the "love" grow.

You stand in a circle...with hands reaching out,
the giving of yourself, is what friendship's about!

2023-2024 Executive Board Southeastern Synod Women of the ELCA

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Janice Hawkins Lutheran World Relief Key Leader	4315 Bending River Trail Lilburn, GA 30047	jchawkin@bellsouth.net 770-712-6090
Sue Tyler SE Synod Liaison		styler@elca-ses.org 404-589-1977 ext. 235

2024 SPRING CLUSTER MEETINGS

CLUSTER	DATE	HOST CONGREGATION	BOARD LIAISON
1 - Ebenezer	4/20/24	Jerusalem, Rincon, GA	Pastor Patti Axel
2 - Good News	TBD	St. John, Griffin, GA	Diana Palma
3 - Trinity	TBD	TBD	Christeen Yerby
4 - Magi	TBD	TBD	Melodee Davis
5 - Mission	TBD	TBD	Alice Schunemann
6 - Agape	TBD	TBD	Bridget Radford
7 - Diaspora	3/9/24	Shades Valley, Birmingham, AL	Sissy Gifford
8 - The King	4/6/24 or 4/27	The Table, Nashville, TN	Arlette Stansbury
9 - Gulf Coast	TBD	Grace, Gulf Shores, AL	Kat Julius

REMINDERS FOR 2024 CLUSTER MEETINGS

- ▶ 2024 is the year we elect Members at Large in each Cluster. Terms are for 3 years and the Member at Large is eligible to serve a second 3 year term.
- ▶ According to our Synod Constitution, ½ of Cluster Members at Large serve on the Nominating Committee each year. For 2024, it will be those in even numbered clusters (2,4, 6, & 8). The Board person assigned to the Nominating Committee will be in contact in early 2024. We will determine who will be the Chair after all the Spring Cluster Meetings have been held.



Need help setting up a ZOOM meeting for your cluster or congregational unit? Or maybe you want to hold a monthly Bible Study like Cluster 3 or start a craft workshop?

SES WELCA has a ZOOM account which is available to congregational units, clusters or synodical committees. Send a Request form (available at seswelca.weebly.com). ZOOM Coordinator, Christeen Yerby, at cyerby@bellsouth.net. She will schedule the meeting and send you the link to invite others to your event.