Becca Brings Love to the ECW Annual Meeting

Thistle Farms opened for business at the ECW Annual Fall Meeting - Love Heals Conference. Some 200 people, who gathered to hear the Rev. Becca Stevens speak, met the Thistle Farms founder face-to-face when they shopped for natural body and home products, candles, healing oil and books. Into every product handcrafted by the women of Thistle Farms goes the belief that love is the most powerful force for change in the world. Becca, the Thistle Farms, Nashville staff – Kim Stevens, retail store manager, and Sophia Crawford, logistics director; and Connolly Penley, road trip logistics coordinator, set up shop at St. Francis in Virginia Beach Nov. 4.

When ECW Diocesan President, Helen Sharpe-Williams introduced Becca, she thanked the ECW for helping arrange their trip to Virginia, and she thanked everyone for a great round of shopping. Twenty years ago, Becca started Thistle Farms to provide sanctuary for survivors of trafficking, prostitution and addiction. Thistle Farms’ sales help fund this mission. Becca said she started Thistle Farms because, “I wanted to have something I would want if I was coming off the street.” She wanted “radical hospitality.” No one who asks for help is left alone. “It’s a partnership,” she said. “Women do recover.” Kim and Sophia shared parts of their stories and told how Thistle Farms has helped them and their families. Their stories are loving and beautiful examples of how Christ’s love for everyone is shared with those in need of learning and experiencing Grace.

Today the Global market of Thistle Farms helps employ more than 1,800 women worldwide and the national network has more than 40 sister communities mostly started by ECWs. If you want to know more about this ministry and how you can help with this ministry visit their web page, https://thistlefarms.org/, it is a treasure trove of examples of God’s love for everyone.

During the ECW business meeting, the Rev. Connor Alexander, rector, St. Francis, installed new board members: Deborah Austin, membership chair, St. Marks, Suffolk; Ann Allen, Prayer and Worship Chair, Grace, Norfolk, and Kathy Haney, recording secretary, Christ Church, Danville. Many thanks to St. Francis for hosting the meeting.

Helen Sharpe-Williams, ECW Diocesan President Says Thank You

Now that I have exhaled I wish to express my deep appreciation for the help and support you’ll gave in making the ECW Annual Fall Meeting a success. I consider myself very fortunate for having a chance to work with and serve you. It is my hope that you were inspired by Becca to do more for your sisters in need. A special thanks to St. Francis’ ECW for their support in setting up and the clean-up. Thank you again.

See Page 4 & 6 for Love Thy Neighbor Project Ideas

Participants Moved by Becca’s Message of Love

I thought Becca’s presentation was very dynamic and stimulating. What she and Thistle Farms are able to do for women in all stages of recovery is quite amazing. Perhaps a one-on-one would have added to the ECW’s knowledge on how to proceed in this Tidewater area.

Marilyn Meek, Ascension, Norfolk

Continued on Page 2.

Inside This Issue

- Women As Peacemakers
- Participants Moved by Becca’s Message of Love continued
- St. Mark’s Women’s Day
- World Day of Prayer Brunch
- United Thank Offering News
- Christmas Tea with Mrs. Claus
- Women’s Advent Retreat
- “Love Thy Neighbor” Project Ideas

Continued on Page 2.
Women As Peacemakers

Peacemaking is a skill that can be learned. “It starts with reconciliation,” said Berhanu Mengistu, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Urban Studies and Public Administration at Old Dominion University. “Then, we have to engage in mediation to find a win-win solution.” Dr. Mengistu laid the foundation for the discussion at the Women As Peacemakers seminar held at ODU October 27. Women-to-Women, chaired by Susan Broaddus, sponsored the seminar.

Building on Dr. Mengistu’s introduction, Dr. Willene Johnson, president of Komaza, Inc. said, “We have to open up our minds. In order to be peacemakers, we have to understand the situation.” Dr. Johnson has done much work in Africa and has facilitated workshops for practitioners engaged in peacekeeping and economic reconstruction in conflict areas.

“Women are now taking the role of peacemakers in many areas of conflict,” Dr. Johnson said. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, created in 2000, identifies the critical role of women and defines ways in which national governments and international organizations can support women’s active role in preventing and resolving conflict. “Conflict is not a bad thing,” she said. “It is part of how we change the world to a better place.” But, she said, nonviolent ways of conflict resolution and change must be nurtured to build lasting peace. The drivers of conflict need to be identified. Women who are often victims in the conflict can help identify the problems. The social and economic issues are very closely related. “To me the most important thing is to prevent relapse.” she said.

“Women’s ideas are essential. We will come together to find a better way.”

The third speaker, Dr. Yossa Way, Professor in the Department of Theology of the Anglican University in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), spoke of the origin of the Anglican Church in the DRC. This started in 1894, when the Chief in Boga asked his counterpart in Uganda to send him people to talk about Christianity after he heard verses such as “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

In 2002-3 there was the inter-tribal war in the region of Bunia between two tribes who are well represented in the Anglican Church. With widespread shooting occurring in Bunia over a period of time, women of different denominations organized a march throughout the town and effected a cease-fire.

He told about the numerous militias throughout the country and about how several women have started organizations to deal with the women victims of violence. He also said there is a special building for prayer of intercession and for mediation with political forces on the campus of the Anglican University. In particular he mentioned a woman who travels to the site of a large militia made up of her own tribesmen. She goes out and talks to them individually and has been successful in having a number of guns given over to the government and the young men returning home to civilian life. Asked how she was received, Dr. Way said she has no fear and has been respected because of her courage and persistence. A lively Q. and A. discussion continued for an hour.

Participants Moved by Becca’s Message of Love

The Diocesan E.C.W. Annual Fall Meeting was a huge success! The Rev. Becca Stevens has created an amazing place for women who need a safe place to heal. Her message is “Love Heals” and the products the women make and sell carry that message. It was a pleasure to hear Becca speak and to meet two of the women who have gone through the program at Thistle Farms. Thanks to those who were responsible for bringing Becca to Virginia Beach and to St. Francis for hosting us. It was a great day. I enjoyed meeting other E.C.W. members and learning about the wonderful things that happen when we join together in fellowship. Thank you.

Mary Alligood, ECW President, Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, Midlothian

Rev. Becca Stevens, keynoter for the fall meeting, shared her life story and her ministry of providing a place women needed to go to escape the clutches of human trafficking, prostitution and/or addiction. In Becca’s down-to-earth style of sharing her story and her ministry, she described how she realized the women caught in the web of human trafficking, prostitution and/or addiction needed a place to live and most of all, a means of income. Thistle Farms was born.

Our priest had mentioned Becca’s mission a few times in the past. Learning her story helped me see how her philosophy “love Heals” is really meaningful and very effective. Especially in abuse instances. I was even more touched by her mission to women in refugee camps. Love Heals reaches worldwide. Betty Mariner, St. George’s, Pungoteague
St. Mark’s Women’s Day 2017: Whose Hand Rocks the Cradle?

The Reverend Betty Ricks-Montgomery, assistant pastor at the Greater First Baptist Church – Orlando, in Suffolk was the keynote speaker at St. Mark’s Women’s Day, Sunday, October 9. ECW Vice President, Priscilla Benns, introduced Rev. Ricks-Montgomery. After the service, everyone enjoyed a reception. Tia Moring, chair, Bettie Swain, Sharon Go forth, Deborah Austin and Renee Roper-Jackson planned Women’s Day 2017 an annual event at St. Mark’s.

Christmas Tea with Mrs. Claus at St Francis

The ECW at St. Francis, Virginia Beach hosted a Christmas Tea with Mrs. Claus December 2, and Mr. Claus (Santa) arrived as a special guest. “Santa told the children the story of the real St. Nicholas,” said Maureen Fuster, ECW president and Christmas Tea chairperson. Children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors sampled Mrs. Claus’, AKA Mary Bligious, tasty home-baked cookies and scones. Santa’s elves served the goodies with hot chocolate, British cream tea and coffee. Young

World Day of Prayer Brunch

Reported by Anna Price, St. Thomas, Freeman, Virginia

St. Paul’s Memorial Chapel, Lawrenceville, and St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Freeman, sponsored a World Day of Prayer Brunch. St. Thomas hosted the brunch September 21. Anna Price and Iris Jones co-chaired the event. Cleo Goodwyn, served as mistress of ceremonies. Edna Parker, St. Paul’s Memorial welcomed some forty guests. Anna Price, St. Paul’s Memorial, gave the purpose. Her theme was Thomas Paine’s quote, “These are the times that try men’s souls.” The times are trying because of fires, tornados, floods, violence, unstable government and the threat of war. A representative from 14 churches said a prayer or sang a song of encouragement.

Each person was given a candle to light. They were encouraged to let their light shine throughout the world. The lights were shut off as the group sang, “This Little Light of Mine.” The musician was the Rev. Dr. Michael R. Alston. Mrs. Joyce Jones, St. Thomas gave the blessing. The hostesses: Joan Mayo, Joyce Jones, Gwendolyn McMillan and Edna Parker served a delicious brunch. Each attendee received a bag with Bible verses and a candle to take home.

October

UTO Donations Bountiful

Donations to the United Thank Offering (UTO) collected during October Ingatherings throughout the Diocese have been coming in at a swift and steady pace...what a blessing! Monies collected through December 10, 2017 were sent in for 2017. For more information contact: Ronda Toll, Diocesan UTO Coordinator, at the following address: 42 Cherbourgh Drive, Newport News, VA 23606.

ECW Falls in Love with New UTO Prayer

The National UTO Board recently created a simple prayer (memorable and easy enough for children to recite) that can be said when making an offering in a Blue Box. This prayer, which will soon be featured on Blue Boxes, was shared by the Diocesan UTO Coordinator at the ECW Annual Fall Meeting on November 4th. The reaction was immediate. The ECW loved it!

Here’s the new prayer:

Almighty God, I give you praise for blessing me in many ways. Create in me a grateful heart and with this gift, a blessing start. Amen.
Women’s Advent Retreat: Living the Magnificat

By Susan Boze, St. Aidan’s, Virginia Beach, Chanco Program Committee Member

A beautiful mild late fall evening welcomed all to Chanco on the James Camp and Conference Center, Dec. 1. A number of women from around the diocese stepped back from the busy world outside Chanco for a time together to quiet our hearts and minds as we enter into Advent and prepare for Christmas. The Women’s Advent Retreat offered two options: an evening program Friday, Dec. 1 and/or a full day program Saturday, Dec. 2.

On Friday evening, we began the Advent retreat by creating an individual prayer scarf. As the fabric paint colors flowed onto our blank scarf, each woman created individual and beautiful scarves to proclaim, as Mary did, in the opening line of the Magnificat: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” The night air was still warm and we gathered on the bluff of the James River, by the cross, for a surprise treat, a bonfire and smores! Oh, and songs too!

Saturday the additional women arrived for the day-long portion of the retreat. The plan for the day provided ways to explore and interpret the Magnificat with reflection and discussion of the verses. We wondered about the possibilities of “who was Mary?,” did she struggle with saying YES to God? We continued our exploration by looking at how people through the ages expressed their interpretation of the Birth of Christ through Marian icons.

We concluded the afternoon with the creation of an Anglican Rosary for use with a portion of the Magnificat for our personal prayer time during Advent and celebrated the coming of the season with Advent Lessons and Carols.

You too can include an Advent Rosary in your personal prayer time during Advent. Collect 14 beads, any kind or color, and string them in a straight line or in a bracelet. Recite each line of the following 14 line meditation as you touch each bead.

The Chanco Program Committee is committed to offering a Women’s retreat during Advent and Lent. Mark your calendar for the next retreat on March 23-24, 2018. Watch for more information and registration in early 2018.


O God, whose word is fruitless when the mighty are not put down, the humble remain humiliated, the hungry are not filled, and the rich are: make good your word, and begin with us.

Open our hearts and unblock our ears to hear the voices of the poor and share their struggle; and send us away empty with longing for your promise to come true in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Where to Find & Share ECW News

**Weekly Enews**—Sign up online at diosova.org and click on News and Publications for the latest news from around our diocese in weekly newsletters.

**Diocesan Enews** distributed on Wednesday, includes ECW news. Send the news by Tuesday to Ann Turner, aturner@diosova.org.

**Parish Enews** distributed Tuesday

**The Diocesan Connection** is a quarterly print-ready newsletter available for individuals and churches to receive via email.

If you have news you would like included in the Diocesan Connection, or would like to be added to the email list, please contact Ann Turner, aturner@diosova.org.

The next deadline is March 1.

**National Episcopal Church Women**

Signup at ecwnational.org/

For online news about ECW & the **ECW COMMUNIQUE MAGAZINE**

**The Grapevine** is a quarterly print-ready newsletter available for individuals and churches to receive via email. We appreciate your help sharing the news.

If you have news you would like included in The Grapevine, or know of someone who would like to be added to the email list, please contact Nancy Smith at nsmithwtr@aol.com.

The deadline for Spring Issue is March 16.
Number 1: Clothing

Women many times leave their homes very quickly without packing. All they take with them are their children and the clothes on their back. A great way to assist would be clothing or superstore gift cards (so they can buy correct sizes) or offer to personally shop for them if they cannot leave the shelter. Having even an extra change of clothing when they have nothing would help and for survivors who are ready to leave the shelter, gift cards to help them get professional work attire is a great way to help them with the process of securing a job and building a new, independent life.

Number 2: Hygiene Items

Hygiene items such as soap, shampoo, conditioner, shaving cream, razors, deodorant, toothbrushes and paste, tampons and pads, diapers, and wipes are always items needed by women who have left their homes quickly. Your local shelter may already have a list of their most needed items. A great way to give back anytime of the year is to host a fund-raiser with your group of friends or club and see how many items you can donate to the shelter collectively.

Number 3: Group Collections

Your group could choose one main item and have members bring them to meetings, events, or even do a special theme surrounding it to make it more fun and bring in more donations.

Number 4: Bake Goodies

Bake cookies or goodies and take them to your local shelter for the employees, as well as those living in the shelter, for the holidays or the weekend. Employees will appreciate you thinking of them for all their hard work and women and children in the shelter will be thankful for a homemade or special treat to brighten their day.

Number 5: Work at a Hotline

Check and see if your local shelter or rape crisis center has a domestic violence or rape crisis hotline that is in need of volunteers. Since these lines are generally open 24 hours a day, every day, they many times utilize volunteers to keep costs down. Usually volunteers have to go through a training course and then commit to work several times a week answering the phones. You have to be willing to do the training and work your schedule, but this can be a very rewarding way to offer your assistance right on the front lines, so to speak.

Number 6: Use Your Artistic Abilities

If you are artistic, offer to teach free lessons or host craft times at the shelter for the women or kids. This will help them take their mind of stressful situations and provide the children with some much needed entertainment. Or offer to help create and/or stock an art or craft area for the shelter by providing paper, paint, play dough, scrap fabric, glue, glitter, recycled materials such as glass jars and bottles, plastic tubs, newspaper, and more.

Number 7: Cook Meals or Donate Food

This is a suggestion from a young male volunteer aged 12, who loves to cook. One of the things you might equate with home and safety is a good home-cooked meal. Call your local shelter and find out about food donations. Do they have a pantry they must keep filled for the guest to cook their own meals? Offer to run a drive for much needed items at a time of year when the pantry gets low. Ask if you could host a cooking class teaching the women how to cook nutritious, yet quick meals for her family. Teaching a class where cooking is done utilizing pantry-type items is a way to ensure families are eating right while under stress and, if needed, teach essential life skills that will help them in their new future.
Need an Idea?  Love Thy Neighbor Project Suggestions

Find out  right here where can you help.  Who you can help.  How you can help.

**Number 8: Share and Help from Your Experiences**

Ask your local shelter what volunteer options are available for peer-to-peer support services. If you are a survivor yourself, you could offer valuable emotional support to those going through the process. Many times, leaders of the domestic violence support groups are volunteers and that could be YOU! These women are very scared and need a helping hand and an attentive ear to work through their emotional journey.

**Number 9: Community Education**

Although one of the purposes and missions of any domestic violence organization should be community education, many times they just can’t do as much as they would like due to budgets and staffing. Possibly, you could volunteer time to take their materials to various service groups and organizations in your area and talk about the mission, goals, and needs of the shelter, while gaining awareness for domestic violence issues in your community. You could contact your local library and ask to put up a display on domestic violence awareness, with information on resources that are available in your community such as your local shelter.

**Number 10: Let Kids Help Other Kids**

If your children would like to be involved here is an idea from one of our 8-year-old female supporters—for your next birthday party invite your friends and have them bring with their gift, or in place of a gift to you, something for the children at the domestic violence shelter. Good ideas include coloring books, crayons, books, puzzles, blocks, stuffed animals, gift cards, or whatever you think another child would enjoy since he/she had to leave all her favorite items behind.

**Number 11: Clean**

If cleaning is your forte, you could call and see if they could use a hand cleaning donated items, shelving, rooms, laundry, or just overall organizing their space. If you enjoy interior decorating, you could buy new items and work your magic to create a home-life atmosphere of tranquility and peace.

**Number 12: Help with Childcare**

If you love children, your assistance with child care could be greatly appreciated by both the shelter and the families. If your local shelter does not have the funds to employ a full-time childcare staff, and most don’t, then you could offer some of your time to care for the children at the shelter in a group at a certain day or time, or work with a single mom as she schedules meetings with lawyers, needs time for paperwork, housing appointments, and the list goes on. Sometimes they might not be able to take the children to their regular daycare due to a stalking partner so childcare while the mom works is also important. Leaving an old life and starting a new one can be time consuming and confusing and you could help ease that by assisting in the care of her children.

**Number 13: Plan a Fundraiser**

Put on a fund-raiser such as a 5K run, a bake sale, a bazaar, a dinner and dance, or a silent auction. Put on your creative thinking cap and come up with something unique that will work in your community to raise awareness for domestic violence and your local shelter’s work, while also raising much needed funds to support their efforts.

**Number 14: Give!**

Last, but not least, just simply DONATE. If you don’t have much free time to spend now in your life, but still want to help, donate money and gift cards for many different stores. Donate any old cell phones you have. Check your local shelters list of much-needed items to see what will make the most impact. Don’t forget the families at Christmas or holiday times, as that is when items, gifts, and clothing are needed even more.

**Number 15: Gifts for Staff**

Purchase holiday gifts for your local domestic violence shelter staff. A massage gift certificate, a restaurant gift card, a bath and body gift basket, or anything that embodies a relaxing time for them for all their long and tireless hours.