

SECTION C - South Carolina Conferences

Conference structure

Conferences exist to work cooperatively with the synodical women's organization in assisting units in fulfilling the purpose of Women of the ELCA. These are not legislative groups. Conferences are simply practical groupings of units that are in close geographic proximity to one another. A conference offers a more workable size for the gathering of women and delivery of services. Women can more easily gather in conferences with smaller geographical boundaries.

Conferences are charged with working interdependently with the synodical women's organization and the units to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA through activities. They are designed to be bridges between the units and synodical women's organization. The activities that are to be carried out must meet five (5) criteria, as established in the synodical constitution. The activities will:

1. provide experiences for learning and leadership development,
2. build community,
3. provide opportunities for joint ministry and action,
4. provide opportunities for stewardship education and offerings, and
5. establish networks for communication.

Often conferences meet once in the spring and once in the fall of each year, moving the meeting location between the units in the geographical area of the conference. The activity planned for that meeting would meet the criteria set forth above. A synodical board member will be assigned as a liaison to each conference and will work with the conference leadership to develop the program and activities. In some synodical organizations, each conference leader (often called a coordinator) also serves as a liaison back to the synodical board and attends the synodical board meetings with voice, but no vote. This is an effective tool for involving more women in the synodical organization and its ministries.

Conferences may not have treasurers or treasuries. These entities are not bonded against theft or embezzlement of funds. In the South Carolina Synodical Women's Organization, the monies of the conference are connected to the synodical women's organization checking account as separate revenue and expense lines. The conference offering is remitted in full to the synodical treasurer along with the conference's request for disbursement. It is the responsibility of the synodical treasurer to oversee these funds for each conference.

Many synodical women's organizations have established a practice of sending board representatives to conference gatherings, based on the churchwide mode of sending a President's representative to the synodical convention. The goal of the synodical representative has the major objectives to:

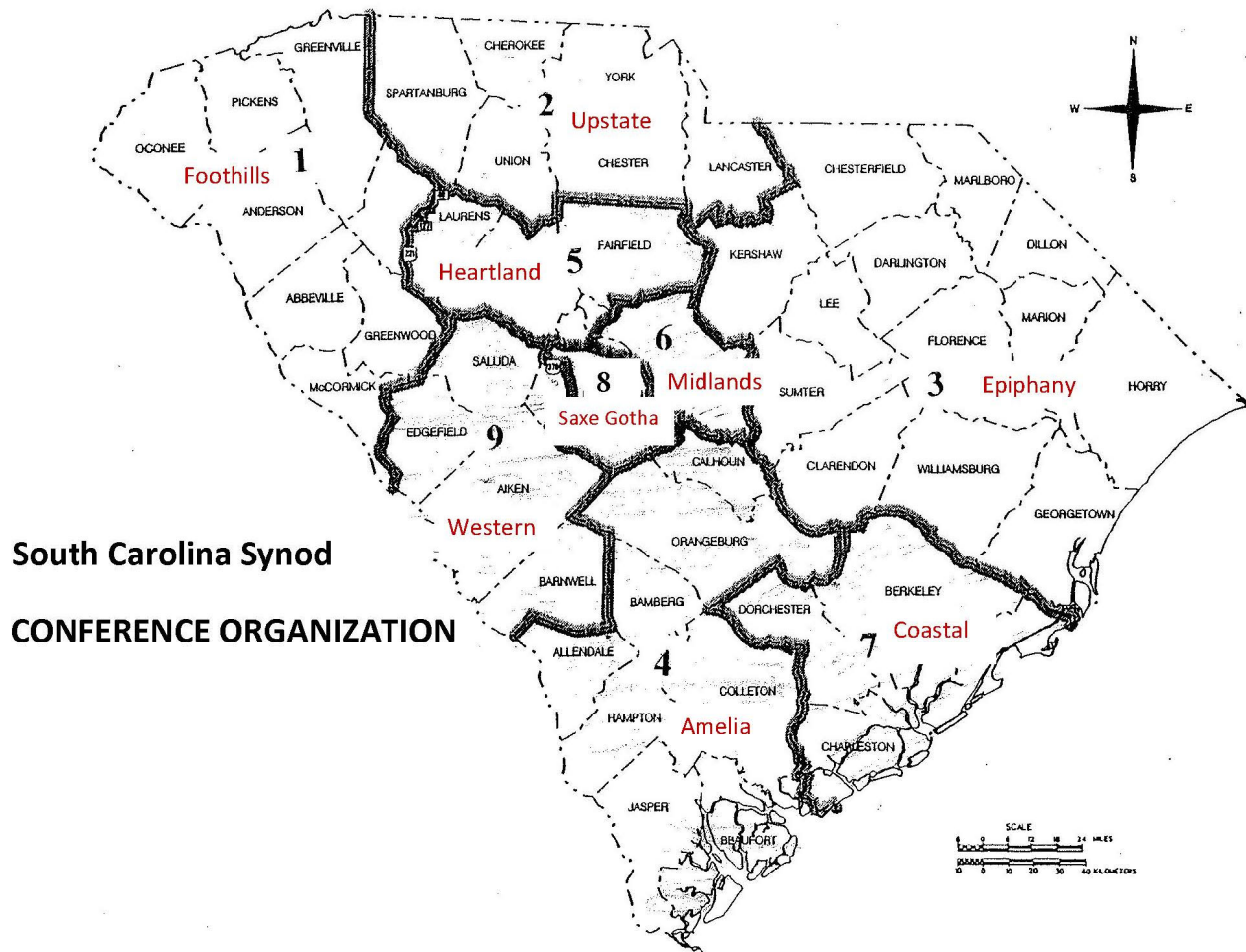
- demonstrate interdependence between the CWO, the SWO, the conference and the unit.
- bring a greeting and report from the president and the synodical board during a meeting/gathering.
- provide information about the work of the synodical board and its impact on units and about program plans of the synodical SWO and the CWO.
- listen to comments, questions, and concerns of participants from units and conveying them to the synodical board.

To improve the link between the synodical board and conference, the board liaison should maintain contact with the conference throughout the year. This contact may take the form of an occasional telephone call, a note, or a personal visit. The conference coordinator should be invited to share news of activities within the conference. In addition, the board representative can act as a sounding board and as a resource for the conference.

The SWO should develop a standardized form for conferences to use in reporting their activities to the synodical board. The information gathered should include the total number of participants, the number of participants from each unit, offering received, charity supported, results of elections held, and a brief summary of program activities.

Conference areas in South Carolina

In the spring of 1998, the South Carolina Synod formed nine conferences within the state instead of the previous cluster groupings. South Carolina Women of the ELCA followed the suggested realignment. Our conference boundaries coincide with the boundaries established by the South Carolina Synod.



Conference guidelines

1. Purpose

- To assist the Synodical Women's Organization (SWO) in promoting the programs of the Women of the ELCA.
- To encourage community building.
- To promote opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

2. Conference Leaders

- Conference leaders are elected at the fall meeting in the even years for a two-year (2-yr) term.
- Appoint a nominating committee in the odd year. Leaders shall be eligible for re-election.
- Interpret program and the purpose of Women of the ELCA for the congregational units (CUs) in the conference.
- Inform the SC WELCA Board Liaison of plans including dates and places of conference events.
- Conference events will be self-supporting.
- Offerings shall cover expenses and designated projects as voted on at the meeting.
- Include time on the agenda for a report from the Board Liaison.
- Should a vacancy occur, the SC WELCA board shall fill the vacancy until the next regular conference meeting with a recommendation from the conference leaders.
- The Ripple shall be mailed to the conference leaders at no charge.
- Conference leaders should contact inactive congregational units to offer help and information.
- Plan and implement the details of conference events.
- The host CU is responsible for greetings and refreshments.
- The conference leaders will develop the program in collaboration with the host CU.
- When the conference is the host for the synodical convention, attend convention planning meetings and assist as needed.

3. Duties of Conference Leaders

a. Coordinator

- Conduct conference meetings.
- Serve as the contact person for the SWO.

b. Secretary

- Send notices of meetings to the CUs and Board Liaison.
- Keep an up-to-date list of the names and addresses of each CU officer and/or contact person in the conference and provide this list to the CUs at the conference event.
- Notify Synodical Secretary of CU officer name and address changes.
- Notify Synodical Secretary of conference leader name and address changes.
- Have a roll call of churches or registration of churches.
- Keep accurate minutes or records of all conference events.
- Send minutes, reports, and news of all conference events to Board Liaison within 21 days of the event.
- Assist coordinator as needed.

c. Financial Secretary

- Keep an accurate record of conference finances.
- Give a financial report at a conference meeting.
- Collect conference offering and remit to the SWO Treasurer.

- Submit conference disbursement requests to SWO Treasurer for expenses of the conference.
 - Assist coordinator as needed.
- d. Nominating Committee
- Elected by vote or appointed by the Conference President consisting of 2 to 3 members.
 - Meet on the day of election or appointment to determine the chair of the committee.
 - Be familiar with job descriptions and requirements of officers/leaders to be elected.
 - Prepare a list of candidates for officers/leaders at least a month before the conference meeting/gathering elections are held.
 - Committee members will attend any leadership training provided for conference leaders.
4. Meetings
- Meetings are to be held in the fall to facilitate lead time for convention planning.
 - Fall meetings should include Devotions/worship, Program, Business, Elections (in the even years), Convention Planning (if the conference is hosting the following convention).
 - Spring meetings are encouraged and may be used for fellowship.
 - The date and place of the fall meeting should be published at the time of the SWO convention.
 - Use convention theme at fall meeting.

Conference business meeting agenda

Suggested after the welcome, devotions, and program.

Call to Order - Read the Mission and Purpose Statements of the Women of the ELCA. This should be printed in the program materials and easily available for attendees to read along.

Roll Call of congregational units represented is led by the Conference Secretary.

Approval of Minutes

- The minutes of the prior business meeting are the Conference Secretary's Report. The printed report should be available for each attendee prior to the meeting. The Secretary DOES NOT need to read the entire report. She may choose to highlight a few significant items from the report or may go straight to the motion to approve the Minutes as printed.
- The Conference Coordinator then calls for a motion to approve the minutes. The Secretary records the person's name who makes the motion. Ask for a second if none come forth readily. There is no need to document the name of individuals who second any motions in any portion of your business.
- Conference Coordinator then states "We have a motion to approve the Minutes from (date). Are there any questions or discussion?" At this point, there may be corrections to the printed Minutes. If so, the Minutes can be approved with those corrections.
- Call for Vote. All in favor say "aye." All opposed say "no." Declare the motion approved.

Financial Secretary's Report

- The Conference Financial Secretary should provide a printed report made available to each attendee prior to the meeting. This report should include the checking balance as of the last meeting/gathering, any subsequent income received and/or any expenses paid, and the balance as of the date of the report.
- Ask if there are any questions about the Financial Secretary's Report.
- There is no motion to approve the Financial Secretary's Report. State the report will be placed on file.
- Take up the offering.

Nominating Committee Report (if applicable)

The Conference Nominating Committee provides a verbal report. Once names of women nominated for open positions, the Conference Coordinator asks three (3) times “Are there any other nominations from the floor?” If any, those names would be added to the Committee’s nominations. After asking three (3) times, the nominations are declared closed. Then ask for a motion to elect the nominees, and for a second to the motion. Call for the vote - all in favor say “aye,” all opposed say “no”. Declare the motion approved.

Installation of Elected Leaders (if applicable)

Installation of new leadership will be led by someone from the SC SWO board.

SWO Board Report

The SWO President, or her designee, will present this report. Copies of the written report should have been made available for all attendees. Please allow 15-30 minutes in your programming for this report. The SWO President will introduce other Board members, any Churchwide representatives present, and any Board member present who has information to bring to the attention of the meeting/gathering, including *The Ripple* Editor.

Old Business

If there is any business from your last meeting/gathering that hasn’t been acted on, now is the time to bring that forward for discussion and action. If there is none, move on to the New Business.

New Business

Items of New Business may typically include:

- Report of offering collected.
- Ask for a decision for the amount and where offering will go (needs a motion, a second and vote)
- Location of meeting for the next meeting/gathering
- Host church for the next meeting/gathering
- Conference responsibilities for the next SWO convention (if applicable)

Announcements

- The congregational unit representatives may offer announcements of upcoming events at their church.
- Ask that representatives complete the Congregational Unit Leaders Update form as needed.

Adjournment

Call for a motion to adjourn, a second and then VOTE! Or declare the meeting adjourned.

Complete the following conference forms as needed:

- Conference Meeting Form
- Conference Leaders Update Form
- Cash Received Form
- Conference Offering and Disbursement Form