

# Women <sup>of the</sup> ELCA

South Carolina Synodical Women's Organization

## HANDBOOK FOR



## CHURCHWIDE SYNODICAL BOARD CONFERENCE AND CONGREGATIONAL UNITS

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## **SECTION A – Churchwide Women of the ELCA**

The purpose statement of Women of the ELCA was adopted by the 1987 Constituting Convention and summarizes the foundational principles of the organization. It tells us who we are and what we do as an organization.

### **Purpose statement of Women of the ELCA**

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 of Women of the ELCA**

Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus.

### **Women of the ELCA Logo**



### **Logo description**

Our logo—with the cross, water and a white lily—identifies women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as children of God; baptized, forgiven, adopted into God's family, full of grace and hope in eternal life. It is a reminder of the growth, beauty, and vitality that rises out of that life-giving baptismal water. It is also a reminder of the mission of the church to "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

## **Logo licensing**

Use of the Women of the ELCA logo is expressly subject to and conditioned on agreement to the following terms.

The Women of the ELCA logo is protected under United States and international Trademark Law. Use of these marks, other than in accordance with the terms and conditions of this agreement or as otherwise authorized by law, is strictly prohibited.

Any use of the logo that involves the sale of goods or fundraising requires additional, formal permission from the churchwide organization in order to (1) determine whether the criteria outlined below are being met and (2) to approve the graphic representation and use of the logo.

The churchwide organization may grant permission to recognized expressions of the organization to reproduce the logo for fundraising purposes if (1) the fundraising or sale of goods will support that expression's own mission and ministries, or (2) the fundraising or sale of goods will support the mission and ministries of the churchwide organization (for example, to raise money for Katie's Fund, grants, scholarships, or the health initiative).

Recognized expressions of the organization can be synodical women's organizations, congregational, inter-congregational, or special units; and clusters or conferences.

Women of the ELCA grants a nonexclusive, non-transferable license to use the Women of the ELCA logo in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Users agree not to revise or alter the logo in any way. Our three-color logo consists of black, white and blue (PMS 308). The lily and waves in the cross must be white. No other colors may be substituted. The logo may be reproduced in grayscale, or black and white.
2. Use of the Women of the ELCA logo does not imply approval or endorsement of products or services.
3. Women of the ELCA is and remains the sole owner of the Women of the ELCA logo. By entering into this nonexclusive license, the user does not attain any interest in the logo.
4. Women of the ELCA reserves the right to alter or amend these guidelines at any time and without notice to the user.
5. Permission is never granted to individuals who wish to reproduce the logo on items that will be sold for personal profit.
6. Users agree not to use the Women of the ELCA logo in any manner likely to confuse, mislead, or deceive the public, or to be adverse to the best interests of the Women of the ELCA.
7. Users agree that the Women of the ELCA logo is proprietary to the Women of the ELCA and that Women of the ELCA maintains all rights, title, and interest thereto including, without limitation, all intellectual property and other proprietary rights.

## Preface

Each year women throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are called to ministry on the boards of synodical women's organizations of Women of the ELCA. This guide is meant to enable, equip, and empower those volunteers in carrying out their call. They, together with all women participating in Women of the ELCA, accomplish the organization's mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. This guide relies on the constitutions of our organization as they set out the vision that the founders of our organization had in 1987. The constitutions establish the ways in which we agree to live together.

Women of the ELCA today is supported by countless years of ministry in predecessor bodies, reaching back into the 19th century. The current community of women owe much to these ancestors who brought their God-given gifts to ministry when women's roles within the institutional church were limited or non-existent.

This guide draws on similar guides prepared in the past, the first having been written for Women of the ELCA in 1992. Revisions were published in 1997, 2001 and 2007. We are thankful for the opportunity to build upon previous guides in drafting this one.

Finally, this guide reflects the needs and desires of the synodical women's organizations as they are expressed in the many conversations and questions that staff members of Women of the ELCA regularly encounter through social media, e-mail, phone calls, mail, and personal conversations.

## How to use this guide

Those who drafted and adopted the constitutions of Women of the ELCA offered the organization a huge gift. Because of constitutions and structures, women have great freedom to follow our Purpose Statement and accomplish our mission in ways that support their local context and the needs of those gathered under the umbrella of Women of the ELCA. What the ministry looks like can change as circumstances change and as different women gather under the umbrella. This is true for units and for synodical organizations.

We have order in our organization, thanks to our constitutions. We have commitments and expectations too. We also have great flexibility in how we follow our Purpose Statement and accomplish our mission. This handbook follows those same principles. There are a few things that every synodical organization should be about, and then there is great flexibility in how the synodical organizations follow our Purpose Statement and accomplish our mission.

When a woman is called into service and elected as a leader in the South Carolina WELCA, they should prayerfully begin that ministry by reading our constitutions in this handbook. If some of the terminology is confusing, they should refer to the glossary.

For consistency, words and phrases that have particular meaning for Women of the ELCA follow the style established in the Constitutions and Bylaws. For example:

- **Participant** refers to the individual woman who is committed to the purpose of, and is active within, Women of the ELCA in some way.
- **Member** refers to a congregational, inter-congregational, or special unit.
- **Unit** is the more common word which refers to the local WELCA group.
- **Conference** refers to the area of churches within a specific location of the synod.
- **Executive Board** refers to the board of the churchwide organization.

The latest version of this handbook can be found at [www.scwelca.com](http://www.scwelca.com) by following the "Tools for Leaders" link. It is available as a downloadable PDF.

## Celebrating Women of the ELCA's history

Lutheran women in the United States have been gathering in mission since the 1800s. We owe much to our foremothers who responded to God's call, created a place, and lived out a purpose when women had few roles in the church.

Three groups came together in 1987 to form Women of the ELCA. These groups were the American Lutheran Church Women (of the American Lutheran Church), the Lutheran Church Women (of the Lutheran Church in America) and Women in Action for Mission (of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches). The constituting convention was held June 13-14, 1987, in Milwaukee, Wis., with the theme "Embrace God's World."

Communication tools soon followed. The magazine *Lutheran Woman Today* began publishing in January 1988, and *Newsletter* (the predecessor to *Interchange*) followed in June of that year. The organization's first website was inaugurated in 1995. *Café*, an electronic magazine for young women, launched in 2006, and podcasts soon followed. The organization's first smart phone app was unveiled in 2011, the same year that the magazine took on its new name, *Gather*. For several years now the organization has been publishing an electronic newsletter for participants called *Bold Connections*.

Various program initiatives were launched by the churchwide organization in 1988, some of which continue today—such as the scholarship program. Initiatives came and went, meeting the context for and the needs of women at the time. For example, a literacy program existed from 1988-1996, and "Money, Security, and Spirituality" events were held from 1991-1995. Rachel's Day was initiated in 1996 and continues today.

Significant efforts were expended in:

- banning plastic-foam cups,
- celebrating anniversaries of women's ordination,
- exploring cross-cultural programming,
- developing an anti-racist identity,
- supporting women and children living in poverty,
- traveling globally,
- eliminating landmines,
- supporting fair trade, and
- understanding and working to end human trafficking.

Within units and synodical organizations, participants have made significant contributions to their communities by supporting domestic violence shelters, programs for the homeless and hungry, and women's empowerment initiatives, to name but a few. Traditional activities like Bible study and relief quilt making have been joined by service and advocacy projects, both at home and abroad. Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls, the organization's health initiative, began in 2005. Bold Women's Day, an annual celebration of our mission and the women who accomplish it, launched in 2007.

The organization has prepared an assortment of resources through the years in addition to the annual Bible study published in the magazine. Resource books were popular in the first years of the organization. Themed series followed. Most recently, the organization has produced program resources designed to assist women in living out the mission and purpose of the organization. While resources were available for purchase early in the



life of the organization, more recently most resources have been available as free downloadable PDFs.

The staff grew to 30 by 2002; but the size has slowly been reduced since then, primarily due to financial considerations. Today the executive director and their staff of 15 oversee the day-to-day operations of the churchwide organization. They are the only paid staff located within the churchwide organization. In all other expressions of the organization, volunteers carry out the organization's mission.

The churchwide women's organization currently functions with an annual budget of approximately \$3 million. The primary source of revenue is contributions from participants, either in the form of Regular Offerings or Thankofferings. If the organization had more disposable income, it would make an unrestricted annual gift to the ELCA, often about \$1 million. In 2007, however, considering declining revenue, the executive board determined that the organization could no longer make an unrestricted gift to the ELCA. The organization continues to transmit all designated gifts from women and units to the various ministries of the ELCA.

The organization has assets held in endowments, some of which were created during the life of this organization and some of which were passed down from predecessor women's organizations (the oldest was created more than 100 years ago). The interest earned on these endowments is used consistent with the original donor's intent, and that ranges from scholarships to international mission.

A special endowment fund was created by the organization on its tenth anniversary and named the Katharina von Bora Luther Fund (Katie's Fund, for short). The interest earned on this fund is used by the churchwide organization for ministries that involve leadership development, global connections, and faith in daily life. In 2007, the executive board created a current fund as part of Katie's Fund. Since 2008, gifts can be designated for either current needs or the endowment. An annual appeal for Katie's Fund began in 2008. The endowment fund now exceeds \$1 million.

## **Why we exist: our mission and purpose**

The mission of Women of the ELCA, in all its expressions, is to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. All efforts of the women's organization should support this mission. The statement of purpose of Women of the ELCA further expands on that mission, identifying ways in which we support that mission:

*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.*

All efforts of the women's organization, in all its expressions, should be done in order to accomplish this purpose. All who participate in the organization must agree to this purpose. When women gather together in our organization, all of their work should be measured against our mission and purpose.

When women gather together, many amazing things can be accomplished. **Together we accomplish more than we ever could accomplish alone.**

## **How we are organized: our structure**

Women of the ELCA is the women's organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is separately incorporated, and it is not an auxiliary of the church. It is financially independent and responsible for its own financial affairs. Under the current structure of the church, it is identified as a "separately incorporated ministry," as are Lutheran Men in Mission; 1517 Media; the ELCA Foundation; and the Mission Investment Fund. By the terms of our constitution, the churchwide organization follows the personnel policies and financial policies of the ELCA.

The constitutions govern how this organization operates. We have four constitutions and accompanying by-laws and continuing resolutions:

- Approved Model Constitution and Bylaws, **Congregational or Inter-congregational Unit**
- Approved Model Constitution and Bylaws, **Special Unit**
- Approved Constitution and Bylaws, **Synodical Women's Organization**
- Constitution and Bylaws, **Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

The constitutions reflect the values and expectations of the women in this organization. In the constitutions, we agree how we will live together and carry out our mission and purpose. Constitutions change from time to time, reflecting the changing needs of the organization and the world in which we live. Changes can originate organically within the participants of our organization or with the churchwide executive board. Proposed changes are considered and voted upon at the triennial conventions of our organization which is the highest legislative authority. Voting members to the convention are elected by synodical organizations. Between conventions, the churchwide executive board conducts the business of the organization.

## **Expressions within the Women of the ELCA**

As its constitutions provide, Women of the ELCA is comprised of three elements called "expressions:"

- A. Congregational, inter-congregational and special Units (Unit)
- B. Synodical Women's Organizations (SWO)
- C. Churchwide Women's Organization (CWO)

### **A. Congregational, inter-congregational and special units (Unit)**

At the heart and center of Women of the ELCA are the congregational units. All others – the conference, synodical women's organization, and the churchwide women's organization – exist to help the congregational units carry out specific ministries. To accomplish the purpose of Women of the ELCA, the constitution states that women in this unit shall commit themselves to:

- a. come together for study, support and action;**
- b. participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation;**
- c. support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA; and**
- d. designate leadership that shall be in communication with the synodical and churchwide**

**women's organization.**

The way that each unit lives out these commitments may vary, limited only by the imagination and resources of the women participating in the unit. As to Commitment a., some units may meet monthly, others quarterly. Some units may consist of a handful of women; other units may have many women who meet in smaller groupings, organized around interests. Some units may sponsor a retreat while other units sponsor service projects.

Likewise, for Commitment b., there are many ways to participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation. Some units will be active in conference events while others participate in synodical or regional events. Many units will attend events sponsored by the churchwide organization, including the triennial gathering. All are encouraged to subscribe to the organization's publications and use its resources.

When it comes to "support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA," Commitment c., units do several things. They collect Regular Offerings and submit a portion of them to their synodical organization, which in turn, submits a portion of those regular offerings to the churchwide organization. Units hold one or more Thankoffering services each year and that offering goes directly to the churchwide organization. Units also participate in special offerings and designated gifts.

Commitment d. simply designates a participant who will be in communication with the synodical and churchwide organizations. Depending upon how the unit organizes its life together, it will usually be the president or chair of the unit who fills this role.

## **B. Synodical Women's Organization (SWO)**

The second expression is the synodical women's organization. The constitution states: "The purpose of this synodical women's organization shall be to assist units within its territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA." Women of the ELCA has 64 synodical women's organizations. Depending upon its geography, history and leadership, each synodical organization carries out the responsibility of assisting units in a different way, led by a changing group of elected volunteers.

The legislative function of the synodical organization is fulfilled by the synodical convention, held either annually or biennially, with the synodical board (elected volunteers) exercising interim legislative authority. While planning and carrying out a convention can be a large task, it should not overshadow the work of the board in assisting units to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA.

It is the responsibility of the synodical organization to be in close contact with the units in its territory. Contact with established units should include but is not limited to:

- establishing and maintaining contact information for the unit's leadership;
- informing units of actions taken by the churchwide executive board;
- introducing resources produced in the churchwide office;
- informing units of programs available through the synodical organization and presenting said programs at their meetings;
- assisting with the formation of new units; and
- communicating the emphasis selected by the synodical board for projects, programs, and events.

Congregations that do not currently have an established unit of Women of the ELCA should be contacted, and every effort should be made to establish a new unit in those congregations. Keep a list of active units so that the following can be used to:

- contact active congregational units and send them:
  - the synodical newsletter,
  - synodical board meeting minutes,
  - synodical convention minutes, and
  - notice of planned events;
- determine how many voting members should be attending synodical conventions (all voting members must be a participant of an active unit)
- determine how many voting members the synodical organization is allowed to elect for the triennial convention (all voting members must be a participant of an active unit).

### **C. The Churchwide Women’s Organization (CWO)**

The third expression of the organization is the churchwide women’s organization. Like the synodical organizations, the churchwide organization exists to support women in units as they carry out our shared mission and purpose. The churchwide organization also coordinates the ministry of women across the church, exercising many functions and responsibilities.

### **Triennial Convention**

The three expressions of Women of the ELCA are connected most visibly at the Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA. “The Triennial Convention shall be the highest legislative authority of Women of the ELCA and shall deal with all matters that are necessary in the pursuit of the purpose and functions of this organization.” The executive board members (elected volunteers) exercise interim legislative authority and serve as the board of directors.

Women of the ELCA operates on a three-year programming cycle called a “triennium.” Elections for the executive board are on a 3-year cycle. Units nominate participants to be voting members at the Triennial Convention. Voting members are elected at the synodical women’s organization convention one or more years in advance of the triennial convention at which they are to serve. The number of delegates from the SWO is based on a census of units within each SWO. Currently, one voting member is assigned for every 25 active congregation units within the SWO.

By voting and presenting resolutions to the convention, voting members to the triennial convention determine the direction and develop the policies of Women of the ELCA for the upcoming three years. This direction and these policies affect all three expressions of the women’s organization. In addition, synodical women’s organizations in convention may adopt resolutions to submit to the triennial convention. Such resolutions are called memorials, and they also help give direction to the organization.

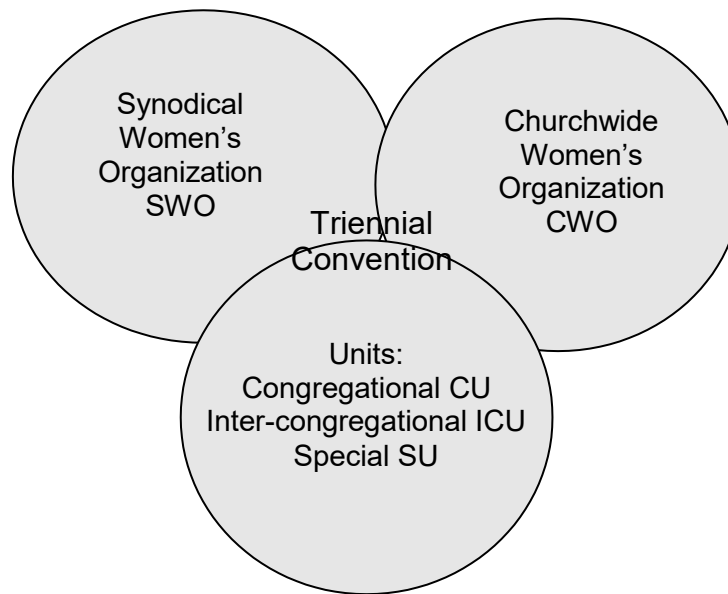
The Triennial Gathering is a relational event held after the triennial convention. At the Triennial Gathering Women of the ELCA worship together, learn together, strengthen our mutual commitment, and affirm our sisterhood in mission and ministry.

## “Expressions,” not “Levels”

Units, synodical women’s organizations and the churchwide women’s organization each live out its own mission while being intimately interconnected with the others as we share responsibility for fulfilling the common purpose of Women of the ELCA. Each in its own way is an “expression” of Women of the ELCA. While each expression is *fully* Women of the ELCA, no one expression is the *whole* Women of the ELCA.

Note that the term “expression” is preferred to “level” because it implies relationships of equality among CWO, SWO and unit instead of hierarchical relationships. We can also see that communication can take place directly between units and the churchwide women’s organization without going “through” synodical women’s organizations.

We can see in the diagram of interconnected circles that what affects one expression of Women of the ELCA affects all expressions of the organization. We live out our mission as Women of the ELCA in partnership and interdependence. “Each part shall recognize that it is in a partnership with the others to share in God’s mission.”



## A relational organization

Women of the ELCA is a relational organization. Our purpose statement makes it clear that we are a community of women living in relationships to God, one another, the church, the society and the world. Our structure, the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Constitutions and Bylaws of Women of the ELCA help us understand and live out those relationships.

Below are some of the ways that the synodical women’s organization may relate to other expressions of Women of the ELCA.

### To the Churchwide Women’s Organization

Conference of Synodical Presidents. Presidents of synodical women’s organizations meet annually to learn about and share information about emphases, mission-related policies, and plans of the organization.

Conference also provides an opportunity for synodical presidents to develop leadership skills and to gather for



mutual support and the sharing of ideas, information, and resources. While the Conference of Presidents has no legislative authority, recommendations are made from the Conference of Presidents to the executive board.

President's Representative to the Synodical Women's Organization Convention: A member of the churchwide executive board brings a report to each synodical convention describing the activities, plans, and programs of the churchwide organization. they also function as a "listening post" to convey concerns and information from the synodical organization to the president and executive board. Between synodical conventions, the president's representative may act as a personal liaison to the synodical women's organization.

Printed Communications from the churchwide women's organization: Published Communications from the churchwide women's organization include Gather Magazine, Bold Café, and Bold Connections. All subscriptions are available online at [www.welca.org](http://www.welca.org) under Publications.

Synodical Women's Organization reports to the Churchwide Women's Organization. These reports include regular mailings of the synodical newsletter, reports following synodical conventions, information regarding proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws for the Synodical Women's Organization and other reports which may be requested.

## **To Congregational Units**

The synodical convention is the highest legislative authority of the synodical women's organization and must be held at least biennially. At the synodical convention, voting members from units elect synodical officers and board members, determine policies and direction for synodical women's organization. The synodical board reports on its work since the previous convention and its plans for the future.

Communication: The synodical women's organization frequently serves as the liaison between the churchwide organization and the unit. This role may be performed in a variety of ways, including a regular synodical newsletter (The Ripple), email news blast, letters to units, telephone contact with unit leader, personal visits to unit meetings and on the SWO Website ([www.scwelca.com](http://www.scwelca.com)).

Support: The synodical women's organization supports units by providing resources for programming (such as leadership training), helping new units organize and nurturing active units. To accomplish these functions, synodical board members must be aware of the needs of individual units and be creative in the ways they address those needs.

## **To Conferences**

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 and do not have a constitution.

Conferences are simply practical geographical groupings of units, intended to enhance relationships and offer opportunities to build community. Where the geography of a synodical organization is great, 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. Conferences are designed to be bridges between the congregational unit and the synodical women's organization.

## **To the South Carolina Synod of the ELCA**

Under its constitution, the synodical women's organization is also called into an interdependent relationship with its synod. The SWO to "establish a relationship" with its synod, and shall "invite the bishop of the synod or their or his appointee to serve as a representative of the synod to the synodical women's organization and to provide reports to its convention and board meetings." (SWO Constitution, Article IV, Section 4.) Other ways in which that relationship can be established, nurtured, and supported include:

- When a synodical president is elected, they should arrange to visit with the synod bishop, introducing herself, discussing the vision of the board for its ministry in the next two-year period and ways in which the SWO and synod can support each other in ministry.
- The synodical president or their representative should provide a report of the past year's synodical women's activities – a written report for the Bulletin of Reports, and an oral report/greeting in a plenary session during the Synod Assembly.
- The synod office and the bishop or her/his appointee should receive the synodical newsletter and other important synodical women's communications.
- The synodical president and board should subscribe to the synod eNews and be informed of other media communications on the synod website.
- Stay informed of Synod Council meeting highlights - <https://scsynod.com/synod-council/>
- Major synodical women's organization events should be included on the synod calendar and vice versa. Dates for SWO events should be set in consultation with the synod office so as not to conflict.
- The bishop or a synod staff member can be approached for assistance, such as leading a team-building exercise when a new SWO board is formed or facilitating discussions in a dysfunctional situation.
- The synodical president of Lutheran Men in Mission and the president of the Lutheran Youth Organization should be included in regular communications. Many opportunities for partnerships may result from developing good relationships with these organizations.
- At synod assemblies, the SWO president should have an opportunity to bring greetings in a plenary session. The SWO should have an exhibit, if exhibit space is available.

## **Partner synods**

Since 2002, partner synods have existed within the ELCA, providing ways in which synods from different locations can work together to form community and partnership. This partnership originated within the Conference of Bishops as a way to allow synods to become familiar with the history, customs, culture and faith practices of their ELCA brothers and sisters. Within Women of the ELCA, we have mirrored these partner synods.

South Carolina Synod (9C) is in partnership with Greater Milwaukee Synod (5J). The number refers to the specific region of the ELCA. The letter refers to the specific synod within that region. South Carolina Synod is in Region 9 of the ELCA which includes six synods: 9A is the Virginia Synod, 9B is the North Carolina Synod, 9C is the South Carolina Synod, 9D is the Southeastern Synod, 9E is the Florida-Bahamas Synod, and 9F is the Caribbean Synod.

## Other connections

Companion synods. Currently the SC Synod has three companion synods outside of the United States in Tanzania, Japan, and Colombia. Women active in Women of the ELCA often participate in travel to and programming in the companion synods while also hosting representatives from the companion synods at activities in the synod and SWO.

Other women’s organizations. By its governing documents, the churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA is called to relate to other women’s organizations ecumenically and globally. For instance, we celebrate World Day of Prayer the first Friday in March of each year which is sponsored by Church Women United.

Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran World Federation. Internationally, Women of the ELCA has been active in supporting Lutheran World Relief, not only through financial support, but also through hundreds of thousands of quilts and kits made by Lutheran women and distributed by LWR around the globe. Through these connections we have increased our understanding of, and mutual respect for, other cultures and people.

## Women of the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Women of the ELCA is not an “auxiliary” of the ELCA. While we are separately incorporated self-supporting and have our own constitution, we operate with the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with the policies of the church. Women of the ELCA reports to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly and to the ELCA Church Council.

Parallel Structure, Different Language. The structure of the Women of the ELCA parallels that of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and follows the same geographic lines. Our language for the three expressions of Women of the ELCA is slightly different from the language of the church.

ELCA	Women of the ELCA
Local Congregation or Institution	Local congregational, inter-congregational, or special unit (“Unit”)
Synod	Synodical Women’s Organization (“SWO”)
Churchwide Organization	Churchwide Women’s Organization (“CWO”)
Assembly	Convention
Voting Member	Voting Member
Conference	Conference

Being consistent in the language we use helps us to be clear in our communication when we are talking about the ELCA and when we are talking about Women of the ELCA.

## Women of the ELCA Respond

Through various program areas, Women of the ELCA’s community of women provide services in their churches, communities, and even the world. We engage in ministry; we take action through advocacy; we promise healing and wholeness; and we support one another in our callings.

We offer anti-racism training; address domestic violence, commercial sexual exploitation, and human

trafficking; and support families with special needs. We assist participants in their desire to discern God's call in their lives and to discover their spiritual gifts through workshops, retreats, resources, scholarships, and global

education. We offer grants to not-for-profit organizations, both domestic and international, that support healing and wholeness for women of all ages through the affirmation and advancement of women's emotional, physical, and spiritual health. **We make a difference in the world.**

## **Focus areas: discipleship, justice, and stewardship**

Our Purpose Statement helps us carry out our mission and should be the focus of our activities. Congregational Units may organize to grow in faith, engage in ministry, and support one another in friendship and fellowship while helping others throughout the world with much more flexible approach than the traditional "board" structure. All can work together to carry out our mission and are encouraged to utilize programs and resources to assist in sharing the Good News and spiritually enriching our own faith. In carrying out the mission of this organization, we focus on three categories of ministry: Discipleship, Justice and Stewardship.

Discipleship: Discipleship is a lifelong journey of living out and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Disciples are followers of Jesus who are intent on carrying out the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8). Women of the ELCA participants are active disciples in many ways. They practice the seven marks of discipleship: praying, studying, worshiping, inviting, encouraging, serving and giving. Whether it be making quilts and kits for Lutheran World Relief or studying the Bible together or assisting in worship, they grow in faith and share what they've learned with friends and neighbors.

Justice: Justice is faith in action. Justice addresses inequities in political, economic and social systems. Justice is equity and impartiality, mercy, and compassion. Justice includes serving God in ways that bring healing and wholeness to the church, the society, and the world. The Women of the ELCA justice initiative includes combating commercial sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and supporting families with special needs through our online resources. We advocate for racial and cultural equity through our anti-racism training, and our cross-cultural programming. Women active in Women of the ELCA also work for justice by supporting partner organizations who lift up women and children such as the 1,000 Days Movement, Lutheran World Relief, ELCA Good Gifts, Our Companion Synods, and many other initiatives. Women of the ELCA is well regarded for their important work in justice and advocacy, including our work on domestic violence, commercial sexual exploitation, and environmental justice.

Stewardship: Stewardship is careful and responsible management of the money, property, and resources that God has entrusted us. Stewardship is also providing for the ministries that God has entrusted to our care. Women of the ELCA creates educational resources about giving and managing money, including devotions, Bible studies, and program materials for individuals and small groups. Learn about Regular Offerings, Thank Offerings, Katie's Fund, and more in the "Your Offerings at Work" stewardship guide available from Churchwide. Share in the mission and ministry through your congregational units, conferences and synods. Part of our purpose as active women in this church is to provide assistance to others through our stewardship dollars as well as to help one another recognize our own power through stewardship.

## **Mission Areas: Growth, Community and Action**

Programs and activities of Women of the ELCA are organized around three mission areas: Mission Growth, Mission Community, Mission Action. Most programs and activities represent more than one mission and constitute a balanced effort. Together, these mission areas provide a holistic approach to living the gospel of Jesus Christ in today's world. They provide opportunities for women to grow in faith and mission.

Mission: Growth (*Our Relationship with God*): Seeks to provide a variety of learning and growth experiences that strengthen each woman as a whole person, develop their potential and sense of call as a disciple and child of God, and equip them for ministry. Mission Growth nurtures spiritual growth through enabling and encouraging women to share the good news as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. It also provides opportunities for each woman to identify their own gifts and leadership skills and makes available resources for Bible study and personal faith development.

Mission Community (*Our Relationship with One Another*): Seeks to enable each woman to value herself and others as created in God's image and redeemed through Jesus Christ, and to build up and celebrate relationships among women of faith that are global, diverse and interdependent. These relationships are disciple relationships which include God, family, other persons of faith, the global community, Women of the ELCA units, and the un-churched.

Mission Action (*Our Response to God*): Seeks to enable women to articulate and act on their faith as disciples of Jesus Christ and in all areas of life. Mission Action is about being in direct servant roles. We act to ensure that all people have access to basic human needs, equality, justice, and safety. This includes developing active partnerships with workers of God's justice to provide tangible goods and services, education, and advocacy against injustice.

### **One Mission - Three Perspectives**

Our Women of the ELCA Purpose Statement is carried out through three different perspectives: Growth, Community, Action. They cannot be separated any more than God the Father (Creator), God the Son (Redeemer), and God the Holy Spirit (Sanctifier) can be separated. Instead of wondering which issues, programs or resources belong to Growth, which belong to Action, and which belong to Community, know that all issues, programs and resources need all three perspectives to be wholly addressed. Women of the ELCA consists of three interrelated mission areas: each unique but cohesive and interdependent elements of the focus (center of activity).

# Venn Diagram



## **Timeline for planning**

### January

- 15<sup>th</sup> – Mail offerings by today for inclusion in fiscal year that is ending.
- 31<sup>st</sup> – End of fiscal year.

### February

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Starting date for new treasurers
- Conference of Presidents, usually third or fourth weekend

### March

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in March – Bold Women’s Day
- 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in March – World Day of Prayer

### April

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Deadline for active unit assessment data submission, every third year
- Churchwide executive board meeting

### May

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in May – Rachael’s Day (to stop gun violence)

### June

- South Carolina synodical women’s convention

### July

- Triennial convention and gathering, every third year (month may vary)

### August

- Nominations open for executive board, secretary and treasurer, every third year
- Conference calls with presidents in each region

### September

- 15<sup>th</sup> – Deadline for submitting proposed constitutional changes to executive board

### October

- Churchwide executive board meeting

### November 30<sup>th</sup>

- Deadline to submit memorials from synodical organizations to churchwide organization
- Deadline to submit roster of voting members for triennial convention, every third year
- Deadline to nominate women for executive board, secretary and treasurer, every third year

### December 15<sup>th</sup>

- Deadline, seed grant applications, Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls
- Application period opens for scholarship program

## **Women of the ELCA Leadership**

The executive board of the Women of the ELCA provides vision and enacts policies which are brought to life by the staff of the Women of the ELCA. The executive director and staff plan a comprehensive program that supports women within the organization as they live out our mission and purpose. This plan involves leadership development, communication resources and networks, racial justice resources and network, global education, a health initiative, financial support, program resources, and more. Click [www.womenoftheelca.org/staff](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/staff) or [www.womenoftheelca.org/executive-board](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/executive-board).

Officers and Board Members may be contacted by sending a message to the churchwide office



<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/contact>

Phone: 800.638.3522, ext. 8730, Fax: 773.380.2419

## Women of the ELCA Publications

Lutheran Women have a long history of Bible study, discipleship, and desire to deepen their spiritual life and learn about issues. Your offerings provide resources to support you on your journey of faith as well as to provide for ministries. Referenced below is a list of some of these resources and how you may access them. For publications, click: <https://www.womeoftheelca.org/publications>

*Gather* - a magazine of Women of the ELCA, offers a mix of articles, theological reflections, devotions, and stories of comfort and challenge that help readers grow in faith and engage in ministry and action. *Gather* is published 10 times a year with combined issues in January/February and July/August.

*Bold Cafe* - an award-winning web-based magazine for young adult women who want to build community, participate in advocacy, and strengthen their faith can relate to everyday life.

*Bold Connections* - A free monthly e-newsletter from Women of the ELCA. Whether you participate a lot or a little in Women of the ELCA, you'll find helpful news and information on our programs and activities, and stories of how together we live out our purpose and mission.

*Daily Grace* - A free devotional app for daily inspirations.

## Women of the ELCA Resources

Free downloadable program resources in English and Spanish help you grow in faith and engage in ministry and action. Click: <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/resources>

**Stay connected** - through Women of the ELCA's online community:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/womenoftheelca](http://www.facebook.com/womenoftheelca)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/womenoftheelca](http://www.twitter.com/womenoftheelca)

Pinterest: [www.pinterest.com/womeoftheelca](http://www.pinterest.com/womeoftheelca)

## Other Resources of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

- ELCA Good Gifts: [www.elca.org/goodgifts](http://www.elca.org/goodgifts)
- ELCA World Hunger: [www.elca.org/hunger](http://www.elca.org/hunger)
- Lutheran Disaster Response: [www.elca.org/disaster](http://www.elca.org/disaster)
- Always Being Made New: [www.elca.org/Campaign](http://www.elca.org/Campaign)
- ELCA Global Links: [www.elca.org/globalmission](http://www.elca.org/globalmission)
- Augsburg Fortress: [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org)
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: [www.lirs.org](http://www.lirs.org)
- Lutheran World Relief (Headquarters): [www.lwr.org](http://www.lwr.org)
- Upstate Lutheran World Relief: [www.worldrelief.org/upstate-sc](http://www.worldrelief.org/upstate-sc)
- Global Health Ministries: [www.ghm.org](http://www.ghm.org)

# **Constitution and Bylaws**

## **Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

The provisions of the Constitution and these Bylaws that pertain to the same subject have been placed together. The three types of provisions are identified in the following way:

**Constitutional provisions appear in bold type.**

Bylaws appear in regular type.

*Continuing Resolutions appear in italics.*

### **ARTICLE I—NAME AND INCORPORATION**

#### **SECTION 1. Name**

The name of this organization shall be **Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.**

#### **SECTION 2. Designations**

**For the purpose of this constitution and the accompanying bylaws, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is designated as “ELCA” or “the church,” Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as “Women of the ELCA,” “this organization,” or “the organization,” and local organizations of Women of the ELCA (congregational, inter-congregational, and special) as “units.”**

#### **SECTION 3. Incorporation**

**Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be incorporated.**

### **ARTICLE II—PURPOSE**

#### **SECTION 1. Statement of Purpose**

**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.**

#### **SECTION 2. Functions and Responsibilities**

To accomplish this purpose, Women of the ELCA shall

- Item 1. Establish and support units to carry out God’s mission in the church, the society, and the world;**
- Item 2. Equip participants and encourage all to grow as whole persons, value themselves and others, articulate and act upon their faith, and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ;**
- Item 3. Advocate for the oppressed and voiceless, urge change in systems and structures that exclude and alienate, and work for peace and justice as messengers of hope;**
- Item 4. Relate to other women’s organizations ecumenically and globally;**
- Item 5. Provide for development and distribution of resources and a periodical for its participants;**
- Item 6. Provide for flexible structures and decision-making processes that foster interdependence and involve people in making decisions that affect them; and**
- Item 7. Provide opportunities for the financial support of Women of the ELCA and manage the assets and processes for planning and evaluation to ensure fulfillment of the mission of Women of the ELCA.**

#### **SECTION 3. Mission Statement**

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

## **ARTICLE III—PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION**

### **SECTION 1. Unity of Purpose**

**As a community of women called and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the participants shall commit themselves to full discipleship and oneness in Christ.**

### **SECTION 2. Affirmation of Individual Worth**

**Recognizing that each woman is created in God's image and uses their varied gifts in diverse ministries, this community of women shall affirm in its life and work the worth of each woman.**

### **SECTION 3. Inclusiveness**

**This community of women shall be inclusive because in Baptism God makes all people one in Christ and shall have the objective of proclaiming and practicing this inclusive unity in the life of its participants together.**

### **SECTION 4. Flexibility**

**An openness to change and the ability to allow for diversity in functioning shall be among the desired results of the structure of this organization. Change shall be viewed as an ongoing process following regular review and evaluation. The process for changing procedures and policies shall be clearly stated and uncomplicated.**

### **SECTION 5. Stability**

**The principle of good order shall be followed. Policies and procedures shall be held in healthy tension with the principle of flexibility.**

### **SECTION 6. Interdependence**

**All entities of the ELCA, the units, the synodical women's organizations, and the churchwide women's organization shall function interdependently and share responsibility for fulfilling the common purpose.**

### **SECTION 7. Decision Making**

**Structures and processes shall foster mutuality and interdependence and shall involve people in making decisions that affect them.**

### **SECTION 8. Leadership**

**Leaders in this community shall practice interdependence and teamwork and strive to enable others to carry out their responsibilities. They shall provide a leadership that supports and empowers others within the community. They shall recognize their accountability to the triune God, to the ELCA, to Women of the ELCA, and to others with whom they serve.**

### **SECTION 9. Stewardship and Mutual Support**

**This community of women shall acknowledge itself as a steward of the resources entrusted to it. It shall commit itself to the effective use of these resources in its life and work and in the life and work of the church.**

### **SECTION 10. Wholeness of the Church**

**This community of women shall work toward wholeness of the church.**

### **SECTION 11. Governing Documents**

**Each unit and synodical women's organization in its governing documents shall include the statement of purpose (see Article II, Section 1) and such structural components as are required in this constitution. Whenever a synodical women's organization proposes to amend its constitution or bylaws, the synodical board shall submit the proposed amendments to the churchwide Executive Board for review and action. Proposed amendments must be submitted by March 15 for consideration at the April Executive Board meeting and by September 15 for consideration at the October Executive Board meeting.**

## **SECTION 12. Governing Authority**

Each convention, board, committee, task force, or other body of this organization shall be conclusively presumed to have been properly constituted, and neither the method of selection nor the composition of any such convention, board, committee, task force, or other body may be challenged in a court of law by any person or be used as a basis of challenge in a court of law to the validity or effect of any action taken or authorized by any such convention, board, committee, task force, or other body.

## **SECTION 13. Anti-Racist Identity**

This community of women shall claim and practice an anti-racist identity and actively seek full participation and shared power in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies, and practices.

## **ARTICLE IV—MEMBERSHIP**

### **SECTION 1. Composition**

Women of the ELCA shall be a composite of its units.

- Item 1.** Only one unit from each congregation shall be eligible for membership in this organization.
- Item 2.** Special units may be established outside the congregation when approved by the Executive Board.

## **ARTICLE V—PARTICIPATION**

### **SECTION 1. Individual Participants**

Participation in this organization shall be open to all women in the ELCA and other women who subscribe to the purpose of this organization.

### **SECTION 2. Commitment**

This participation shall be involvement that indicates a commitment to the purpose of this organization.

## **ARTICLE VI—AUTHORITY**

### **SECTION 1. Policies**

Women of the ELCA shall take such steps as are needed to realize its purpose. It shall function within the policies of the ELCA and the constitution of this organization.

### **SECTION 2. Corporate Responsibilities**

Women of the ELCA shall have and may exercise all powers assigned to nonprofit corporations by the laws of the State of Minnesota except as limited by the charter and the constitution and these bylaws of this organization.

### **SECTION 3. Management of Funds**

In conformity with the laws of the State of Minnesota, Women of the ELCA shall manage its own funds under the financial policies of the ELCA.

## **ARTICLE VII—RELATIONSHIPS**

### **SECTION 1. Relationships within Women of the ELCA**

- Item 1.** Women of the ELCA shall seek to function interdependently through units, the synodical women's organizations, and the churchwide women's organization. Each part shall

**recognize that it is in a partnership with the others to share in God's mission.**

- Item 2.** Women of the ELCA shall be divided into synodical women’s organizations whose number and boundaries shall normally coincide with those established by the ELCA for its synods.
- Item 3.** Each synodical women’s organization shall strive to provide for groupings of units into clusters or conferences whose boundaries shall normally coincide with the boundaries of clusters or conferences established by the synods of the ELCA.

**SECTION 2. Relationships with Other Organizational Units**

The churchwide women’s organization, together with the synodical women’s organizations, may decide to carry out programmatic functions and responsibilities through the nine ELCA regions.

**SECTION 3. Relationships with Interchurch Agencies and Councils**

The churchwide women’s organization shall report to the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA and in the interim to the Church Council.

- Item 1.** The churchwide women’s organization shall work interdependently with all churchwide units of the ELCA.
- Item 2.** The churchwide women’s organization shall develop working arrangements in areas of mutual responsibility with the ELCA publishing house.

**SECTION 4. Relationships with Other Women’s Organizations**

The churchwide women’s organization shall relate to other women’s organizations ecumenically and globally.

**ARTICLE VIII—UNITS**

**SECTION 1. Definition**

A unit shall be a community of women coming together for study, support, and action in local and other settings of Women of the ELCA.

- Item 1.** There shall be only one unit in each congregation. This unit may consist of one or more groups of women within the congregation.
- Item 2.** There may be an inter-congregational unit for women from two or more congregations that have no congregational units.
- Item 3.** There may be special units composed of women who want to come together in special settings as authorized by the Executive Board.

**SECTION 2. Criteria for Recognition**

A unit shall be recognized if it

- Item 1.** Agrees to the statement of purpose of Women of the ELCA (see Article II, Section 1);
- Item 2.** Agrees to come together to demonstrate commitment to the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA;
- Item 3.** Agrees to participate in the program activities of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation;
- Item 4.** Agrees to support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA; and
- Item 5.** Agrees to designate leadership that shall be in communication with the synodical women’s organization and the churchwide women’s organization.

**SECTION 3. Structure**

The purpose of Women of the ELCA may be carried out through differing structural models.

**SECTION 4. Reporting of Units**

- Item 1.** The unit shall report to the annual meeting of its congregation(s), unless it is a special unit as authorized by the Executive Board.

**Item 2. Special units shall report annually to the synodical women's organization board in the territory in which they are located.**



## **SECTION 5. Termination of Relationship**

The relationship of any unit with Women of the ELCA shall be terminated

- Item 1.** By notification to the churchwide women's organization that the unit plans to dissolve.
- Item 2.** If the congregation ceases to exist as a congregation of the ELCA.

## **ARTICLE IX—SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION**

### **SECTION 1. Definition**

Each synodical women's organization shall consist of the units located within its territory, which normally coincide with the boundaries established by the ELCA for each synod.

### **SECTION 2. Relationships**

- Item 1.** Each synodical women's organization shall establish a partnership with units in its territory and with the churchwide women's organization.
- Item 2.** Each synodical women's organization shall strive to establish clusters or conferences of units within its territory.
- Item 3.** The synodical women's organizations, together with the churchwide women's organization, may carry out programmatic functions and responsibilities through the nine ELCA regions.

### **SECTION 3. Purpose**

Each synodical women's organization, in partnership with the churchwide women's organization, shall assist units in its territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA.

### **SECTION 4. Officers**

- Item 1.** The officers or leaders of each synodical women's organization may be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer (or convener(s), coordinator(s), or co-chair(s), a treasurer, and a secretary/communicator), henceforth referred to as SWO leaders.
- Item 2.** These SWO leaders shall be elected by the convention of the synodical women's organization. Each SWO leader shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit.

### **SECTION 5. Synodical Women's Organization Convention**

Each synodical women's organization shall have a regular convention, which shall be its highest legislative authority. The convention of the synodical women's organization shall meet at least biennially.

- Item 1.** Voting membership of the convention shall be the SWO leaders, the board members of the synodical women's organization, and one voting member from each unit.

### **SECTION 6. The Board of the Synodical Women's Organization**

- Item 1.** Each synodical women's organization shall have a board that shall serve as the interim legislative authority between conventions of the synodical women's organization, except that it may not take any action that is reserved exclusively for the convention of the synodical women's organization or that is in conflict with action taken by the convention.
- Item 2.** The board of the synodical women's organization shall consist of the SWO leaders and three or more board members.

### **SECTION 7. Clusters, Conferences, and Committees**

- Item 1.** Each synodical women's organization shall strive to provide for groupings of units into clusters or conferences. Within each cluster or conference the synodical women's organization shall work cooperatively with the units to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA through activities that

- a. provide experiences for learning and leadership development;**
- b. build community;**

- c. provide opportunities for joint ministry and action;
- d. provide opportunities for monetary offerings, stewardship education and financial support of the total program of Women of the ELCA; and
- e. establish networks for communication.

**Item 2.** Each synodical women’s organization board may establish such committees and task forces as it deems necessary to carry out effectively the functions assigned to the synodical women’s organization.

**ARTICLE X—CHURCHWIDE WOMEN’S ORGANIZATION**

**SECTION 1. Functions and Responsibilities**

The churchwide women’s organization shall

- Item 1.** Plan a comprehensive program that enables women to
  - a. articulate and act upon their faith as disciples of Jesus Christ in all arenas of life;
  - b. grow as whole persons, develop their potential, and be equipped for ministry; and
  - c. value themselves and others and build up and celebrate relationships that are global, diverse, and interdependent;
- Item 2.** Witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ as it proclaims reconciliation, dignity, and hope for all persons;
- Item 3.** Advocate for the oppressed and voiceless, urge change in systems and structures that exclude and alienate, and work for peace and justice as messengers of hope;
- Item 4.** Establish an organization-wide program and network for recruiting, preparing, and supporting leaders;
- Item 5.** Facilitate local initiative in creating programs and in identifying alternative structural models that encourage and support flexibility;
- Item 6.** Develop networks for communication within the organization and among women locally, ecumenically, and globally;
- Item 7.** Foster cooperative and interdependent relationships among units, the synodical women’s organizations, and the churchwide women’s organization to implement the purpose of Women of the ELCA;
- Item 8.** Develop policies that enable it to fulfill its purpose;
- Item 9.** Relate to other women’s organizations ecumenically and globally;
- Item 10.** Engage in research in cooperation with the ELCA;
- Item 11.** Provide materials and historical information for the archives of the ELCA;
- Item 12.** Provide opportunities for the financial support of the total program of this organization and manage the assets of the churchwide women’s organization; and
- Item 13.** Work independently with all units of the ELCA in designing and implementing programs of mutual concern that enhance the ministries and participation of women in the church and in the world.

**SECTION 2. Description**

- Item 1.** The legislative function of this churchwide women’s organization shall be fulfilled by the Triennial Convention.
- Item 2.** The Executive Board shall exercise interim legislative authority and shall serve as the board of directors of the corporation.
- Item 3.** The leadership of Women of the ELCA shall be vested in the officers, members of the Triennial Convention, and members of the Executive Board. The officers shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

### **SECTION 3. General Fiscal Policies**

- Item 1. Within the financial policies of the ELCA, and within the limits established by the Triennial Convention in the constitution and bylaws, the Executive Board, as the board of directors of the churchwide women's organization, shall establish the fiscal policies of Women of the ELCA.
- Item 2. On the basis of estimated income, and in consultation with those receiving support from Women of the ELCA, the Executive Board shall authorize expenditures within the budget for the fiscal year, and those receiving support from the single treasury may incur financial obligations up to the specified amounts. Expenditure authorizations shall be subject to revision, in light of changing conditions, by the executive board in consultation with those receiving support from the single treasury of Women of the ELCA.
- Item 3. The monitoring of investment of funds of the churchwide women's organization shall be the responsibility of the executive board.
- Item 4. The fiscal year of the churchwide women's organization shall coincide with the fiscal year of the ELCA.
- Item 5. An audit of the financial records of this organization shall be made annually by a certified public accounting firm.

### **SECTION 4. Financial Policy Statement**

- Item 1. All income, whether received by the unit, cluster or conference, synodical, or churchwide organizations, shall be viewed as being given to the total program of Women of the ELCA. Four ways for giving are established.
  - a. Regular Offerings shall be given in support of the ministries of Women of the ELCA and the ELCA. These offerings may also be given by individuals who choose to give periodically or who pledge to give a stated amount although they may be unable to participate in the scheduled events of this organization. Offerings received shall support unit, cluster or conference, synodical, and churchwide programming.
  - b. Thankofferings shall be gifts from individuals in gratitude for blessings. These offerings shall be received by the unit and transmitted in full to the churchwide organization for the support of the ministries of this organization and the church.
  - c. Designated Gifts shall be given by one or more individuals for specifically designated ministries of the churchwide women's organization or the church. These gifts may be received by all entities and shall be transmitted in full to the churchwide women's organization for disbursement. Gifts may be given for special occasions or in memory or in honor of an individual.
  - d. Occasionally, Special Offerings and Gifts may be received for specific programs that are not identified in the churchwide women's organization budget but that are consistent with the policies of Women of the ELCA.
- Item 2. Women of the ELCA shall work cooperatively with the ELCA Foundation in assisting women as they prepare their personal wills, bequests, and other planned giving instruments.
- Item 3. Each entity of Women of the ELCA shall be responsible for the development of a financial plan or budget that reflects interdependence in meeting the financial needs of this organization.
  - a. Each unit shall develop and administer its own financial plan or budget. Each unit shall regularly transmit funds to the synodical women's organization and churchwide women's organization in accordance with established procedures.
  - b. Each cluster or conference shall work cooperatively with the synodical women's organization in funding the cluster or conference and synodical women's organization program and projects.
  - c. Each synodical women's organization shall develop and administer its own budget.

The budget shall include the synodical women's organization program and operating cost and reflect the interdependent relationship between the synodical women's organization

and the churchwide women's organization. The proposed budget shall be presented as information to the churchwide women's organization executive board within 30 days of its adoption by the synodical women's organization. There shall be an elected treasurer in each synodical women's organization with specific responsibilities for assisting in building the budget and disbursing funds. There shall be an elected or appointed person responsible for leadership in the areas of promotion, interpretation, and financial stewardship education.

- d. The executive board shall approve the churchwide organization's budget, prepared by the executive director and staff, which includes support for the churchwide women's organization, and recommend it to the Triennial Convention for adoption. The executive board shall approve and adopt the budget in the years in which a convention is not scheduled.

Item 4. The executive board shall provide financial reports periodically through the official publications of this organization.

## **ARTICLE XI—CONVENTIONS**

### **SECTION 1. Convention Authority**

**The Triennial Convention shall be the highest legislative authority of Women of the ELCA and shall deal with all matters that are necessary in the pursuit of the purpose and functions of this organization. The powers of the Triennial Convention are limited only by the provisions of the articles of incorporation, this constitution and these bylaws, the policies of the ELCA, and the convention's own resolutions.**

### **SECTION 2. Triennial Convention Program**

**The Triennial Convention shall provide opportunities for witness, growth, and community.**

### **SECTION 3. Triennial and Special Conventions**

**Women of the ELCA shall meet in convention triennially. Special Conventions may be called by a two-thirds vote of the executive board, and Special Conventions shall be called by the president of Women of the ELCA at the request in writing of at least two-thirds of the boards of the synodical women's organizations.**

- Item 1. The time and place of the Triennial Convention shall be determined by the executive board. The Triennial Convention may be held solely by one or more means of remote or virtual communications, provided that the number of participants is sufficient to constitute a quorum.
- Item 2. The secretary shall give notice of the time and place of each Triennial Convention by publication thereof at least 90 days in advance in the periodical of Women of the ELCA.
- Item 3. At least 20 days prior to the Triennial Convention, the secretary shall distribute preconvention reports to each voting member-elect.
- Item 4. The arrangements for agenda, program, and worship shall be under the supervision of the executive board.
- Item 5. The churchwide women's organization shall be responsible for the costs of the Triennial and Special Conventions, including the reasonable costs for travel, housing, and board for the voting members and members of the executive board.
- Item 6. A majority of voting members registered at the Triennial or Special Convention shall constitute a quorum.
- Item 7. Immediately upon the issuance of the call for a Special Convention, the secretary shall give written notice to voting members seated in the preceding Triennial Convention, provided they have not ceased to participate in a unit within the synodical women's organization from which

they were elected or are not superseded by election of new voting members.

- Item 8. *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall be the governing parliamentary procedures of the Triennial or Special Conventions, except as otherwise provided in this constitution and these bylaws.

#### **SECTION 4. Members of the Triennial Convention**

**The voting members of the Triennial Convention shall be the voting members of Women of the ELCA. The requirements for voting members of the convention and other members shall be specified in the bylaws.**

#### **SECTION 5. Voting Members of the Triennial Convention**

- Item 1. The voting members of the Triennial Convention shall be the officers of the churchwide women's organization; the members of the churchwide executive board; the president, one convener, coordinator, or co-chair of each synodical women's organization; those women elected as voting members by the conventions of the synodical women's organizations; and those appointed as "at large" voting members by the churchwide organization.
- Item 2. Each synodical women's organization shall elect one voting member for every 25 congregational, inter-congregational, or special units (or a fraction thereof) within the synodical women's organization, and each synodical women's organization shall have at least two elected voting members in addition to the president of the synodical women's organization. At least 10 percent of the voting member body shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English. As defined in ELCA continuing resolution 5.01.C00, "persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English" shall be understood to mean African American, Black, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, American Indian, and Alaska Native people. This definition, however, shall not be understood as limiting Women of the ELCA's commitment to inclusive participation in its life and work.
- Item 3. The president or SWO leader of the synodical women's organization shall submit to the churchwide women's organization at least six months before the Triennial Convention a certified list of the regular and alternate voting members elected by the convention of the synodical women's organization.
- Item 4. The roster of voting members shall be final 30 days prior to the opening of convention.
- Item 5. Each voting member of the Triennial Convention shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit.
- Item 6. Voting members elected to serve at the Triennial Convention shall continue serving until voting members are elected for the next regular Triennial Convention.

#### **SECTION 6. Nonvoting Members of the Triennial Convention**

- Item 1. The Bishop of the ELCA, or the bishop's representative, shall have seat and voice in the Triennial Convention.
- Item 2. Other categories of nonvoting members may be established by the Triennial Convention.

#### **SECTION 7. Committees of the Triennial Convention**

**The Triennial Convention shall have a Reference and Counsel Committee, a Memorials Committee, and a Nominating Committee selected from among the voting members of the Triennial Convention. The description of these committees shall be in the bylaws. Other committees may be authorized as the Triennial Convention shall deem necessary.**

- Item 1. A Reference and Counsel Committee, appointed by the president of the churchwide women's organization with the approval of the executive board, shall review all items submitted at the



convention that are not germane to items contained in the stated agenda of the Triennial

Convention. The Reference and Counsel Committee shall make appropriate recommendations for convention action.

- Item 2. A Memorials Committee, appointed by the president of the churchwide women's organization with the approval of the executive board, shall review memorials from the conventions of the synodical women's organizations and make appropriate recommendations for action by the Triennial Convention.
- Item 3. A Nominating Committee shall be elected by the executive board. The Nominating Committee shall nominate two persons for each position for which an election will be held at the Triennial Convention with the exception of the offices of president and vice president.

## **ARTICLE XII—OFFICERS**

### **SECTION 1. President**

**This organization shall have a president elected by the Triennial Convention for one term, with the office held until the next convention. The president shall be ineligible for election as an officer or executive board member in the succeeding triennium. The president shall a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit. The president shall**

- Item 1. Preside at the Triennial Convention and Special Conventions of the churchwidewomen's organization;**
- Item 2. Preside at all meetings of the executive board, Executive Committee, and Conference of Synodical Presidents;**
- Item 3. Appoint members of all committees for which election procedures are not provided and make other appointments as necessary;**
- Item 4. Represent the churchwide women's organization at, or appoint representatives to, the convention of each synodical women's organization;**
- Item 5. Present a report to the Triennial Convention;**
- Item 6. Be ex-officio member of all committees of the executive board except the Nominating Committee; and**
- Item 7. Represent the churchwide women's organization at, or appoint representatives to, inter-Lutheran and ecumenical associations and councils in which this organization participates.**

### **SECTION 2. Vice President**

**This organization shall have a vice president elected by the Triennial Convention for one term, with the office held until the next convention, and with no reelection to this office. The vice president shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit. The vice president shall**

- Item 1. Act in the absence, disability, or resignation of the president; and**
- Item 2. Perform other duties as requested by the president or the executive board.**

### **SECTION 3. Secretary**

**This organization shall have a secretary elected by the Triennial Convention for one term, with the office held until the next convention, and with no reelection to this office. The secretary shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit. The secretary shall**

- Item 1. Be the secretary of the Triennial Convention, the executive board, and the Executive Committee;**
- Item 2. Be responsible for recording and distributing minutes of the Triennial Convention, the executive board, the Executive Committee, and the Conference of Synodical Presidents;**
- Item 3. Give notification of the Triennial Convention at least 90 days in advance in the official periodical of this organization;**

- Item 4. Keep a correct register of the roll of units, presidents of the units, and officers and board members of the synodical women's organization;

- Item 5. Be the secretary of the corporation;
- Item 6. Provide for the gathering and the preserving of historical records and documents; and
- Item 7. Perform other duties as requested by the president or the executive board.

**SECTION 4. Treasurer**

**This organization shall have a treasurer elected by the Triennial Convention for one term, with the office held until the next convention, and with no reelection to this office. The treasurer shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit. The treasurer shall**

- Item 1. Provide for financial record keeping and, on behalf of the executive board, be accountable for all funds of the churchwide women’s organization in accordance with the financial policies of Women of the ELCA and the ELCA;
- Item 2. Interpret the financial condition of the churchwide organization to the executive board;
- Item 3. Present a complete report, including an audit, to the Triennial Convention and an interim report to each executive board and Executive Committee meeting; and
- Item 4. Perform other duties as requested by the president or the executive board.

**SECTION 5. Eligibility and Terms**

- Item 1. Except for the president, an officer may be eligible for election to another office or to a term as an executive board member, serving a total of two consecutive terms but no more than seven consecutive years.
- Item 2. Terms of the officers shall begin at the close of the Triennial Convention.

**ARTICLE XIII—EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**SECTION 1. Composition**

**The executive board shall be composed of the four officers and one representative from the territory of each of the nine ELCA regions, plus two at-large members, to make a total of 15. Of the 15, at least 20 percent shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English, and at least 20 percent shall be under the age of 45 and/or persons of the LGBTQIA+ community.**

**SECTION 2. Members and Terms**

- Item 1. **The 15 board members shall be elected by the Triennial Convention for one term, with the position held until the next convention. Each elected member shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit.**
- Item 2. **Board members may be reelected to the board or to an office, serving a total of two consecutive terms but no more than seven years consecutively.**
- Item 3. **Terms of the board members shall begin at the close of the Triennial Convention.**

**SECTION 3. Purpose and Meetings**

- Item 1. **This organization shall have an executive board that shall be the board of directors of this corporation and shall serve as the interim legislative authority between the Triennial Conventions.**
- Item 2. **The executive board shall meet at least two times each year, in person or electronically. Additional meetings may be called by the president or by a two-thirds vote of the executive board. Meetings may be held solely by one or more means of remote or virtual communications, provided that the number of participants is sufficient to constitute a quorum.**
- Item 3. **The actions of the executive board shall be in accord with the actions of and policies established by the Triennial Convention and the constitution and bylaws of this organization and of the ELCA.**

**Item 4.**        ***Robert's Rules of Order*, the latest edition, shall be the governing parliamentary procedure of the churchwide executive board.**

#### **SECTION 4. Mail, Digital Technology, Conference Call, and Electronic Meeting Vote**

- Item 1. In an emergency, as determined by the president and the executive director, a vote by mail, by digital technology, conference call, or e-mail may be taken.**
- Item 2. In a mail vote, responses must be postmarked on or before the date established in the letter, and an 80 percent vote in the affirmative of the total board shall be necessary to adopt the vote taken by mail.**
- Item 3. In a digital technology or conference call vote, if all board members participate, the vote necessary for adoption shall be a majority vote; if fewer than 100 percent of the board members participate, the vote necessary for adoption shall be a two-thirds vote in the affirmative of the total board.**
- Item 4. In an email vote, responses must be sent on or before the date established in the letter and an 80 percent vote in the affirmative of the total board shall be necessary to adopt the vote taken by email.**
- Item 5. The results of the action taken by mail, digital technology, conference call or e-mail shall be emailed immediately to all board members and shall be reviewed and adopted at the next meeting of the board.**

#### **SECTION 5. Responsibilities**

##### **The executive board shall**

- Item 1. Provide for long-range planning for the churchwide women's organization and coordinate its work with other churchwide units;
- Item 2. Ensure that programs are implemented that meet the priorities of the churchwide women's organization;
- Item 3. Set policies required for effective and efficient functioning;
- Item 4. Transact necessary business and make decisions between conventions;
- Item 5. Promote and encourage participation in the organization and in fulfilling the priorities for the churchwide women's organization;
- Item 6. Promote and interpret the life and work of the organization to members, the church, and the public;
- Item 7. Set financial policies, recommend budgets, manage assets, be accountable for all funds of the churchwide organization, and interpret the financial commitments of the organization;
- Item 8. Develop working arrangements in areas of mutual responsibility with the ELCA publishing house;
- Item 9. Fill vacancies on the board until the next regular Triennial Convention;
- Item 10. Determine the fact of the incapacity of an officer or board member to perform their duties and determine whether they shall be removed from their office in accordance with the policies and procedures of the executive board (for removal of an officer or board member, a two-thirds vote of the total board shall be required; a mail vote shall not be used to affect the removal of an officer or board member);
- Item 11. Under the personnel and financial policies of the ELCA, elect its executive director, authorize other staff positions, establish the salary structure for staff, and arrange for an annual review of the executive director;
- Item 12. Set time and place for the Conference of Synodical Presidents;
- Item 13. Determine the number of voting members from each synodical women's organization to serve as voting members of the Triennial Convention;
- Item 14. Prepare proposed agenda, rules of procedure, and program for each Triennial Convention;
- Item 15. Report its actions and work to the Triennial Convention;
- Item 16. Act as the Constitution and Bylaws Committee;

- Item 17. Report to the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA; and
- Item 18. Establish ecumenical and global relationships with other women's organizations.

## **SECTION 6. Committees**

The executive board shall establish committees and nominate or elect such persons as necessary to carry out the functions assigned to it. The descriptions of the committees shall be:

- Item 1.** There shall be an Executive Committee.
  - a.** The Executive Committee shall be composed of the four churchwide organization officers and three board members elected by the executive board. At least one executive committee member shall be a person of color or whose primary language is other than English.
  - b.** The Executive Committee may act between board meetings within the policies of this organization.
- Item 2.** There shall be a budget and finance committee composed of the treasurer and members of the executive board appointed by the president.
- Item 3.** There shall be a constitution review committee composed of members of the executive board appointed by the president.

## **SECTION 7. Non-voting Members of the Executive Board**

- Item 1.** The Bishop of the ELCA or the Bishop's representative and a Conference of Bishops representative shall have seat and voice but not vote at all executive board meetings.
- Item 2.** Terms of advisors shall coincide with the term of office in the respective unit and/or organization they represent.
- Item 3.** Other categories of non-voting members may be established by the executive board.

## **ARTICLE XIV—NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION PROCESS**

### **SECTION 1. Procedures**

The churchwide women's organization shall elect such officers and such other persons as the constitution and bylaws may require and according to procedures set forth in the bylaws.

### **SECTION 2. Guidelines for Nominations**

- Item 1.** At least 20 percent of the nominees shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English, and at least 20 percent shall be persons under the age of 45 and/or persons of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Item 2.** Consideration shall be given to geographical location, variety of ages, and diversity of experience.

### **SECTION 3. Provisions**

The following provisions shall govern the nomination and election process:

- Item 1.** It shall be the responsibility of the executive board to assure that this organization maintains its commitment to inclusive representation. At least 20 percent of the members of the executive board shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English, and at least 20 percent shall be persons under the age of 45 and/or persons of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Item 2.** Each nominee for an elected or appointed position in this organization shall be a voting member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit.
- Item 3.** In all Triennial Convention elections, except that of the president and vice president, a majority of the votes cast shall elect.
- Item 4.** When there are floor nominations, the first ballot shall include the names of the nominees presented by the Nominating Committee and the names of the persons nominated from the floor.
- Item 5.** All elections shall be by ballot.



- Item 6. Board members shall be elected in such a manner that at least one person and no more than two persons are elected from the territory of each of the nine ELCA regions. Further, no more than one shall be elected from any one synodical women's organization.
- Item 7. No board member shall hold two positions of leadership simultaneously in a synodical women's organization and/or the churchwide women's organization.

**SECTION 4. The Nominating Committee**

- Item 1. This committee shall consist of nine persons nominated from the roll of the Triennial Convention voting members-elect and elected by the executive board.
- Item 2. This committee shall be selected on the basis of the inclusiveness guidelines and shall include one member from the territory of each of the nine ELCA regions.
- Item 3. This committee shall meet no earlier than 170 days and no later than 140 days prior to the Triennial Convention.
- Item 4. This committee shall prepare the slate of nominees for the offices of secretary and treasurer and for members of the board from names submitted by the Triennial Convention voting members-elect and units. If the names submitted to the Triennial Convention Nominating Committee do not fulfill the nominations criteria, the committee may recruit other names from congregational units, voting members, and churchwide officers to fulfill its goals.
- Item 5. This committee shall nominate no more than one person from a synodical women's organization.
- Item 6. Members of the committee shall be ineligible for nomination by the committee to any position to be filled. Committee members may, however, be nominated from the floor.
- Item 7. This committee shall present two names for each position to be filled. Nominations may be made from the floor for those elections for which nominations have been made by the committee.

**SECTION 5. Election of the Churchwide Women's Organization Officers**

- Item 1. The president shall be elected by the Triennial Convention by a nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Two-thirds of the votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the five persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of votes on the second ballot. An information sheet shall show for each of the five nominees their address, synodical organization, and qualifications for office. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the highest number of votes on the third ballot.
- Item 2. The vice president shall be elected by the Triennial Convention by nominating ballot. Two-thirds of the votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. On subsequent ballots a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for election. On the third ballot, the voting shall be limited to the five persons (plus ties) receiving the highest number of votes on the second ballot. An information sheet shall show for each of the nominees their address, synodical organization, and qualifications for office. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) receiving the highest number of votes on the third ballot.
- Item 3. The secretary and treasurer shall be elected by the Triennial Convention. The Nominating Committee shall present two names for each position to be filled. Additional nominations may be made from the floor.

**SECTION 6. Election of Board Members**

The election of the board members of the churchwide women's organization shall be by the Triennial

Convention according to procedures set forth in this constitution and these bylaws.

## **ARTICLE XV—CONFERENCE OF SYNODICAL PRESIDENTS**

### **SECTION 1. Composition**

**The Conference of Synodical Presidents shall consist of one president or SWO leader of each synodical women’s organization and shall meet at least annually. The conference may be held solely by one or more means of remote or virtual communications, provided that the number of participants is sufficient to constitute a quorum.**

### **SECTION 2. Functions and Responsibilities**

The Conference of Synodical Presidents shall

- Item 1. Provide and receive information related to emphases, priorities, and projected programs of Women of the ELCA;
- Item 2. Make recommendations to the executive board;
- Item 3. Develop leadership skills; and
- Item 4. Foster community and renewal.

### **SECTION 3. Other Conference Participants**

The president and secretary of the churchwide women’s organization and the executive director of Women of the ELCA shall attend the conference. Other members of the executive board and staff may attend as deemed necessary.

## **ARTICLE XVI—STAFF**

### **SECTION 1. Employment of Staff**

**This organization shall have the authority to employ staff and engage in other contractual arrangements in accordance with the constitution, bylaws, and personnel practices of the ELCA.**

- Item 1. The staff of Women of the ELCA shall consist of an executive director and such staff positions as the executive board may determine.
- Item 2. The executive director shall be the chief executive officer of the organization. they shall carry out the policies of the organization and work collegially with the staff. they shall work interdependently with other churchwide units. they shall prepare the reports of the executive board to the Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA and the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA.

## **ARTICLE XVII—CHURCHWIDE OFFICES OF WOMEN OF THE ELCA**

### **SECTION 1. Location**

The principal office of Women of the ELCA shall be in the same location as that of the ELCA.

## **ARTICLE XVIII—AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS**

### **SECTION 1. Amendments to the Constitution**

**The constitution of this organization may be amended through either of the following procedures:**

- Item 1. **The executive board may propose an amendment and send an official notice to the voting members-elect at least six months prior to the next regular Triennial Convention. The adoption of such an amendment shall require a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at the Triennial Convention.**

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**Item 2. An amendment may be proposed by 25 or more voting members of the Triennial Convention. The proposed amendment shall be referred to the executive board for its recommendation to the next Triennial Convention. Adoption of such an amendment shall require passage at two successive regular Triennial Conventions by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting.**

**SECTION 2. Amendments to the Bylaws**

**Bylaws not in conflict with this constitution may be adopted or amended at any regular meeting of the Triennial Convention when presented in writing by the executive board or by at least 15 voting members of the convention. An amendment proposed by members of the convention shall immediately be submitted to the executive board for its recommendation. No amendment shall be placed before the convention for action sooner than the day following its presentation to the convention. A two-thirds vote of the members present and voting shall be necessary for adoption.**

**SECTION 3. Continuing Resolutions**

**Provisions relating to the administrative functions of this organization shall be set forth in the continuing resolutions. Continuing resolutions may be adopted or amended by a majority vote of the Triennial Convention or by a two-thirds vote of the executive board.**

# **Synodical Leaders Guide**

**January 2025**

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## Preface

Each year women throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are called to ministry on the boards of synodical women's organizations of Women of the ELCA. This guide is meant to enable, equip, and empower those volunteers in carrying out their call. They, together with all women participating in Women of the ELCA, accomplish the organization's mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. This guide relies on the constitutions of our organization as they set out the vision that the founders of our organization had in 1987. The constitutions establish the ways in which we agree to live together.

Women of the ELCA today is supported by countless years of ministry in predecessor bodies, reaching back into the 19th century. The current community of women owes much to these ancestors who brought their God-given gifts to ministry when women's roles within the institutional church were limited or non-existent.

This guide draws on similar guides prepared in the past, the first having been written for Women of the ELCA in 1992. Revisions were published in 1997, 2001, 2007, 2016, 2019, and 2025. We are thankful for the opportunity to build upon previous guides in drafting this one.

Finally, this guide reflects the needs and desires of the synodical women's organizations as they are expressed in the many conversations and questions that staff members of Women of the ELCA regularly encounter through social media, e-mail, phone calls, mail, and personal conversations.

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## How to use this guide

Those who drafted and adopted the constitutions of Women of the ELCA offered the organization a huge gift. Because of constitutions and structures, women have great freedom to follow our Purpose Statement and accomplish our mission in ways that support their local context and the needs of those gathered under the umbrella of Women of the ELCA. What the ministry looks like can change as circumstances change and as different women gather under the umbrella. Perhaps more simply said, one size does not fit all! This is true for units, and it is also true for synodical organizations.

We do have order in our organization, thanks to our constitutions. We have commitments and expectations too. We also have great flexibility in how we follow our Purpose Statement and accomplish our mission. So, this Synodical Leaders Guide follows those same principles. There are a few things that every synodical organization should be about, and then there is great flexibility in how the synodical organizations follow our Purpose Statement and accomplish our mission.

This guide is written to assist synodical board members as they carry out their ministries in the 64 synodical organizations in Women of the ELCA. Although our synodical women's organizations share the same mission and purpose, they vary greatly in size, population, geography and even Lutheran history and identity. For these reasons, this guide is a basic one and is not meant to be exhaustive. The guide may be placed into a ring-bound notebook so that individual boards can supplement the guide with material particular to their own ministry setting. Because the constitutions of this organization govern our lives together, every board member would benefit from having the latest version of the constitutions placed into this same notebook.

The latest version of this guide can be found at [welca.org](http://welca.org) by following the "Tools for Leaders" link in the footer of any page. It is available as a downloadable PDF.

As a woman is called into service and elected as a synodical officer or board member, they should prayerfully begin that ministry by reading our constitutions and this guide. If some of the terminology is confusing as they read this guide, they should refer to the glossary (see page 47). The newly formed synodical board should use this guide at its initial meeting (or orientation) and thereafter, as appropriate.



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When questions arise, there are multiple ways to seek the answer. First look to the constitutions. Then check [welca.org](http://welca.org) as the website contains the latest and most accurate information on most everything about our organization. If you don't immediately find what you're looking for, use the robust search engine found at the top of every page on our website and you'll get to where you want to be. Of course, the churchwide staff of Women of the ELCA is ready to assist. The primary contact for synodical presidents and their boards is the executive director. A staff member also has been assigned as a liaison to each region, and that person is available for assistance. For financial questions, one should contact the Director for Membership. Contact information for all staff members is found beginning on page 58.

It is helpful to remember the use of certain terms within this organization, based on how they are used in our governing documents. Participant refers to individual women who are committed to the purpose of Women of the ELCA and active within the organization in some way. Member refers to a congregational, intercongregational, or special unit. For ease of use, the term *unit* will be used in this guide to refer to congregational, intercongregational, and special units. Additional terms used by the organization are defined in the glossary (see page 47).

## Celebrating Women of the ELCA's history

Lutheran women in the United States have been gathering in mission since the 1800s. We owe much to our foremothers who responded to God's call, created a place, and lived out a purpose when women had few roles in the church.

Three groups came together in 1987 to form Women of the ELCA. These groups were the American Lutheran Church Women (of the American Lutheran Church), the Lutheran Church Women (of the Lutheran Church in America) and Women in Action for Mission (of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches). The constituting convention was held June 13-14, 1987, in Milwaukee, WI., with the theme "Embrace God's World."

Communication tools soon followed. The magazine *Lutheran Woman Today* began publishing in January 1988, and *Newsletter* (the predecessor to *Interchange*) followed in June of that year. The organization's first website was inaugurated in 1995. *Café*, an electronic magazine for young women, launched in 2006, and podcasts soon followed. The organization's first smart phone app was unveiled in 2011, the same year the magazine took on its new name, *Gather*. For several years now the organization has been publishing an electronic newsletter for participants called *Bold Connections*.

Various program initiatives were launched by the churchwide organization in 1988, some of which continue today—such as the scholarship program. Initiatives came and went, meeting the context for and the needs of women at the time. For example, a literacy program existed from 1988-1996, and "Money, Security, and Spirituality" events were held from 1991-1995. Rachel's Day was initiated in 1996 and continues today. Significant efforts were expended in:

- banning plastic-foam cups,
- celebrating anniversaries of women's ordination,
- exploring cross-cultural programming,
- developing an anti-racist identity,
- supporting women and children living in poverty,
- traveling globally,
- eliminating landmines,

- 
- supporting fair trade, and
  - understanding and working to end human trafficking.

Within units and synodical organizations, participants have made significant contributions to their communities by supporting domestic violence shelters, programs for the homeless and hungry, and women's empowerment initiatives, to name only a few. Traditional activities like Bible study and relief quilt making have been joined by service and advocacy projects, both at home and abroad.

Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls, the organization's health initiative, began in 2005. Bold Women's Day, an annual celebration of our mission and the women who accomplish it, launched in 2007.

The organization has prepared an assortment of resources through the years in addition to the Bible study published in the magazine. Resource books were popular in the first years of the organization. Themed series followed. Most recently, the organization has produced program resources designed to assist women in living out the mission and purpose of the organization. While resources were available for purchase early in the life of the organization, more recently most resources have been available as free downloadable PDFs and are also available in Spanish.

The staff grew to 30 by 2002; however, the size has slowly been reduced since then, primarily due to financial considerations. Today the executive director and the staff oversee the day-to-day operations of the churchwide organization.

The churchwide women's organization currently functions with an annual budget of approximately \$2 million. The primary source of revenue is giving from participants, either in the form of Regular Offerings or Thankofferings. When the organization had more disposable income, it would make an unrestricted annual gift to the ELCA, often about \$1 million. In 2007, however, due to declining revenue, the executive board determined that the organization could no longer make an unrestricted gift to the ELCA. The organization continues to transmit all designated gifts from women and units to the various ministries of the ELCA, promoting them as well.

The organization has assets held in endowments, some of which were created during the life of this organization and some of which were passed down from predecessor women's organizations (the oldest was created more than 100 years ago). The interest earned on these

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endowments is used consistent with the original donor's intent, and that ranges from scholarships to international mission.

A special endowment fund was created by the organization on its tenth anniversary and named the Katharina von Bora Luther Fund (Katie's Fund, for short). The interest earned on this fund is used by the churchwide organization for ministries that involve leadership development, global connections, and faith in daily life. In 2007, the executive board created a current fund as part of Katie's Fund. Since 2008, gifts can be designated for either current needs or the endowment. An annual appeal for Katie's Fund began in 2008, with an initiative in 2012 to grow the fund to \$1 million, and the recent appeal was initiated in 2022. The endowment fund is now over \$2 million.

Today the organization is active in over 4,000 ELCA congregations and in 63 of the 65 synods.

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## Why we exist: our mission and purpose

The mission of Women of the ELCA, in its three expressions, is to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ. All efforts of the women's organization should support this mission.

The statement of purpose of Women of the ELCA further expands on that mission, identifying ways in which we support that mission:

*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.*

All efforts of the women's organization, in all its expressions, should be done to accomplish this purpose. All who participate in the organization should subscribe to the purpose of the organization.

When women gather, many amazing things can be accomplished. When women gather in our organization, all their work should be measured against our mission and purpose.

## How we are organized: our structure

Women of the ELCA is the women's organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is separately incorporated, and it is not an auxiliary of the church. It is financially independent and responsible for its own financial affairs. Under the current structure of the church, it is identified as a "separately incorporated ministry," as are Lutheran Men in Mission; 1517 Media; the ELCA Foundation; and the Mission Investment Fund. By the terms of our constitution, the churchwide organization follows the personnel policies and financial policies of the ELCA.

The constitutions govern how this organization operates. We have four constitutions and accompanying bylaws and continuing resolutions:

- Approved Model Constitution and Bylaws, Congregational or Intercongregational Unit
- Approved Model Constitution and Bylaws, Special Unit
- Approved Constitution and Bylaws, Synodical Women's Organization
- Constitution and Bylaws, Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (churchwide)

The constitutions reflect the values and expectations of the women in this organization. In the constitutions we agree how we will live together and carry out our mission and purpose. Constitutions change from time to time, reflecting the changing needs of the organization and the world in which we live. Changes can originate organically within the participants of our organization or with the churchwide executive board. Proposed changes are considered and voted upon at the triennial conventions of our organization.

The triennial convention is the highest legislative authority; the voting members to the convention are elected by synodical organizations. Between conventions, the churchwide executive board (volunteers elected by the triennial convention) conducts the business of the organization. The churchwide executive board hires an executive director to oversee the operations of the organization. The executive director, in turn, hires staff to assist in managing the day-to-day work of the organization. The only paid staff is located within the churchwide organization. In all other expressions of the organization, volunteers carry

out the organization's mission.

As its constitutions provide, Women of the ELCA is comprised of three elements called "expressions" as follows:

- Congregational, intercongregational and special units
- Synodical women's organizations
- Churchwide women's organization

## Congregational, intercongregational and special units

Currently the organization has over 4,000 units. Women of all ages come together in these units for study, service, and fellowship. What does it take to be a unit? The Approved Model Constitution and Bylaws, Congregational, or Intercongregational Unit and the Approved Model Constitution and Bylaws, Special Unit provide the answers.

To accomplish the purpose of Women of the ELCA, women in this unit shall commit themselves to:

- a. come together for study, support and action;
- b. participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation;
- c. support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA; and
- d. designate leadership that shall be in communication with the synodical and churchwide women's organization. (Article II Section 2.)

The way that each unit lives out these commitments may vary, limited only by the imagination and resources of the women participating in the unit. As to commitment a., some units may meet monthly, others quarterly. Some units may consist of a handful of women; other units may have many women who meet in smaller groupings, organized around interests. Some units may sponsor a retreat while other units sponsor service projects.

Likewise, for commitment b., there are many ways to participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation. Some units will be active in cluster or conference events while others participate in synodical or regional events. Many units will attend events sponsored by the churchwide organization, including the triennial gathering. All are encouraged to subscribe to the organization's publications and use its resources. These are

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all ways of participating in the ministry of the organization beyond the congregation.

When it comes to “support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA,” commitment c., questions often arise. Ideally, units would do several things. They would collect regular offerings and submit a portion of them to their synodical organization (which, in turn, submits a portion of those regular offerings to the churchwide organization). Units would hold one or more Thankoffering services each year and transmit to the churchwide organization 100 percent of the Thankofferings collected. Units would also participate in special offerings and designated gifts, as appropriate.

The last commitment is an easy one. Units simply need to designate a participant who will be in communication with the synodical and churchwide organizations. Depending upon how the unit organizes its life together, it will usually be the president or chair of the unit who fills this role.

## Synodical women’s organization

The second expression is the synodical women’s organization. The constitution states: “The purpose of this synodical women’s organization shall be to assist units within its territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA.” (Constitution and Bylaws, Synodical Women’s Organization, Article II, Section 1). Women of the ELCA has 64 synodical women’s organizations.

Depending upon its geography, history and leadership, each synodical organization carries out the responsibility of assisting units in a different way, led by a changing group of elected volunteers. Some synodical organizations hold annual training events, others hold retreats. In some synodical organizations the board members visit every congregational unit every year. Some synodical organizations gather the participants and units together around a service project. Some facilitate connections between units and ministries in companion synods.

The legislative function of the synodical organization is fulfilled by the synodical convention, held either annually or biennially, with the synodical board (elected volunteers) exercising interim legislative authority. While planning and carrying out a convention can be a large task, it should not overshadow the work of the board in assisting units to fulfill the purpose



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of Women of the ELCA.

Synodical organizations also provide for groupings of units into clusters or conferences. Again, depending upon geography, history and leadership, these clusters or conferences assist and partner with the synodical organizations in fulfilling the purpose of Women of the ELCA in varying ways. Clusters and conferences can be helpful in a synod with a large geographical territory because they provide a way for women to gather more frequently and locally than at a synodical convention. Additional information about clusters and conferences can be found in the “how we work together” section, beginning on page 17.

It is the responsibility of the synodical organization to be in close contact with the units in its territory. Contact with established units should include but is not limited to:

- obtaining and maintaining a copy of each unit’s constitution;
- establishing and maintaining contact information for the unit’s leadership;
- informing units of actions taken by the executive board;
- interpreting and explaining those actions;
- introducing resources produced in the churchwide office;
- educating units as to the use of these resources;
- informing units of programs available through the synodical organization and presenting said programs at their meetings;
- assisting with the formation of new units; and
- communicating the emphasis selected by the synodical board for projects, programs, and events.

Congregations that do not currently have an established unit of Women of the ELCA should be contacted, and every effort should be made to establish a new unit in those congregations.

Every three years, the churchwide office requests each synodical president verify a list of ELCA congregations in her territory, producing the most current list of those congregations having units. (SWO presidents should request a current list of congregations from the office of their Synod Bishop.) The president is asked to use this list to establish which congregations continue to have active Women of the ELCA units. This is called the Active Unit Assessment. This listing is used by the churchwide organization to establish the

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number of voting members per synodical organization for the next triennial convention.

The listing, however, can be invaluable for the synodical organization as well. After the listing of active units has been established, the list should be maintained by the synodical organization on a regular basis. This list should be used to:

- contact active congregational units to send them
  - the synodical newsletter,
  - synodical board meeting minutes,
  - synodical convention minutes, and notice of planned events;
- contact those congregations that do not have an active unit;
- determine how many voting members should be attending synodical conventions (one voting member from each unit on the roll of the synodical women's organization).
- determine how many voting members the synodical organization is allowed to elect for the triennial convention.
- NOTE: all voting members must be a member of an ELCA congregation and shall strive to be a participant in a unit

Even though the Active Unit Assessment is verified by the synodical president, the entire synodical board should be involved in this process. Based on location of the unit, different board members could contact different units. Please remember that all board members should be presenting the same information to each unit.

## The churchwide women's organization

The third expression of the organization is the churchwide women's organization. Like the synodical organizations, the churchwide organization exists to support women in units as they carry out our shared mission and purpose. The churchwide organization also coordinates the ministry of women across the church, exercising many functions and responsibilities. The legislative function of the churchwide women's organization is fulfilled by the triennial convention, with the executive board members (elected volunteers) exercising interim legislative authority and serving as the board of directors. The executive board provides vision and enacts policies which are brought to life by staff. The executive director and staff plan a comprehensive program that supports women within the organization as they live out Women of the ELCA's

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mission and purpose. This plan involves leadership development, communication resources and networks, racial justice resources and network, global education, a health initiative, financial support, program resources, and more.

### Three expressions: one mission and purpose

All participants in the organization share one mission and one purpose. The congregational units are the heart of the organization. There we invite women to experience the reconciling and transforming love of God through Jesus Christ, encouraging them to act on their baptismal covenant and live out our mission and purpose. There we live in community. All other expressions of the organization exist to support these units as women in their daily lives live out our mission and purpose.

Our expressions work interdependently with one another, remaining in regular contact and sharing support, programs, information, and finances. A couple of examples help illustrate this.

Example one. The churchwide organization, with its staff, produces program resources addressing issues through the lens of our mission and purpose. Staff members create, edit, design, publish, and promote these resources. The resources are designed for use in units, whether in a monthly meeting, while on retreat, or in some other setting. The synodical organization promotes the use of these resources, perhaps presenting one or more in workshop settings during a convention or profiling them in a synodical newsletter or website. Units use the resources, helping the women in their community further explore and act on their faith. The units respond, in part, with offerings, a portion of which is sent to the churchwide organization to be used ultimately in some way to produce new resources in the future.

Example two. The churchwide organization has invited our participants into a health initiative, launched in 2005. As part of that initiative, a seed grant program was established that is funded with dollars raised by women in a run, walk and roll held at each triennial gathering since 2005. Seed grants are awarded annually to units that engage in activities in support of the emotional, spiritual, and physical health of their participants and those in their community. The grants allow the women to take their commitments to better health to a new level, whether it's in a single event, an on-going series, or some form of study.

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Whatever the format, the women are asked to give back to the seed grant fund so that other women in our organization can address the health initiative in a new way too.

## The triennium

Since its inception, Women of the ELCA has operated on a three-year programming cycle called a “triennium.” The three-year cycle has been helpful in organizing programming and priorities. It provides a natural beginning and ending date for many activities in a manageable period of time.

In the early days of our organization, a triennial theme was launched at a triennial convention. Women were invited to explore that theme in the next three years, both in their units and in their synodical organizations. Special program resources and worship materials were produced by the churchwide staff to support the theme. That practice was abandoned in 2005 after considerable evaluation. The focus should be and always has been on our mission and purpose. It was felt that adding additional themes on top of the mission and purpose diluted our resolve to accomplish the mission and purpose. Layering themes upon themes was confusing as well. Beginning in 2005, we got back to basics.

The convention simply meets every three years to carry out the business of the organization. It meets without any theme. A triennial gathering follows the convention and bears a theme for the event only. Some synodical organizations and congregational units choose to use some variation of that gathering theme in the following triennium, adapting it to make sense in their context.

## Relationships beyond the three expressions

One of the “principles of organization” for Women of the ELCA states: “All entities of the ELCA, the unit, the synodical women’s organization, and the churchwide women’s organization shall function interdependently and share responsibility for fulfilling the common purpose.” (*Churchwide Women’s Organization Constitution*, Article III, Section 6.) That “common purpose,” of course, is what forms our Purpose Statement. We live out that interdependence in many ways, working with congregations, church colleges, social ministry organizations, camps and retreat centers, and other parts of the church.

Under its constitution, the unit is called to work interdependently with the congregation in which it exists. The unit should regularly report to the congregation; that often happens as part of the congregation's annual meeting process. Some units report monthly to the congregational council. All women in a congregation are invited to join the unit, however, they are not automatically become a participant. To be a participant, a woman should subscribe to the purpose statement of the organization.

A unit can also work interdependently with the conference or cluster to which it is assigned and with the synodical organization. As always, together we accomplish more than we ever could accomplish alone.

## Conference/cluster structure

In those synodical women’s organizations where conferences and clusters have been developed, these structures 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 and clusters are simply practical groupings of units. Where the geography of a synodical organization is great, a conference or cluster offers a more workable size for the gathering of women and delivery of services. For instance, where a synodical organization covers an entire state, such as in North Carolina or South Dakota, it is impractical to gather regularly in ministry with women from across the entire state. But women can more easily gather in conferences or clusters or for events with smaller geographical boundaries. In synodical organizations with large numbers of units, a conference or cluster might offer a more manageable

size as well. Imagine a synodical organization with 250 units. If all the women from all 250 units were invited to an event, imagine how large a space would be needed to house the event! But divide those 250 units up into 10 conferences or clusters, and it is much easier to hold an event where many women from each unit attend.

Based on the history of the women's organization in some areas, conferences and clusters are quite programmatic in nature and flourish greatly. In other areas, conferences and clusters are nearly non-existent. That's okay. Women of the ELCA's constitution and structure provide for flexibility. This is not a one-size-fits-all organization. Conferences and clusters might work well for a time and then fall out of favor, depending upon needs and leadership. Allow the structure to reflect the needs of the organization at any given time.

Conferences and clusters 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. Conferences and clusters are designed to be bridges. The activities that are to be carried out must meet five criteria, as established in the synodical constitution. The activities will:

- provide experiences for learning and leadership development,
- build community,
- provide opportunities for joint ministry and action,
- provide opportunities for stewardship education and offerings, and
- establish networks for communication.

Often conferences or clusters meet once in the spring and once in the fall of each year, moving the meeting location around the geographical area of the conference or cluster. The activity planned for that meeting would meet the criteria set forth above. Often a different synodical board member will be assigned as a liaison to each conference or cluster and will work with the conference/cluster leadership to develop the activities. In some synodical organizations, each conference or cluster's 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.

Cluster/conferences may not have treasurers or treasuries. These entities are not bonded

against theft or embezzlement of funds. When Women of the ELCA was incorporated, cluster/conferences maintained their own treasuries. At that time, the Women of the ELCA constitution contained a clause that stated, “Cluster/Conferences shall normally be self-supporting.” This had been interpreted to mean the cluster/conferences were to maintain their own checking accounts. This was not the original intent. The intent of the clause was to encourage cluster or conference planners to budget carefully so that their events came as close as possible to paying for themselves and not be overly dependent upon unit or synodical women’s organizational funds. The Fourth Triennial Convention (1999) voting members acted to remove this clause from the constitution.

In keeping with the current constitution of Women of the ELCA, synodical organizations are advised to have clusters or conferences use one of the following methods to handle money:

Option A: The monies of the cluster or conference are connected to the synodical women’s organization checking account in separate revenue and expense lines. It is the responsibility of the synodical treasurer to oversee these items.

Option B: The monies of the cluster or conference are connected to a unit’s checking account in separate revenue and expense lines. It is the responsibility of the unit treasurer to oversee these items.

## Synods of the ELCA

Under its constitution, the synodical organization is called to work interdependently with two expressions of Women of the ELCA: the unit and the churchwide organization. The synodical women’s organization (“SWO”) is also called into a special kind of interdependent relationship, a relationship with its synod. Not only is the SWO to “establish a relationship” with its synod, but the SWO shall also “invite the bishop of the synod or their appointee to serve as a representative of the synod to the synodical women’s organization and to provide reports to its convention and board meetings.” (*Synodical Women’s Organization Constitution*, Article IV, Section 4.)

Admittedly, “establish a relationship” with its synod is a bit vague. What does that mean? It’s likely that there are 64 different versions of what that relationship looks like, one

for every one of our 64 SWOs. Those relationships draw on history, culture, and the personalities of leadership, among other things, including even the size and geography of the synod. The constitution goes on to provide a minimum connection by indicating that the SWO shall invite the bishop (or appointee) to serve as a representative to the SWO and to provide reports at conventions and board meetings.

Here's a list of ways in which that relationship can be established, nurtured, and supported. Not each item will work in all locations. It's not an exhaustive list, so you may have additional ideas. The ideas aren't presented in any order, either.

- When a synodical president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) is elected, they should arrange to visit with the synod bishop, introducing themselves, discussing the vision of the board for its ministry in the next two-year period and ways in which the SWO and synod can support each other in ministry. The president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) might ask to attend a synod staff meeting or synod council meeting to share the SWO's ministry or to seek partnerships for a particular purpose.
- Some very practical arrangements can sometimes be worked out with a synod office, e.g., photocopying of SWO materials, use of meeting spaces, coverage in synod communication, or use of the synod office as a permanent mailing address.
- The synodical board, through the president (convenor, coordinator, co-chair), should invite the bishop (or appointee) to serve as a liaison between the synod and the SWO. That person should be invited to attend all synodical board meetings, offering usually both a written and an oral report on synod happenings and taking information back to the bishop, bishop's staff, and synod council on behalf of the SWO.
- All SWO mailings, including newsletters, should be sent to the bishop's office, whether by U.S.P.S. or electronic mail.
- Dates for SWO events should be set in consultation with the synod office so as not to schedule events at the same time. SWO events should be placed on all synod calendars.



- The bishop or a synod staff member can be approached for assistance, such as leading a team-building exercise when a new SWO board is formed or facilitating discussions in a dysfunctional situation.
- The SWO's relationship with its synod council differs from place to place. In some synods, the SWO president (convenor, coordinator, co-chair) has both voice and vote at synod council meetings. In other synods, the SWO president (convenor, coordinator, co-chair) has voice, but not vote. Whatever the situation, the relationship between the SWO and the synod can be nurtured by having the SWO president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) (or their designee) attend and present a written report at each synod council meeting. As with any relationship, keeping the lines of communication open is essential.
- Regarding synod assemblies, the SWO president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) should have an opportunity to bring greetings in a plenary session. The SWO should exhibit, if exhibit space is available. The SWO president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) should approach synod assembly planners to offer leadership for workshops or learning sessions. (This is a great way to reach women who are not active in the organization. Consider using one of the program resources available at [welca.org](http://welca.org).) The SWO presents a written report that is part of the assembly's bulletin of reports.

## Partner synods

Since 2002, partner synods have existed within the ELCA, providing ways in which synods from different locations can work together to form community and partnership. This partnership originated within the Conference of Bishops to allow synods to become familiar with the history, customs, culture and faith practices of their ELCA brothers and sisters. Within Women of the ELCA, we have mirrored these partner synods.

Synodical women's organizations have chosen to live out these partner relationships in a variety of ways:

- Members of synodical boards in the two partner synods have become prayer

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partners with one another.

- Synodical presidents (convenors/coordinators/co-chairs) of the two partner synods send written greetings to the other's convention.
- Where individuals and congregations in one partner synod sustained hurricane damage, the other partner synod sent a portion of its convention offering for use within the affected synodical women's organization.
- Attendees at one synodical convention wrote words of greeting on note cards, which were gathered up and sent to the partner synod for distribution at its synodical convention. The intent was that the writer and recipient might become prayer partners or pen pals of sort.
- Groups from partner synods attending the triennial gathering got together for fellowship.

These are just the beginning. You will likely think of more. You may find it helpful to create a committee within your board (perhaps incorporating non-board members too) to plan and lead activities with your partner synod. Here are some other ideas on how partner synods can live out these partner relationships:

- Plan and execute the same servant project, either each in your own synodical organization or perhaps in a third location upon which you agree.
- Challenge each other on a project (e.g., who can gather the most new subscriptions to *Gather* magazine or who can raise the most money in a given period of time for Katie's Fund).
- Plan and experience the same program at the same time. Possibly connect via video conferencing.
- When each synodical organization gathers, pray for the partner synodical organization.
- Provide each other with a physical offering (e.g., cross or banner) that can be present when you gather and serve as a physical reminder of your partnership.
- Match congregational units within the partner synods, so they can live out the partnership in different ways.

- Produce a joint devotional resource for a liturgical season, such as Advent or Lent, with devotions written by women from both partner synodical organizations.
- Learn about each other through articles in your synodical newsletters or activities at your synodical conventions. You can learn about differences (or similarities) in geography, economy, ethnic heritage, ministry, etc.
- Have each synodical organization select one of its most successful ministries and share a “how to” with each other.

Contact your synod offices to learn how the synods are living out these same partnerships.

Tell your bishop how the two synodical organizations are living out the partnership.

### Partner Synods

3A	Western North Dakota	6E	Northeastern Ohio
3B	Eastern North Dakota	1A	Alaska
3C	South Dakota	2A	Sierra Pacific
3D	Northwestern Minnesota	7A	New Jersey
3E	Northeastern Minnesota	8A	Northwestern Pennsylvania
3F	Southwestern Minnesota	9A	Virginia
3G	Minneapolis	4F	Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast
3H	Saint Paul Area	2B	Southwest California
3I	Southeastern Minnesota	7B	New England
4A	Nebraska	2C	Pacifica
4B	Central States	9B	North Carolina
4C	Arkansas-Oklahoma	7C	Metropolitan New York
4D	Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana	8B	Southwestern Pennsylvania
4E	Southwestern Texas	1B	Northwest Washington
5A	Metropolitan Chicago	9E	Florida-Bahamas
5B	Northern Illinois	8D	Lower Susquehanna
5C	Central/Southern Illinois	7D	Upstate New York
5D	Southeastern Iowa	2D	Grand Canyon

5E	Western Iowa	1E	Oregon
5F	Northeastern Iowa	9C	South Carolina
5G	Northern Great Lakes	8F	Delaware-Maryland
5H	Northwest Synod of Wisconsin	7E	Northeastern Pennsylvania
5I	East-Central Synod of Wisconsin	2E	Rocky Mountain
5J	Greater Milwaukee	1D	Eastern Washington-Idaho
5K	South-Central Synod of Wisconsin	7G 9F	Slovak Zion Caribbean
5L	LaCrosse Area	9D	Southeastern
6A	Southeast Michigan	7F	Southeastern Pennsylvania
6B	North/West Lower Michigan	8E	Upper Susquehanna
6C	Indiana-Kentucky	8H	West Virginia-Western Maryland
6D	Northwestern Ohio	1C	Southwestern Washington
6F	Southern Ohio	8G	Metropolitan Washington, D.C.
8C	Allegheny	1F	Montana

## Other connections

### Companion synods.

In addition to partner synods that are lived out within the United States and the Caribbean, ELCA synods also have companion synods, i.e., relationships with Lutheran denominations in settings all around the globe. Some synods have just one companion synod while other synods have multiple companion synods. A companion synod committee usually manages the relationships between an ELCA synod and its companion synods. The SWO should connect with the companion synod committee in its synod to participate in these international relationships. Women active in Women of the ELCA often participate in travel to and programming in the companion synods while also hosting representatives from the companion synods at activities in the synod and SWO. SWOs are invited to consider partnering with the churchwide women's organization in advance of each triennial gathering to bring international guests to the triennial gathering. The director for discipleship on the churchwide staff coordinates international relations, so contact them with any companion synod questions.

Don't know much about companion synods? Go to [elca.org](http://elca.org) and do a search on "companion synods." You'll find a list of companion synods, organized by both ELCA synod and by country.

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

Under its constitution, the churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA is called to work interdependently with all churchwide units of the ELCA. This is carried out in many and varied ways. For instance, the executive director of Women of the ELCA or their appointee sits on the consulting committee of the ELCA Justice for Women program. Several Women of the ELCA staff members participate in inter-unit teams with other units of the ELCA, where cooperative consulting and programming takes place.

### **Other women's organizations**

By its governing documents, the churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA is called to relate to other women's organizations ecumenically and globally. This mandate is carried out in many and varied ways, through each expression of the organization, complementing, not duplicating, our own efforts.

The executive directors of denominational women's organizations come together occasionally to share ideas, projects and resources. The directors offer mutual support to each other. The directors (or sometimes the volunteer elected presidents of the organizations) attend the conventions of other denominations.

### **Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran World Federation**

Internationally, Women of the ELCA has been active in supporting Lutheran World Relief, not only through financial support, but also through hundreds of thousands of quilts and kits made by Lutheran women and distributed by LWR around the globe. Women of the ELCA regularly participates in Lutheran World Federation ministries, standing in solidarity with Lutheran women throughout the world.

Through its own global education and advocacy program, carried out with ELCA Global Mission, Women of the ELCA has increased the understanding of, and mutual respect for, other cultures and people. This effort, which also supports the work and struggles of women in other countries, often in ecumenical contexts, is based on the ELCA's companion synod program.

Our magazines, *Gather* and *Café*, occasionally include articles written by ecumenical

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partners; and we know our readers are not only Lutheran women. Since our program resources are available as free downloadable PDFs on our website, people around the globe seek copyright permission to use them in their own ministries.

These are a few of the ways in which the women's organization, both formally and informally, engages in ecumenical ministries and supports its ecumenical partners.

## Serving on the board of a synodical women's organization

You have just had a synodical convention. You have a new board. Some of the board members are serving a second term. Some have been elected for a first term. Bottom line is it is a *new* board. Before you can take on the tasks mandated by Article V, Section 1, Items 1 through 14 of the constitution, there are a few things you should do first:

*Get to know each other.*

There are a variety of ways to do this, so you will have to find the one that suits you best. Here's one example: Ask each woman to write down five things about themselves, four being true and one false. Each woman, in turn, shares their list and the group tries to figure out which item is the false one. This is a fun and fascinating way to learn about each other. There are many such activities. If you don't know of one, perhaps someone on your board does. Be creative!

*Decide how the board will work together.*

Since your work together will center on the constitutional mandates, you will have to decide how you will work together. One way to do this is by setting norms for your group's behavior. These are standards or rules for how you will operate together that the group agrees to and follows at each meeting. Norms should be:

- few,
- short and easy to understand,
- developed by the group,
- agreed upon by the group, and
- written down and displayed at each meeting.

It is the responsibility of the group members to make sure everyone adheres to the norms. When someone is not performing according to established and agreed-upon standards, it is the responsibility of the group to call it to that person's attention.

Here are some of the norms used by the churchwide executive board in the past, offered as examples:

- The board will focus on matters relevant to its work and mission.
- The board speaks with one voice on board actions.

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- All voices should be heard on an issue.
  - All opinions are equally valued.
  - Board business remains in the boardroom.

Some are self-explanatory, a few words need to be said about others. Number 2, for instance, means that whatever the final decision of the board is, even if you disagree with it and voted against it, you do not speak your opinion after the final decision is made. Number 3 means that everyone has an opportunity and sometimes an obligation to speak. One person should not monopolize the conversation. The president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) should keep a list of those wishing to speak, and one person does not speak twice until all those wishing to speak have been heard. Number 4 simply means that one person's opinion is as important as another's.

Number 5 is probably one of the most important. "Board business remains in the board room." This means that there should be no outside or behind-the-scenes conversations between two, three or more board members about a decision that has been made or a matter to come to the board for discussion. Whatever you have to say about an issue should be said during the discussion of the matter at the meeting and nowhere else. Nothing upsets the workings of a board more than having a few people discussing an issue, sometimes with negative comments, behind the back, as it were, of the entire board. This behavior is counter-productive not only to the synodical board but to the entire organization.

*Set your vision for the coming year/two years*

Next you will want to set the vision for your synodical organization for the next year or perhaps the next two years. During this time, you should decide on programs you will support, what events you will hold and what projects you will support. Look to the actions taken at your synodical convention for priorities along with actions from the triennial convention that involved synodical organizations and units.

Once you have set your direction, you will have to decide who is going to do what to carry out your goals.

*Complete a talent/gift assessment*

It is important that you conduct a talent and gift assessment of each board member. This will give insight as to what gifts a woman has so you can select the right role or job for



each board member. For instance, you wouldn't put someone in charge of the nominating committee who is not a detailed person, or who ignores the constitution. If you do, you will find that the person may become frustrated with the assignment; the assignment may not be accomplished properly or at all. Using a talent/gift assessment will be helpful when committees are assigned, when board members are paired for an assignment, or when sending a board member out to represent the organization. Use the program resource *Gifts for You: Opening Your Spiritual Gifts*, available as a free downloadable PDF at [welca.org](http://welca.org).

### *Set meeting times*

According to Article VII, Section 2 of the Synodical Women's Organization constitution: "The board shall meet at least two times each year. Special meetings may be called by the president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) or, in the event of their death, resignation, or incapacity, by the vice president(co-convenor/co-coordinator/co-chair) or the administrative committee. A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum."

It is the responsibility of the president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair) to set board meetings and special meetings. They may do this in a variety of ways: by themselves, in consultation with the entire board or in consultation with the board's executive committee. Others may be consulted as needed, especially in the case of the synodical convention. It is the responsibility of the secretary/communicator to notify all interested parties of meeting dates, times and locations once established.

### *Set an agenda*

To set an agenda, you need to determine what work you want to accomplish at a particular meeting. Agendas will vary from meeting to meeting; however, there are some core items that should be part of every agenda. They are:

- date, time and location of the meeting;
- call to order;
- roll call of members present, guests, etc.;
- welcome;
- devotions;
- adoption of the agenda;

- 
- reports:
    - report of the secretary/communicator—to include minutes of the last meeting, minutes of any conference calls held, minutes of executive committee meetings, if any, and minutes of the synodical convention, if appropriate;
    - report of the president (convenor/coordinator/co-chair);
    - report of the vice president (co-convenor/co-coordinator/co-chair);
    - report of the treasurer;
    - committee reports; and
    - other reports;
  - new business; and
  - unfinished business.

Other items may be added as needed and can change with each meeting.

#### *Assess your meeting*

It is helpful to assess your meetings. There are different tools available for this purpose. Among other things, they help you evaluate whether board members stayed on task, work was accomplished, and all participated. At its simplest form, two different board members could serve at each meeting as “observers.” During the meeting, they take note of the engagement of board members, how conflict was managed, whether the board stayed on task, whether materials were prepared and distributed in advance, whether adequate time was allotted for discussion, etc. They “take the temperature” of the board, as it were. Then, at the end of the meeting, the observers share their observations with the board. This process helps board members hold each other accountable and gives assurance that the board members are fulfilling their responsibilities. The process can help identify gaps and suggest areas for development. At its core, the process identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the board.

#### *Maintain a constitution and bylaws*

Every synodical organization should maintain its established constitution and bylaws, providing an updated copy to the churchwide office. This document orders your life together as an organization. This constitution should be reviewed by your board and reviewed often.

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There are two ways a synodical constitution can be changed:

1. Proposed amendments are submitted to the churchwide executive board for review and action prior to March 15 or September 15. The churchwide executive board at its spring meeting of the board will consider proposed amendments submitted prior to March 15, and those submitted prior to September 15 will be considered at its fall board meeting. You will be notified of the board's decision.

2. Constitutional changes may also be proposed by the churchwide executive board and voted on in the affirmative at the triennial convention. These changes then should be automatically made to your synodical convention.

After changes to a synodical constitution are made, either by the first or the second method, an updated constitution must be sent to the churchwide office, to the attention of the director of membership, see page for contact information 59.

#### *Keep minutes*

Minutes of meetings are very important. They are the historic record of the work of the organization. Minutes should be an accurate account of decisions made at board meetings and conventions and should include all attachments. Attachments are items such as the budget, the audit, etc. Committee reports may be incorporated into the minutes and need not be included as attachments. Minutes must be kept for the lifetime of the organization. Minutes of your executive committee meetings acting between board meetings are to be treated like board and convention minutes. Copies of your minutes should be circulated among board members; those persons who may be meeting with your board but have only voice, not vote; and possibly the cluster/conferences leaders and units. This lets everyone know of important actions taken at board or executive committee meetings and synodical conventions.

#### *Define duties for officers and board members*

All board positions should have job descriptions. The constitution gives us some insight as to the responsibilities of the officers and board members. However, others who will be performing various duties for the organization should also have job descriptions. Job descriptions should be developed by the board in accordance with the expected outcome of the assigned task. Job descriptions identify agreed-upon expectations and provide benchmarks for evaluating whether a task is being completed and how well it is being completed. Templates for these job descriptions

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are not provided here because of the variety of ways in which the synodical boards are established and carry out their work. Basic responsibilities are found in the constitutions and bylaws. Begin with those and then add in responsibilities that are unique to your locale. For instance, the vice president (co-convenor/co-coordinator/co-chair) is often tapped to chair the SWO convention. If that's true in your SWO, include the overarching details about convention planning in the vice president's (co-convenor/co-coordinator/co-chair's) job description. Review the job descriptions regularly so they do not become outdated or irrelevant to the ministries in which your officers and board members are engaged.

## Timeline for planning

### January

- 15th Mail offerings by today for inclusion in fiscal year that is ending Jan 31
- 31st End of fiscal year for churchwide Women of the ELCA

### February

- 1st Starting date for new Synodical Women's treasurers
- Conference of Presidents, usually third or fourth weekend
- Executive board assignments for SWO conventions made, usually sent at the end of the month

### March

- Bold Women's Day – First Sunday in March
- 15th Deadline for submitting proposed constitutional changes to executive board

### April

- 1st Deadline for active unit assessment data submission, every third year (2018, 2021, 2024, etc.)
- 5th Deadline for scholarship applications
- Churchwide executive board meeting

### May

- Rachel's Day (1st Sunday in May)
- 5th Red Dress Day honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

### June

- July Triennial convention and gathering, every third year (2017, 2020, etc.)

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**August**

Nominations open for churchwide executive board, secretary and treasurer, every third year (2016, 2019, 2022, 2025, etc.)

Conference calls with presidents in each region are held

**September**

15<sup>th</sup> Deadline for submitting proposed constitutional changes to executive board

**October**

Churchwide executive board meeting

**November**

30<sup>th</sup> Deadline to submit memorials from synodical organizations to churchwide organization, every third year (2019, 2022, 2025, etc.)

30<sup>th</sup> Deadline to submit roster of voting members for triennial convention, every third year (2019, 2022, 2025, etc.)

30<sup>th</sup> Deadline to nominate women for executive board, secretary and treasurer, every third year (2019, 2022, 2025, etc.)

**December**

15<sup>th</sup> Deadline, seed grant applications, Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls

15<sup>th</sup> Application period opens, scholarship program

21<sup>st</sup> Blue Christmas Virtual Service

## Sample Synodical Convention Script

Note: “President” below also refers to coordinator/co-coordinator, or convenor/co-convenor. Every synodical women’s organization can use a different position title as noted in the Constitution and Bylaws.

### Official Opening

**President:** Good \_\_\_\_\_, and welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_  
Convention of the \_\_\_\_\_ Synodical Women  
Organization.

In a few minutes the Credentials Committee will bring forward its report and the convention will be called to order.

Before that happens, I invite you to stand as you are able and recite our Purpose Statement.

**President:** Thank you.

### Report of the Credentials Committee

**President:** The Chair calls on \_\_\_\_\_, Chair of the Credentials Committee for the committee’s report.

According to the Article VI, Section 2, Item 1 of the Synodical Constitution:

**“Voting members of a convention shall be the elected officers and board members of the synodical women’s organization and one voting member from each unit on the roll of this synodical women’s organization.”**

As of   (Time)   on   (Date)   the credentials committee reports the following:

Synodical Officers and Board Members: \_\_\_\_\_ Voting members:

Total eligible to vote: \_\_\_\_\_

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**President:** The adoption of the committee report was moved by the committee, therefore, no second needed. The question is on the adoption of the committee report. Is there any discussion?

Hearing none:

All those in favor \_\_\_\_\_.

All those opposed \_\_\_\_\_.

The affirmative has it and the report is adopted.

### Call to Order

**President:** A quorum having been established; the Chair declares the \_\_\_\_\_ convention of the \_\_\_\_\_ synodical women's organization is called to order.

### Appointment of the Parliamentarian

**President:** The Chair appoints \_\_\_\_\_ as Parliamentarian of the \_\_\_\_\_ convention of the \_\_\_\_\_ synodical women's organization.

### Appointment of Convention Business Committees

*(All committee chairs must be voting members since voting members are the only people that can bring business to the floor of the convention)*

**President:** At this time the Chair would like to announce the appointment of Convention Business Committees.

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair of the Credentials Committee. Will all the committee members please stand?

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair of the Elections Committee. Will all the committee members please stand?

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair of the Nominations Committee. Will all the Committee members please stand?

(Etc. until all committees have been



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announced) Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

**President:** The Chair asks secretary \_\_\_\_\_ to present the proposed rules of procedure.

**Secretary:** Please turn to pages \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ of your bulletin of reports/convention program and reports.

On behalf of the synodical board, I move the adoption of the proposed rules of procedure.

**President:** The adoption of the rules of procedure has been moved by the synodical board and no second is required.

The question is on the adoption of the proposed rules of procedure. Is there discussion?

Hearing none, the Chair calls for a vote.

All those in favor \_\_\_\_\_.

All those opposed \_\_\_\_\_.

(This takes a 2/3 vote to pass)

The affirmative has it as the rules of procedure are adopted.

Adoption of the Agenda

**President:** The Chair asks secretary \_\_\_\_\_ to present the convention agenda.

**Secretary:** Please refer to pages \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_ of your bulletin of reports/convention program and reports for the proposed agenda.

On behalf of the synodical board, I move the adoption of the agenda with flexibility allowing the Chair to reorder items as necessary.

**President:** The adoption of the agenda has been moved by the synodical board; no second is required.

The question is on the adoption of the agenda. Is  
there discussion?

Hearing none, the Chair calls for a vote.

All those in favor \_\_\_\_\_.

All those opposed \_\_\_\_\_.

(Majority needed to adopt)

The affirmative has it and the convention agenda is adopted.

### Report of the Churchwide Representative

**(This should be placed on the agenda early so the women can get to know the representative and interact with her during the remainder of the convention.)**

**President:** It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you \_\_\_\_\_ a member of the Churchwide Executive Board and the President's representative to our convention.

Churchwide Rep: (Gives her report)

**President:** Thank you \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ will be with us for the entire convention and is willing to answer any questions you may have.

She is also conducting a workshop titled \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

### Report of the Nominating Committee

**(This process is used for all elections unless the president and vice president are elected by a nominating ballot)**

**President:** The Chair calls on \_\_\_\_\_, chair of the nominating committee for the committee's report prior to the first ballot for \_.

**Nominations Chair:** The following names have been placed into nomination by the committee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

There have been \_\_\_\_\_ names placed in nomination from the floor.  
These names will be announced in alphabetical order:

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**President:** Thank you. The Chair now calls on the chair of the elections committee for instructions prior to the first ballot for \_\_\_\_\_.

**Elections Chair:** **(The instructions differ if you have a ballot book you are using or if you have a printed ballot. For a ballot book voting members will be instructed to remove ballot #, and print clearly. If you have a printed ballot, voting members will be instructed to place an X in front of the person for whom they wish to vote.**

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE ELECTIONS CHAIR SHOULD ALWAYS STATE, “WHEN INSTRUCTED TO DO SO BY THE CHAIR. . .”**

**(If the election of the president and vice president is by a nominating ballot, please refer to and read Article VI, Section 4, Item 8 of the synodical constitution.**

### **Call for the First Ballot for \_\_\_\_\_.**

**President:** The Chair calls for the first ballot for \_\_\_\_\_.

**Please (remove ballot # from your ballot books and print clearly the name of the person for whom you wish to vote – or Please (place an X in front of the name of the person you wish to vote for on the printed ballot that is before you.**

You may vote now.

(Pause)

Has everyone voted?

(Pause)

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Please pass your ballots to the pages.

The vote is now closed.

### Call for New Business

**President:** The Chair calls for new business. These items will be referred to the Reference and Counsel Committee/Resolutions Committee so please as you bring new business forward, please just state your name, your unit's name and the nature of the new business.

The Chair calls on voting member \_\_\_\_\_

**Voting member:** *States only her name, the name of her unit and the nature of the new business being presented.*

**President:** Thank you

(You will repeat this for all new business being brought

forward.) Introduction of Synodical Board

**President:** At this time the Chair would like to introduce to you the board of the \_\_\_\_\_ synodical women's organization.

**(Order of introduction should be: Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Board Members in alphabetical order)**

### Call for the Report on the First Ballot for

**President:** The Chair calls for the report on the first ballot for \_\_\_\_\_.

**Elections Chair:** The results of the first ballot for \_\_\_\_\_ will be reported in descending order.

Number eligible to vote: \_\_\_\_\_ Total ballots cast \_\_\_\_\_

Votes needed to elect \_\_\_\_\_

(Reads names and number of votes received in descending order.)

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**President:** There has been no election.

(or)

The Chair declares \_\_\_\_\_ elected to the position of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Recommendations from the Synodical Board

**President:** **The Chair calls on the Vice President (or whomever) to present recommendations from the synodical board.**

(These may be recommendations for constitutional changes or anything else that is not coming to the convention floor as its own item. i.e. the budget)

Remember, any proposed constitutional changes must be presented to the Churchwide Executive Board for approval before it is presented to your convention.

(presents items)

**President:** The question is on \_\_\_\_\_. Is there any discussion?

(Recognize the voting member, ask if there is further discussion, and recognize the voting member. Continue until all discussion is completed.)

The Chair now calls for a vote.

To vote in favor \_\_\_\_\_.

To vote in opposition \_\_\_\_\_.

The vote is now closed.

The affirmative has it and the recommendation passes.

### Report of the President

**President:** The Chair asks the Vice President to assume the chair as I give my

report.

**Vice President:** Thank you, madam president. I now call for the report of the president.

**President:** **(Gives her report)**

**Vice President:** Thank you, madam president. The president will now resume the chair, Madam President.

**President:** **Thank you.**

### Report of the Treasurer

**President:** The Chair calls on \_\_\_\_\_ for the treasurer's report.

**Treasurer:** **(Gives her report)**

### Adoption of the Budget

**President:** The Chair asks the treasurer to introduce the budget.

**Treasurer:** The budget appears on pages \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the bulletin or reports. On behalf of the synodical board, I move the adoption of the budget.

**President:** The adoption of the budget has been moved by the synodical board and no second is required.

Are there any questions?

The Chair recognizes voting member \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

**(Repeat for each voting member wishing to speak)**

The Chair calls for a vote.

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All in favor of the adoption of the budget \_\_\_\_\_.

All those opposed.

The affirmative has it and the budget is adopted.

### Other Elections

(Proceed as above)

### Report of the Reference and Counsel/Resolutions Committee

**President:** The Chair calls on \_\_\_\_\_ the chair of the Reference and Counsel/Resolutions Committee for the committee's report.

**Committee Chair:** Please turn to pages \_\_\_\_\_ of your bulletin of reports/convention program and reports for the resolutions received in advance. Resolutions received onsite will be/were distributed. The committee report includes our recommendations are before you.

Madam Chair, on behalf of the Reference and Counsel/Resolutions Committee I move the committee recommendation for resolution # 1.

**President:** The question is on the committee recommendation for resolution #1. It does not need a second as it has come from the committee. Is there any discussion?

The Chair recognizes voting member \_\_\_\_\_ .

Thank you.

(Repeat for each voting member wishing to speak)

The Chair calls for a vote.

The question is on the committee recommendation for resolution #1.

All those in favor \_\_\_\_\_

All those opposed \_\_\_\_\_

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The affirmative has it and the committee recommendation for resolution #1 is adopted.

**(Repeat for each resolution)**

**(If the committee recommendation fails, the vote now is on the original resolution. Proceed as above.)**

### **Report of the Offerings Committee**

**President:** The Chair calls on \_\_\_\_\_, chair of the Offerings Committee for a report.

**Committee Chair:** The offering(s) taken during this convention totaled \_\_\_\_\_.

The offering(s) will be distributed as follows:

Churchwide Organization \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Worship Service and Installation of Synodical Board Officers and Board Members**

#### **Adjourn**

**President:** The Chair declares the \_\_\_ convention of the \_\_\_ synodical women's organization adjourned.

## **Leading a delegation to a triennial convention**

### Pre-convention orientation

Who?	All voting members
What?	Orientation session conducted by SWO president for the delegation
Where?	In person or via conference call or virtually
When?	Before convention, after <i>Convention Program &amp; Reports</i> has been received
Why?	So voting members are equipped to carry out their responsibilities

### Orientation to cover

- **Parliamentary procedure.**





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Goal: Have corporate prayer for voting member, for convention; acknowledge the ministry of Women of the ELCA in the congregational setting

- A blessing and sending rite will be available at [welca.org](http://welca.org)
- Encourage its use in corporate worship or congregational worship

### On site meetings

Gather delegation together as needed. Join in prayer before a plenary session. Discuss matters coming before the convention that might need further explanation or discernment.

### Post-convention

Gather in person or via phone, or virtually, to discuss the experience, note ways to improve the experience for the next triennial convention. Report out to the synodical board, especially on matters acted upon that require action and follow-up by the synodical board as well as congregational units. Identify learnings from the triennial convention that can be applied in synodical expression of Women of the ELCA. Some SWOs invite the voting members to make a brief report of their triennial convention experience at their next SWO convention.

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## Glossary of terms

Many common words have specific meanings within Women of the ELCA. Use this glossary to become familiar with these terms. Words that are *italicized* in the definitions are among the terms defined in this glossary.

**Adopt** To choose or accept and put into effect (by vote or consensus).

**Approve** To confirm or sanction formally; to ratify.

**Assembly** Term used by the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* for the gathering of *voting members* for decision-making or legislative functions.

**Biennial convention** A *convention* held every two years.

**Bylaw** A standing rule governing the regulation of the internal affairs of the organization.

**Churchwide executive board** The group of board members and officers (all elected by the *triennial convention* for three-year terms) who serve as the board of directors and the interim legislative authority between triennial conventions. The responsibilities of the executive board are spelled out in the Women of the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, Article XIII, Section 5.

**Churchwide women's organization** Designated term for the whole organization; an inclusive, less hierarchical term that replaces "national." Manifested in the *triennial convention* and the *churchwide executive board* and used to describe the staff and office that support the activities of the whole organization.

**Circle** A non-legislative grouping of women within a *unit* that comes together for fellowship, Bible study, program or service activities and personal growth. A circle meets regularly and supports the mission and purpose of the organization.

**Cluster** A non-legislative grouping of *congregational*, *intercongregational* and *special units* within the territory of a *synodical women's organization*. Also known as a *conference* in some synodical women's organizations.

**Committee** A group of people, usually appointed by a larger group or legislative body, to define and/or carry out a particular task or respond to an issue.

**Conference** A non-legislative grouping of *congregational*, *intercongregational* and *special units* within the territory of a *synodical women's organization*. Also known as a *cluster* in some synodical women's organizations.

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**Congregational unit** *A member of Women of the ELCA: a community of women coming together for study, support and action in a local setting of Women of the ELCA (Women of the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 1); also referred to simply as a unit.*

**Consensus** General agreement or unanimity; group solidarity in sentiment or belief; a non-formal approach to decision-making.

**Constitution** A legal document that outlines the name, purpose, authority, relationship and financial structure of an organization (*churchwide organization, synodical women's organization, congregational or intercongregational unit, special unit*).

**Convention** *A Women of the ELCA term for a gathering in which voting members make decisions or carry out legislative functions.*

**ELCA** Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Executive director** The chief executive officer of the organization; as paid staff, they carry out the policies of the organization and work interdependently with other churchwide units of the *ELCA*; sole employee of the *churchwide executive board*.

**Expression** *Women of the ELCA has three legislative expressions: units, synodical women's organizations, and the churchwide women's organization.*

**Fiduciary responsibility** The responsibility of a person or organization to handle the finances of and gifts to the organization in a trustworthy manner.

**Honorarium** A payment in recognition of acts or professional services.

**Intercongregational unit** *A member of Women of the ELCA; a community of women from two or more congregations coming together for study, support and action locally; also referred to simply as a unit.*

**Job description** An outline that includes title or role, function, term (length) of service, specific responsibilities, budget and resources available (including training, printed or audiovisual materials, and mentoring relationships) and guides and directs the ministry or work of an individual or group.

**Member** *A congregational, intercongregational or special unit of Women of the ELCA; units are members, individuals are not; compare with participant.*

**Memorial** A statement of facts presented to a legislative body that is the basis for a petition or request for action; the way in which one organization formally makes a request of another.

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Brought to a *synodical women's organization convention* by a unit or to a *triennial convention* by a synodical women's organization.

**Network** An interconnected or interrelated group, often with a common identity, cause or circumstance that offers support and facilitates communication and the work of the group.

**Parliamentary procedure** The manner in which churchwide and synodical legislative business is conducted; some *units* also use this method.

**Participant** A woman who takes part in carrying out the mission of *Women of the ELCA* and supports its ministries. **Not all women in an ELCA congregation are automatically participants in Women of the ELCA; only those who take part in carrying out the mission of the organization and support the ministries of Women of the ELCA are participants.**

**Policy** A statement of principles for action; a position that guides the decision-making and activities of an organization.

**Procedure** A particular way or series of ways in which to accomplish something (procedures are both flexible within and limited by the policies of an organization).

**Quorum** The number, usually a majority of officers or members of a body, that when duly assembled is legally competent to transact business.

**Region** One of nine geographic territories of the *ELCA* comprising a number of synods in the United States and the Caribbean.

**Resolution** The formal vehicle by which a *voting members* bring a matter to a *convention* for action, consistent with the rules of procedure established by that convention.

**Robert's Rules of Order** The standard form of *parliamentary procedure*; a book by this same name that includes the form of parliamentary procedure.

**Special committee** A *committee* appointed by the president or board to bring recommendations on a particular issue, concern, or subject to the board or to carry out a particular project or task.

**Special unit** A *member* of *Women of the ELCA*; a community of women who want to come together in special settings as authorized by the *executive board* for study, support and action in local settings where congregational affiliation is not readily available or possible; also referred to simply as a *unit*. An example of this kind of unit would be one organized on a college campus or within a retirement community.

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**Standing committee** A *committee* appointed by the president or board to carry on a continuing function.

**Synodical women’s organization** A legislative and programmatic expression that assists *congregational, intercongregational* and *special units* within its territory to fulfill the purpose of *Women of the ELCA*; sometimes referred to as an SWO.

**Synodical convention** The *convention* of a *synodical women’s organization*.

**Synod** One of the 65 regional and the one non-geographic grouping of congregations of the *ELCA*.

**Taskforce** A temporary grouping of individuals or of representatives of groups, established for the purpose of accomplishing a definite objective usually with a specific deadline, and that reports its findings to a larger group or legislative body.

**Triennial convention** The *convention* of *Women of the ELCA*; the highest legislative authority of the organization; meets every three years.

**Unit** See *congregational unit, intercongregational unit, or special unit*.

**Voting members** Those women who may vote on legislative matters at synodical or triennial convention.

**Women of the ELCA** The shortened form for “Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” the legal name for the women’s organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; a separately-incorporated ministry of the *ELCA*.

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## Recognizing those who complete their service

*The following order may be used when recognizing outgoing board members and installing new officers and board members.*

*Those completing their time of service come forward and face the assembly. Names and offices may be read.*

Siblings in Christ, through your baptism you were called to lives of service as part of the priesthood we all share in Jesus Christ. You have served faithfully and well as leaders in the [name of synodical women's organization]. You have served thoughtfully, graciously and with diligence, offering strategic leadership to this synodical women's organization and to the entire women's organization. We offer to you our gratitude for the wisdom and compassion that you have given so generously in service for Women of the ELCA.

Recognizing that change must be an ongoing process and that diversity and flexibility are essential, will you continue to share your wisdom and your experience with this synodical women's organization? Will you support and encourage the future leaders of this organization, pray for and with them?

If so, answer: I will, and I ask God to help me.

***Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.***

*Leading the prayer.*

Let us pray.

Loving God, we thank you for these women. Your Holy Spirit equipped them with many gifts that have been used to support the mission and purpose of this organization. Inspire them now to new avenues of service, encouraging them to be risk-takers and making them confident in their faith. May their pathways be filled with peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

*Addressing the assembly.*

Let us stand to recognize and appreciate these women, acknowledging their gifts to God and to Women of the ELCA.

*Those whose current service is ending return to their seats. The assembly is seated.*

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## Installation of a synodical board

*The new officers and board come forward and face the assembly. The person doing the installation may read the offices and names of those who are to be installed.*

*Addressing the assembly.*

A reading from 1 Corinthians:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

*Addressing those being installed.*

Siblings in Christ, you have been chosen for leadership responsibilities in Women of the ELCA. We rejoice in the gifts God has given you and, in your willingness, to offer them for this service.

Will you continue to seek to grow in faith, attending daily to God's holy Word, and listening to God in prayer? If so, respond, Yes, and I ask God to help me.

***Response:* Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you earnestly seek to affirm the gifts of others, to share the responsibilities of your office in partnership with your siblings in Christ, and to encourage others to offer their talents and skills in faithful service? If so, respond, yes, and I ask God to help me.

***Response:* Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you seek to lead the [name of synodical women's organization] in ministry and action, extending God's loving promise of hope to those beyond this community? If so, respond, yes, and I ask God to help me.

***Response:* Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Will you seek to promote healing and wholeness within the church, the society and the whole world? If so, respond, yes, and I ask God to help me.

***Response:* Yes, and I ask God to help me.**

Do you accept the specific responsibilities for which you have been elected and will you seek to serve faithfully? If so, respond, yes, and I ask God to help me.

***Response:* Yes, and I ask God to help me.**



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Will you accept responsibility for the financial and constitutional order of the [name of the synodical organization] of Women of the ELCA? If so, respond, yes, and I ask God to help me.

***Response:*** Yes, and I ask God to help me.

Through Holy Baptism, you were gathered into the family of God and called to minister to others, and through your election, you have been chosen to serve as leaders of Women of the ELCA. May God work through you to share hope and healing with the world in which you live. God is faithful and will graciously enable you to fulfill your task. May God's blessing give you peace.

*Addressing the assembly.*

Together with these elected leaders, you are called through Holy Baptism to a life of discipleship. Will you receive these leaders and work with them, pray for them, and support them for the sake of the gospel? If so, answer: We will, and we ask God to help us.

***Assembly:*** We will, and we ask God to help us.

*Addressing those being installed.*

I now declare you installed as officers and board members of the [name of synodical women's organization] of Women of the ELCA, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

*Continuing with prayer.*

Let us pray.

Loving God, surround these siblings with your life-giving Spirit, inspiring them to love and serve all creation. Make them bold and courageous, Holy God, that they may help this organization fulfill our mission and purpose. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

*Addressing the assembly.*

Let us stand in recognition and appreciation of these women for their gifts to God and to Women of the ELCA.

*The officers and board members return to their seats.*

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## Women of the ELCA logo

### What does our logo mean?

Our logo—with the cross, water and a white lily—identifies women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as children of God; baptized, forgiven, adopted into God's family, full of grace and hope in eternal life. It is a reminder of the growth, beauty, and vitality that rises out of that life-giving baptismal water. It is also a reminder of the mission of the church to "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

### Logo licensing agreement

Use of the Women of the ELCA logo is expressly subject to and conditioned on agreement to the following terms.

The Women of the ELCA logo is protected under United States and international Trademark Law. Use of these marks, other than in accordance with the terms and conditions of this agreement or as otherwise authorized by law, is strictly prohibited.

Any use of the logo that involves the sale of goods or fundraising requires additional, formal permission from the churchwide organization in order to (1) determine whether the criteria outlined below are being met and (2) to approve the graphic representation and use of the logo.

The churchwide organization may grant permission to recognized expressions of the organization to reproduce the logo for fundraising purposes if (1) the fundraising or sale of goods will support that expression's own mission and ministries, or (2) the fundraising or sale of goods will support the mission and ministries of the churchwide organization (for example, to raise money for Katie's Fund, grants, scholarships, or the health initiative).

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Recognized expressions of the organization can be, synodical women's organizations, congregational, intercongregational, or special units; and clusters or conferences.

Women of the ELCA grants a nonexclusive, non-transferable license to use the Women of the ELCA logo in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Users agree not to revise or alter the logo in any way. Our three color logo consists of black, white and blue (PMS 308). The lily and waves in the cross must be white. No other colors may be substituted. If reproducing the logo in grayscale, or black and white, please use the black and white versions below.

2. Use of the Women of the ELCA logo does not imply approval or endorsement of products or services.

3. Women of the ELCA is and remains the sole owner of the Women of the ELCA logo. By entering into this nonexclusive license, the user does not attain any interest in the logo.

4. Women of the ELCA reserves the right to alter or amend these guidelines at any time and without notice to the user.

5. Permission is never granted to individuals who wish to reproduce the logo on items that will be sold for personal profit.

6. Users agree not to use the Women of the ELCA logo in any manner likely to confuse, mislead, or deceive the public, or to be adverse to the best interests of the Women of the ELCA.

7. Users agree that the Women of the ELCA logo is proprietary to the Women of the ELCA and that Women of the ELCA maintains all rights, title, and interest thereto including, without limitation, all intellectual property and other proprietary rights.

## Staff list

### October 2024

P: 800.638.3522, ext. 2730 ■ F: 773.380.2419 ■ facebook.com/WomenoftheELCA Women.elca@elca.org ■ womenoftheelca.org ■ twitter.com/WomenoftheELCA

Position	Person	Primary tasks
Executive director	<b>Jennifer Hockenbery</b> <b>Interim Executive Director</b> <a href="mailto:jennifer.hockenbery@elca.org">jennifer.hockenbery@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2862	"The executive director shall be the chief executive officer of the organization. She shall carry out the policies of the organization and work collegially with the staff. She shall work interdependently with other churchwide units. She shall prepare the reports of the executive board to the Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA and the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA." Constitution and By-laws of Women of the ELCA, Article XVI, Section 1, Item 2
Director for membership	<b>Eva James Yeo</b> <a href="mailto:eva.yeo@elca.org">eva.yeo@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2450	Support SWO presidents and congregational, inter-congregational and special units. Supports the database. Coordinates efforts to expand the organization.
Director for discipleship	<b>Valora K Starr</b> <a href="mailto:valora.starr@elca.org">valora.starr@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2741	Responsible for developing and coordinating resources and learning opportunities in the areas of evangelism, discipleship, and global education. Administers the churchwide scholarship program of Women of the ELCA.
Director for Communication and intergenerational programs and editor, Café	<b>Elizabeth McBride</b> <a href="mailto:elizabeth.mcbride@elca.org">elizabeth.mcbride@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2745	Shapes, directs, and manages the marketing, public relations, and communication efforts of Women of the ELCA through an integrated marketing communication strategy. Responsible for the editorial content and development of all webpages and social as well as the design, maintenance, and management of Café's presence on the Internet. Responsible for outreach to and involvement by young women in the organization.
Editor, <i>Gather</i>	<b>Elizabeth Hunter</b> <a href="mailto:elizabeth.hunter@elca.org">elizabeth.hunter@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2537	Responsible for all aspects of the development, production and distribution of <i>Gather</i> magazine.

Associate editor, <i>Gather</i>	<b>Cindy Novak</b> <a href="mailto:Cindy.Novak@elca.org">Cindy.Novak@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2766	Assists in the production and distribution of <i>Gather</i> by managing and coordinating the day-to-day functions and by contributing to its overall editorial development.
Director for Meeting Planning	<b>Gabriela Contreras</b> <a href="mailto:Gabriela.Contreras@elca.org">Gabriela.Contreras@elca.org</a> (773) 380-2747	Coordinates the Triennial Convention and Gathering. Coordinates meetings arranged for the CWO staff and Board.

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## 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

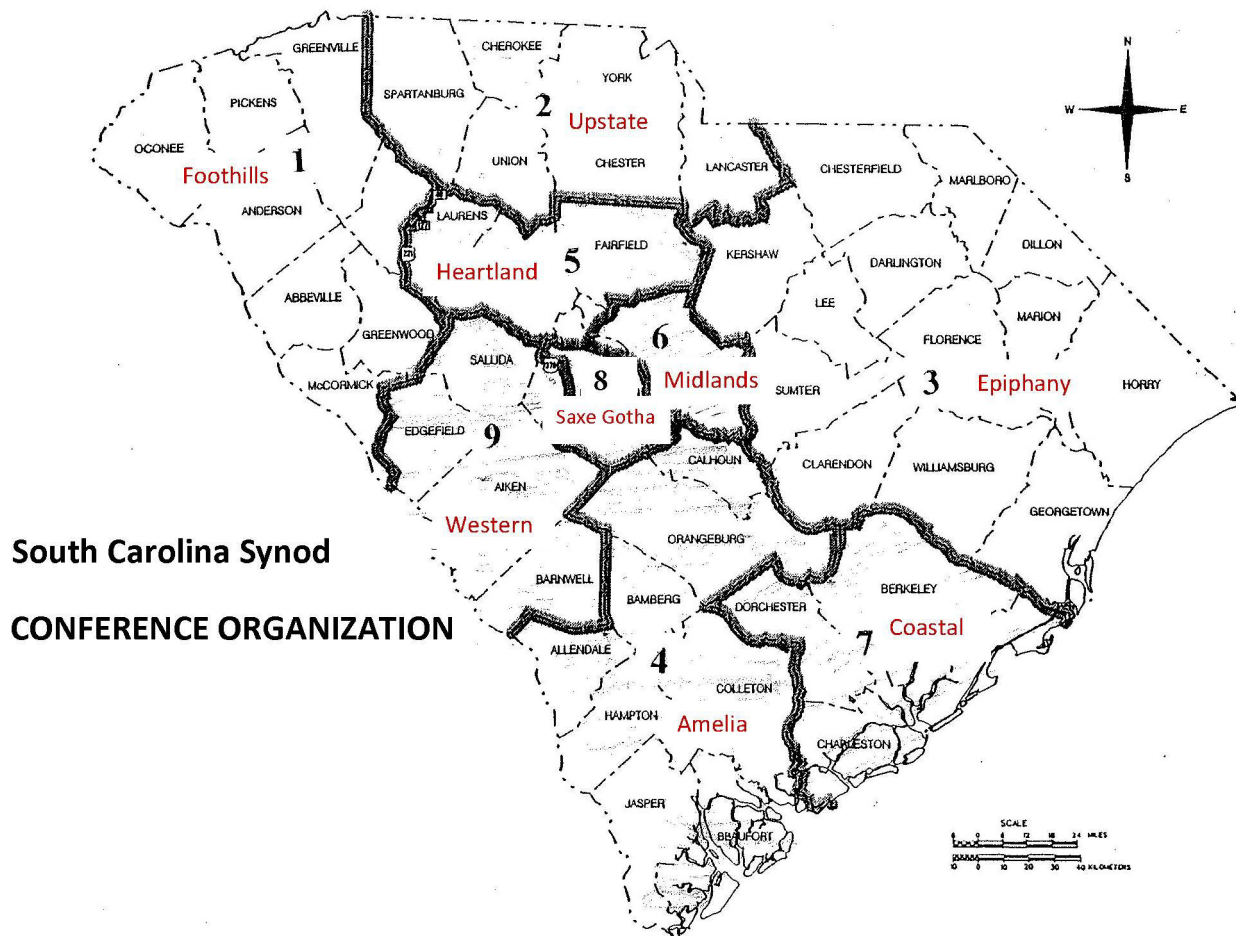
the synodical board.

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.



**South Carolina Synod  
CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION**

## 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. they 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 their 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

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## SECTION D – SOUTH CAROLINA CONGREGATIONAL UNITS

### The Women of the ELCA unit

A Women of the ELCA Unit is a community of women who come together for study, support, and action. Units are members of the Women of the ELCA. There can only be one unit within any single congregation or institution. There can be groups within that unit usually referred to as circles that function separately but come together as a unit to conduct business such as electing officers or leaders, establishing a budget, and supporting a unit project.

The unit's commitment. Constitutionally, units agree to accomplish the purpose of Women of the ELCA. The women in each unit commit themselves to:

- **come together for study, support, and action;**
- **participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond their local setting;**
- **financially support the total program of Women of the ELCA; and**
- **designate leadership that shall be in communication with the SC synodical and churchwide women's organization.**

Under its constitution, the unit is called to work interdependently with the congregation in which it exists. The unit should regularly report to the congregation; that often happens as part of the congregation's annual meeting process. Some units report monthly to the congregational council. All women in a congregation are invited to join the unit, but all do not automatically become a participant. To be a participant, a woman must actively agree to the purpose statement of the organization. A strong Women of the ELCA unit within a congregation strengthens the ministry of the entire congregation. Pastors and other congregational leaders appreciate the energy and commitment of each a mobilized community of disciple-women and what a unit brings to the ELCA worshipping community as a whole.

#### Kinds of units

Most of our units are “congregational units” within single congregations.

There are also “inter-congregational units” with participants from two or more congregations that have no units. And there are “special units” composed of women in special settings without congregational affiliation.

Some examples of units have small groups that reflect the generations of the women. Women have cross-generational small groups. Some units have both. Some units are large with as many as 13 small groups (sometimes referred to as circles). Some units have five women. In every size unit there is a core group of women who develop the ministry plan and provide the opportunities of this organization to all women with their setting and beyond! Finding women in your congregation and communities with a common need or passion is an excellent way to start a new Circle or Group.

#### Sample types of circles/groups:

- Bible study
- book clubs
- quilting groups
- lunch or dinner groups
- project groups
- mom's day out groups
- knitting and crocheting groups

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- crafting groups

The unit's participants. Each woman who is committed to the purpose of Women of the ELCA is called a "participant" in the unit. Women of the ELCA has no measurement for how often a woman needs to participate to be considered a participant. This enables women who regularly participate to be warmly open and receptive to the women who only participates in one particular event or only financially supports the community. Each supports Women of the ELCA's purpose. It is the unit, in total, that meets all the requirements of the unit criteria as listed in the unit constitutions.

The unit's leadership. Women in *elected leadership* positions in a unit and *elected as voting members* to a convention of the synodical women's organization are expected to be members of a congregation of the ELCA. This is not a requirement for non-elected leaders or for participants in small groups, units, or at our conventions.

Who a unit serves. Within Women of the ELCA units, women share their faith journeys. Units provide a place where women's gifts are affirmed and their baptism and creation in the image of God is embraced and celebrated. A unit develops a ministry plan that encourages as many women as possible to participate. This could be said to be the first task of a unit - to gather women into community for the purpose of growing in faith and discipleship. The very nature of discipleship compels the mobilization of such a community of women growing bold in their faith. As these women support each other in their callings, they are led by God's Spirit into ministry and actions that promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society and the world.

The Women of the ELCA small group. The small group ministry is one way of mobilizing women to boldly act upon their faith in Jesus Christ. Each small group (also called "circle") recognizes its responsibility to its unit. This responsibility is lived out through regular financial offerings for missions and ministries as well as a willingness to serve, as voting members and other leadership roles.

Small groups are commonly established around the needs and interests of women. The women of small groups live out our purpose statement and mission while focusing on the stated needs and interests of the women involved. A unit may have one or more small groups. Most small groups "grow into" the three mission areas but should look at these areas from the beginning. A group gathering to do yoga to experience the relation and reduction of stress of this discipline (personal growth) could incorporate a brief devotion (spiritual growth) on a regular or semi-regular basis. This small group may help others by perhaps doing a yoga class at a domestic violence women's shelter.

## Starting a small group

There's no limit to the number of small groups a unit can have. Small groups can talk to unit leadership about getting started at any time. There is no minimum number of times small groups must meet. Small groups can change their focus when they choose. Individual women who want to gather around a selected topic as a demonstration of their commitment to grow in community and in faith make up a small group. Small groups can change women's lives. Small groups allow women to share their passions and share their resources that can change other's lives outside of your small group.

Some small groups grow out of a unit event or activity. For example, a unit doing a Habitat for Humanity workday, may lead a few women to gather as a small group to look in the issues around affordable housing.

Small groups can grow out of a crisis. For example, a group of women may first gather around the shared pain of the rural economic crisis by helping families who have been nearly devastated. They might do political advocacy and write letters to legislators for enactment of bills to protect men, women and children from sex



trafficking.

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There are small groups that form to share their faith journeys. Like the one small group of single, career women who gather once a month to view a movie and talk about it afterward or serve others through different activities that appeal to them. They enjoy being together as they affirm each other's gifts.

### What Small Groups Do

Whether it is young mothers sharing the faith journey of being mothers, or empty nesters sharing transitions, or women of different generations interested in a topic, small groups do different things.

Many small groups focus on Bible study. This may be Women of the ELCA's most popular kind of small group. Many units use the Bible Study session found in the *Gather Magazine* published by churchwide Women of the ELCA. There are other Bible study and program resources found on the WELCA website. Women of the ELCA encourages units to use Bible studies that are theologically reflective of the Lutheran faith traditions.

## **Keeping a unit energized with evaluation**

Energized units come in all sizes. If your unit cannot be described as energized or is unclear on what its goals are the Getting Started section may be helpful. A healthy, energized unit can do an *annual evaluation* as an important step to maintain its health! An annual evaluation of a unit is like a health "checkup."

The value of unit goals. Unit goals determine the direction of a unit's ministry. Without goals, how would a unit know what it is trying to achieve? In the Goal Setting exercise in the Getting Started section of this handbook, every woman in the community has the opportunity to develop goals that they can truly own. Once goals are established, they serve as witnesses to all that a unit does. A unit's goals can be re-established fresh every three to four years, but sooner if needed.

Annually evaluating your unit's goals. Evaluating the performance of a unit in meeting its unit's goals helps keep it on track. Both current leaders and regular participants can re-visit the unit's goals on an annual basis by rating the unit's success at meeting its goals. One way of doing this is to use a one to four rating with four (4) being "wonderfully done," three (3) being "mostly done," two (2) being "less than half done," and one (1) being "totally missed."

Evaluating participant experience. Evaluating the experience of regular and not-so-regular participants is also important. Mini surveys can be done while sharing a coffee and dessert reception, before a planned event, or even mailed out with a tea bag. Online survey applications are free and very easy to set up and send by email to your participants. Check out [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) as a possible way to create a survey. To be of greatest use, these mini surveys should provide a place for women to sign their names if they desire. Whatever method is used doing such an evaluation, along with active follow-up, will help a unit remain energized.

### Example mini survey

1. The most enjoyable thing our unit did in the past year was \_\_\_\_\_
2. What made it so good for me was \_\_\_\_\_
3. Something we could do to make things work better in the area of \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_
4. Something that could be done to improve our business meetings is \_\_\_\_\_
5. What I think would be fun to try differently next year is \_\_\_\_\_
6. The one thing we didn't do this year that I would want to help us do next year is \_\_\_\_\_

Compiling your findings. An ad hoc committee can complete the results of both evaluations. A report can be written and presented to the elected leaders of the unit. The leaders use those findings to plan the unit's ministry

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identify new leaders, and as a tool to identify possible new small groups. Remember, an evaluation is only as good as the plan of action that results from the information gathered.

## When a unit gets tired

When women in a unit get tired it is important for them to take a caring, yet critical, look at what is making them tired. Tired feelings can be caused when what a unit does is no longer meeting the need of the women involved.

Women of the ELCA is really a flexible organization. Too often women are being tired out by operating with a model of organizing a unit that served it quite well at one time, but now, it only makes the women involved feel inadequate. Hopefully, this handbook might help units realize their ability to change before feelings of hopelessness begin to take root. In this way, women can retain the feelings that once had for being part of a community of women seeking to grow in faith and discipleship.

One woman called churchwide from a unit of thirty or so, and shared that they were tired of coming to monthly business meetings. At the same time, new women were coming to small group activities. When the caller realized that unit business meetings didn't have to be monthly and that offerings could be gathered at the small group events, new life and energy was breathed into the unit. In this case, the unit's leaders were tired while being faced with growth.

## Getting started

Women have different seasons in our lives. Sometimes women are active. Sometimes women withdraw from participation as their responsibilities change. Planners keep this in mind by providing women choices in time, day of week and in the content of ministry opportunities. If you are starting a new unit, or working to revise or renew an existing unit, we suggest that you contact the South Carolina synodical women's organization's president or board member, and we will be happy to help you.

The assessment team or committee. Do an assessment if you are starting a new unit or if your current unit needs reviving or renewing. Begin with the women you have. The more women who get involved in developing or redeveloping your unit the more fun you will have. As a planning team or committee, keep all the women of the congregation or institution in your mind and prayers.

### The first three tasks of the assessment.

1. Know the women in your congregation or institution
2. Ask what the women want to do and when they want to do it
3. Identify three to five goals for your unit's work that will carry it through the next several years.

Have conversation with the women in your congregation. Here are some suggests questions to stimulate conversation:

1. Describe how you feel you are an important part of the total mission of the church.
2. What are you passionate about?
3. Do you have a job or career? What do you do?
4. Do you have children at home? What are their ages?
5. What are your hobbies or what do you do in your spare time?
6. What do you wish women in this congregation could do together?
7. How often would you like to come together for Bible Study?
8. What day and time is best for you to gather with other women?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your possible participation in a unit?

## Setting goals

### Example of a goal setting exercise

Supplies needed: pens or pencils, sticky notes (enough for each woman), some clear wall space, several sheets of blank notebook paper, stickers (three stickers each of circles, stars, or another), 3-5 sheets of newsprint and markers. Write on a black board, poster board or wipe board the following statement: *The benefit I expect our congregation and the women in it to gain from being a part of Women of the ELCA are...*

In order to develop goals women will be able to own, ask women to write on the three sticky notes. Have them complete the statement by writing only one idea per sticky note. Have women share their responses by reading out loud what they have written prior to placing their sticky notes on the wall. After all women have put up their sticky notes, have the group identify any key words or phrases that are repeated. As these are identified, group the sticky notes into like or same idea categories. Ask the clarification for any sticky note that is not quickly understood. Throughout the discussion, bring the focus on three to five desired outcomes for your unit and have the women prioritize the groupings.

Putting it together. At this point the planning team or committee has in their possession three important and critical components for starting or reviving a unit.

1. The unit's three to five goals
2. The best days and times for gathering the women
3. Additional ideas for small group/unit activities

The final step in the assessment is to organize the written goals and the records of the one-on-one conversations.

## Selecting a unit model for the new unit

With the unit's goals in hand, now is the time to consider what unit model of organizing will be most helpful for the women of your unit. Elected leadership, regardless of model has an overseeing and active role in developing the Ministry Plan, which is the next step in the following section. Decide what unit organization model makes the most sense to them.

See details in the Women of the ELCA resource: "Six Models for Mission"

1. Board and Committee (each committee has a representative on the board)
2. Coordinating Committee (develops the ministry plan for the unit)
3. Coordinating Council (4-9 council members, each representing a subgroup of women)
4. Co-leaders (2 elected or appointed leaders to coordinate ministries and unit programs)
5. Covenant (women meet for a specific purpose and specific length of time to try out Women of the ELCA)
6. Team Model (leadership is short-term and decisions are made by consensus)

## The ministry plans

The Ministry Plan reflects Women of the ELCA's mission, "to mobilize women to boldly act upon their faith in Jesus Christ." Refer to the three focus areas (discipleship, justice, and stewardship), and the three mission areas (growth, community, and action) in Section A of this handbook. Plan opportunities for:

- personal growth,
- fellowship,
- community experiences,
- service opportunities,

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- relationships with each other, and
  - events that reach out for the involvement of new women.

Communicating Your Ministry Plan. Your unit's ministry plan should be written down and well communicated. The entire year of opportunities open to all women can be put on a handout piece of paper and distributed. If the population of women is particularly large or your events numerous, you may also want to mail or email quarterly listings of upcoming events. Events should also be published in the church/institution newsletter, promote using flyers, and email blast as appropriate. The best way of communicating your unit's ministry plan is through personal invitations in many and various ways. Offering childcare or rides to non-participant women is a warm and welcoming gesture. Refuse to be discouraged if women do not respond immediately.

### **Three mission areas – one mission**

#### **Mission: GROWTH**

Goal: To provide a variety of learning and growth experiences that strengthen each woman as a whole person, develop their potential and sense of call as a disciple and child of God, and equip them for ministry.

What does this mean? Mission Growth nurtures spiritual growth through enabling and encouraging women to share the good news as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. It also provides opportunities for each woman to identify their own gifts and leadership skills and makes available resources for Bible study and personal faith development.

#### How might this be done?

- Providing opportunities for women to broaden their theological understanding of God's word.
- Promoting daily prayer in a style that suits individuals.
- Organizing prayer groups or chains.
- Identifying individual spiritual gifts of women and encouraging these women in developing those gifts.
- Promoting an understanding of the scriptural mandate for Christian action and stewardship.
- Organizing group and individual Bible studies.
- Providing opportunities for witness.

The question to be pursued: How will the selected ministry event or activity assist in faith development?

#### **Mission: COMMUNITY**

Goal: To enable each woman to value their and others as disciples created in God's image and redeemed through Christ; and to build up and celebrate relationships that are global, diverse, and interdependent.

What does this mean? Mission Community is about relationships among women of faith. These relationships are disciple relationships that include God, family, other persons of faith, the global community, Women of the ELCA units, and the unchurched.

#### How might this be done?

- Assisting women in understanding that stewardship of time, talent, and resources is a way of life.
- Openly publicizing events and activities, assuring hospitality to all.
- Encouraging all women to show their discipleship through acts of faith and justice.
- Supporting women as they articulate and act upon their faith as led by the Holy Spirit
- Staying informed by local, national, and international issues related to human needs, peace with justice, the environment, and encouraging active interest in these issues.
- Communicating non-imperialistic support for the oppressed through advocacy and partnerships.
- Promoting education on justice issues.

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The question to be pursued: How will the selected ministry event or activity assist in community outreach?



**Mission: ACTION**

Goal: To enable women to articulate and act upon their faith as disciples of Jesus Christ in all areas of life.

What does this mean? Mission Action is about being in direct servant roles. We act to ensure that all people have access to basic human needs, equality, justice, and safety. This includes developing active partnerships with workers of God's justice, to provide tangible goods and services, education, and advocacy against injustice.

How might this be done?

- Assisting women in understanding that stewardship of time, talent, and resources is a way of promoting life and action in the world.
- Encouraging all women to show their discipleship through acts of faith and justice
- Supporting women as they articulate and act upon their faith as led by the Holy Spirit.
- Staying informed about local, national, and international issues related to human needs, peace with justice, the environment, and encouraging active interest in these issues.
- Communicating non-imperialistic support for the oppressed through advocacy and partnerships
- Promoting education on justice issues

The question to be pursued: How will the selected ministry event or activity provide opportunities to put faith into action?

**Some activity suggestions**

This section includes examples of how the three mission areas can be incorporated into one activity or event. These suggestions can be used to stimulate your own creativity.

A few words about location: The nurture of the activity should determine the location. A small Bible study can travel from dining room table to kitchen table to the patio table depending on the needs and wishes of the women involved. Just be sure that everyone knows where the location is and how to get there.

Outreach tip: Does your congregation have a hostess who is only peripherally involved (or not at all) with your unit? Maybe they would enjoy hosting a Bible study in their lovely home on occasion? Is there a woman who is of your larger community who sells beauty products? Might they not partner with a spiritual facilitator to help provide a half-day of body and spiritual pampering for new (and seasoned) women?

If you are doing a spiritual retreat: Use a serene and quiet location where the retreat can be free of outside interruptions. In addition, time should be taken to "set the mood" using candles or fresh flowers as centerpieces or in groupings. If it is wintertime, a fire in the fireplace is a nice focal point and provides soothing feelings and sounds. The sound of a portable water fountain or softly played music can be used during times of meditation. Incorporating slow breathing exercises, soothing head rolls, shoulder shrugs or other simple stretching exercises are a good way to bring the entire body into the renewing experience of a spiritual retreat. Times of silence to pay attention to our bodies are also helpful. Women often need physical as well as spiritual nurturance. A combination "spa experience" and spiritual retreat could be developed where women give each other manicures or pedicures or facials during a time of silence or soothing talk about God.

Essential oils used in the Bible. Ask a representative selling essential oils to partner with a Bible study of the essential oils used in the Bible and how they were used.

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An Epiphany retreat. *While this retreat is written using the Epiphany church season, it can be developed using a different Biblical text.*

This retreat is structured around the story of the three kings. A collection of canned foods can be made at the door for a local shelter as an emulation of the magi bringing gifts. While women should be directed to bring their Bibles, it is always good to have extra Bibles on hand. Pre-registration is a good idea for this retreat so that the facilitator will know ahead of time the participants and what they do as their gifts of service.

Allow ten minutes for greetings and settling in. All cell phones should be silenced so that all the cares of what they have left at home fall away. Start the retreat by singing an appropriate hymn of God's faithfulness. Follow this with a simple devotion that recalls the story of the three kings. Ask the women to close their eyes and meditate about how the story of the three kings has meant different things to them at different times in their lives. What kinds of wonders and ideas has this Biblical story brought them during their lives? After the meditation, invite the women to open their eyes and have a large group sharing of what they had remembered or thought about the story of the three kings. (Women may have memories of pageants, Christmas creches, etc.) Close with community prayer.

Next have the women move to different areas for small group discussions that consider God's faithfulness in the lives of selected women in the Bible. (Sara, Hannah, Esther, Elizabeth, Ruth, the maiden Mary are examples.) Have the women's names and Bible texts on slips of paper and divide the women into groups. To encourage discussion, women can be given questions such as: Do you think this woman ever doubted God would be faithful? What did it mean to this woman to endure the wait, experience the journey? What must it have been like for there to finally have evidence of God's faithfulness?

After the small group discussions, ask the women to sit back, close their eyes and do quiet slow breathing. The facilitator can follow this by reading a selected psalm of faithfulness or other appropriate reading in the silence of the setting. Then each woman is invited to move to a separate space by herself and take fifteen minutes in silent prayer and meditation of God's faithfulness. Small slips of paper with "God is Faithful," "God Answers Prayers," "God is Timely," or "God is Love" written on them can be distributed as meditation or prayer prompts. Add additional phrases as you wish. The facilitator may share how silence can seem so strange and unaccustomed to us in today's culture. Remind them that taking quality time for God and with each other is in itself a "work" of faith.

At the end of the meditation and prayer, the facilitator has the women gather back together for another short devotional or psalmody of God's faithfulness. Invite the women to share with one another what they have felt and thought during their private time of prayer and meditation. For a break, refreshments can be enjoyed in an adjacent area. During the break, the facilitator will arrange the seats in a large circle with flowers, candles, a Bible, a cross and an offering basket in the center of the circle.

After the break, invite the women to return to the retreat space. The facilitator can then pass around two or more tubes of good hand cream and invite the women to take some lotion for their hands. As the women massage the cream into their own hands, the facilitator can point out how God has shown His faithfulness in many instances through the things done by the hands of women, such as: feed the hungry, soothe the sick, work a job, provide for others, write words of encouragement or comfort, prepare delicious meals, applaud the success or efforts of other. The facilitator then begins to specifically acknowledge the "hand" work of each of the women present, how their hands serve God by enhancing the lives of others. Examples: Clara uses their hands in service to God to count the offerings, Lisa uses their hands in service to God teaching school, Keisha uses their hands in service to God as a nurse to hold a dying patient's hand, Laura uses their hands to knead bread for communion, Barbara uses their hands to serve God by making quilts for Lutheran World Relief and those they love.

The facilitator then invites the participants to share their own stories of God's faithfulness in their lives. Bearing

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witness to God's faithfulness is an ancient custom. Think of Miriam's song! (And all the psalms!) Sharing our

stories not only encourages others, but strengthens our own spirits as we recall anew the faithfulness of God! To close the sharing, the facilitator thanks the women for sharing and invites the group to sing the remaining verse of the hymn that began the retreat or another hymn of God's faithfulness. The reading of another psalm or reading about God's faithfulness and five minutes of meditation on the psalm or reading follows this singing.

Close the meditation with a facilitator-led prayer. A nice parting gift for women would be small samples of hand lotion or a small votive candle for them to use as they meditate upon God's faithfulness in their lives in the following weeks.

Check out all of the programs on the Women of the ELCA website at [www.womenoftheelca.org/resources](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/resources). Categories include Personal, Retreat, Short Sessions, Liturgical Year, Multi Session, Racial Justice Advocacy, and Stewardship.

## A few icebreakers

Having an outreach event? How many women are you inviting? Need a new way to get into an event? You want to get women to mingle more with other people? The nice thing about these icebreakers is that they can be used more than once and for more than one reason.

Puzzle pieces. If you have ten women, this icebreaker requires a ten-piece jigsaw puzzle. When the women arrive, give them each a puzzle piece. After the starting prayer, have the women put the puzzle together.

Complete me. This icebreaker is fun with Christmas Carols or favorite hymns, but it can be done with popular scripture texts as well, or anything else your community is uniquely familiar with. Plus, it is homemade. Write, type, or print the beginning and end of a phrase from a Christmas Carol. For examples: "It came upon" and "a midnight clear." These are cut in half and distributed to people as they arrive. The task is to go around asking others to "complete me" with either the first or second part of the phrase that you have in your hand. Funny combinations are made sometimes...but that is part of the fun! The pairs just "made" can be used later as well such as: "As we do this project, sit with the one who made you 'complete' in our icebreaker exercise!"

Pairs of cards. Having an inter-generational event? Use two decks of cards or pairs of Memory Game cards, (This is a children's card game with either baby and mama animals, or two of the same shape of animal). You'll have to pull out as many pairs of cards as you need beforehand. If you are expecting fourteen people, you will need seven pairs of cards. This icebreaker can also be used to form groups of three or four by preparing a deck of playing cards with three or four of a kind numbers. Shuffle and hand them out. Everyone who has the matching cards will be in a group. This match-up exercise can also be done with colored beads or buttons, too. Be creative and have fun!

The talking stick. Some of our American Indian sisters will be familiar with the talking stick. If you have an American Indian sister in your unit, ask them to share this with your group prior to use.

The talking stick is a proper stick usually with meaningful carving or ornamentation reserved for use by the elder in the tribe's council. It is the elders who make tribal decisions, and the talking stick is used for discussion. The person holding the talking stick is the only one talking at any time. To make your own talking stick, use a short (approximately 18 inches) dowel approximately 1 inch in diameter. You can give it added meaning by tacking a "Women of the ELCA" blue ribbon to the end as a streamer. One Indian tribe used the talking stick principle in a group discussion of diverse people as a way to invite all to speak. The stick was placed in the middle of the floor where people were sitting in a circle. The one who first wished to speak got up,

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took the stick, and spoke. This stick was then offered to others.

At points in the discussion, others put out their hands signaling they wanted to speak. In this way, only one person spoke at a time, invitations were made to those who were sitting silent (by offering them the talking stick) and discussion was done in good order and quietly – the only one speaking was the one holding the talking stick. You may choose other objects to use such as a ball, a balloon, knitting needles etc.

The community prayer. There are many ways to do community prayer. Women gather in a circle, perhaps holding hands, and one person begins the prayer by addressing God and inviting others to continue the prayer as the Spirit leads them closing their petition with “Lord in your mercy.” To which all respond, “Lord, hear our prayer.” And then the next person led by the Spirit shares a petition. Sometimes the facilitator may warmly and helpfully supply the “Lord in your mercy” if the Petitioner omits this. The facilitator closes the community prayers by thanking God for his faithfulness and the knowledge that God has heard the prayers. Sometimes the community prayer goes around the circle. At other times the prayer moves in a back-and-forth manner through the circle.

## **Unit leadership**

This section addresses the business functions of unit leaders. Officers are not required for units. Only one model for organizing units has officers. If you look at our model constitution the wording used is “leaders (officers)” who are selected for a term of one year with one reelection. Lutheran women today, like women everywhere, are not as eager to take volunteer leadership roles. Opportunities for leadership aren’t as scarce as they were years ago. Also, as the demand on time and energy continue to grow, women want volunteer leadership roles to be heavy in value and light in busy-ness.

General leader responsibilities for business meetings. The minimum functions that are needed at any business meeting are that of the presider and recorder. The primary areas of unit leader responsibilities are:

- records transmitted for use in reports to Women of the ELCA and the congregation or institution
- communication within the unit and to the other expressions
- development of the ministry plan for the unit
- bookkeeping and transmittal of offerings
- in some cases, representation on the church council within a congregation or program committee within an institution

Business meetings. “To meet or not to meet,” that can be the question. Business meetings do have to happen. Yet, there is no prescribed number of times a unit has to have business meetings in a calendar year.

The number of units that are having business meetings on a quarterly basis is growing as women are finding other ways to collect, record, and submit the offerings of women between business meetings. In this way, no part of mission service lies dormant between business meetings. On the contrary, new energy for more effective or additional ministry has been freed up and financial support to both synodical and churchwide continue.

Business meetings require the presence of elected leaders but are open to anyone interested in attending. Some units prefer that only business be done at business meetings. A brief devotion is desired as is praying for the known needs of people. Some units prefer programs included with their business meetings. This is something on which the leaders of the unit should seek consensus.

Time is saved when committee work is not brought to the business meeting to be completed or rehashed. Those who are entrusted to do “committee work” can fulfill their responsibilities without having their chair (or

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designated leader) discuss anew things already discussed. Of course, this does not mean that the coordinating



council can't be asked its feelings on a given topic, but committee decisions are best made within committee meetings.

Other time saving methods that can be tried are:

- The minutes to the previous business meeting and all committee meetings are distributed well before the scheduled business meeting.
- Committees limit their report on any actions taken for the sake of the organization and any recommendations made to the board.
- Offerings expected to be reported at the business meeting are provided to the unit's financial recorder (or treasurer) far enough in advance to allow for records to be completed and distributed prior to the business meeting.
- The agenda is prepared and distributed prior to the business meeting.
- Everyone commits herself to be on time.
- Consider having your business meetings after worship since the women on the board will likely already be present.

## Co-leader responsibilities

Co-leaders can work together on the agendas. A simple agenda of devotion or prayer, roll call, old business (things needing further discussion) and new business (things to discuss for the first time), financial reports and closing prayer can be typed or even handwritten as used as a form for developing future agendas. While it is true that the co-leader not presiding could take the minutes at each meeting, there may be another woman in the unit willing to do this task. The written record of business meetings can be handwritten. Minutes shall be saved in a manner that they can be located easily for future reference.

Co-leaders oversee the development of the unit's ministry plan. They can take turns presiding at business meetings. They do not necessarily lead non-business meetings or activities. The process the unit uses for making decisions can be either consensus or voting. Whatever process is used, it needs to be one that enables the unit to make the best progress. The co-leaders will help the unit decide what method of making decisions it will use. Co-leaders provide the annual report. Highlight the activities and events women of your unit have been involved in during the previous year.

Communication co-leader. This co-leader makes sure the unit's non-financial records are properly maintained. This would include the minutes of the unit's business meetings as well as the record of any standing rule that the unit adopts. The Communication Co-leader can have a unit mailbox or basket in the church office. Mailings that have Women of the ELCA's logo or addressed to the women of the church along with any communication for the SC Synodical Women's Organization can be placed in the mailbox. One of the Co-leaders should pick up the unit's mail on a regular basis.

While this co-leader receives the information about events where unit representation is desired, both co-leaders take turns with others to represent the unit at conference meetings, activities or events, the synodical women's organization activities and convention, and the churchwide organization. Follow the process for voting member representation at SWO conventions and the CWO triennial conventions.

Keep the names and address list of unit participants. Maintain a relationship between the unit and the church secretary or church councilperson that handles membership information. Changes of address can be shared.

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The communication co-leader also makes sure the annual ministry calendar is distributed to all the women of the congregation. (See the Ministry Plan section.) Verbal reminders and emails about business meetings are also

provided in addition to a bulletin announcement. When publicizing an activity or event, the Communication Co-leader will want to work with other leaders to come up with the best ways to get the warm invitation to as many women as possible! Fliers, bulletin board postings, bulletin inserts, personal invitations, carpool arrangements, and the like, make clear the welcoming intent of the unit.

The financial recording co-leader. The financial recording co-leader is encouraged to participate in any treasurer's training available within the synodical women's organization. The South Carolina SWO treasurer will stay in touch through regular correspondence, providing offering remittance and receipt forms which are individualized for the specific unit. This co-leader provides a full financial report annually or as the unit's bylaws prescribe. Keep records that reflect money received and money expended. All units decide where their funds go. When sending offerings to either synodical or churchwide Women of the ELCA, cash should be converted to a check.

## Officer responsibilities

The following job descriptions are examples based on listings found in Robert's Rules of Order. They are only examples. Elected leaders in other models can also use the officer job descriptions as informal task checklists.

### President/Presider:

- Develops the agenda, in consultation with others.
- Leads in the development of an annual Ministry Plan for the unit.
- Oversees the facilitation of the Ministry Plan.
- Either herself or their designee prepares the business meeting place.
- Presides at unit business meetings and at executive/officer meetings.
- Prepares annual reports to the unit, the congregation and synodical women's organization (if such reports are requested.)
- Oversees and affirms relationships of unit with any conference activities or events, the synodical women's organization activities and convention, and the churchwide organization.
- Represents Women of the ELCA at other local and appropriate ministries/functions or appoints a designee to take their place.
- Introduces/Affirms process for decision making that allows unit to make the best progress. (Does not have to be Robert's Rules).
- Make sure any standing rules that the unit may adopt are published and distributed.

Vice President. If the president for any reason vacates or is absent, the vice president takes the chair or president's role in conducting the tasks of the president. To this end, the vice president should be:

- Current in all matters affecting the unit including the Ministry Plan.
- Be knowledgeable and supportive of the president's desired outcomes for a business meeting.
- Speak in unison with the president on matters decided.
- In many circumstances it is the vice president who works in partnership with the president as their designee in appropriate situations and as assigned.

### Secretary/Recorder:

- The recording office of the unit and custodian of all unit records—unless otherwise designated.
- Provide other board members with whatever documents are required for the performance of their duties.
- Maintain name and address list of officers, unit participants and any committees.
- Provide written record of meetings.
- Send out notices of each business meeting. This can also be done informally.

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- In the absence of both the president and vice-president, presides over meeting.
  - Provide and handle correspondence as needed.

Treasurer:

- Entrusted with the custody of the units' funds which includes bookkeeping and transmittal of offerings to synodical and churchwide expression.
- Desirably bonded through congregational insurance policy.
- Disburse funds only by authority of the unit or as the unit's bylaws prescribe.
- Provide full financial report annually or as unit's bylaws prescribe.

**Women of the ELCA offerings**

These gifts, as outlined in the constitution, are the primary source of support of all our ministries together. Women gather for study and/or action and make a voluntary offering. The unit treasurer collects these offerings and deposits them in the unit's checking account for disbursement as the unit desires. All offerings which are sent to and through the synodical women's organization must be sent with the SC WELCA remittance form and will be listed on the annual report of congregational unit offerings in the South Carolina SWO Bulletin of Reports.

There are six types of offerings.

1. Regular offerings. As recommended by the churchwide board, the unit keeps a share of all offerings received for its own ministries, and forwards 50% or more to the synodical women's organization. The synodical women's organization then keeps a share for its own ministries, and forwards 50% or more to the churchwide organization.

Make one check payable to SC Women of the ELCA, fill in the remittance form provided by the SC WELCA treasurer, and mail it to the treasurer at the address at the bottom of the form. After the treasurer deposits the check, they will reply with an acknowledgement form which identifies all receipts by check number, date, and designation of the gift(s) for the current fiscal year. The remittance and receipt forms provided by the synodical treasurer are pre-printed with the unit's church address and congregation ID.

Regular offerings sent to the South Carolina Women of the ELCA help provide the following ministries:

- support leadership development,
- organize synodical events,
- provide Bible study retreats,
- publish newsletters,
- provide a website for resources,
- support mission growth, community, and action activities,
- train congregational officers,
- provide scholarships for women to attend synodical conventions and the triennial gathering.

Regular offerings sent to Churchwide Women of the ELCA help to provide the following ministries:

- operational expenses (i.e., rent, salaries, insurance, travel, etc.)
- Gather magazine, Daily Grace, and Café
- program resources
- social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest)
- grants and scholarships
- Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls Initiative
- Racial Justice
- Katie's Fund for Women in Leadership

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2. **Thankoffering.** This is an offering which cannot be designated and must be sent with Form B to the churchwide women's organization. (See appendix for Form B.) Thankoffering supports the same churchwide ministries as regular offering and is not included on the annual report of congregational unit offerings in the synodical bulletin of reports.
  3. **Joy Offering.** South Carolina Lutheran women have collected Thankofferings since the late 1800s in gratitude for blessings received. They were forwarded to world-wide ELCA ministries. This was a separate offering from regular offering which supports local, synodical and churchwide Women of the ELCA ministries. At the merger, Churchwide Women of the ELCA adopted the practice of collecting Thankofferings but put in the constitution that all Thankoffering received was to be kept for its own programming expenses. In order for the South Carolina women to continue our custom of supporting world-wide ELCA ministries, a resolution was passed at the 2011 synodical convention to rename our Thankoffering to "Joy Offering." Because it is renamed, we are allowed to continue giving our gratitude offering in support world-wide ELCA ministries, specifically to the Good Gifts program. (See appendix for the history and resolution.) Joy Offering is traditionally brought to the annual synodical convention, but it can also be remitted to the synodical treasurer at other times of the year, such as at Thanksgiving.
  4. **Designated offering.** This is an offering collected for a specific charity or organization as determined by the congregational unit, or by the synodical organization. Designated gifts must be specified on the SC WELCA unit's remittance form. These may include designated gifts to churchwide which the synodical treasurer will forward to churchwide. If sent directly to churchwide, the check must be accompanied by Form B.
  5. **Conference offering.** Submitted by the units at each conference meeting/gathering. Conference offering may also include personal offerings by the women attending the conference. The conference determines where it will be disbursed. The conference financial secretary completes the SC WELCA conference remittance form and forwards the offering check(s) to the synodical treasurer. Each conference has a unique account within the synodical checking account. The SWO treasurer writes a check to the conference-requested charity or organization and sends an updated conference statement to the conference financial secretary.
  6. **Convention offering.** Submitted by the units and visitors at the annual synodical convention during the convention ingathering service. Half of this offering helps defray the cost of the convention and half goes toward the convention projects.

To learn more about Churchwide and Synodical Women of the ELCA offerings and the ministries they support, contact the synodical treasurer.

## Constitution for units

When a unit is started, it adopts a constitution taken from the model and made specific to itself in the title and within the brackets. Also, portions without an asterisk may be modified as needed. Amendments may be made according to the last section of the constitution. Constitution Provisions are in bold and are the basic general practices. Bylaws are in regular type and explain the details of the provisions.

The model Constitution and Bylaws for Units follows. It is approved by Churchwide Women of the ELCA and may be found on the Women of the ELCA website, along with versions for inter-congregational units and special units and is available in Spanish. The following model may also be found on the SC WELCA's website:

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[www.scwelca.com](http://www.scwelca.com)

## **Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

### NOTE:

Portions marked with an asterisk (\*) are needed to fulfill the criteria for membership.

The provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws that pertain to the same subject have been placed together.

The two types of provisions are identified in the following way:

- Constitutional provisions are printed in **bold** type.
- Bylaws are printed in regular type.

### **ARTICLE I—MEMBERSHIP AND NAME**

#### **\*SECTION 1. Membership**

**This [congregational] [inter-congregational] unit shall be a member of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, hereinafter designated as “Women of the ELCA.”**

#### **\*SECTION 2. Name**

**The name of this [congregational] [inter-congregational] unit shall be [name(s) of congregation(s)] Unit of Women of the ELCA, hereinafter designated as “the unit.”**

### **ARTICLE II—STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

#### **\*SECTION 1. Purpose**

**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.**

#### **\*SECTION 2. Commitment**

**To accomplish the purpose of Women of the ELCA, women in this unit shall commit themselves to**

- a. come together for study, support, and action;**
- b. participate in the ministry of Women of the ELCA beyond the congregation;**
- c. support financially the total program of Women of the ELCA; and**
- d. designate leadership that shall be in communication with the synodical and churchwide women’s organization.**

### **ARTICLE III—PARTICIPATION**

#### **\*SECTION 1. Composition**

**This unit shall be composed of those women who participate in activities that indicate a commitment to the purpose of Women of the ELCA.**

#### **\*SECTION 2. Participation**

**Participation in this unit shall be open to all women in the(se) congregation(s) and other women who**



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**subscribe to the purpose.**

**\*SECTION 3. Congregational Membership**

Women elected to leadership in this unit and elected as voting members of a convention of the synodical women's organization shall be participants in this unit and voting members of an ELCA congregation.

**ARTICLE IV—RELATIONSHIPS****\*SECTION 1. Congregation**

This unit shall participate in the life and work of [name(s) of congregation(s)] and report to the annual meeting(s). It may report regularly to the congregational council(s).

**\*SECTION 2. Cluster or Conference**

This unit shall participate in activities within the cluster or conference to which it is assigned.

**\*SECTION 3. Synodical Women's Organization**

In an interdependent partnership with the [name of synod] Synodical Women's Organization, this unit shall participate in the convention of the [name of synod] Synodical Women's Organization by

- \*Item 1. Electing a voting member and an alternate to represent the unit; and
- \*Item 2. Cooperating in the process for nomination of officers and board members of the synodical women's organization.

**\*SECTION 4. Churchwide Women's Organization**

- \*Item 1. This unit shall participate in the process for nomination of voting members of the Triennial Convention.
- \*Item 2. This unit shall participate in the process of nomination of officers and board members.

**ARTICLE V—MEETINGS****SECTION 1. Program**

Women of this unit shall come together regularly [designate dates, times, etc.] for study, support, and action.

**SECTION 2. Business**

There shall be a business meeting(s)† held in [name of month(s)] for purposes such as receiving reports, projecting plans, electing leadership, and adopting an annual budget.

† At least annually

**ARTICLE VI—LEADERSHIP****SECTION 1. Leaders (Officers)**

This unit shall have [names of leadership positions], elected for a term of one year with one reelection.

**SECTION 2. Duties of Leaders (Officers)****SECTION 3. Duties of Unit (Board) (Coordinating Committee) (Coordinating Council)**

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**ARTICLE VII—PLANNING**  
**SECTION 1. Program Areas and Goals**

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This unit shall engage in planning, giving attention to the program areas and goals established by Women of the ELCA.

## **SECTION 2. Program Planning**

The unit (board) (coordinating committee) (coordinating council) shall be responsible for the total program planning for the unit.

## **ARTICLE VIII—NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

### **SECTION 1. Nominating Committee**

There shall be a Nominating Committee of at least three persons to present nominees for [names of leadership positions] for election by this unit.

### **SECTION 2. Elections**

All elections shall be for a term of one year with one reelection.

## **ARTICLE IX—FINANCE**

### **SECTION 1. Fiscal Year**

**The fiscal year and the budget year for this unit shall be determined by this unit. SECTION 2. Administration**

**This unit shall develop and administer its own financial plan or budget that shall reflect support for the total program of Women of the ELCA.**

### **SECTION 3. Transmittal**

**This unit shall transmit funds regularly in accordance with established procedures.**

### **SECTION 4. Reports**

**This unit shall provide annual financial reports to participants.**

### **SECTION 5. Financial accountability**

**An annual accounting compilation or review of this unit's financial records shall be conducted by a financial review committee of the unit.**

## **ARTICLE X – DISSOLUTION CLAUSE**

**In the event of the dissolution of this congregational/inter-congregational unit, any surplus property remaining after the payment of its debts shall be disposed of by transfer to the churchwide women's organization or its successor provided that said organization is, at the time of dissolution, a qualified organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 or comparable provision, and, if not, to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or its successor, and, if not, to one or more organizations so qualified in such proportions as the leadership of this unit shall determine.**

## **ARTICLE XI—BYLAWS AND AMENDMENTS**

### **SECTION 1. Bylaws**

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This unit may adopt bylaws not in conflict with this constitution by a majority vote, provided they have been presented in writing at the previous meeting.

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**SECTION 2. Amendments**

- Item 1. This constitution may be amended at any regular business meeting or special meeting of this unit by a two-thirds vote of the women present and voting, provided the proposed amendment has been presented at the previous meeting and is consistent with the purpose of Women of the ELCA.
- Item 2. Amendments to the bylaws may be adopted by the unit by a majority vote after having been presented at the previous meeting.
- Item 3. Whenever the secretary of Women of the ELCA officially informs the congregational/inter-congregational units that the Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention has amended the approved Model Constitution and Bylaws for Congregational/Inter-congregational units, whether by setting out alternate clauses or otherwise, such provisions shall be introduced at once into this constitution and notice of this action shall be forwarded to the synodical president.

**Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

*Revised 2017*

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## GLOSSARY

**Adopt** – To choose or accept and put into effect by vote or consensus.

**Approve** – To confirm or formally sanction; to ratify.

**Assembly** – Term used by the ELCA for the gathering of voting members for decision-making or legislative functions.

**Bulletin of Reports (BOR)** – Report that includes everything that is needed to conduct a churchwide or synodical convention.

**Bylaw** – A provision which relates to a specific practice or detail of the organizations' operation and ongoing responsibilities.

**Churchwide** – An inclusive ELCA designated term for the whole organization to acknowledge that the church extends beyond any one nation's borders.

**Churchwide Executive Board** – The group of board members and officers elected by the Triennial Convention for three-year terms who serve as the legislative authority between triennial conventions; the highest level of authority of the Women of the ELCA.

**Churchwide Women's Organization (CWO)** – The entire Women of the ELCA organization, manifested in the Triennial Convention and the Executive Board, which describe the staff and office that support the activities of the organization.

**Circle/Group** – A non-legislative group of women within a Congregational Unit, usually for the purpose of program activities, Bible study, fellowship, and personal growth, which meet regularly and support the purpose of the Women of the ELCA.

**Conference** – A non-legislative grouping of Units within the territory of the Synodical Organization for the purpose of fostering interdependent relationships among congregations.

**Conference Offering** – Received at each conference meeting. The conference determines where it will be applied.

**Congregational Unit (CU)** – The women's organization within a congregation which supports the mission of the Women of the ELCA.

**Constitution** – A legal document that outlines the name, purpose, authority, relationships, and financial structure of an organization.

**Contact Person** – A person selected in a congregation to receive and disperse information for the purpose of networking.

**Convention** – The gathering of voting members for decision-making or legislative functions within Women of the ELCA and the Synodical Women's Organization.

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**Convention Offering** – Given at the convention by the Congregational Units to help defray the cost of the convention.



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**ELCA** – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a mainline Protestant Lutheran church headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, officially formed in 1988 by the merging of three Lutheran church bodies.

**Expression** – One of three legislative groups within the Women of the ELCA, which are: units, synodical women’s organizations, and the churchwide women’s organization.

**Designated Gift** – An offering which supports a specific ministry identified by the donor(s).

**Gather** – The magazine of the Women of the ELCA, formerly “Lutheran Women” magazine.

**Honorarium** – A payment in recognition of acts or professional services.

**In Kind Gift** – A tangible gift (not monetary) which is given to an agency or ministry through a gathering or convention.

**Inter-congregational Unit** – A community of women from two or more congregations who come together for study and action which support the mission of the Women of the ELCA.

**Joy Offering** – A special gratitude offering designated for the world-wide ministry of the ELCA. South Carolina Women of the ELCA sends all Joy Offering to the ELCA Good Gifts Program.

**Member** – A congregational, inter-congregational, or special unit of the Women of the ELCA. For individuals, see Participant definition.

**Memorial** – A statement which addresses a broad policy issue and presented to a legislative body for consideration; may be brought by a Congregational Unit to the Synodical Convention, or by the SWO to the Triennial Convention.

**Participant** – A woman who takes part in carrying out the mission of Women of the ELCA and supports its ministries. Not all women in an ELCA congregation are automatically participants in WELCA; only those who take part in carrying out the mission of the organization and support the ministries of WELCA are participants.

**Policy** – A statement of principles for action; a position that guides the decision-making and activities of an organization.

**Quorum** – The majority of members of a body that, when duly assembled, is legally competent to transact business.

**Region** – A geographic territory in the ELCA which includes several synods. South Carolina is in Region 9 and the SC synod code within Region 9 is C.

**Regular Offering** – A voluntary offering given at each circle/group meeting which is the primary source of support for the ongoing ministries of the unit, the synodical, and the churchwide women’s organization.

**Resolution** – A proposal or request for consideration of a specific action by the legislative organization, usually with a narrower focus than a memorial. A resolution and a memorial may not be combined in one action.

**Special Unit (SU)** – A community of women who come together in a unique setting (such as on a college

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campus or within a retirement community) for study and action which supports the mission of the Women of the ELCA

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**Synodical Women’s Organization (SWO)** – The legislative and programmatic expression that assists congregational, inter-congregational and special units with its territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA.

**Taskforce** – A temporary grouping of women for the purpose of accomplishing a definite objective, usually with a specific deadline, and reports its finding to a larger group or legislative body.

**Thankoffering** – A gratitude offering sent on Form B to Churchwide Women of the ELCA for their program activities; used the same way as Regular Offering.

**The Ripple** – The newsletter publication of the South Carolina Women of the ELCA.

**Triennial Convention** – The highest legislative authority of the Women of the ELCA with elected voting members from each region in the US and Caribbean which meets every three years.

**Triennial Gathering** – Open to all women in the ELCA from each region in the US and Caribbean which meets immediately following the Triennial Convention.

**Unit** – A member of the Women of the ELCA, such as a Congregational Unit, an Inter-Congregational Unit, or a Special Unit.

**Voting Member** – An elected woman who has voting privileges on legislative matters at a synodical or triennial convention. The congregational unit elects voting members to a synodical convention. Voting members to a triennial convention are elected at the prior year’s synodical convention.

**Women of the ELCA (W/ELCA)** – The shortened form for “Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” the legal name for the women’s organization of the ELCA, which is a separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA. A relational organization, a community of women living in relationships to God, one another, the church, the society, and the world.



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## History of name change from Thankoffering to Joy Offering in South Carolina

In the 1896 convention, Mrs. M. Kinard, president of the South Carolina Lutheran Women, initiated the practice of collecting Thankofferings in “mite” boxes whenever they felt gratitude for God’s gifts. These were to be used for specific projects sponsored by Lutheran Church Women, such as for foreign missionaries or women and children in need.

Between 1918 and 1962, the prime purpose of the SC women’s organization was that of missionary education and support of the world missionary enterprise. The key to the stewardship of the women in South Carolina has been the overwhelming proportion of contributions given to “others” as contrasted with monies retained. The ingathering of Thankoffering has been one of the highlights of each convention.

In the 1971 Triennial Convention of Lutheran Church Women, the Auxiliary adopted South Carolina’s idea of Thankoffering as a special gratitude offering, in addition to Regular Offering. However, the constitution reads, “These offerings shall be transmitted in full to the churchwide organization for the support of the ministries of this organization and the church.” (Article X, Section 4, Item 1.b.)

In the 2008, the Stewardship Planning Guide stated “Thankofferings help Women of the ELCA provide resources, events and programs, and also support the organization’s crucial annual gift to the ELCA.” Publicity on programs and services supported by Thankofferings stated “25% Annual Gift to the ELCA, 40% Programs, 30% Communications, 5% Governance. Thankoffering supported as much as \$1 million toward the annual gift to the ELCA. In turn, the ELCA provided the Women of the ELCA free rent in their Chicago offices.

In 2009, the Women of the ELCA cut the unrestricted gift to the ELCA “due to declining revenue.” The only funds going to the ELCA from the Women were designated giving from units and synodical organizations. The ELCA began charging rent for use of office space.

At the 2011 Triennial Convention, the South Carolina delegation presented a resolution to strike “and the church” from the CWO constitution (quoted in the third paragraph above) since that was no longer true. The resolution was signed by 25 delegates at the convention and was told that it would be referred to the Resolutions Chair of the Executive Board. No action was ever taken.

At the June 25-26, 2011, South Carolina synodical women’s convention, the resolution shown on the following page was passed unanimously. See the definition of Joy Offering on page 73 of this handbook.

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References:

History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Carolina 1842-1924, page 46  
 A History of the Lutheran Church in South Carolina 1971-1987, page 55  
 A Brief History of Women in the ELCA Celebrating 20 Years, by Nancy Stelling,  
 editor of Lutheran Women Today magazine from 1987-2001  
 Women of the ELCA Stewardship Planning Guides

THIS RESOLUTION WAS PASSED AT THE SC WELCA CONVENTION, JUNE 25, 2011

**A RESOLUTION ON THE USE OF THANKOFFERINGS IN SOUTH CAROLINA**

WHEREAS, in 1896 the South Carolina Lutheran Women initiated the practice of collecting Thankofferings (in "Mite boxes") in response to their gifts from God to be used for definite projects; and

WHEREAS, at the Lutheran Church Women National Triennial Convention in 1971, the Auxiliary adopted South Carolina's idea of Thankofferings to be used for specific projects sponsored by Lutheran Church Women; and

WHEREAS, the constitution of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Organization reads, "Thankofferings ... shall be received by the unit and transmitted in full to the churchwide organization for the support of the ministries of this organization and the church"; and

WHEREAS, Thankofferings are used by Women of the ELCA for the "total outreach" of the women's organization to relieve suffering and injustice around the world, to care for God's creation, providing safe shelter, secure food, and clean water to those in need, to provide care and treatment for women and children who are abused; and

WHEREAS, financial records available to us from Women of the ELCA Churchwide Organization show that our Thankofferings are NOT held separate for outreach projects as the list above implies, plus they are NO LONGER given to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ministries, but rather are combined with Regular Offering and other offerings and income for operating expenses within the organization, such as to "provide new resources and events"; therefore, be it

*RESOLVED*, that the South Carolina Women of the ELCA collect gratitude offerings as special gifts to be called JOY offerings as it was called in 1971, and sent directly to the SC Synodical Treasurer so that these offerings can be used as intended ONLY for outreach projects determined by the South Carolina Women of the ELCA Synodical Board; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, that South Carolina Women of the ELCA continue to submit a generous portion of our Regular Offering to the Women of the ELCA Churchwide Organization ministries; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, that Congregational Units in South Carolina may continue to submit their Thankofferings and Designated Gifts directly to the Women of the ELCA Churchwide Organization on their Offering Transmittal Form B; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, that "JOY offering" replaces the Thankoffering line item in the Synodical budget; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, that these resolves become effective immediately upon their adoption by the South Carolina Women of the ELCA convention on June 25-26, 2011.

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Resolution Task Force: Carolyn Torrence (Chair), Virginia Herlong, Donna Fulmer, Sharon Ganis,  
Sandra Wanto, Linda Wilkerson, Martha Koeller, Jenny Cannon, Marsha Mikell  
Resolution was approved by the SC Women of the ELCA Synodical Board, May 14, 2011

**South Carolina Women of the ELCA**  
**Conference Meeting/Event Report**  
*(to be completed by Conference Secretary)*

Conference Name \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Place \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

# of Units in Attendance \_\_\_\_\_ # of Units in Conference \_\_\_\_\_

Total in Attendance from Units \_\_\_\_\_

Board Members Present \_\_\_\_\_

Pastors/Guest Present =====

Total Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

New Officers Elected    yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_

*If yes, fill out Conference Leaders Form and send copy to SWO Secretary*

Next Meeting/Event Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of Meeting/Activities or attach agenda

Comments/Questions/Concerns

*Mail copy to the SC WELCA Synodical Secretary*

**South Carolina Women of the ELCA**  
Cash Record

Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cash received:

\$20	x	_____	=	\$	_____
\$10	x	_____	=	\$	_____
\$ 5	x	_____	=	\$	_____
\$ 1	x	_____	=	\$	_____
Change			=	\$	_____
					=====

Total cash    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Convert cash to check for remittance to SC WELCA Synodical Treasurer*







## South Carolina Women of the ELCA Conference Leaders Update Form

**Name of Conference** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year** \_\_\_\_\_ **to** \_\_\_\_\_

**Coordinator** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (Cell)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (Home)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church** \_\_\_\_\_ **City** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secretary/Recorder** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (Cell)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (Home)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church** \_\_\_\_\_ **City** \_\_\_\_\_

**Financial Secretary** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (Cell)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (Home)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church** \_\_\_\_\_ **City** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please give this completed form to Board Liaison or mail the completed form to the Synodical Secretary as soon as new officers are elected. Your cooperation in keeping up to date is greatly appreciated.*

*SC WELCA Synodical Secretary*



**South Carolina Women of the ELCA  
Congregational Unit Leaders Update Form**

Year \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Church** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Conference** \_\_\_\_\_

**President/Coordinator** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (Cell)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (Home)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secretary/Recorder** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (Cell)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (Home)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Treasurer** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (Cell)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone (Home)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please mail this completed form to the Synodical Secretary as soon as new officers are elected.  
Your cooperation in keeping up to date is greatly appreciated.*

*SC WELCA Synodical Secretary*

**Women of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
South Carolina Synodical Women's Organization (SWO)

For use by Congregational Unit (CU)  
**OFFERING REMITTANCE**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONGREGATION:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Conference: Congregation:**

\_\_\_\_\_ ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT TREASURER:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

REGULAR OFFERING \$ \_\_\_\_\_

JOY OFFERING \$ \_\_\_\_\_

DESIGNATED: (specify)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ payable to: **SC WELCA**

Mail this form with your check to:

South Carolina WELCA Synodical Treasurer



## Offering Form B

For use by **CONGREGATIONAL UNITS**  
for offerings to **CHURCHWIDE**

Use Form B for **Thankofferings, Where Needed Most, Katie's Fund, Special Offerings,** and **Designated Gifts** to WELCA and ELCA ministries. Make check payable to "Women of the ELCA." For more information, please call 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2730 or go online to [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org).

**Mail form with check to: Women of the ELCA, ELCA Gift Processing Center, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.**

		DATE	
CONGREGATION		CONGREGATION NUMBER	
CONGREGATION CITY/STATE		ZIP	REGION/SYNOD
UNIT TREASURER NAME		PHONE NUMBER	
ADDRESS		EMAIL	
CITY/STATE		ZIP	

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
WOG0420 <b>THANKOFFERING</b>	\$
DESIGNATED GIFTS & SPECIAL OFFERINGS (PLEASE SPECIFY)	
WOG0466 <b>WELCA WHERE NEEDED MOST</b>	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$

FLCAW01022

Form updated 5/2017