Synodical Leaders Guide

January 2025

Women of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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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 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.

When questions arise, there are multiple ways to seek the answer. First look to the constitutions. Then check 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, 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 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 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.

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 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 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 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 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.

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 themself, 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*.) 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 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 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 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 themself, 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.
- 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.*

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 themself, 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.

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 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.)

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

15th Deadline for submitting proposed constitutional changes to executive board

October

Churchwide executive board meeting

November

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

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

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

December

15th Deadline, seed grant applications, Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls

15th Application period opens, scholarship program

21st 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: _____

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 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 at 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:

_____
_____
_____

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)

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.)

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.

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 _____

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 *Convention Program & Reports* has been received
Why? So voting members are equipped to carry out their responsibilities

Orientation to cover

- **Parliamentary procedure.**

  Goal: Help voting members understand the basics of parliamentary procedure
  - Use the tips on parliamentary procedure that will be published in the *Convention Program & Reports (CPR)*

- **Matters coming from executive board**

  Goal: Review the proposed constitutional changes; understand them in context
  - Determine if you want to remove any proposed changes from en bloc. En bloc means all proposed changes will be voted on at once, eg, en bloc, unless someone requests one or more to be removed and dealt with individually.

- **Review the committee reports published in the *CPR***

  Goal: Equip voting members to understand the business issues on which they must vote
  - Memorials Committee
    - Review memorials and recommendations from Memorials Committee
    - Answer questions
    - Determine if you want to remove any recommendations from en bloc
  - Nominating Committee
    - Review candidates
    - Will you want to nominate someone from the floor?
    - Explain about ecclesiastical ballot
    - Begin thinking about possible candidates, pray for discernment
  - Proposed budget
    - Plan to attend the budget review session at the convention

- **New business**

Goal: Help voting members understand how to introduce a new piece of business
- Discuss the possibility of introducing new business
- Draft resolution, if applicable
- Note time on agenda by which all new business must be introduced

- **Logistical, practical matters**

  Goal: As a matter of hospitality, shepherd the delegation
  - Share cell phone numbers
  - Share travel itineraries
  - Coordinate local, on the ground travel (in synod, on site)
  - Have emergency numbers
  - Remind of need for photo ID

- **Blessing and sending**

  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
  - 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.

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.
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. 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.
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*.

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.

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.**

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).

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 the 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
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Position	Person	Primary tasks
Executive director	**Jennifer Hockenbery** **Interim Executive Director** jennifer.hockenbery@elca.org (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	**Eva James Yeo** eva.yeo@elca.org (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	**Valora K Starr** valora.starr@elca.org (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	**Elizabeth McBride** elizabeth.mcbride@elca.org (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, *Gather*	**Elizabeth Hunter** elizabeth.hunter@elca.org (773) 380-2537	Responsible for all aspects of the development, production and distribution of *Gather* magazine.

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