

Reflections from Lutheran women in Canada

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada was created in 1986. Its women's organization, Evangelical Lutheran Women (ELW) existed until 2010 when its board decided to dissolve and cease operations. Now, nearly 10 years later, we asked some women who had been active in ELW what it's like to not have a women's organization. Here are some of their responses.

“Most of us who were very involved with ELW surely miss it but have found other ways to be active in the congregation and wider church as well. It is a different situation than we knew and most of us who miss a women's organization are long in the tooth.”

“Here in southern Saskatchewan ... 3 or 4 of our congregations still have women's groups that meet regularly for Bible study and regular social events. My congregation actually also has a book club, a dinner club, a prayer shawl, and a quilting group in addition to the traditional women's group events. We also have an organized group (Lutheran Women's Retreat) comprised of women within about 70 km of Regina and women from city congregations that meet twice a year in a 1 day retreat format...we have a Spring Connection (1/2 day) and a fall full day retreat.”

“What I miss most about the more structured ELW program is the "conference" multi day gatherings and the national gatherings. I also miss the national resources that we had access to.”

In one synod, “the Bishop (and council) have appointed a woman to be the women's ministry contact. From what I can find, her main purpose is to organize a biennial gathering” and publish a newsletter.

“There is a feeling of less connection with other women and churches across Canada and even within our own synod. ... distance and lack of regular convention gatherings has contributed to that. Personally, it seems that there is a real loss of community amongst women in our area and in what we called the conferences and particularly here, the synod. Perhaps this loss is also a reflection of what is happening in our society too.

“A positive: when the ELW disbanded, the money was given to the ELCIC. That has been designated into a Women of Faith Fund. Each year a certain amount is made available to projects which support the goals of the fund, which coincide with what the ELW goals were. I currently sit on the Advisory Committee of that and have opportunity to see the grant applicants. There seem to be many more women who were not necessarily ELW members who are applying on behalf of service/outreach/social justice groups. There are also many of those ELW groups who apply and continue the work they have always done. So, this fund is

well used. It is structured so that the funds are projected to be fully used in another 1 or 2 years, I think.”